



Child Domestic Work

**In Southeast Nigeria:
Legal Frameworks and
Policy Recommendations**

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- Criminal Code Act, 2015
- Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Minimum Age Convention No. 138 of 1973
- Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour No. 182 of 1989
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

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Acronyms

CDW:	Child Domestic Work
CFRN:	Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
CRA:	Child Right Act
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO:	Civil Society Organization
FDG:	Focus Group Discussion
ILO:	International Labour Organization
KII:	Key Informant Interview
NSSCL:	National Steering Community on Child Labour
MOLE:	Ministry of Labour and Employment
OAU:	Organization of African Unity
SSDO:	South Saharan Social Development Organization
VAPP:	Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act



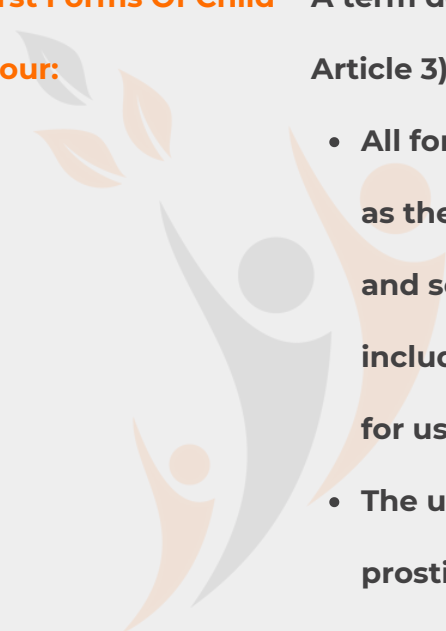
Definition of Terms

Child: A person under the age of eighteen (United Nations General Assembly, 1989)

Child Labour: Child labour is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their social, physical and mental development. (International Labour Organization, 2012)

Worst Forms Of Child Labour: A term defined in the ILO Convention No. 182. It comprises (Article 3):

- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- The use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography, for pornographic performance;
- The use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities in particular, for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- Work which, by its nature or because of the circumstance in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of the child. (commonly referred to as “hazardous work”) (International Labour Organization, 1999)



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Definition of Terms

Acceptable/ Permissible/ Light Work

Work permitted by the law for children of at least 12 or 13 years of age. The law may allow for specific activities which are not harmful to a child's health and development and do not prejudice attendance at school and participation in vocational training, nor "the capacity to benefit from the instruction received."

For statistical purposes, ILO defines this as work which does not exceed fourteen hours per week. Convention 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment addresses the definition of 'light work.' (International Labour Organization, 1973)

Domestic Work

Means work performed in or for a household or households (International Labour Organization, 2021)

Domestic Worker

Means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship; (Excludes work carried out by members of the family within their own household). (International Labour Organization, 2011)

Child Domestic Work

Domestic work undertaken by children under the legal minimum working age, as well, as by children above the legal minimum age but under the age of eighteen, under slavery like, hazardous, or other exploitative conditions a form of child labour. (International Labour Organization, 1999)

Definition of Terms

Child Domestic Worker

A child domestic worker is defined as a person below the age of 18 who is engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship. This excludes work done by children in their own homes for their families. (International Labour Organization, 2011)

Child Labour In Domestic Work

Domestic work undertaken by children under the legal minimum working age, as well, as by children above the legal minimum age but under the age of eighteen, under slavery like, hazardous, or other exploitative conditions a form of child labour. (International Labour Organization, 1999)

Exploitative Domestic Work

Occurs when children perform tasks that expose them to physical or psychological harm, violate their rights by forcing them to work in hazardous conditions, deny them access to education, or subject them to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

(International Labour Organization, 2013)





Executive Summary

1. Background and Methodology

Child Domestic Work (CDW) presents a significant challenge in Southeast Nigeria, reflecting broader societal issues despite existing legal frameworks intended to safeguard children from exploitation and abuse. This practice involves children performing household tasks in environments outside their own homes, often under conditions that compromise their rights to education, safety, and overall well-being. Economic pressures, particularly poverty, compel families to rely on child labour for survival, perpetuating a cycle where children assume responsibilities that hinder their development and welfare.

In Nigeria's legal context, CDW is a sub-component of child labour and ideally regulated by a combination of national laws and international commitments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on child labour. However, effective implementation and enforcement of these laws in the southeast are hindered by several challenges. These include inadequate resources allocated to agencies responsible for child protection, entrenched cultural norms that normalize child labour, and inconsistencies in interpreting and applying laws across different regions.

The complexities surrounding CDW necessitate a thorough understanding of its socio-economic foundations and the legal mechanisms designed to address it. In Nigeria, while laws related to child labour and protection exist, there is no unified legislation specifically targeting CDW. Instead, provisions are dispersed across various legal instruments, resulting in fragmented enforcement and uneven protection for affected children across different jurisdictions. This fragmented legal landscape highlights the urgent need for harmonized legislation that explicitly defines and prohibits CDW, alongside clear guidelines for enforcement.

To address these issues, this study focuses on three key objectives:



Assessment of Legal Frameworks: This objective examines the existing laws governing CDW and child trafficking in Anambra, Ebonyi, and Enugu States, analyzing how they define and address these practices to protect vulnerable children.



Evaluation of Effectiveness: The study evaluates the effectiveness of these laws in combating exploitative CDW within and across state borders, assessing their impact on protecting children's rights.



Policy Recommendations: Based on findings, the study proposes practical legal and policy measures to strengthen protection for CDWs originating from these states.

Recommendations include enhancing enforcement mechanisms, raising community awareness, and improving socio-economic support to reduce reliance on child labour. The methodology employed a qualitative approach through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with legal practitioners, social workers, advocates, government officials, and civil society members across the three states. Thematic analysis of these discussions provided insights into the socio-legal dynamics of CDW, highlighting challenges and opportunities for policy intervention.



2. Key Findings

a. Current Laws that Can Impact Child Domestic Work in Nigeria

The study identified several laws that underpin child domestic work in Southeast Nigeria. These include the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Child Rights Act, the Labour Act, the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, the Criminal Code Act, and the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act. These laws contain provisions aimed at protecting children from exploitation and abuse in the context of domestic work. The frameworks and key provisions are summarized in the table below:

	RELEVANT SESSION	PROVISION
a. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN), 1999, as Amended		
1.	Section 17 (3)(f)	(3) (f) children, young persons and the age are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect;
2.	Section 18 (3)(a)	(3) (a) Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide-(a) free, compulsory and universal primary education;
b. Child's Right Act (CRA), 2003		
3.	Section 10 (1)	(1) A child shall not be subjected to any form of discrimination merely by reason of his belonging to a particular community or ethnic group or by reason of his place of origin, sex, religion or political
4.	Section 11 (a-d)	(11) Every child is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person and accordingly, no child shall be- (a) subjected to physical, mental or emotional injury, abuse, neglect or maltreatment, including sexual abuse; (b) subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; (c) subjected to attacks upon his honor or reputation; or (d) held in slavery or servitude, while in the care of a parent, legal guardian or school authority or any other person or authority having the care of the child.

5.	Section 28 (1)(a-d),(2)	<p>(1) Subject to this Act, no child shall be-</p> <p>(a) subjected to any forced or exploitative labour; or</p> <p>(b) employed to work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character; or</p> <p>(c) required, in any case, to lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be likely to adversely affect his physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development; or</p> <p>(d) employed as a domestic help outside his own home or family environment.</p> <p>(2) No child shall be employed or work in an industrial undertaking and nothing in this subsection shall apply to work done by children in technical schools or similar approved institutions if the work is supervised by the appropriate authority.</p>
6.	Section 29	The provisions relating to young persons in sections 58, 59, 60, 61, 62 and 63 of the Labour Act shall apply to children under this Act.
7.	Section 30 (2) (a,b and d)	<p>(2) A child shall not be used-</p> <p>(a) for the purpose of begging for alms, guiding beggars, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour or for any unlawful or immoral purpose; or</p> <p>(b) as a slave or for practices similar to slavery such as sale or trafficking of the child, debt bondage or serfdom and forced or compulsory labour;</p> <p>(d) for any purpose that deprives the child of the opportunity to attend and remain in school as provided for under the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act;</p>
c. Labour Act, 2004		
8.	Section 91 (1)	<p>(1) ..."child" means a young person under the age of twelve years;</p> <p>"young person" means a person under the age of eighteen years.</p>
9.	Section 49 (1-2)	<p>(1) The parent or, in the case of an orphan, the guardian of a young person above the age of twelve years and under the age of sixteen years may, with the consent of that person testified by his execution of a written contract of apprenticeship, apprentice that person to an employer to train him or have him trained systematically for a trade or employment in which art or skill is required, or as a domestic servant, for any term not exceeding five years.</p>

		<p>(2) Where a young person above the age of twelve years and under the age of sixteen years is without known parents or a guardian, an authorized labour officer may authorise the apprenticeship of that person and appoint some fit and proper person to execute the written contract of apprenticeship and act generally as guardian of that young person.</p>
10.	Section 59 (1)(a) and b)	<p>(1) No child shall-</p> <p>(a) be employed or work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character approved by the Minister; or</p> <p>(b) be required in any case to lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be likely to injure his physical development.</p>
11.	Section 59 (3,4,5,6 & 8)	<p>(2) A child shall not be used-</p> <p>(a) for the purpose of begging for alms, guiding beggars, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour or for any unlawful or immoral purpose; or</p> <p>(b) as a slave or for practices similar to slavery such as sale or trafficking of the child, debt bondage or serfdom and forced or compulsory labour;</p> <p>(d) for any purpose that deprives the child of the opportunity to attend and remain in school as provided for under the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act;</p>
11.	Section 59 (3,4,5,6 & 8)	<p>(3) A young person under the age of fourteen years may be employed only-</p> <p>(a) on a daily wage;</p> <p>(b) on a day-to-day basis; and</p> <p>(c) so long as he returns each night to the place of residence of his parents or guardian or a person approved by his parents or guardian: Provided that, save as may be otherwise provided by any regulations made under section 65 of this Act, this subsection shall not apply to a young person employed in domestic service.</p> <p>(4) No young person under the age of sixteen years shall be employed in circumstances in which it is not reasonably possible for him to return each day to the place of residence of his parent or guardian except-</p> <p>(a) with the approval of an authorized labour officer; and</p>

(b) on a written contract (which, notwithstanding any law to the contrary, shall not be voidable on the ground of incapacity to contract due to infancy) conforming with Part I of this Act: Provided that, save as may be otherwise provided by any regulations made under section 65 of this Act, this subsection shall not apply to a young person employed in domestic service

(5) No young person under the age of sixteen years shall be employed-

(a) to work underground; or

(b) on machine work; or

(c) on a public holiday.

(6) No young person shall be employed in any employment which is injurious to his health, dangerous or immoral; and, where an employer is notified in writing by the Minister (either generally or in any particular case) that the kind of work upon which a young person is employed is injurious to the young person's health, dangerous, immoral or otherwise unsuitable, the employer shall discontinue the employment without prejudice to the right of the young person to be paid such wages as he may have earned up to the date of discontinuance.

(8) No young person under the age of sixteen years shall be required to work for a longer period than four consecutive hours or permitted to work for more than eight working hours in one day:

d. Trafficking In Persons(Prohibition) Law Enforcement And Administration Act

12.	Section 13 (6)	(6) The act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, or harbouring a person who is under 18 years for the purpose of exploitation shows that trafficking has taken place and attracts a fine and 2 years' imprisonment.
13.	Section 15	Anyone who moves a child from place to place for illicit intercourse or detains or keeps a person for prostitution or other sexual exploitation with people or with animals shall go to prison for 5 years and pay a fine of N500,000
14.	Section 16 (1)	(1) Anyone who recruits children (persons under 18 years) for prostitution or sexual exploitation anywhere will go to prison for not less than 7 years and pay a fine of N1,000,000.

15.	Section 23 (1)	<p>(1) Any person who-</p> <p>(a) Employs, requires, transports, harbours, receives or hires out a child under 12 years as a domestic worker commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for minimum term of 6 months and not exceeding 7 years.</p> <p>(b) Employs, requires, transports, harbours, receives or hires out a child to do any work that is exploitative, injurious or hazardous to the physical, social and psychological development of the child, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a minimum term of 2 years but not exceeding 7 years without an option of fine.</p>
e. Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, 2015		
16.	Section 10 (1)	<p>(1) A person who deprives another of his liberty, except pursuant to a court order commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 2 years or to a fine not exceeding N500,000.00 or both.</p>
17.	Section 13 (1)	<p>(1) Anyone who forcefully isolates or separates another from family and friends commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 months or to a fine not exceeding N100,000.00 or both</p>
18.	Section 14 (1)	<p>(1) A person who causes emotional, verbal and psychological abuse on another commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 1 year or to a fine not exceeding N200,000.00 or both.</p>
19.	Section 16 (1)	<p>(1) A person who abandons a wife or husband, children or other dependant without any means of sustenance commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 years or to a fine not exceeding N500,000.00 or both.</p>
20.	Section 18 (1)	<p>(1) Any person who intimidates another commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 1 year or to a fine not exceeding N200,000.00 or both.</p>
21.	Section 20 (1)	<p>(1) Any person who carries out a harmful traditional practice on another commits an offence is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 4 years or to a fine not exceeding N500,000.00 or both.</p>

22.	Section 22 (1)	(1) A person commits an offence if he intentionally administers a substance to, or causes a substance to be administered to or taken by, another person with the intention of stupefying or overpowering that person so as to enable any person to engage in a sexual activity with that person
23.	Section 38 (1)	(1) In addition to the rights guaranteed under chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, or any other international human rights instrument to which Nigeria is a party, every victim of violence, as defined in section 1 of this Act, is entitled to the following rights- (a) To receive the necessary materials, comprehensive medical psychological, social and legal assistance through governmental agencies or non-governmental agencies providing such assistance, (b) To be informed of the availability of legal, health and social services and other relevant assistance and be readily afforded access to them; (c) To rehabilitation and reintegration program of the State to enable victims to acquire, where applicable and necessary, pre-requisite skills an any vocation of the victim's choice and also in necessary formal education or access to micro credit facilities.
24.	Section 27 (1)	Only the High court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja empowered by an act of Parliament shall have the jurisdiction to hear and grant any application brought under this Act
f. Criminal Code Act 2015		
25.	Section 302	It is the duty of every person who as master or mistress has contracted to provide necessary food, clothing, or lodging, for any servant or apprentice under the age of sixteen years, to provide the same; and he or she is held to have caused any consequences which result to the life or health of the servant or apprentice by reason of any omission to perform that duty.

26.	Section 340	Any person who, being charged as a master or mistress with the duty of providing necessary food, clothing, or lodging, for a servant or apprentice under the age of sixteen years, unlawfully fails to perform that duty, or in any other manner does any harm or causes any harm to be done to such servant or apprentice, whereby, in either case, the life of such servant or apprentice is or is likely to be endangered, or his health is likely to be permanently injured, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for three years
27.	Section 341	Any person who unlawfully abandons or exposes a child under the age of seven years, in such a manner that any grievous harm is likely to be caused to it, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for five years.
g. Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act,2004		
28.	Section 2 (1-2)	(1)Every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age. (2) Every parent shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes his— (a) primary school education; and (b)junior secondary school education, by endeavouring to send the child to primary and junior secondary schools.
29.	Section 4 (1-2)	(1) Every parent shall ensure that his child receives full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude by regular attendance at school. (2) The provisions of sections 2 (2) and 4 (1) of this Act shall not apply to any parent who, for the time being, is resident outside Nigeria

b. Effectiveness of Legal Frameworks

The study identified several laws that underpin child domestic work in Southeast Nigeria. These include the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Child Rights Act, the Labour Act, the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, the Criminal Code Act, and the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act. These laws contain provisions aimed at protecting children from exploitation and abuse in the context of domestic work. The frameworks and key provisions are summarized in the table below:

The study evaluated the effectiveness of legal frameworks addressing child domestic work (CDW) and identified several factors impeding their implementation and enforcement. These factors are as follows:

1.Inconsistencies in Legal Frameworks: The lack of uniformity and consistency in defining who qualifies as a child and what forms of labour are acceptable complicates the effectiveness and enforcement of CDW laws.

2.Lack of Awareness of Child Labour Laws: There is a significant lack of awareness and understanding of child labour laws among the general public, including magistrates who preside over family courts. This lack of knowledge results in non-compliance and a lack of accountability in preventing children from engaging in hazardous or exploitative domestic work.

3.Hidden Nature of CDW: Significant challenges exist in enforcing laws against exploitative child domestic work (CDW) due to the hidden nature of the work environment.

4.Coordination and Collaboration Issues: There is a lack of adequate coordination and collaboration among agencies responsible for enforcing CDW laws, further complicating enforcement efforts.

5.Inadequate Funding: The challenge of inadequate funding for agencies responsible for addressing child domestic work (CDW) is a major deterrent to the effective enforcement of laws against exploitative practices.

6.Cultural Acceptance of CDW: The entrenched cultural acceptance of CDW in the southeast, where children are expected to assist with household chores, hinders the enforcement of laws prohibiting CDW. The cultural context emphasizing communal living and support, as well as the prevalence of child fostering practices, adds complexity to the issue.

7.Socio-Economic Factors: Socio-economic factors, such as poverty, lack of access to quality education, and unemployment or underemployment among adults, are major drivers of CDW. Families facing economic hardships often rely on children to contribute to household income through domestic work. Limited job opportunities for adults also contribute to children's engagement in domestic work.

c. Policy and Legal Recommendations

The study also highlighted key recommendations that can strengthen the effectiveness and enforcement of laws addressing child domestic work (CDW). They are as follows:

1.Strengthen Legal Frameworks: Introduce laws and policies related to child domestic work, clarify definitions of acceptable and exploitative domestic work, set a minimum engagement age, specify hazardous work, and outline penalties for abuse.

2.Adequate Funding: Allocate sufficient resources to child protection agencies for effective enforcement of CDW laws.

3.Capacity Building: Strengthen the capacity of individuals (magistrates, law enforcement officers, social workers, and other stakeholders) and institutions involved in safeguarding child rights to ensure the effective enforcement of laws and policies aimed at combating exploitative child domestic work (CDW).

4.Licensing and Monitoring: Implement licensing and monitoring procedures for placing children in households as domestic workers. This measure will prevent child trafficking for domestic work and ensure safe placements for domestic workers.

5.Child Protection Mechanisms: Establish and reinforce mechanisms like child helplines and safe houses to provide CDWs with avenues to report abuse and seek assistance.

6.Support Services for Victims: Provide counselling, legal assistance, education, and vocational training to victims of exploitative CDW to aid in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society

7.Awareness Campaigns: Educate the public, including children and law enforcement, about the legal frameworks that protect children from exploitation and abuse.

8.Change Societal Attitudes: Dislodge harmful attitudes and norms through education and cultural reorientation programs, promoting a shift in societal behaviors and respect for children's rights.



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INTRODUCTION



1.1 Introduction

Child domestic work (CDW) is a global issue where children from disadvantaged backgrounds are engaged by households, often where they are not closely related, to perform domestic tasks in exchange for social protection. These tasks include cleaning, cooking, childcare, and running errands. CDW is considered a hidden form of child labour (Musizvingoza et al., 2022). According to the International Labour Organization (2012), child labour is the exploitation of children through any form of work that interferes with their ability to attend school regularly, or is mentally, physically, socially, and morally harmful. Exploitative CDW occurs when these tasks not only expose children to physical or psychological harm but also violate their rights by forcing them to work in hazardous conditions, denying them access to education, or subjecting them to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. The conditions of CDW can be severe, lacking the stimulation necessary for proper physical and mental development, leading to lives of deprivation for many child domestic workers.

In Southeast Nigeria, CDW is not just a matter of children helping with household chores; it represents a complex interplay of societal norms, economic pressures, and cultural traditions. While it is often viewed as a way to supplement family income, the practice of CDW also presents significant challenges and risks for the children involved. They are frequently denied their fundamental rights, including access to education, healthcare, and a safe living environment. Moreover, they are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and hazardous working conditions.

Despite Nigeria's commitment to international labour laws and conventions, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which prohibits exploitative child labour, exploitative CDW remains prevalent in the Southeast region. This persistence is attributable to a multitude of factors, including entrenched poverty, social inequality, limited educational opportunities, and cultural norms that prioritize economic gain over children's welfare. Child labour in domestic work also violates the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182) and Minimum Age Convention (C138). Additionally, in certain instances, it may infringe upon the UN Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons (Fawcett, 2013).

Children engaged in CDW often face numerous hardships, including long working hours, physical and emotional abuse, and limited opportunities for personal development. They may also have to balance work with schooling, if they are fortunate enough to attend school, or resort to other forms of labour, such as street vending, to contribute to their family's income. These challenges not only compromise their immediate well-being but also perpetuate cycles of poverty and exploitation.

To address this issue, the South Saharan Social Development Organization (SSDO) aims to initiate an intervention to curb exploitative child domestic work (CDW). Accordingly, SSDO conducted this research to review the legal framework underpinning CDW in Southeast Nigeria, focusing on Anambra, Ebonyi, and Enugu states. This research considers the economic and cultural significance and nuances of CDW in Southeast Nigeria, with a focus on targeting exploitation and reducing harm to this vulnerable class of children.



1.2 Study Aim and Objective

The aim of this research was to review the legal framework underpinning child domestic work (CDW) in the south eastern states of Nigeria, focusing particularly on Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu states.

The objectives are as follows:

- 1.To ascertain the laws that govern CDW and Child trafficking in Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu States.
- 2.To ascertain the effectiveness of these laws in addressing exploitative CDW of children within and outside the states.
- 3.To proffer legal or policy recommendations that can strengthen the protection of CDWs originating from the states.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What laws govern CDW and Child trafficking in Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu States?

- What are the current legal frameworks governing exploitative CDW and child trafficking in these states, and how do they define and address various forms of exploitation?

2. How robust are the laws in addressing exploitative CDW of children within and outside the states?

- How effective are the laws Underpinning CDW?
- What is the effectiveness of the implementation and enforcement of these legal frameworks governing child domestic work (CDW) in states in the southeast, and what challenges have been encountered?
- Which agencies are responsible for the enforcement of child labour laws?
- What are the key challenges or gaps in the existing legal framework that hinder its effectiveness in protecting child domestic workers (CDWs), and how can these be addressed?
- Do socio-cultural practices in Southeast Nigeria contrast with the legal frameworks governing child domestic work (CDW), and how do these differences impact the protection of children?
- How do socio-economic factors impact the effectiveness of legal frameworks regarding child domestic work?

3. What legal or policy recommendations can be proffered to strengthen the protection of CDWs originating from the states?

- How can the enforcement of these laws be improved to better protect CDWs from exploitation, abuse and hazardous working conditions?
- What additional legal or policy measures do you believe could be implemented to strengthen the protection of CDWs in your state, considering the cultural and economic factors at play?
- How can education and awareness strengthen laws and policies protecting child domestic workers(CDWs)?



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a non-doctrinal/qualitative research approach to comprehensively assess the legal frameworks underpinning child domestic work (CDW) in Southeast Nigeria, with a specific focus on Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu states.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

For this research project, a structured in-depth guide was developed to guide both the key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). This methodological approach was chosen to systematically extract detailed insights from participants based on a predefined set of research inquiries. To ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of this approach, experienced research assistants were engaged to facilitate and supervise the data collection process.

Data collection occurred from May 19th to May 27th, 2024. During this period, three focus group discussions (FGDs) and seventeen key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted across the three study states. Participants included legal practitioners, social workers specializing in children and family matters, child rights advocates, government officials, and members of civil society. Both FGDs and KIIs encouraged open discussions. On average, FGDs lasted about 60 minutes, while KIIs lasted 20 minutes.

2.3 Data Analysis

For document analysis, a thematic analysis approach was used to identify key themes and patterns in the legal documents related to child domestic work (CDW) in Southeast Nigeria. The data from the informant interviews (KIIs) were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify common themes and patterns regarding CDW. Similarly, data from focus group discussions (FGDs) was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically to identify key issues and recommendations related to CDW in the region. These analytical approaches provided valuable insights into the legal frameworks underpinning CDW and helped in formulating effective policy recommendations.

2.4 Sampling Strategy

The purposive method, also known as judgment or selective sampling, was used to select participants for qualitative data collection through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). It involved the researcher using his expertise to select a sample that best suits the research objectives. This method is often employed in qualitative research to gain in-depth knowledge about a specific phenomenon, especially when the population is specific. A small sample was selected from each of the five categories of stakeholders identified, they were drawn across the three study states. Participants were selected based on their direct experience or expertise in child domestic work (CDW) in Southeast Nigeria. This approach aimed to gather rich insights into the legal frameworks governing CDW in the region. Selection criteria included professionals in fields such as law, social work, child protection, civil society and government officials responsible for implementing and enforcing laws related to child welfare.

2.5 Sample Size

A total of thirty-three respondents participated in this study through focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). In Anambra State, six key informants were interviewed, while five individuals participated in the FGDs. These respondents were selected for their expertise and involvement in addressing child domestic work. They included legal practitioners, members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), government officials, social workers, and child rights advocates. In Ebonyi, four key informants were interviewed, while five participated in the FGDs. In Enugu, seven key informants were interviewed, while six persons participated in the FGDs.

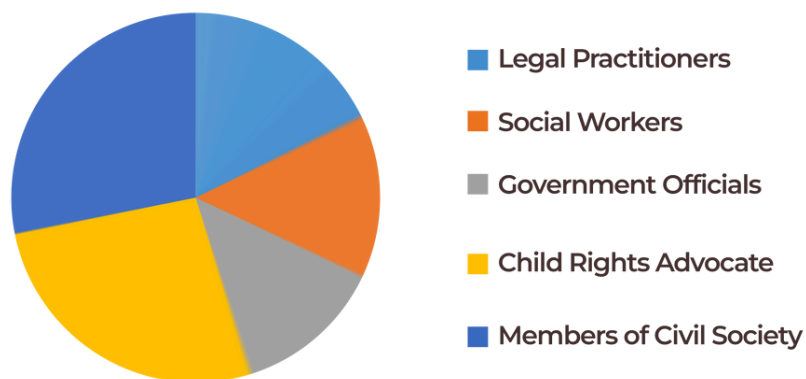
	Key Informants (KIs)	FGD Participants	TOTAL
ANAMBRA	6	5	11
EBONYI	4	5	9
ENUGU	7	6	13

Table 1: Table showing the distribution of Key Informants and FGD participants FGD across the study states

	Legal Practitioners	Social Workers	Government Officials	Child Rights Advocate	Members of Civil Society
ANAMBRA	2	2	1	4	2
EBONYI	1	1	1	3	3
ENUGU	3	1	2	3	4

Table 2: Table showing the Occupational distribution of Key Informants and FGD participants

Figure 1: Occupational distribution of Respondents



2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical principles, ensuring that all participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process to protect the identity and privacy of participants.



ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS



This section presents the study's findings, structured into three parts. The first part discusses the findings from the desk analysis of the various laws underpinning child domestic work (CDW) in the Southeast, which aligns with the first objective of this study. The second part presents findings on the effectiveness of these laws in addressing exploitative CDW of children within and outside the states, corresponding to the second objective. The third part presents findings on the legal or policy recommendations that can strengthen the protection of CDWs originating from the states, in line with the third objective of the study.

3.1 Legal and Policy Frameworks Underpinning Child Domestic Work

The findings of the desk analysis of the legal frameworks underpinning child domestic work (CDW) in Nigeria, with a particular focus on the laws applicable in states within the southeast are presented in the subsequent lines of this report.

a. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN),1999, as Amended



The legal framework underpinning child domestic work in Nigeria finds its foundation in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as Amended. As the supreme law of the land, the CFRN sets the precedent for all other laws within the country, including those concerning the rights and protections afforded to children.

Within the CFRN, specific provisions address the protection of children, particularly in relation to exploitation and neglect. Section 17(3) (f) stands out as a basis in safeguarding children and young persons from all forms of exploitation, as well as from moral and material neglect. This provision underscores the government's obligation to shield vulnerable children from any form of abuse or exploitation, including within the context of domestic work.

Furthermore, Section 18(3)(a) of the CFRN mandates the government to provide free, compulsory, and universal basic education as and when practicable. This provision not only emphasizes the importance of education in promoting the well-being and development of children but also reflects the government's commitment to ensuring that every child has access to quality education without discrimination.

In the context of child domestic work, these constitutional provisions are fundamental for establishing legal frameworks that protect the rights and welfare of child domestic workers. By upholding principles such as non-exploitation and ensuring access to education, the CFRN sets the foundation for legislative and policy measures that prioritize the safety, dignity, and development of children engaged in domestic work.

b. Child's Right Act(CRA), 2003



The Child Rights Act of 2003 ensures the protection of children's rights in Nigeria. This Act serves as the legal foundation governing all matters relating to children in the country, aligning with major international conventions like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Charter. Central to this Act is the emphasis on prioritizing the best interests of the child in all actions concerning them, laying down foundational principles aimed at promoting and safeguarding children's rights.

As per the provisions of the Act, discrimination against children based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, or religion is strictly prohibited (Section 10). Moreover, children are guaranteed dignity and protection from various forms of abuse, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as slavery or servitude, irrespective of whether they are under the care of a parent, legal guardian, school authority, or any other individual or entity (Section 11 a-d).

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Section 28 of the Child Rights Act prohibits exploitative labour for children, providing a safeguard for them, including child domestic workers, to be protected from exploitation or forced labour. It states that no child shall be subjected to forced or exploitative labour. Children are only allowed to work in certain circumstances, such as light work within their family, and are not permitted to work in capacities or environments that could harm their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. Also, children are not allowed to work in industrial undertakings, except in supervised settings like technical schools or approved institutions.

Additionally, section 29 of the Act extends protections outlined in the Labour Act to young persons, ensuring that children engaged in domestic work are afforded appropriate safeguards under labour laws.

Furthermore, section 30 (2 a, b, and d) explicitly prohibits the exploitation of children for purposes such as begging, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour, or any other unlawful activity. This includes preventing practices akin to slavery, such as trafficking or forced labour, which deprive children of their right to education as stipulated in the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act.

Initially, the reach of the Child Rights Act (CRA) was limited by its enactment, which confined its jurisdiction to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This limitation arose because matters of child rights are not on any of the legislative lists of the Constitution (Arowolo,2018). Furthermore, as a domestication of international treaties, the Child Rights Act cannot be imposed on states by virtue of section 12(3) of the Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, which requires that the bill for such laws must have been ratified by all the states of the Federation before becoming law (Bashir, 2023). Consequently, individual states were required to domesticate or adopt the Act into their own legal frameworks to ensure its applicability within their jurisdictions.

Anambra State was among the pioneering states to domesticate the Child Rights Act in 2004. Likewise, Ebonyi State adopted the law as the Ebonyi State Child Rights and Related Matters Law, 2010. Enugu State followed suit by ratifying the Child's Rights Act in 2016, through the passage of the Child's Rights and Responsibility Law (CRRL) by the Enugu State House of Assembly. These domesticated laws in Anambra, Ebonyi, and Enugu States closely mirror the national act, ensuring a degree of uniformity in child rights protection across these states. Consequently, these laws can be effectively enforced within their respective jurisdictions.

c. Labour Act, 2004

The Labour Act has different provisions that directly and indirectly relate to child domestic work(CDW). The Act defines a child as a young person under the age of 12 and categorizes individuals between the ages of 12 and less than 18 as young persons (section 91)



Section 49 of the Act addresses contracts of apprenticeship, which can have implications for CDW. It mandates parental or guardian consent for apprenticeships involving young individuals aged 12 to 16.

This provision ensures that minors are not subjected to harmful working conditions without appropriate oversight. Authorized labour officers are empowered to oversee apprenticeship processes and appoint suitable guardians for orphans or children without known guardians, thereby safeguarding vulnerable children at risk of exploitation or neglect in domestic work settings. While not directly addressing CDW, these provisions indirectly protect child domestic workers by ensuring proper supervision and guardianship arrangements.

Section 59 of the Labour Act outlines additional protections for child workers. Section 59(1a-b) of the Act prohibits the employment or work of children, except when they are engaged in light agricultural, horticultural, or domestic work approved by the Minister and provided by a family member. It also stipulates that children should not be required to lift, carry, or move anything that could potentially harm their physical development. Furthermore, children under 14 years, except those in domestic service, may be employed on a daily wage basis as long as they return to their parent's or guardian's house each night. Any child below the age of 16 employed must be able to return to their place of residence daily, except with the approval of a labour officer or through a written contract (Section 59: 3-4).

The Labour Act also specifies that children under 15 should not be employed to work underground, operate machinery, or work on public holidays. Their employment should not endanger their health, be hazardous, or be morally questionable. Employers are required to cease employing a person under 16 if they receive oral or written notice from the parents or guardian stating that such employment is not permitted. Additionally, a child in employment should not work for more than 4 hours at a time or more than 8 hours in a day, as stated in Section 59 (5, 6 & 8).

These provisions of the Labour Act are robust measures that should ideally discourage the exploitation and abuse of child domestic workers.



d. Trafficking In Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administrative Act 2015 in Nigeria is a Legal framework designed to combat all forms of trafficking.

The Act contains several key provisions that directly impact child domestic work, aiming to protect minors from exploitation and abuse.

One of the key sections of the Act is Section 13, which criminalizes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, receipt, or harboring of a person for exploitation. This provision underscores that trafficking constitutes a serious offense, irrespective of the victim's consent.

Offenders face fines and imprisonment of up to 2 years, highlighting the gravity of exploiting minors for domestic work.

Section 14 addresses forced prostitution or sexual exploitation, with penalties including 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of a million naira. Although this section does not explicitly mention domestic work, it indirectly relates to situations where children trafficked for such purposes may be subjected to sexual exploitation.

Similarly, Section 15 covers the movement of a child for illicit intercourse or prostitution, which can include domestic workers subjected to sexual exploitation. The penalty includes 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of five hundred thousand naira, further emphasizing the protection of children from such exploitative practices.

Section 16 is particularly relevant as it directly addresses the recruitment of children for prostitution or sexual exploitation, punishable by at least 7 years' imprisonment and a fine of a million naira. This provision aims to deter individuals from exploiting children, including those engaged in domestic work, for sexual purposes.

Section 23 prohibits the employment of children less than 12 years as domestic workers, with offenders facing imprisonment for 6 months to 7 years upon conviction. It also prohibits employing children in work that is exploitative, injurious, or hazardous to their physical, social, and psychological development, with offenders facing imprisonment for 2 to 7 years without the option of a fine. This section highlights the vulnerability of young children in domestic work and seeks to protect them from harm.

e. Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, 2015



The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act of 2015 in Nigeria contains key legal provisions that form part of the framework underpinning child domestic work (CDW). This law addresses various forms of violence, including those that can occur in the context of CDW, such as deprivation of liberty, isolation from family and friends, emotional abuse, failure to provide for children, intimidation, harmful traditional practices, and sexual abuse.

One of the key provisions, in Section 10, focuses on the deprivation of liberty, which is relevant in cases where children are forced to work against their will in domestic settings. This section imposes penalties, including imprisonment or fines, for those who deprive others of their liberty. Section 13 of the VAPP Act addresses the act of forcibly isolating or separating an individual from their family and friends. This can be relevant in situations where children are taken from their homes to engage in domestic work.

Section 14 of the VAPP Act addresses emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse, which are forms of abuse that child domestic workers may experience. The section imposes penalties, such as imprisonment or fines, to discourage such behaviour.

Section 16 addresses the failure of parents to provide for their children, which could lead to children being engaged in domestic work due to economic hardship. This provision imposes penalties for such failures, including imprisonment or fines, to ensure that parents fulfill their responsibilities towards their children.

Intimidation, covered in Section 18, could be relevant in cases where children are forced to work through threats or coercion. This section imposes penalties for intimidation, including imprisonment or fines, to protect individuals from such actions.

Harmful traditional practices on children, discussed in Section 20, could include practices related to child domestic work. This section imposes penalties for such practices, including imprisonment or fines, to prevent harm to children.

Section 22 of the VAPP Act targets the act of administering substances to incapacitate a child for sexual abuse, a situation that child domestic workers may unfortunately face. This section imposes strict penalties, including life imprisonment, to discourage perpetrators and safeguard children.

Section 38 guarantees certain rights for victims of violence, including child domestic workers, such as access to rehabilitation and various forms of assistance like material, medical, social, and legal support. This provision is designed to aid victims in their recovery from the emotional and physical effects of violence.

Lastly, Section 27 of the VAPP Act restricts its jurisdiction to the Federal Capital Territory High Court, necessitating the need for states to domesticate the law. In 2017, Anambra State became one of the few Nigerian states to domesticate the law. In 2018, Ebonyi State followed suit, and in April 2019, Enugu State passed the Act into law.

f. Criminal Code Act, 2015

Within the legal framework surrounding child domestic work, the Criminal Code holds substantial importance, defining both obligations and penalties for those with responsibility over minors. For instance, Section 302 of the Criminal Code underscores the duty of masters and mistresses to provide necessary provisions such as food, clothing, and lodging for servants or apprentices under the age of sixteen. Failure to fulfill this obligation renders the master or mistress liable for any resultant harm to the life or health of the servant or apprentice.

Additionally, Section 340 of the Criminal Code addresses the endangerment of life or health of apprentices or servants, holding accountable any individual entrusted with the care of a servant or apprentice under the age of sixteen who fails to provide necessary provisions or causes harm to such individuals. This section emphasizes the severity of endangering the life or health of young servants or apprentices, prescribing felony charges and a possible term of imprisonment for three years.

Furthermore, Section 341 of the Criminal Code prohibits the abandoning or exposing of children under the age of seven in a manner likely to cause grievous harm. This provision reflects the legal stance against the abandonment or exposure of vulnerable young children, recognizing such acts as felonious and subject to imprisonment for five years.



g. Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004



The Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 in Nigeria is a legal framework that intersects with the issue of child domestic work (CDW), emphasizing the right of every child to compulsory, free, and universal basic education. This Act is a fundamental tool in combating CDW, as education is key to protecting children from exploitation and providing them with opportunities for a better future.

One of the key provisions of the Act is the requirement for every parent to ensure that their child attends and completes primary and junior secondary school education (Section 2). This provision directly impacts CDWs, as it underscores the importance of education in the development of children and highlights the responsibility of parents to prioritize their children's education over engaging them in domestic work.

The Act also places a duty on stakeholders in education, including local government officials, to ensure that parents fulfill their obligation to send their children to school (Section 3). This collaborative approach is important in addressing the root causes of CDW, such as poverty and lack of access to education, by creating a supportive environment for education and raising awareness about the importance of schooling.

Furthermore, the Act recognizes that education should be suitable to the child's age, ability, and aptitude, highlighting the need for inclusive education that accommodates the diverse needs of children, including those engaged in domestic work (Section 4). By ensuring that every child receives full-time education, the Act seeks to empower children and break the cycle of poverty that often leads to CDW.

By making education free, compulsory, and accessible to all children, the Act provides a pathway for children to escape exploitative labour and realize their full potential.

h. The National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour and Its Worst Form (2021-2025)



National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour and Its Worst Forms (2021-2025) provides the roadmap for the implementation of the national policy on Child Labour in Nigeria.

One of the primary goals of the action plan is to step up monitoring of the measures taken by Nigerian states to enforce existing legal frameworks for eliminating child labour. This includes conducting annual performance ratings of states and actors by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment. By closely monitoring state actions, the plan aims to ensure that efforts to combat child labour are effective and impactful.

The action plan also emphasizes the importance of evaluating the capacities of law enforcement agencies responsible for enforcing child labour regulations. This includes developing minimum national standards, guidelines, training protocols, and other arrangements to facilitate information gathering, sharing, and coordination on child protection within Nigeria, as well as with ECOWAS and other neighbouring countries. By strengthening the capacities of these agencies, the plan seeks to improve their ability to enforce child labour laws effectively.

The action plan calls for the development and adoption of guidelines and protocols for child labour inspection, prosecution, and enforcement. This includes enhancing the capacity of relevant labour inspectors, the Nigeria Police, National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Customs/Immigration, and judicial officers. By improving the coordination and cooperation among these agencies, the plan aims to enhance the enforcement of child labour laws.

Furthermore, the action plan highlights the importance of cooperation, coordination, and information sharing among members of the National Steering Committee on Child Labour (NSCCL), State Steering Committee on Child Labour (SSCCL), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and other relevant bodies. By fostering collaboration among these stakeholders, the plan seeks to enhance the overall effectiveness of efforts to eliminate child labour.

i. The National Policy on Child Labour (Phase II), 2022



The National Policy on Child Labour in Nigeria, established in 2013 and revised in 2022, reflects the government's commitment to combating child labour by providing a legal framework and creating an enabling environment for its eradication, particularly its worst forms.

Despite notable progress, evaluations of the 2013 policy and the 2013-2017 Action Plan have shown that child labour remains a prevalent issue in Nigeria, posing a threat to the future of Nigerian children and the nation's overall development. The policy recognizes that Child labour deprives victims of education, perpetuates poverty, and hinders their physical, social, mental, and moral development, making them susceptible to exploitation and involvement in deviant behaviors.

The National Policy on Child Labour has several specific objectives, including providing guidelines for ratifying and implementing relevant international conventions and protocols, raising awareness about the effects and consequences of child labour, implementing direct action projects to combat child labour, mobilizing resources for sustainable action programs, establishing a framework for coordination and networking among stakeholders, monitoring and evaluating policies and programs on child labour, promoting child and youth participation in the elimination of child labour, and developing a national research agenda for a database on child labour. These objectives aim to strengthen efforts in combating child labour and ensuring the protection and well-being of Nigerian children.

j. International Instruments

The legal framework in Nigeria for protecting children from labour and exploitation draws heavily on international conventions and treaties that the country has ratified. These instruments offer standards, policy direction, and accountability measures for addressing child domestic work (CDW). They also promote international cooperation, increase awareness, and mobilize support to protect children from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

They include:

- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

This is an international instrument aimed at safeguarding children's rights. It defines child labour as any work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and that interferes with their education, or is harmful to their health or development.



The convention has been ratified by nearly every country, including Nigeria. The convention covers various aspects of a child's rights, including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Article 32(1) of the convention recognizes the right of children to be protected from economic exploitation and from work that is likely to be hazardous or harmful to their health, education, or development.

- **The Minimum Age Convention No. 138 of 1973**

This convention addresses the age at which children can start working. It specifies that the minimum age for employment should not be below the age when compulsory schooling ends and, in any case, should not be under 15 years of age. It also establishes a minimum age of 14 years for developing countries.

- **Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour No. 182 of 1989**

The Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182) is a key international treaty aimed at eradicating the most severe forms of child labour. It defines worst forms of child labour to include slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, forced labour, and hazardous work. Countries that ratify this convention are obligated to take immediate and effective measures to eliminate these exploitative practices. The convention sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 years and urges states to urgently prohibit and eliminate these forms of child labour. This convention provides a framework and motivation for action in ending all forms of exploitation of children, including those disguised as domestic work.

- **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)**

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) prohibits economic exploitation and hazardous labour that could harm a child's physical or mental development. While Article 15 of the ACRWC, which addresses child labour, does not explicitly define the term, it emphasizes protecting children from economic exploitation and hazardous work that could hinder their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. The article emphasizes the need for states parties to implement legislative and administrative measures to ensure these protections are fully realized, covering both formal and informal sectors of employment. It highlights the importance of setting minimum ages for employment, regulating working hours and conditions, enforcing penalties for violations, and raising awareness about the dangers of child labour.

	RELEVANT SESSION	PROVISION
a. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN), 1999, as Amended		
1.	Section 17 (3)(f)	(3) (f) children, young persons and the age are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect;
2.	Section 18 (3)(a)	(3) (a) Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide-(a) free, compulsory and universal primary education;
b. Child's Right Act (CRA), 2003		
3.	Section 10 (1)	(1) A child shall not be subjected to any form of discrimination merely by reason of his belonging to a particular community or ethnic group or by reason of his place of origin, sex, religion or political
4.	Section 11 (a-d)	(11) Every child is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person and accordingly, no child shall be- (a) subjected to physical, mental or emotional injury, abuse, neglect or maltreatment, including sexual abuse; (b) subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; (c) subjected to attacks upon his honor or reputation; or (d) held in slavery or servitude, while in the care of a parent, legal guardian or school authority or any other person or authority having the care of the child.

5.	Section 28 (1)(a-d),(2)	<p>(1) Subject to this Act, no child shall be-</p> <p>(a) subjected to any forced or exploitative labour; or</p> <p>(b) employed to work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character; or</p> <p>(c) required, in any case, to lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be likely to adversely affect his physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development; or</p> <p>(d) employed as a domestic help outside his own home or family environment.</p> <p>(2) No child shall be employed or work in an industrial undertaking and nothing in this subsection shall apply to work done by children in technical schools or similar approved institutions if the work is supervised by the appropriate authority.</p>
6.	Section 29	The provisions relating to young persons in sections 58, 59, 60, 61, 62 and 63 of the Labour Act shall apply to children under this Act.
7.	Section 30 (2) (a,b and d)	<p>(2) A child shall not be used-</p> <p>(a) for the purpose of begging for alms, guiding beggars, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour or for any unlawful or immoral purpose; or</p> <p>(b) as a slave or for practices similar to slavery such as sale or trafficking of the child, debt bondage or serfdom and forced or compulsory labour;</p> <p>(d) for any purpose that deprives the child of the opportunity to attend and remain in school as provided for under the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act;</p>
c. Labour Act, 2004		
8.	Section 91 (1)	<p>(1) ..."child" means a young person under the age of twelve years;</p> <p>"young person" means a person under the age of eighteen years.</p>
9.	Section 49 (1-2)	<p>(1) The parent or, in the case of an orphan, the guardian of a young person above the age of twelve years and under the age of sixteen years may, with the consent of that person testified by his execution of a written contract of apprenticeship, apprentice that person to an employer to train him or have him trained systematically for a trade or employment in which art or skill is required, or as a domestic servant, for any term not exceeding five years.</p>

		(2) Where a young person above the age of twelve years and under the age of sixteen years is without known parents or a guardian, an authorized labour officer may authorise the apprenticeship of that person and appoint some fit and proper person to execute the written contract of apprenticeship and act generally as guardian of that young person.
10.	Section 59 (1)(a) and b)	(1) No child shall- (a) be employed or work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character approved by the Minister; or (b) be required in any case to lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be likely to injure his physical development.
11.	Section 59 (3,4,5,6 & 8)	(2) A child shall not be used- (a) for the purpose of begging for alms, guiding beggars, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour or for any unlawful or immoral purpose; or (b) as a slave or for practices similar to slavery such as sale or trafficking of the child, debt bondage or serfdom and forced or compulsory labour; (d) for any purpose that deprives the child of the opportunity to attend and remain in school as provided for under the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act;
11.	Section 59 (3,4,5,6 & 8)	(3) A young person under the age of fourteen years may be employed only- (a) on a daily wage; (b) on a day-to-day basis; and (c) so long as he returns each night to the place of residence of his parents or guardian or a person approved by his parents or guardian: Provided that, save as may be otherwise provided by any regulations made under section 65 of this Act, this subsection shall not apply to a young person employed in domestic service. (4) No young person under the age of sixteen years shall be employed in circumstances in which it is not reasonably possible for him to return each day to the place of residence of his parent or guardian except- (a) with the approval of an authorized labour officer; and

(b) on a written contract (which, notwithstanding any law to the contrary, shall not be voidable on the ground of incapacity to contract due to infancy) conforming with Part I of this Act: Provided that, save as may be otherwise provided by any regulations made under section 65 of this Act, this subsection shall not apply to a young person employed in domestic service

(5) No young person under the age of sixteen years shall be employed-

(a) to work underground; or

(b) on machine work; or

(c) on a public holiday.

(6) No young person shall be employed in any employment which is injurious to his health, dangerous or immoral; and, where an employer is notified in writing by the Minister (either generally or in any particular case) that the kind of work upon which a young person is employed is injurious to the young person's health, dangerous, immoral or otherwise unsuitable, the employer shall discontinue the employment without prejudice to the right of the young person to be paid such wages as he may have earned up to the date of discontinuance.

(8) No young person under the age of sixteen years shall be required to work for a longer period than four consecutive hours or permitted to work for more than eight working hours in one day:

d. Trafficking In Persons(Prohibition) Law Enforcement And Administration Act

12.	Section 13 (6)	(6) The act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, or harbouring a person who is under 18 years for the purpose of exploitation shows that trafficking has taken place and attracts a fine and 2 years' imprisonment.
13.	Section 15	Anyone who moves a child from place to place for illicit intercourse or detains or keeps a person for prostitution or other sexual exploitation with people or with animals shall go to prison for 5 years and pay a fine of N500,000
14.	Section 16 (1)	(1) Anyone who recruits children (persons under 18 years) for prostitution or sexual exploitation anywhere will go to prison for not less than 7 years and pay a fine of N1,000,000.

15.	Section 23 (1)	<p>(1) Any person who-</p> <p>(a) Employs, requires, transports, harbours, receives or hires out a child under 12 years as a domestic worker commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for minimum term of 6 months and not exceeding 7 years.</p> <p>(b) Employs, requires, transports, harbours, receives or hires out a child to do any work that is exploitative, injurious or hazardous to the physical, social and psychological development of the child, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a minimum term of 2 years but not exceeding 7 years without an option of fine.</p>
e. Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, 2015		
16.	Section 10 (1)	<p>(1) A person who deprives another of his liberty, except pursuant to a court order commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 2 years or to a fine not exceeding N500,000.00 or both.</p>
17.	Section 13 (1)	<p>(1) Anyone who forcefully isolates or separates another from family and friends commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 months or to a fine not exceeding N100,000.00 or both</p>
18.	Section 14 (1)	<p>(1) A person who causes emotional, verbal and psychological abuse on another commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 1 year or to a fine not exceeding N200,000.00 or both.</p>
19.	Section 16 (1)	<p>(1) A person who abandons a wife or husband, children or other dependant without any means of sustenance commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 years or to a fine not exceeding N500,000.00 or both.</p>
20.	Section 18 (1)	<p>(1) Any person who intimidates another commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 1 year or to a fine not exceeding N200,000.00 or both.</p>
21.	Section 20 (1)	<p>(1) Any person who carries out a harmful traditional practice on another commits an offence is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 4 years or to a fine not exceeding N500,000.00 or both.</p>

22.	Section 22 (1)	(1) A person commits an offence if he intentionally administers a substance to, or causes a substance to be administered to or taken by, another person with the intention of stupefying or overpowering that person so as to enable any person to engage in a sexual activity with that person
23.	Section 38 (1)	(1) In addition to the rights guaranteed under chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, or any other international human rights instrument to which Nigeria is a party, every victim of violence, as defined in section 1 of this Act, is entitled to the following rights- (a) To receive the necessary materials, comprehensive medical psychological, social and legal assistance through governmental agencies or non-governmental agencies providing such assistance, (b) To be informed of the availability of legal, health and social services and other relevant assistance and be readily afforded access to them; (c) To rehabilitation and reintegration program of the State to enable victims to acquire, where applicable and necessary, pre-requisite skills an any vocation of the victim's choice and also in necessary formal education or access to micro credit facilities.
24.	Section 27 (1)	Only the High court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja empowered by an act of Parliament shall have the jurisdiction to hear and grant any application brought under this Act
f. Criminal Code Act 2015		
25.	Section 302	It is the duty of every person who as master or mistress has contracted to provide necessary food, clothing, or lodging, for any servant or apprentice under the age of sixteen years, to provide the same; and he or she is held to have caused any consequences which result to the life or health of the servant or apprentice by reason of any omission to perform that duty.

26.	Section 340	Any person who, being charged as a master or mistress with the duty of providing necessary food, clothing, or lodging, for a servant or apprentice under the age of sixteen years, unlawfully fails to perform that duty, or in any other manner does any harm or causes any harm to be done to such servant or apprentice, whereby, in either case, the life of such servant or apprentice is or is likely to be endangered, or his health is likely to be permanently injured, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for three years
27.	Section 341	Any person who unlawfully abandons or exposes a child under the age of seven years, in such a manner that any grievous harm is likely to be caused to it, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for five years.
g. Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act,2004		
28.	Section 2 (1-2)	(1)Every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age. (2) Every parent shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes his— (a) primary school education; and (b)junior secondary school education, by endeavouring to send the child to primary and junior secondary schools.
29.	Section 4 (1-2)	(1) Every parent shall ensure that his child receives full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude by regular attendance at school. (2) The provisions of sections 2 (2) and 4 (1) of this Act shall not apply to any parent who, for the time being, is resident outside Nigeria

Table 3: Table showing the various laws/Acts underpinning CDW in Nigeria and the relevant sections

3.2 Accessing the robustness of the laws addressing exploitative CDW of children

- **The effectiveness of the legal frameworks underpinning CDW**

This study found that Nigeria's legal framework for protecting child domestic workers (CDWs), encompassing laws such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Child Rights Act, the Labour Act, the Trafficking In Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, the Criminal Code Act, and the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, has the potential to safeguard the rights and welfare of children engaged in domestic work.

These laws comprehensively address various aspects of CDW, including protection from exploitation, access to education, and provisions for basic needs. They are in alignment with international standards, demonstrating Nigeria's commitment to upholding global norms for child rights and protection. Notably, these laws explicitly prohibit exploitative practices such as forced labour, trafficking, and sexual exploitation, providing a robust legal foundation for prosecuting offenders and safeguarding CDWs. Furthermore, the legal framework underscores the right to education for all children, including CDWs, mandating free and compulsory education, which is vital for empowering CDWs and breaking the cycle of exploitation.

Despite the strengths of this legal framework, this study observed that it has not been fully leveraged to protect CDWs in Nigeria.

“If we could harness even half of the potential provided by this array of legal frameworks, we could effectively eradicate the abuse and exploitation of children in our country.” -Legal Practitioner, Anambra state.

- **Implementation and Enforcement of exploitative Child Domestic Work (CDW) Laws in the Southeast**

Insights from the key informant interviews (KIIs) and the focus group discussions (FGDs) suggest that the implementation and enforcement of legal frameworks governing child domestic work (CDW) in the southeast region of Nigeria have been ineffective, despite the presence of laws such as the Child Rights Act aimed at protecting children from exploitative labour practices, including abuse, neglect, and maltreatment. This finding corresponds with Zhang's (2020) African Report on Child Wellbeing 2020, which highlights that numerous child protection laws and policies in Nigeria exist; however, child labour, female circumcision, early marriage, sexual violence, unregistered births, out-of-school children, under-age criminal charges, and physical punishment of children still persist due to poor implementation. The FGD and KIIs implicated several factors that contribute to the ineffective enforcement of CDW laws in Nigeria, including a lack of awareness of these laws, cultural acceptance of CDW, corruption, socio-economic factors, and poor coordination among agencies responsible for enforcement.

"Our problem in this country is not the absence of laws but the commitment to enforcing these laws, regardless of who is involved." - Member, Civil Society, Anambra State.

The lack of awareness and understanding of child labour laws among both employers and the general public presents a significant challenge, resulting in a lack of compliance and accountability in preventing children from engaging in hazardous or exploitative domestic work. Akinwumi (2009) underscores this issue, attributing the failure to effectively implement the Child's Rights Act and curb violations of child rights to Nigeria's inadequate education of its citizens on human and child rights. He emphasizes that Nigeria's ratification of the United Nations Child's Rights Convention obligates it to promote child rights education at all levels of the school curriculum, a commitment that has not been fully realized. Akinwumi (2009) argues that children should be aware of their rights to demand them when neglected or violated, and parents must understand these rights to respect them properly.

."Even within legal circles, there is a significant lack of awareness regarding the laws protecting children from exploitative labour, including among magistrates who preside over family courts. Additionally, when individuals encounter issues related to the abuse or exploitation of children, many are unsure where to seek redress." -Legal Practitioner, Enugu state.

The entrenched cultural acceptance of child domestic work (CDW) in southeastern Nigeria, particularly in rural areas where children are expected to assist with household chores, poses a significant obstacle to enforcing laws that prohibit CDW. Haspels and Suriyasarn (2003) note that domestic work is often viewed as easy and safe for children, particularly girls, in some areas, hindering its recognition as child labour. These cultural norms and societal attitudes undermine the effectiveness of laws aimed at protecting children from exploitation, perpetuating a cycle of exploitation that is difficult to break.

The study identified inadequate funding as a significant challenge undermining the operations of agencies responsible for addressing child domestic work (CDW). This lack of resources hinders the effective enforcement of laws against exploitative practices. Insufficient funding means that agencies may struggle to investigate cases of exploitation and abuse against CDWs, conduct inspections of households where CDWs are employed, and prosecute cases of abuse. This lack of oversight creates a loophole for exploitative practices to thrive.

Moreover, inadequate funding can also impact the quality of services provided to CDWs who have experienced abuse or exploitation. These services may include counseling, legal assistance, and access to education or vocational training. Without adequate funding, agencies may struggle to provide these essential services, leaving CDWs without the support they need to recover from their experiences.

"Most of the work we do requires a lot of money, such as investigations and providing legal services. In my opinion, we are trying our best to protect children with the limited funds available to us, but I know there's still a lot of work to do. I believe that with more funding, we can be more effective and responsive."- Government Official, Ebonyi State.

Another significant finding from this study is the lack of coordination and collaboration among agencies responsible for enforcing laws against exploitative child domestic work (CDW) in southeast Nigeria. This lack of collaboration hinders efforts within enforcement agencies responsible for stopping exploitative child labour. Pais and Bissell (2006), in their study titled "Overview and Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child," emphasized the importance of developing effective coordinating mechanisms to facilitate a concerted effort among relevant government bodies. They also highlighted the necessity for greater coordination across ministries and between levels of government to ensure that the Child Rights Act is effectively understood and implemented at the grassroots level.

The lack of political will is a key factor contributing to the ineffective implementation of child domestic work (CDW) laws, as highlighted in this study. Governments often fail to prioritize CDW, choosing to allocate limited resources and attention to other more pressing issues. CDW is often not considered a priority compared to matters such as economic development or national security. This lack of prioritization leads to a situation where laws exist but are not effectively enforced.

This study also observed that enforcing laws against exploitative child domestic work (CDW) presents significant challenges, mainly due to the hidden nature of the work environment. Gamlin et al. (2015) underscored this issue, pointing out that regulations designed to protect child domestic workers are especially difficult to enforce because the workplace is usually a private residence. This aspect grants the employer complete control over the worker, creating difficulties for authorities in monitoring and intervening in cases of abuse or exploitation. Additionally, the private setting of the work environment may discourage child domestic workers from reporting abuses, thereby adding complexity to enforcement efforts.

- **Agencies Responsible for the Enforcement of Child Labour Laws**

The study highlighted several agencies involved in the enforcement of child labour laws. One such agency is the Labour Inspectorate, operating under the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE). Tasked with enforcing federal child labour laws, the Labour Inspectorate deploys inspectors nationwide, the southeast inclusive, to identify and address instances of child labour, ensuring that employers adhere to relevant regulations.

Another entity in combating child labour is the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP). With a mandate to enforce laws against human trafficking and exploitative labour, often involving children, NAPTIP collaborates closely with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and state governments. This collaboration aims to provide social services to child victims and reunite trafficked children with their families.

The Nigeria Police also play an important role in enforcing child labour laws, especially those prohibiting forced child labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Collaborating with NAPTIP on human trafficking enforcement, the police contribute significantly to efforts aimed at combating child labour and exploitation.

Additionally, the Nigeria Immigration Service collaborates with NAPTIP to enforce laws against child trafficking. Their joint efforts are instrumental in preventing the trafficking of children across borders and ensuring that traffickers face justice.

The Child Protection Unit/Department, operating under the Ministry of Women/Gender Affairs and Social Development in the various states of the southeast, is another key player in enforcing child labour laws. Responsible for safeguarding children's rights and welfare, including enforcing child labour laws and providing social services to vulnerable children, this department plays a key role in protecting children from exploitation.

- **Challenges and Gaps in the Legal Frameworks**

The continued prevalence of child domestic work (CDW) as a significant issue in Nigeria, despite the presence of numerous laws aimed at protecting children from exploitative labour, highlights significant gaps and challenges within the legal framework. While there is no specific law that explicitly addresses child domestic work (CDW) as a distinct form of abuse or exploitation, various frameworks within Nigeria's legal system implicitly address it. This includes federal and state laws and regulations that touch on aspects related to child labour and domestic work, albeit without direct and explicit mention of CDW as a specific issue. The high incidence of exploitative CDW underscores the inadequacies of these legal provisions in effectively safeguarding children.

One major challenge in addressing child domestic work (CDW) in Nigeria is the lack of uniformity and consistency in defining who qualifies as a child and what forms of labour are acceptable. For instance, the Children and Young Persons Act defines a child as less than 14 years, while the Labour Act sets the age at below 12 years. This inconsistency creates confusion regarding the minimum ages applicable for specific types of employment.

The Child Rights Act (CRA) which is regarded as the foremost law for the protection of child's right in Nigeria also faces challenges due to inconsistencies with the Labour Act. For example, the CRA defines a child as below 18 years, while the Labour Act distinguishes a child from a young person, considering a child below 12 years and a young person between 12 and 18 years. These conflicts compromise the principles of the CRA, leading to potential exploitation of young persons. This distinction allows young persons to engage in more hazardous work, contrary to the CRA's intent to protect all persons below 18 years from industrial work. Additionally, the Labour Act permits the employment of children below 14 years on a daily wage basis, contradicting the CRA's prohibition of children in domestic service.

Furthermore, the reliance of the CRA on the Labour Act for certain provisions complicates the application of minimum age requirements for different types of work. While the CRA supersedes other legislation, the incorporation of sections of the Labour Act undermines its own provisions. Inadequate penalties against perpetrators and implementation challenges also hinder the effectiveness of the CRA.

Also, the lack of specificity in defining hazardous or exploitative work for children poses another challenge. Both the Labour Act and the Child Rights Act do not clearly outline which types of work are considered hazardous to a child's well-being and development. This ambiguity provides leeway for the exploitation and abuse of child labour laws, particularly in defining hazardous work within the context of child domestic work (CDW). The International Labour Organization (ILO), in their report on the urgent elimination of hazardous child labour in 2018, acknowledges that determining what constitutes hazardous work is challenging for various stakeholders, including public authorities, employers' and workers' organizations, enterprises, cooperatives, and parents. This lack of clarity and specificity allows for the continuation of exploitative practices in child domestic work, highlighting the urgent need for clearer definitions and stricter enforcement mechanisms.

"While there are expectations for every child in a domestic setting, I believe there is a lack of clear legal provisions that distinctly define the boundary between acceptable domestic work for children and exploitative labour or child labour." - Legal Practitioner, Enugu state.

This study also discovered that the limited applicability of laws, such as the Child's Rights Act (CRA), has hindered the uniform protection of children's rights across states in Nigeria. Initially limited to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the CRA required individual states to domesticate or adopt the Act into their legal frameworks. An informant cited a particular instance where a state governor refused to domesticate the Child Rights Law due to personal reasons, contrary to the overriding public interest. This uneven adoption and implementation of the Act have impacted the protection of children engaged in child domestic work (CDW).

Key informants in this study also indicated that the root causes of child labour, including poverty, unemployment, and the high cost of living, remain largely unaddressed by the legal framework. While the laws aim to alleviate the symptoms of child labour, such as exploitation and unsafe working conditions, they often fail to tackle the underlying issues that drive children to work. As a result, child labour persists, with parents and children alike resorting to it as a means of livelihood when faced with limited alternatives.

- **Socio-Cultural Practices and Legal Frameworks**

The legal frameworks aimed at protecting children from exploitative domestic work in Southeast Nigeria are significantly influenced by socio-cultural practices, which can undermine their effectiveness. The divergence in perceptions of child labour between legal frameworks and socio-cultural practices adds complexity to the issue. Activities that are considered child labour under the law may be viewed as normal or necessary within the community, making enforcement challenging.

"In my community, the perception of a responsible and diligent child is often based on their willingness to perform duties that are beyond a child's capabilities. Children who endure rigorous domestic labour are often held up as examples for others to emulate." -Member of the civil society, Enugu state.

The cultural context in Southeast Nigeria emphasizes communal living and support, often leading to children being sent to live with relatives or acquaintances for various reasons like education and apprenticeship. This practice, known as "child fostering," is intended to provide opportunities for children and strengthen family ties. However, it can also make children vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, particularly in domestic settings. Ebigbo (2023) notes that child battering is prevalent in the Eastern States, with domestic helps being especially exposed to such abuse. The tradition of placing a child with a relative is meant to ensure proper training and good prospects, but it has unfortunately turned into the exploitation of child domestic helps, who often endure long hours and harsh treatment.

."The practice of child fostering is an age long tradition which has become deeply ingrained in our communities. While it is meant to provide better opportunities for children, it often results in these children being subjected to harsh working conditions that compromise their well- being."- Social worker, Anambra state.

Socio-cultural norms in the southeast dictate that girls are often expected to take on domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities from a young age. This perception contributes to the prevalence of child domestic work (CDW), as girls are engaged in such work outside their own homes. Also, it is expected that children should contribute to household chores from a young age. While intended to teach responsibility, this can sometimes blur the lines between acceptable tasks and exploitative labour, contravening legal frameworks.

"We see many cases where young girls are expected to manage entire households. This expectation is rooted in cultural norms, but it often leads to severe exploitation and denies these girls the chance to enjoy their childhood."- Social worker, Anambra state.

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The prevalent "IgbaBoi" apprenticeship system, wherein children are dispatched to learn a trade or skill while also serving as domestic aides in their masters' households, poses significant concerns regarding child labour and domestic work. According to Olewu (2023), the inherent vulnerability of children, compounded by their disadvantaged family backgrounds, limited education, close relationships within the apprenticeship framework, and the informal nature of initiating these arrangements, creates an ideal environment for the exploitation of children's labour and overall rights.

"The 'IgbaBoi' apprenticeship system is supposed to be about skill acquisition and future economic independence, but it has turned into another form of child exploitation. These children are often overworked, underappreciated and many do not receive the promised settlement after completing their service." -Social worker, Anambra state.

Traditional beliefs and practices, such as those related to witchcraft or spiritual possession, have a profound impact on child protection in Nigeria. In some communities, children are accused of witchcraft or possession, leading to their mistreatment or expulsion from their homes. Foua and Diriwari (2020) have shed light on the stigmatization of children as witches, resulting in severe forms of child abuse. These children endure unimaginable dehumanization as a consequence.

- **The Nexus between CDW laws and Socio-Economic Factors**

In Southeast Nigeria, the prevalence of child domestic work (CDW) is deeply intertwined with various socio-economic factors that shape the region's economic landscape. One of the primary drivers is poverty, which unlike most parts of Nigeria, remains a significant challenge in the region. Many families struggle to meet their basic needs, and children are often expected to contribute to household income through domestic work. This economic necessity drives parents to engage their children in domestic work, sometimes in exploitative conditions, as a means of survival. Omoni and Ijeh (2010) suggest that poverty is a major reason for child domestic work in Nigeria, with children from poor economic backgrounds often ending up as domestic workers for affluent families. They argue that economic hardships force some parents and guardians to sell or barter their children or abandon them, leading to their engagement in various income-generating activities for survival.

"No parent would willingly choose to send their child away, except out of sheer poverty. Many parents whose children are victims of abuse in the context of domestic work do so because they cannot provide for them. Often, these parents have many children and struggle to financially support and educate them all." – Social worker, Ebonyi state.

The lack of access to quality education is a significant factor driving children into domestic work. Parents who cannot afford to send their children to school often see domestic work as a means of survival. This situation often forces children into domestic work as an alternative to formal education, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities. Ilon and Moock (1991) suggest that the lack of access to education prompts children to seek employment in private homes, with family background and income determining children's school attendance.

"Many children endure significant hardships in the care of their employers, particularly given the strenuous nature of their tasks. I recall a specific instance where an 11-year-old girl was responsible for filling a 200-liter container daily by climbing a three-story building. When we interviewed the girl, she expressed a preference to stay in the household, fearing that she would no longer be able to attend school if she returned to her village. However, despite these challenges, we often feel powerless to intervene, as long as the children are provided with basic necessities like food and education, everyone seems content to overlook their struggles." -Social Worker, Anambra state.

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Unemployment and underemployment among adults also contribute to the prevalence of CDW. With limited job opportunities, parents may rely on their children to help with household chores or work outside the home to supplement family income. This can lead to children being engaged in work that is detrimental to their well-being and development.

This study also discovered that as the poverty crisis intensifies, families will face increasingly difficult economic circumstances. Factors such as inflation, stagnant wages, and a high cost of living will contribute to increased financial hardships for many households. In such challenging conditions, parents may find it difficult to provide for their families' basic needs, including food, shelter, and education. As a result, some parents, with no viable alternatives, may turn to sending their children to work as domestic help. This trend is particularly concerning as it perpetuates a cycle of poverty, limiting children's opportunities for education and future economic advancement.

3.3 Legal or policy recommendations that can strengthen the protection of CDWs originating from the states

- **Improving the Enforcement of Laws Underpinning CDW**

Enhancing the enforcement of the diverse laws supporting child domestic work (CDW) in Nigeria is important in preventing all forms of exploitation and abuse of children engaged in domestic work. The findings of this study highlight the urgent need to strengthen legal frameworks by enhancing existing laws and policies related to child labour, particularly by addressing gray areas of conflict regarding the definition of a child and what constitutes domestic work.

Clarity on acceptable domestic work versus exploitative domestic work is essential. This includes defining the minimum age for employment, specifying hazardous work for children and outlining commensurate penalties for people who abuse and exploit children in the context of domestic work. These legal reforms will ensure that CDW laws are comprehensive, clear, and in line with international child rights protection standards.

Adequate funding is also a critical component for the effective enforcement of laws related to CDW. Without adequate resources, laws cannot be enforced. Most agencies responsible for enforcing the rights of children struggle with inadequate funding which significantly undermines their operations. Therefore, it is essential to allocate sufficient funds to support the activities of child protection agencies in the states.

Furthermore, enhancing the capacity of individuals and institutions involved in safeguarding child rights is very important for the proper enforcement of laws and policies aimed at combating child domestic work (CDW). This should involve strengthening the capacities of government agencies responsible for child rights in the states of the Southeast, as well as providing adequate personnel and equipment for inspections and investigations.

Additionally, capacity building should extend to other stakeholders such as law enforcement agencies, social workers, members of the civil society and community leaders to better identify and respond to cases of exploitative CDW. Proper training programs can help these stakeholders better understand the nuances of CDW and ensure that child's rights are upheld, ultimately contributing to the eradication of exploitative child labour in Nigeria.

Another key strategy emphasized in this study involves establishing and managing records of children involved in domestic work, which is imperative for effective monitoring and inspection. Developing mechanisms for regular monitoring and inspection of households and workplaces where child domestic workers (CDWs) are employed is important. While this task may seem challenging, it can be achieved through collaborative efforts between government agencies, non- governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations.

Establishing support services and social coverage for victims of exploitative child domestic work(CDW) is another strategy identified by this study. When children are confident of receiving state support, they are more likely to report exploitative cases and abuses. This support includes providing counseling, legal assistance, and access to education and vocational training. These services can aid in rehabilitating and reintegrating victims of abuse and exploitation into society.

- **Additional Legal or Policy Measures**

In addition to enhancing enforcement, this study identified some legal and policy measures that can strengthen the protection of child domestic workers (CDWs) in the Southeast region. One vital measure is ensuring universal access to quality education, enforced through the Universal Basic Education Act, which guarantees basic education as a right in Nigeria. Implementing policies that mandate CDWs' attendance in school, coupled with support mechanisms like scholarships or subsidies, can safeguard them from exploitation and enhance their future opportunities.

Regulating the recruitment and placement of CDWs through licensing and monitoring placement agencies is another crucial step to prevent child trafficking for domestic work and ensure safe placements. Conducting awareness and sensitization campaigns about CDWs' rights among employers, communities, and the CDWs themselves is vital for shifting attitudes and fostering respect for their rights.

Establishing and reinforcing child protection mechanisms, such as child helplines and safe houses, is imperative to provide CDWs with avenues to report abuse and seek assistance. These mechanisms should be accessible, confidential, and tailored to the needs of CDWs. Urgent legislative and policy changes are also necessary to review and amend existing laws, including strengthening child labour laws to align with international standards and address CDWs' unique vulnerabilities.

- **Education and Awareness as Tools to Strengthen CDW Protection Laws**

The findings of this study underscore a critical gap in the awareness and education surrounding legal frameworks designed to protect children from exploitation and abuse in Nigeria. Despite the presence of these protective laws, there is a notable lack of awareness among the general population and even within law enforcement circles. This deficiency has been highlighted in previous research, which indicated that many Nigerians are unaware of the specific laws safeguarding children from domestic work (Issa and Awoyemi, 2006; Okoye, 2011). Such unawareness poses a significant challenge, as the efficacy of these laws depends on the populace being well-informed and empowered to enforce them.

To effectively prevent exploitative child domestic work, it is imperative to enhance awareness and understanding of the legal frameworks and rights of children. Citizens must be educated not only about the existence of these laws but also about the broader implications of child domestic work on the well-being and development of children. This educational effort should aim to instill a sense of responsibility and advocacy for children's rights within society.

Additionally, this study highlighted the importance of ensuring that citizens are familiar with agencies capable of intervening and safeguarding children from exploitative domestic work. It is essential for children who become victims of exploitative labour to know the correct channels through which they can seek assistance. Furthermore, other members of society should understand how to access these agencies and how to report cases of child domestic work to ensure timely and appropriate action. Al-Mahroos (2007) recommends increased awareness on the prevalence and dangers of the abuse of under-18 domestic helpers and the identification of child protection authorities to monitor and prosecute perpetrators of abuse of under-18 domestic helpers.

Awareness and education can also mobilize communities to advocate for policy changes and improved enforcement of existing laws. When people are informed about social injustices like child domestic work, they are more likely to speak out against them and demand action from policymakers. It can also strengthen support systems for children at risk of or engaged in domestic work. By informing caregivers, teachers, and community leaders about the signs of exploitation and the available resources, communities can create a network of support to intervene and protect vulnerable children.

Ultimately, awareness and education can dislodge the harmful attitudes and norms that perpetuate child domestic work, especially prevalent in the Southeast region of Nigeria. By educating individuals about the rights of children and the negative impacts of exploitative labour, education can promote a shift in societal attitudes and behaviours.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS



4.0 Summary of Key Findings

4.1 The legal frameworks Underpinning CDW in Southeast Nigeria

The study identified several laws that underpin child domestic work in Southeast Nigeria. These include the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Child Rights Act, the Labour Act, the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, the Criminal Code Act, and the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act. These laws contain provisions aimed at protecting children from exploitation and abuse in the context of domestic work.

4.2 Effectiveness of Legal Frameworks

The study evaluated the effectiveness of legal frameworks addressing child domestic work (CDW) and identified several factors impeding their implementation and enforcement. These factors are as follows:

1. Inconsistencies in Legal Frameworks: Challenges and gaps were identified within these legal frameworks. The lack of uniformity and consistency in defining who qualifies as a child and what forms of labour are acceptable complicates the effectiveness and enforcement of CDW laws.

2. Lack of Awareness of CDW laws: There is a significant lack of awareness and understanding of child labour laws among the general public, including magistrates who preside over family courts. This lack of knowledge results in non-compliance and a lack of accountability in preventing children from engaging in hazardous or exploitative domestic work.

3. Hidden Nature of CDW: Significant challenges exist in enforcing laws against exploitative child domestic work (CDW) due to the hidden nature of the work environment.

4. Coordination and Collaboration Issues: There is a lack of adequate coordination and collaboration among agencies responsible for enforcing CDW laws, further complicating enforcement efforts.

5. Inadequate Funding: The challenge of inadequate funding for agencies responsible for addressing child domestic work (CDW) is a major deterrent to the effective enforcement of laws against exploitative practices.

6. Cultural Acceptance of CDW: The entrenched cultural acceptance of CDW in the southeast, where children are expected to assist with household chores, hinders the enforcement of laws prohibiting CDW. The cultural context emphasizing communal living and support, as well as the prevalence of child fostering practices, adds complexity to the issue.

7. Socio-Economic Factors: Socio-economic factors, such as poverty, lack of access to quality education, and unemployment or underemployment among adults, are major drivers of CDW. Families facing economic hardships often rely on children to contribute to household income through domestic work. Limited job opportunities for adults also contribute to children's engagement in domestic work.

8. Poverty Crisis: As the poverty crisis intensifies, families will face increasingly difficult economic circumstances, potentially leading to more children being engaged in CDW.

4.0 Policy and Legal Recommendations

The study also highlighted key recommendations that can strengthen the effectiveness and enforcement of laws addressing child domestic work (CDW). They are as follows:

1. Strengthen Legal Frameworks: Enhance laws and policies related to child labour, clarify definitions of acceptable and exploitative domestic work, set a minimum employment age, specify hazardous work, and outline penalties for abuse.

2. Adequate Funding: Allocate sufficient resources to child protection agencies for effective enforcement of CDW laws.

3. Capacity Building: Strengthen the capacity of individuals (magistrates, law enforcement officers, social workers, and other stakeholders) and institutions involved in safeguarding child rights to ensure the effective enforcement of laws and policies aimed at combating exploitative child domestic work (CDW).

4. Licensing and Monitoring: Implement licensing and monitoring procedures for placing children in households as domestic workers. This measure will prevent child trafficking for domestic work and ensure safe placements for domestic workers.

5. Child Protection Mechanisms: Establish and reinforce mechanisms like child helplines and safe houses to provide CDWs with avenues to report abuse and seek assistance.

6. Support Services for Victims: Provide counseling, legal assistance, education, and vocational training to victims of exploitative CDW to aid in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society

7. Awareness Campaigns: Educate the public, including children and law enforcement, about the legal frameworks that protect children from exploitation and abuse.

8. Change Societal Attitudes: Dislodge harmful attitudes and norms through education and cultural reorientation programs, promoting a shift in societal behaviors and respect for children's rights.



CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION



5.1 Conclusion

This research has delved into the intricate legal framework surrounding exploitative child domestic work (CDW) in the Southeast region of Nigeria. The study has uncovered a complex web of laws and policies that should protect CDWs, highlighting the indispensable need for harmonization and effective enforcement. Despite the existence of legal provisions, persistent gaps and inconsistencies remain, presenting significant challenges in addressing the exploitation and abuse of children in domestic work settings.

Furthermore, the research has revealed the substantial impact of societal attitudes and norms on perpetuating exploitative CDW in the Southeast region. Deep-rooted cultural practices often blur the lines between legitimate skill acquisition and exploitative labour, further complicating the enforcement of protective legal frameworks. The sheer ignorance of these laws among the general populace is another factor that undermines these various legal frameworks. Other socio-economic factors like poverty and unemployment further exacerbate this issue.

The study's findings underscore the importance of intervention strategies that transcend legal measures alone. They emphasize the necessity of panoramic approaches that incorporate awareness-raising, capacity-building, and economic empowerment to tackle the root causes of exploitative CDW. Such comprehensive approaches are vital for addressing the deep-rooted socio-cultural dynamics that hinder the effective enforcement of laws protecting children.

In conclusion, this research calls for concerted efforts from policymakers, civil society organizations, and communities to create a protective environment for children. By addressing the various challenges surrounding exploitative CDW, we can move towards a future where every child in the Southeast region can grow up in a safe and nurturing environment, free from exploitation and abuse.



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5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following strategies are recommended to address the issues surrounding the legal frameworks underpinning child domestic work in southeast Nigeria and to ensure the protection and well-being of children:

1.State governments, through the house of assembly, should amend current laws to provide clearer definitions of acceptable domestic work for children. This should include outlining penalties for those who exploit or abuse child domestic workers(CDWs) and aligning conflicting definitions of a child across various laws. Specific guidelines, such as defining the minimum age for employment and identifying hazardous work, should be established within these frameworks.

2.The Ministry of Justice in the south eastern states, in collaboration with relevant ministries, should provide sufficient training programs for magistrates, law enforcement officers, social workers and other stakeholders involved in protecting child rights. These programs should focus on effective strategies for implementing and enforcing the various laws underpinning child domestic work (CDW).

3.State governments in the southeast, particularly through the Ministry of Social Welfare, should implement licensing and monitoring procedures for placing children in households as domestic workers. This measure will prevent child trafficking for domestic work and ensure safe placements for domestic workers.

4.State governments in the southeast should establish regular meetings, joint operations, and information-sharing mechanisms among agencies responsible for enforcing child labour laws. To enhance this collaboration, they can establish a dedicated task force to oversee issues relating to exploitative CDW.

5.The Ministry of Social Welfare in the south eastern states should establish accessible mechanisms, such as helplines or online platforms, for reporting violations of child domestic work (CDW) laws. These mechanisms should also provide support to CDWs who experience abuse or exploitation. Furthermore, there should be provisions for establishing functional safe houses to offer protection to CDWs facing exploitative or abusive situations.

6.The Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to incorporate child rights education into school curricula. This education should cover child labour laws, the rights of the child, and the importance of protecting children from exploitative work, including child domestic work (CDW).

7.State governments in the southeast should appropriate more funds to support the activities of agencies responsible for enforcing laws related to CDW.

8.State governments in the southeast should establish a policy framework to regulate the engagement of child domestic workers (CDWs). This framework should clearly outline mandatory rest periods, limits on working hours and age-appropriate tasks for CDWs.

9.Civil society organizations should collaborate with the Ministry of Information, Education, Justice, and other relevant departments and agencies to conduct public awareness campaigns. These campaigns should educate the public, including children, about child labour laws and children's rights.

10.Civil society organizations should champion cultural reorientation programs. These programs should challenge harmful norms and practices that contribute to exploitative child domestic work (CDW) and promote positive attitudes towards child rights protection.

11.Civil society organizations should work in partnership with the various ministries, departments and agencies responsible for Child's right to conduct regular assessments of enforcement efforts and legal frameworks to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

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Question Guide for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Objective I: To ascertain the laws that governs CDW and Child trafficking in Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu States?

Objective II: To ascertain the effectiveness of the laws addressing exploitative child domestic work(CDW) of children.

Legal Frameworks and Definitions

- What are the current legal frameworks governing exploitative CDW and child trafficking in your state, and how do they define and address various forms of exploitation?
- How effective are these legal frameworks?

Implementation and Enforcement

- How would you describe the implementation and enforcement of these legal frameworks governing child domestic work (CDW) in your state, and what challenges has been encountered?
- Which government agencies are responsible for enforcing these laws, and how effective are they in their duties?

Challenges and Gaps in the Legal Framework

- What are the key challenges or gaps in the existing legal framework that hinder its effectiveness in protecting child domestic workers (CDWs), and how can these be addressed?

Socio-Cultural Practices and Legal Frameworks

- Do socio-cultural practices in Southeast Nigeria contrast with the legal frameworks governing child domestic work (CDW), and how do these differences impact the protection of children?
- Can you provide specific examples where cultural practices have hindered the enforcement of these laws?

The Nexus between CDW laws and Socio-Economic Factors

- How do the prevailing socio-economic factors in the region contribute to the prevalence of child domestic work (CDW)?
- How do these socio-economic factors interact with the legal framework, and what impact do they have on the effectiveness of Child protection laws?

Objective III: To proffer legal or policy recommendations that can strengthen the protection of CDWs originating from the states.

Improving Law Enforcement

- How do you think the enforcement of these laws can be improved to better protect CDWs from exploitation, abuse, and hazardous working conditions?

Additional Legal or Policy Measures

- What additional legal or policy measures do you believe could be implemented to strengthen the protection of CDWs in your state, considering the cultural and economic factors at play?
- Are there specific areas where you see an urgent need for new legislation or policy changes?

Awareness and Education Programs

- How can awareness and education programs be enhanced to inform communities, households, and employers about the rights of CDWs and the legal obligations regarding their protection?





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