

Nature of Child Labour and its Causes among Basic School Pupils along the Coast: A Study of Moree Suburb

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Abstract

This research was carried out to find the nature of child labour and factors influencing child labour along the coast of Moree. To find how grievous child labour along the coast is, the study examined the nature of child labour and its causes. Having reviewed the literature on the topic, the researcher wondered whether or not pupils were aware of the factor that influences child labour and the nature of child labour along the coast of Moree. Questionnaires were the instrument used for the data collection. The data were analysed using a soft ware known as statistical product for service solution (SPSS), and it was revealed that child labour along the coast is real and has a lot of negative impact on the academic performance of basic school pupils. The study revealed that child labour along the coast of Moree is caused by the large family size, poverty, and unemployment on the part of parents, proximity to the sources of fishing (sea), the seasonal nature of fishing and irresponsible parenthood. The research also revealed that the engagement of this children in various fishing activities such as paddling of canoes, mending of nets, washing of boats and exchange of fish for other commodities actually have effects on the academic performance. They become low achievers, sleep in class, loose interest in education and finally fail examination and become drop out. The research revealed that, the problem of child labour could be reduced if not solved through government policies and non-governmental organization in job creation for parents as well as educates parents on the importance of educating their wards and consequences of child labour.

KEYWORDS: Child Labour, Cause of Child Labour, Child Labour in Coast,

I. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

This paper presents the outcome of the nature and causes of child labour along the coast in Ghana. The paper is structured into five (5) main sections namely: the introduction and Background, Review of the Literature, Methodology, Findings and Discussion and the Conclusion. The first section introduces the structure of the paper, the context and aims and objectives of the paper. The literature review section reviews the relevant literature on issues pertaining to the nature and causes of child labour. The methodology section present a broad description of the methodology and procedures adopted in the conduct of the study on the nature and causes of child labour in Ghana. Findings resulting from the study are presented and discussed in the section following the methodology and conclusion, highlighting on some implications of the findings and recommendations.

Today over 246 million children, many as young as five are involved in child labour around the globe. According to United Nation International Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2011) child labour is work that harms children or keeps them from attending school. It involves work by children under conditions that hazardous, illegal or exploitive. Child labour is a widespread growing problem for the developing world. About 250 million of the world's children work nearly half of full time (UNICEF 2003 - 2009). According to (UNICEF,2011) there are an estimated 158 million children aged 5 to 14 in child labour worldwide, excluding child domestic labour. The United Nations and the International Labour Organization consider child labour as exploitative, with the UN stipulating in Article 32 of the Convention on the rights of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that it is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or social development. The UNICEF defines child labour as work that exceeds a minimum number of hours, depending on the age of a child and the type of work. Such work is considered harmful to the child and should therefore be eliminated. Examples of age ranges are as follows:

Ages 5-11: at least one hour of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week,

Ages 12-14: at least 14 hours of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week,

Ages 15-17: at least 43 hours of economic work or domestic work per week

According to Friedman (1995) before the industrial revolution, virtually all children worked in agriculture. During the industrial revolution many of these children moved from farm work to factory work. Over time as real wages rose, parents became able to afford to send their children to school instead of work and as a result child labour declined after legislation. It has been observed that in Ghana, most children along the coast are also victims of child labour. Many children of school going age engage themselves in activities that bring money to their families as well as

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themselves. In spite of numerous efforts being done by state institutions, there are a lot of school going children that are involved in child labour activities along the coast of Ghana and have resulted in the deprivation and marginalization of basic school pupils in our educational institutions, denying them of their basic right to education and leisure. Basic school pupils are faced with a lot of activities that hinders their academic performance in some form within their locality and this phenomenon continues to inflict wounds and scare on basic school pupils. It was in this regard, the researcher conducted a study in Factors Influencing Child Labour and Its Effects on Academic Performance of Basic School Pupils along the Coast. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the causes of child labour among basic school pupils along the coast specifically Moree community. The study further aimed at determining the academic background of children involved in child labour and finally to find out why child labour is prevalent along the coastal areas.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE NATURE OF CHILD LABOUR AND ITS CAUSES

From the literature, child labour along the coast occurs in several forms. A study of the literature shows that the practices of child labour along the coast is common among the fisher folks along the coast of Ghana. According to Afro News (31 October, 2008), the International Confederation of Free Trade Criticized Unions (ICFTU), child labour remains widespread in Ghana. Ghana is not doing enough against child prostitution and trafficking. Ghana ratified ILO convention number 182, the worst form of child labour convention in 2000, but has not ratified ILO convention number 138, the minimum age convention, according to ICFTU. Ghanaian law however, sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years “but this is often disregarded” the report says “Education is free and compulsory until the age of 14, but children especially girls frequently drop out of school due to economic pressure”, child labour reportedly is widespread in practice with the ILO estimating 12 percent of children ages 10-14 are economically active. In urban areas, this involves working in market, collecting fares on buses as well as working as domestic servants ([www.childlabour.in /child-labour-in-](http://www.childlabour.in/child-labour-in-)). Concerns have often been raised over the buying public’s moral complicity in purchasing products assembled or otherwise manufactured in developing countries with child labour. However, others have raised concerns that boycotting products manufactured through child labour may force these children to turn to more dangerous or strenuous professions such as prostitution or agriculture including fishing. For example, a UNICEF (2001) study found that after the child labour Deterrence Act was introduced in the United States of America (USA), an estimated 50,000 children were dismissed from their garment industry jobs in Bangladesh. This left many to resort such as “stone-crushing, street hustling and prostitution” jobs that are “more hazardous and exploitative than garment production”.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the number of working children between 5 and 14 years of age in developing countries is estimated to be 250 million. In general, the ILO establishes 15 years as the minimum age for allowing children to work, provided that 15 years is not less than the age for completion of compulsory schooling. This has been the most widely used yardstick when establishing how many children around the world are currently working. It is believed that 32 percent of them are in Africa. The global convention on the Rights of the child (1989) affirms that children, because of their vulnerability, need special care and protection. It places special emphasis on the primary care and protective responsibility of the family and the society. UNICEF reported that 80 percent of girls working as domestic servants are between the ages of 10 and 14 (www.ilo.org/index.htm). Elsewhere, especially in the rural sector, report says the ILO found in 1996 that 75 percent of child labour in Ghana took place in such family situations. Child labour in Ghana can also be found in cocoa growing areas. Child labour is often used in the production of cocoa (weeding, planting, and harvesting). Boys especially are employed by farmers to weed the farms, work as apprentices in respectable trades such as carrying cocoa beans, spraying of cocoa trees and breaking the cocoa pods.

One constraint on Ghana’s economic growth has been inadequate human capital development. According to the 1992 data for Ghana on child labour, one girl in three and one boy in four does not attend school. The figures are worse in rural areas. Family characteristics play a big role in the child’s decision to work or go to school. Parent’s education has a significant negative effect on child labour; the effect is stronger on girls than on boys. Therefore, adult literacy could indirectly reduce the amount of child labour. Child labour along the coast of Ghana is a big obstacle to the child’s education. Most of the children get into child labour gradually on part time basis that is after school, sometimes through the advice of parents. They get entangled into it when they begin to accumulate some money for themselves and their families. During the bumper season, part time jobs take away little playtime of the children. These make them very tired and sometimes they sleep in class, and are late to school. This affects their academic performance.

According to Joy FM News at 12:00 noon (23rd March, 2010), Big Bill Haywood, a leading labour organizer and leader of western federation of minors, founding member and leader of the industrial workers of the world famously claimed that, “the worst thief is he who steals the playtime of children”(www.childlabour.in/child-in-). It must be noted that leisure is very important in the life of the child. His playtime is part of learning and discovery of knowledge.

Along the coast of Moree, children work on full time and part time basis for fishing activities such as net cleaning, mending, fish carriers and fish selling at the expense of their education and leisure. These activities are very detrimental to the child's school performance and achievement in higher learning institutions if they do not drop out (personal observation). Despite various attempts by government, non-governmental organizations and individuals to help reduce large family sizes so that each parent can cater for his or her children, parents are still giving birth to more children and hence the large family sizes. Many Ghanaians are ignorant of the family planning practices and continue to indulge in behaviours and attitudes that results in large family size. Another shocking phenomenon is that some parents still cling to traditional beliefs that large family size represents ideal situation or pride in the society. Some even think they may offend some gods, if they do something to prevent large family size. Children are thus used as a socio-economic factor. They work to supplement production in the family hence child labour. The rationale behind large family is to get many children to help them in the various work places to boost production. In addition, parent give birth with the motive of getting more hands to help support their work.

Another important cause of child labour along the coast is the unemployment and poverty of parents, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2000) majority of Africans as well as Ghanaians living along the coast live below the poverty line. Many of the youth are unemployed and find it difficult to make ends meet. The only alternative left for adults who have children is to engage them in child labour to help in dealing with financial problems in the family. In an article titled "Poverty and Hunger" by Owusu (1997), the alarming rate of children dropping out of school was fully discussed. This is largely due to the consequences of child labour on their academic performance that eventually kills the academic interest of some children in formal education. According to the article, as a result of the current socio-economic problems that many parents face, child labour has become the order of the day. Absolute poverty of parents pushes children to all sorts of economic activities to support the family financially, which denies the children the rights to formal education.

Unemployment of parents makes children hopeless and cannot even concentrate in class. This is because, they may not even have something to eat or clothes for themselves. This may take them out of school to engage in these labouring jobs, which will not have a future for them. Children whose parents are unemployed often see no hope in the classroom because, they ask themselves questions like "even if I pass who will pay my school fees for the next step". They also turn to look at themselves and others who are well catered for and think that they must do something. This often takes them into the exploitative jobs of child labour. The issue of unemployment, which is the cause of poverty in Ghana, contributes largely to the problem of child labour (FAO, 2000). Child labour also occurs as a result of poor parental care or neglect of children. An article captioned "understanding children" by Adam Hafiz (1992) a national service person and published in the Ghanaian Times, of August, 1992, the author wrote that the most important of all the agents of socializing the child is the family. It is therefore crucial for parents to have some basic understanding of dynamics of child development so as to avoid child labour and its associated effects on the child's education. Deprivation of adequate parental care during childhood according to the quotation leads to child labour, child abuse, school dropout and other social vices. Today, the proper upbringing of children is badly affected by the modern trend of society. Both the nuclear and extended family system have undergone dramatic changes. In an article captioned "women urged to make children welfare top priority by Amankwaa (1992), published in Ghanaian Times of August 7, 1992. She made a call and blamed women for contributing immensely to the neglect of their children resulting in child labour, child abuse and other social vices. Today, there are instances where mothers neglect their children, such neglect subjects children into child labour which in the long run push them into way-wardens, teenage pregnancy and other social vices like pick-pocketing, armed robbery and the like which pose a threat on their education and the nations development (Amankwaa, 1992).

The Junior Graphic on November 8-14, 2000 also carried a story "600 Ghanaian children in slavery" written by Hesse (2000). The story stated that more than 600 children between the ages of six and sixteen are under slavery in various communities along the Volta Lake. The paper still suggested that, most of the children have been sent there by their parents or relatives to work for the fishermen even though most of these children have reached school going age, most of them do not go to school because sending the child to school is not part of the agreement between the fishermen and the relatives of the children. These children are at risk from potential health problems the condition contrary to the guidelines established by convention on the rights of the child, which address educational concerns. As I look at factors like unemployment of parents, illiteracy, poverty and family size, as possible causes of child labour along the coast (Moree). I cannot overlook the policies of Ghana's system of education. There may be policies of education that do not favour or keep children in school. The first among them to be discussed is the cost of education, these includes fees, cost of uniform, books, feeding and other cost can also promote child labour. When education is affordable for all parents with the government trying to supplement other things like textbooks, uniforms and feeding, parents and students will not have much to complain and this can reduce child labour. Another policy of education that promotes child labour is the shift system of education. In Ghana, especially areas along the coast, children who go to the afternoon shift start to sell things like ice water and toffees before going to school. They come to school at 12:00 noon

very tired and cannot concentrate. Some of these children carry their uniform as they sell around and move to school when it is time. Long periods of vacation time at home can also promote child labour. Parents may like to make some money at the expense of the child's leisure time. This may have serious repercussions on the child's education (personal observation). Policy makers for education must always consider some of the policies and how they can reduce child labour.

In conclusion, life experiences, observations, and conversations with other people who some of them are parents, basic school pupils and teachers and reflections on child labour have convinced the researcher that we need to tackle the issue of child labour among basic school pupils. The literature indicated how various school of thought deals child labour. The literature review was done based on the following sub-headings i.e. nature and causes of child labour; Child Labour in Ghana, Child Labour along the coast of Moree, large family size and Child Labour, unemployment and Child Labour, Child Labour and poor parental care, and Child Labour and educational policies being some of the causes of child labour.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in four basic schools in Moree in the Abura Asebu Kwamankese District in the Central Region of Ghana as one case study. The data from the four basic schools were used together to form one case. Multiple case researches helps to gather enough data to provide a rich description of each case, but careful analysis of the similarities and differences between the cases can also help them gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena. The case study offered richness and in-depth of information which is not usually offered by other methods (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

The population for this study was two hundred and fifty (250) comprising one hundred eighty (180) students, thirty (30) parents and forty (40) teachers from all the basic schools in Moree. The study employed simple random sampling and snowball technique to select the participants for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select participants (pupils) from the four basic schools in Moree in the selected areas like Akita, Kuwait and Bentsil all in Moree, to really ascertain or get the real areas where child labour seems to be prevalent and because of it's nearest to the seashore. The snowball sampling technique was used to select thirty (30) parents for the study. Snowball sampling technique was used to identify student's homes and parents. Moreover, the technique was used to sample parents who hold accurate responses on the information on child labour so as to obtain genuine information for the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questions that formed the questionnaires were close-ended and answers were outlined, giving the respondents the opportunity to respond to these simple dichotomous question. The data were presented in the form of percentages and frequency tables to facilitate clearer interpretation of result for the presentation of findings based on themes.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS ON CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR ALONG THE COAST

This study aimed at identifying the causes of child labour along the coast of Moree in the Abura Asebu Kwamankese district. The findings and results relating to the research questions are presented in Tables 1, 2,3,4,5

Table 1: Do you allow your children to sell during school hours?

Responses	Number	Percentage (%)
Yes	38	95
No	2	5
Total	40	100

Table 1 indicates that 95% of the parents agreed that their children sell during school hours and this constitutes child labour. Five percent 5% do not allow their children to sell during school hours. Regarding the fact that majority of parents admitted that they allow their children to trade during school hours, I further sought to find out why it is so.

Table 2: Causes of Child Labour

Responses	No	(%)	No	(%)
Poverty	10	25	4	26.66
Dependency	5	12.5	2	13.33
Irresponsible parenthood	5	12.5	1	6.66
Broken homes	5	12.5	1	6.66
Large family	6	15	2	13.33
Inadequate job	9	22.5	5	33.33
Total	40	100	15	100

Table 2 shows that 25% of parents allow their children to sell due to poverty while 12.5% of parents allow their children to sell because of dependency ratio, irresponsible parenthood and broken homes respectively, 15% of parents also allow their children to sell due to large family and lastly 22.5% of parents allow their children because of inadequate jobs. This findings has been confirmed by The Junior Graphic on November 8-14, 2000 which carried a story titled “600 Ghanaian children in slavery” written by Hesse (2000). The story stated that more than 600 children between the ages of six and sixteen are under slavery in various communities along the Volta Lake. The paper still suggested that, most of the children have been sent there by their parents or relatives to work for the fishermen even though most of these children have reached school going age.

Table 3: Factors that brings about Child Labour in Coastal Areas

Responses	Number	Percentage (%)
Large family	5	25
Fishing is seasonal	7	35
Poverty	5	25
Broken homes	3	15
Total	20	100

Table 3 shows that 25% of the parents agree that large family and poverty influence child labour in their area, while 35% of the parents said that child labour is influenced by the factor that fishing is a seasonal activity and 15% pointed out that broken homes also influence child labour in their area. This result has been confirmed by a report issued by (PREM). In that report, it says that parents end up bringing forth to many children they cannot cater for in the long run (child labour and schooling in Ghana by World Bank Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, PREM).

Table 4: Why do your parents allow you to sell during school hours?

Response	Number	Percentage (%)
Inadequate job	10	25
Large family	15	37.5
Financial problems	15	37.5
Total	40	100

Table 3 shows that 25% of pupils sell due to inadequate jobs faced by parents while 37.5% of pupils responded that large family and financial problems are the causes why they are sent out to go and sell. The assertion of the respondents is confirmed by Tandoh (2001) in his book entitles ‘The Woes of Street Children’, that absolute poverty and family size of parents push their children to all sorts of economic activities to support family financially which tend to deny the children the right to formal education. This proposition is also buttressed by Bosomprah II (1995). He also agrees that large family size does not only bring about delusions in tangible of physical resources but also in the love, care and attention giving to children in order that they can learn well

Table 5: Do you share the view that child labour is prevalent at the coastal areas? If yes, what are your reasons?

Response	Number	Percentage (%)
Fishing being seasonal	10	25
Large family	10	25
Financial problems	10	25
Proximity of the sea	10	25
Total	40	100

Table 4 shows that 100% of the respondents hold the view that child labour is prevalent along the coast of Moree. All the respondents agreed with the reasons stated as factors that has made child labour prevalent along the coast of Moree as well as other coastal areas. A news item on Joy FM at 12:00 pm on 23rd March, 2010, reported that during bumper season or harvest along the coast children of school going age are busily engage in child labour related activities.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the nature and causes of child labour along the coast of Moree, following admissions were found from the respondents: Majority of the respondents admitted that causes of child labour along the coast of Moree are poverty, unemployment, proximity to the sea, irresponsible parenthood, the seasonal nature of fishing which demands everybody’s involvement before the season ends and lastly large family sizes, poverty, broken homes and dependency. It also revealed that large number of illiterate parents do not place much emphasis on their wards education.

It further revealed that prevalence of child labour along the coast of Moree is due to lack of interest in education on the part of parents and their desire to make money out of their wards by using them on their fishing expedition as well as other activities. The research also revealed that the engagement of these children in various fishing activities such as paddling of canoes, mending of nets, washing of boats and exchange of fish for other commodities are actually some of the jobs children undertake during school hours.

Lastly, government policy on Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education which makes Basic Education free is to be implemented to its fullness. Again, the traditional council and district assemblies should enact bye laws which will prevent children from engaging in money ending activities during school hours. This will force all children to go school since it is impossible to labour for money during school hours. In light of the findings, following recommendations were made: That Appropriate and special steps should be put in place especially in the form of laws to curb this incidence of child labour which from our finding is a major cause low standard of education and high dropout rates in our schools.

The researchers suggest that since large family sizes has also been identified as a major cause of child labour, family planning officials should collaborate with Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) to intensify their education and encourage parents to practice family planning and birth spacing. This will reduce the tendency of one parent having two or more children in one class in order to reduce heavy financial burden on parents. Also education in Ghana especially basic education should be vocationally oriented in order to make students or pupils acquire skills that will make them self employed after schooling. Advocacy campaigns for institutions mandated to deal with child related issues and effective programmes to sensitize parents and basic school pupils on the ramifications of child labour should be formulated and implemented along the coastal areas so that parent will be aware of the issues related to child labour.

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