

Breaking the Chains: Child Labour's Effect on Educational Achievement Among Basic School Students in The Tamale Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

Child labour remains one of the key issues hindering the efforts of governments and international organisations to ensure that children across the world achieve quality education. This paper examines the effects of child labour on the educational achievement of basic school students in the Tamale metropolis and how some victims have achieved educational success despite the potential threats of child labour. The research was anchored on human capital theory and social cognitive theory. The design used for this research was a case study. The approach used in gathering the data from forty-two (42) respondents was a qualitative approach. A semi-structured interview guide and a focus group discussion guide were the instruments used to gather the data. The data was analysed using a thematic approach. The research found that poverty, peer influence, cultural and social norms, gender roles and norms, and the culture of fostering are the factors influencing the activities of child labour in the Tamale metropolis. The research also found that reduced learning time, poor academic performance, and school dropout are the effects child labour has on the educational achievement of victims. The paper also revealed that individual determination and support from families, communities, teachers, NGOs, and state institutions are necessary in facilitating the efforts of victims in overcoming the woes of child labour and achieving educational success. The paper believes that economic interventions alone are insufficient in dealing with the issue of child labour and advocates for a holistic approach that challenges gender roles, addresses societal norms, and creates a supportive environment for the education of every child in Ghana.

Keywords: Child, Child Labour, Educational Achievement, Braking Chains, Tamale Metropolis

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Child labour remains a pervasive global challenge, affecting millions of children worldwide and impeding their access to quality education (ILO, 2021). According to the International Labour Organisation (2021), an estimated 152 million children are engaged in child labour, with almost half engaged in hazardous work as of 2020. The International Labour Organisation (2021) further posits that the detrimental consequences of child labour extend far beyond immediate exploitation, with significant implications for the educational achievement of basic school students. This situation underscores the persistent and widespread nature of child labour issues on the global front.

Similarly, the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (1989) viewed child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular schools, and is mentally, physically, socially, or morally harmful. UNICEF (1989) opined that despite global efforts to eradicate this phenomenon, various socio-economic factors, including poverty, lack of education, and cultural norms, perpetuate the cycle of child labour in many regions. For instance, Emerson (2003) holds that child labour remains a heinous and intricate challenge, particularly in third-world countries, where its manifestations are influenced by cultural, familial, rural, or urban settings and socio-economic conditions. In addition, Ehiemere (2000) emphasised that within the context of African and Asian rural areas, child labour takes on various forms, including street hawking, farm work, and domestic chores such as caring for infants, fetching water and firewood, food preparation, and many more.

Similarly, child labour is an issue in Ghana in ascendancy, as a substantial number of children engage in various forms of work. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), approximately 21% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 are involved in child labour in Ghana. The International Labour Organisation (2021) notes further that this prevalence is attributed to a combination of socio-economic factors, including poverty, lack of access to quality education, and cultural norms.

In addition, Santrock (2003) argues that, in Ghana, the prevalence of the worst forms of child labour, such as child trafficking, sale, and prostitution, remains challenging in recent times. Santrock (2003) added that in Ghana, a substantial majority of cases involve children, especially girls, which has been predominant in recent times. In the case of the study area, Owusu-Addo (2016) opined that socio-economic factors play a central role in driving child labour in Tamale Metropolis. According to Owusu-Addo (2016), families facing economic difficulties often rely on the income generated by their children to meet basic needs, contributing to the perpetuation of child labour in the region.

Beegle, Dehejia, and Gatti (2006) and Edmonds (2007) establish a correlation between child labour and compromised educational outcomes. Beegle, Dehejia, and Gatti (2006) and Edmonds (2007) hold that the intricate relationship between child labour and educational achievement among basic school students is crucial in promoting effective educational outcomes.

In the light of the above empirical studies, the researchers noted a deficiency in achieving basic literacy and numeracy skills among schoolchildren as a result of child labour activities in the Tamale metropolis. However, efforts to address child labour activities have seen advancements,

with international organisations, governments, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) collabourating on initiatives aimed at eradicating the phenomenon. However, numerous challenges persist as a result of weak legal frameworks, socio-economic obstacles, and cultural acceptance of child labour in certain communities. As recent studies gazed at unveiling the causes and effects of this development, this research seeks to unravel the multifaceted impact of child labour on the education children attending basic schools. This would contribute to the existing knowledge about promoting informed policy-making and interventions aimed at breaking the chains that bind these young minds. It is against this background that this study becomes very imperative in finding out the effects of child labour on educational achievement among basic school students in the Tamale metropolis.

Problem Statement

Child labour still remains a global problem despite several efforts to address the phenomenon. The issue is predominantly found in developing countries including Ghana. The United Nations Conventions on the rights of the child, the ILO Conventions on Child Labour (IPEC) No. 138 and No. 182, and SDG 4 and 8 are among the international commitments to ensure that Children are protected from engaging in activities of child labour. However, studies have shown that child labour still persist and keeps growing across the world. According to ILO (2020) child labour situation is more prevalent in the Sub-saharan African countries with 86.6 million children representing 23.9% engaged in child labour. UNICEF (2023) reported that 1 in every 4 African child aged 5-17 years engage in child labour.

Ghana is one of the first countries to have signed the UN Conventions on the rights of the child and have since committed itself to protecting children in the country. As a results, measures such as the 1992 constitutions, Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560), Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651), Human trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694), Criminal and other offences Act, 1960 (Act 29), Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (Act 653), National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Worst form of Child Labour Phase II (2017-2020) and NPA for the elimination of human trafficking in Ghana (2017-2021) have been adopted to give children protection and promote their welfare. Despite these efforts by the Ghana government, Ghana has one of the highest rates of child labour per-country in the world with about 21% of children participating in some form of child labour (Cara, 2022). The Tamale metropolis, located in the Northern part Ghana, is the third largest city in country and also the fastest growing city in West Africa (Fuseini, 2017). The city has been witnessing growing influx of children engaging in child labour activities. Studies such as Gunu et al. (2021); Adjei (2014); Abdallah and Abdulai (2015); Sedi and Abdulai (2015) have reported growing trend of child labour in the Tamale metropolis. Their activities range from Agriculture, street vending, porting and other services. Child labour activities in the Tamale metropolis is growing due to factors such as poverty, streetism, child trafficking, weaker social welfare and legal systems, polygamy, death of parents, illiteracy and parental irresponsibility (Seidu and Abdulai, 2015).

The Research has shown that child labour is associated with lower school attendance, higher dropout rates, and compromised cognitive development (Seidu and Abdulai, 2015; Beegle, Dehejia, & Gatti, 2006; Edmonds, 2007). They added that the inability to dedicate adequate time to schooling, coupled with the physical and mental toll of labour, impedes the development of essential academic skills among basic school children, which often challenges their educational journey, leading to disparities in academic achievement.

The complex relationship between child labour and educational achievement of children raises important question of what barriers school-going children face in accessing quality education. There are limited available studies carried out to specifically address the impact of child labour activities on basic school students in the Tamale metropolis. This gap necessitates an in-depth exploration of the causes and effects of child labour on the educational achievement of basic school students. This research aims to investigate the relationship between child labour and educational achievement of learners. The research focused on examining the socio-economic drivers of children to the market at the expense of their education and how the situation affects their educational development. By understanding the dynamics between child labour and educational achievement, the research seeks to inform policy makers, educators and other stakeholders on effective strategies to break the chains the bind child labourers, ultimately creating an environment that prioritize the educational needs and welfare of children in the Tamale metropolis.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the factors influencing child labour activities in the Tamale metropolis?
2. How does the child labour activities affect the attendance, participation and performance of students in basic education in the Tamale metropolis?
3. What suggestions can make in the light of the findings to informed policy-making and interventions in addressing child labor issues in Tamale Metropolis?

RELATED LITERATURE

Factors Influencing Child Labor Among Basic School Students in Ghana

Child labor continues to be a prevalent issue in Ghana, affecting the lives of many basic school students. Multifaceted factors contribute to the persistence of child labor in the Ghanaian context including; considering socio-economic, cultural, and educational dimensions.

The international Labour Organization (ILO) (2021), holds that poverty is a driving force of child labour in Ghana. ILO (2021), emphasized further that families facing economic hardships often resort to sending their children to work as a means of supplementing household income. For instance, the lack of financial resources hinders the ability of parents to support their children's education, creating a cycle where children are forced into labor to alleviate immediate financial strain (ILO, 2021).

The international Labour Organization (2021), added that gender disparities and discrimination is a cause of child labour among basic school students in Ghana. ILO (2021), explains further those cultural expectations may prioritize boys' education over girls', limiting opportunities for female students. That is discrimination against girls further compounds the issue, as they may face additional barriers to education, leading to a higher likelihood of engagement in child labor activities (ILO, 2021).

The international Labour Organization (2021) posits that inadequate enforcement of child Labor laws in Ghana allows for the persistence of exploitative practices. That is, weak regulatory frameworks and a lack of resources for monitoring and enforcement contribute to a climate where children are vulnerable to exploitation (ILO, 2018). Therefore, by strengthening

legal mechanisms and increasing resources for enforcement are crucial steps in curbing child labor (ILO, 2018).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) (2020) also identified limited access to quality education as a factor that contribute to child labour among basic school students in Ghana. For UNESCO (2020), the limited access to quality education, especially in rural areas, exacerbates the prevalence of child labor. That is insufficient educational infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, and long distances to schools contribute to a lack of educational opportunities and as a result, children may be compelled to engage in labor instead of pursuing their education (UNESCO, 2020).

In addition, Owusu-Addo (2016), points to cultural norms and traditional practices as the cause of child labour in Ghana. Owusu-Addo (2016) argues further that cultural norms and traditional practices play a pivotal role in perpetuating child labor in Ghana. He opined that in some communities, it is considered customary for children to contribute to family livelihoods from a young age (Owusu-Addo, 2016). For him, these ingrained cultural expectations often clash with the idea of prioritizing education over labor, making it challenging to break the cycle.

The Impact or Effects of Child Labor on Educational Achievement Among Basic School Students in Ghana

Child labor persists as a critical issue in Ghana, posing significant challenges to the educational achievement of basic school students in Ghana. This section of this paper explores the multifaceted effects of child labor on educational achievement among basic school students.

Ray (2019) argues that, one major effects of child labour on educational achievements is poor academic performance and fatigue among basic school students. Ray (2019) explains further that child labor often subjects students to long working hours and strenuous conditions, leading to physical and mental fatigue. For him, fatigue can result in reduced concentration, diminished cognitive abilities, and overall lower academic performance among basic school students (Ray, 2019).

Edmonds (2007) also explains that irregular school attendance is as a result of child labour in some jurisdictions. For instance, he argues that, the demands for labor can lead to irregular school attendance, as children engaged in work may find it challenging to maintain a consistent presence in the classroom. This irregularity can disrupt the continuity of learning and contributes to gaps in knowledge and skills development (Edmonds, 2007).

Doepke et al., (2012) hold the view that Child labor is a significant factor contributing to premature school dropout rates in Ghana. For them, when children engaged in labor, they are more likely to discontinue their education prematurely, limiting their overall educational attainment (Doepke et al., 2012). Oduro (2015) added that, engaging in labor at a young age can have psychosocial implications, impacting the emotional well-being and social development of basic school students. He notes that the stress and responsibilities associated with work can create barriers to forming positive peer relationships and participating fully in school activities (Oduro, 2015).

Beegle et al., (2006) link the effect of child labour on educational achievements among basic school students to long-term economic consequences. They explain that the limited educational

attainment reduces future employment opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and hindering national development (Beegle et al., 2006). Similarly, Duflo (2001) link gender disparities as an impact of child labour which often exacerbates existing gender disparities in education. For instance, girls, in particular, may face additional challenges, as cultural norms may prioritize boys' education over girls', further limiting opportunities for female students (Duflo, 2001).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the Human Capital Theory as a foundational framework for understanding the impact of child labour on educational achievement. Developed by Gary Becker (1964), the Human Capital Theory posits those investments in education lead to the accumulation of human capital, enhancing an individual's productivity and contributing to economic development. In addition, Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory was used to complement the Human Capital Theory on grounds of providing insights into the socio-cultural factors influencing child labour and its effects on educational achievement.

In the context of child labour and education within the scope of this paper, Becker (1964) Human Capital theory helps frame the dynamics between child labor involvement and the development of human capital, particularly in the formative years of basic education. To this effect, Becker (1964) proposed two major principles under which this theory can be applied.

First, the principle of human capital accumulation and educational attainment. In this principle, Becker's emphasizes that education enhances an individual's skills, knowledge, and productivity, contributing to personal and societal development. However, child labour disrupts this accumulation process, potentially hindering educational attainment among basic school students (Becker, 1964). This argument confirms Doepke et al., (2012) position that child labor is a significant factor contributing to premature school dropout rates in Ghana which apparently affect educational achievement of basic school students in the literature.

Second, the principle of opportunity cost of child labour. For this principle, Becker's posits that individuals make rational decisions based on the opportunity cost of various options. In the case of child labour, the time spent on work represents a missed opportunity for educational investment, impacting the human capital potential of the child (Becker, 1964). This argument confirms Ray (2019) position in the literature that, one major effects of child labour on educational achievements is poor academic performance and fatigue among basic school students which in essences affect educational achievement among basic school students. This argument represents Becker's position on the correlation between child labour and human capital potential of the child.

As indicated already, Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory was used to complement the Becker's Human Capital Theory, providing insights into the socio-cultural factors influencing child labour and its effects on educational achievement. The rationale of Bandura's social cognitive theory confirms ILO (2021) argument that families facing economic hardships in the form of poverty often resort to sending their children to work as a means of supplementing household income. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of observational learning, imitation, and cultural context in shaping behavior.

Bandura's theory suggests that individuals learn by observing others. Cultural norms and family practices surrounding child labour can provide insights into how these norms are transmitted and perpetuated across generations (Bandura, 1986). This view confirms Owusu-Addo (2016) argument that cultural norms and traditional practices play a pivotal role in perpetuating child labor in Ghana.

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, that project the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations, can be applied to understand how child labour may influence students' self-perception and educational aspirations. The experience of child labour may impact a child's belief in their academic capabilities (Bandura, 1997).

In conclusion, the integration of these theoretical perspectives in this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between child labour and educational achievement among basic school students. By addressing these underlying factors, these frameworks guided the analysis of individual, social, and environmental factors, contributing to the development of targeted interventions and policies that could be adopted to address the problem of child labour and its associated effects in the form of poverty alleviation strategies, improvements in educational infrastructure, cultural sensitization, and strengthened legal frameworks.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research adopted the case study design to gather the necessary data. This research involves investigation in to a contemporary issue that requires an in-depth analysis within the real context of participants and this is possible with the use of case study design (Bryman, 2015; Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013). This study sought to gain detail understanding of the factors influence child labour, how child labour is affecting the educational achievement of victims and how victims have been able to breakthrough the severity of child labour to achieve educational success. Case study enabled the researcher to gather information in that regard. The relevance of case study in this research stem from the fact that it enabled researchers to use different sources including interviews and focus group discussion to gather vital information for the research.

Research Approach

This research was strictly qualitative in nature. This is because the research sought to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of the realities of school-going children who are victims of child labour, parents of children involved in child labour activities, teachers, former child labour victims and some experts on the factors promoting child abuse, how it is affecting the educational achievement of children and how it can address using the experiences of those who have been able to navigate through. It is important therefore qualitative approach was adopted because it allowed researchers to gain in-depth information from the perspectives of participants.

Sample Selection and Procedure

In this research, purposive sampling procedure was used to select forty-two (42) participants. Purposive sampling allowed researchers to select participants in a strategic way that ensure that the said participants are relevant to the research. Thus, all the participants selected in this

researcher are relevant and meet the criteria with having the knowledge and experiences needed to answer the research question for the study. In total forty-two (42) respondents were selected comprising of 20 children who are engaging in child labour at the time of the research, ten parents of children engaged in child labour at the time of the research, five teachers, six former victims of child labour and 1 official of social welfare department. In selecting the victims, snowballing purposive sampling technique was utilized. In doing this, the researchers first observed five (5) children from separate location in the Tamale metropolis who are always on the street engaging in income generating activities (child labour) at the time their peers are in school studying. This was done for two weeks before the research team interacted with them to ascertain why they are selling at the expense of going to school. The research team established good rapport with them and trust as a result of which they led us to other children engaged in the child labour activities. This was done until we identified twenty-five (25) of the child labourers. Out of the 25, five declined engaging in the research whilst twenty agreed to be part of the research. The 25 included aged between 8 to 17 years old with all of them attending basic school with only few who do not attend school at all. The five teachers were also selected after identifying and visiting some schools the children were attending. Parents were also selected through the children who directed us to their houses after the research team had requested so. Out of the 18 houses visited, only 10 parents agreed to participate in the research. Expertise purposive sampling was used to select official of the social welfare department because they are state agencies mandated to protect the rights and welfare of children. Snowballing technique was also used to sample participants who were once victims but have been able to break through and achieve educational success.

Research Instruments

This research was guided by three instruments namely; focus group discussion guide and non-participant observation. The focus group discussion guide was used to conduct two focus group discussion for children who are victims of child labour and interview guide was used to conduct interviews for teachers, parents, official of social welfare and former victims.

Data Collection Procedure

After observing and identifying the victims and having agreed to participate in the research, we set 12/06/2023 and 15/06/2023 as the date for the focus group discussions at the venue most convenient to the participants. The first focus group consisted of 11 participants whilst the second consisted of 9 participants. Before the discussion began, the research explained to them the purpose and the modality of the research. The research team also assured them of their anonymity and sought permission for their narrations to be quoted in the report, which they subsequently agreed. The discussion was made participatory and every member was encouraged to participate. Each focus group discussion lasted between 45-60 minutes. The data was recorded using an audio-recording device with the permission of the respondents. Participants were given the opportunity to opt out anytime they felt doing so and could come back anytime they felt like coming back to the discussion. Interviews were also conducted on one-to-one basis at the convenience of the respondents. The aims and objectives as well as the modalities of the interviews were spelled out to the respondents. Interviews for teachers, parents, and former victims lasted for one hour each.

DATA ANALYSIS

After gathering the qualitative data, it was subjected to analysis using thematic approach. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to analyse themes generating from the data obtained. It involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data the researcher obtained (Bryman, 2016; Yin, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2006). To thematically analysed theses data, six steps were followed; first the researchers familiarized themselves with data, coded the data set, searched for themes among the code, reviewed the identified themes, defined the themes and then presented the report based on the defined themes which are presented below (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Underlining Factors Promoting Child Labor

Research has shown that the factors promoting child labour are numerous and varied from one context to another. This research intended to dig deep into the factors that promotes the occurrence of child labour which has likely impact on the educational achievement of victims. These factors are complex and intertwined with poverty, peer influence, cultural norms, gender roles, and the practice of fostering. The data with regards to causes of child labour in the Tamale metropolis are presented and analysed in the following;

Poverty

Poverty emerged in this research as one of the driving forces of child labour in the Tamale metropolis. In this research, it was found that families in improvised conditions rely on their children to work in order to supplement household incomes at the expense of going to school. In such a situation, children are forced to work in low-paying and exploitative jobs. In a focus group discussion with some victims, they narrated the following to suggest that they engage in child labour due to their house hold poverty level:

"...I do it because I want to support my parents to take care of the house and support my education..." (Boy, 10 years).

"It is what I do to support the family. Without it, there won't be food in the house" (Boy, 12 years).

"...and me too. Every morning I have to go and sell before my parents can get money for me to go to school. The day I don't sell, that day I don't go to school because there won't be money for me" (Girl, 11 years).

"We go to farm at least 3 times in a week. He says if I don't help, there will be no one to do and there won't be money to support the house and my education" (Boy 13 years).

The narratives above by the children suggest that children engage in income generating activities to support their families. This shows that children feel a sense of responsibility to contribute to their household. The emphasis on children to support parents and ensure there is enough money for basic needs like food highlights how poverty status of parents push children to engage in child labour activities.

The researchers engaged some of the parents on how poverty leads to child labour. They gave their narrations as follows:

"...is not my fault. Who wouldn't want the child to go to school and become somebody in future? For my child, I would want him to become a big man in future like a doctor, a nurse or teacher. But we have to do this (engaging children in income generating activity). If they don't support us to look after them, then their dream will not be achieved. So, it is for their own good" (Parent, 3).

"... I know is not good for him. But because we don't have money and no one to support us, I have to make him to farm and sell the products. Even though is not good, but it will help me support him through school to become successful in the future" (Parent 1).

"In these times, every parent will want the child to go school. For the child to succeed in school he/she needs peace of minds to do that. This is not case in poor families. If you want to have enough to feed the family and support children to school, then you have to involve them" (Parent 7).

"...Because they are the labour one can rely on since you don't have money to hire labourers. Because of that sometimes they have to miss school for one or two weeks, sometimes even a month to be on the farm. That is the only way I can feed the family and also support their education" (Parent, 2).

The excerpts above highlight the challenging circumstances faced by parents who are compelled to engage their children in income-generating activities despite the desire for them to attend school and build a successful future. The narratives show the complex interplay between economic constraints, educational aspirations and practical challenges faced by parents in balancing the immediate needs of their families with the long-term goal of providing a better future for their children through education. The excerpts further show how parents take some nuanced decisions including engaging children in child labour activities within the constraint of their socio-economic context. The findings align with the findings of ILO (2021; 2018) and Ray (2002) which suggest that many children engage in child labour due to family poverty.

Peer Influence

The significant impact of peer influence on shaping individuals' behavior, particularly among children is evident in this research. This study reveals that peer influence plays a pivotal role in sustaining child labour practices in the Tamale metropolis. Insights gathered from the accounts of victims, parents, teachers and experts suggest that children in Tamale are often enticed by their peers to partake in child labour, in many cases without the awareness of their parents. Find below excerpts from their narratives shedding lights on this aspect.

"Sometimes my friends will tell me to dodge (skip) class so that we can go to the market to work. They tell me that is not everything that we will want and our parents can afford to give us. The only way we can get what we want is to go and work" (Boys 11 years).

"...we usually go after first break. When is time, one of us will blow the whistle to alert us. Immediately all of us will pack our things and pass through the bush to our meeting point..." (Boy, 12 years).

"...we wear our home clothing under our uniforms. During break, we give each other signs and then we move. When we reach some points, then we change our uniforms to the home clothing and go to the market. We spend the rest of the day there" (Boy, 9 years).

In an interview with parents, they narrated that some of the children engage in child labour activities under the influence of their peers. They narrated the following;

"... I won't encourage to engage in any income generating activities. It was the teacher that told me about how he skips classes. When I investigated, I realized it was true he skips class. When I confronted him, he said his friends told him I can't give him everything he need and so he does it to support himself as his friends were doing" (Parent 3).

"I once saw him with his friends without uniform at the central market selling items. I thought he was in school. Upon seeing that I took him back to school to find out why he was at the market instead of school. The teachers told me that they have tried taking them out of that practice but they could not. In this case I do not have an idea but his friends introduced him to it" (Parent 5).

"I only take him to farm during weekends, because I know the importance of education to his future. I only recently found out from their teachers that he and his friends go to people's farm to work when they should be in school. When I was whipping him for engage in such activities, he told him I don't give him what he wants and so he is doing it to support himself. I never encouraged him to do that but his friends did. So, their friends influence them a lot (Parent, 10).

The teachers in an interview also narrated the following in this regard:

"...the children do that under the influence of friends. Sometimes you will see them in class in the morning, towards 2nd break you won't find them in class. They are off to the market..." (TR 1).

"...we have some students who comes to school with home clothing. Whilst in school, they skip to engage in income earning activities sometimes without their parents' knowledge (TR 5).

Excerpts from the narratives above underscore the significant impact of peer pressure on children participating in child labour. the narratives reveals that some children were drawn into these activities due to the allure created by their friends. The data also highlights that economic challenges and desire for quality life by the children contributed to their susceptibility to their peer influence. The data also revealed the covert nature of the children's actions as influenced by their peers, indicating their awareness of the illegitimacy of their endeavors, as they make considerable efforts to conceal their involvement in the child labour activities. This finding confirms the study of Manu et al. (2020) and Duflo et al. (2011) which

explain that peers influence each other to indulge in the activities of child labour. it also supports the work of Gunu et al. (2021) which showcased how peers presents enticing life on street and how that influence children to move on the street to engage in child labour activities in the Tamale metropolis.

Cultural and Social Norms

Cultural and social norms guide and shapes the behavior of people including children in a society. In this research, it has been found that some aspects of cultural and social norms see child labour as a means of passing on family and societal skills and knowledge to younger ones. Many parents engage their children in child labour activities because they want to preserve their family occupational legacy. This quest to preserve family occupational legacy encourage and sustain child labour activities. Some of the parents in an interview narrated the following:

"Our great grandparents were involved Blacksmithing and we inherited it, we are now benefiting. It is therefore befitting to pass it on to our children". When asked at the expense of the children's education the responded argued that "yes, they have to learn at the tender age. If we allow them to concentrate on only school, they will not learn and the family legacy will end" (Parent 4).

Another parent whose child engage in drumming argued that

"Drumming is the occupation of the family and also a source of income to us. Traditionally we drum to the chief before he comes out of his room and anywhere the chief goes, we drum for the him. We have been doing for ages even before the white man brought schools. So, we won't allow the white man's education erode our family tradition. If activities coincide with school, they skip the school and go out with us. They learn in the process which automatically gives them job in the future and also help us to earn money to support the family" (Parent 2).

A parent who is a farmer by occupation also narrated that

"...it is our duty as parents to teach our children this occupation. First to preserve our legacy as best farmers and second to get them skills that will help them in future" (Parent 6).

"The future of our society depends on the children. If we don't teach them the skills we acquire from our grandfathers, they will grow without skills and also without knowing who they are. So, I engage them in these activities because I want to preserve my family legacy (Parent, 4).

Some of the children having a focus group discussion narrated views that support what the parents has narrated.

One of the children said; "my father said his parents thought him and so I must learn so that I can inherit him and keep the family occupation alive. So, sometimes I will be in school and will called come and engage in the activity (drumming)" (Boy 12 years).

"They said I have to learn so that I won't get lost. So, that we can keep the family's knowledge and skills" (Boy 14 years).

The narrative above from both parents and children demonstrate how family's desire to preserve family's occupational legacy influence the occurrence of child labour. As demonstrated in the data above, parents place high premium in children engaging in income generating activities, because they want them to learn the occupational of the family. This is at the expense of the education of children. In some situation, any attempt by the child to resist results to abuse. This leaves the child with no choice than to engage in the income generating activities (UNESCO, 2016; Owusu-Addo, 2016; Bruscino, 2001).

Gender Roles/Norms

Additionally, it emerged that gender norms also play a role in promoting child labour activities in the Tamale metropolis. It was found that girls face the pressure to engage in domestic work at the expense of education. Two girls revealed this during focus group discussion.

One said "My father prefers the boys to go to school than the girls. He feels that after all, I am going to get married. And so, I go to people's houses to work (wash clothes, utensils etc.) to bring money home to support the family including my sibling's education" (Girl, 13 years).

"My parents took me out of school because they feel that I will get married soon. Since then, I have been a 'house girl' work to support the family until the day my teacher visited me and pleaded with them to send me back to school. The teacher is the one supporting my education right now" (Girl, 13 years).

A follow up to the teacher was done to get his perspective. He narrated that

"Yes, what she said is true. She is one of the brilliant students we have in the class. After getting to realize she was stopped from schooling by the parents. I interacted with her and she told me she is involved in domestic work to earn a living. I then pleaded with parents and made a conscious effort to get an NGO who are now supporting her education" (TR 4).

These narratives suggest that the cultural and societal norm of preserving a family's and societal tradition, knowledge and norms greatly contribute to child labour. As demonstrated in this research, many parents do not prioritise the education of the girl-child because of the believe that the girl-child will end getting married. As a result, coupled with poverty, the girl-child is encouraged to engage commercial domestic work to gather what she needs to get married. This practice does not only perpetuate gender inequality, but also serve as a stimulant for increasing child labour activities in the Tamale metropolis. These results support the work of Duflo et al. (2011) which explain how gender roles influence child labour activities.

Culture of Fostering

It has emerged in this research that the culture of foster parenting contributes to the existence of child labour. In many communities within the city of Tamale, one common social practice is fostering. It is a practice where biological parents for several reasons such as poverty, death,

family arrangement gives out their children to other members of their families to take care of. This practice has been found to be exposing children to all kinds of physical and emotional abuse including child labour. Many of such foster parents push children to engage in child labour. This was revealed in a focus group discussion by some of the children. extracts of the interview are presented in the following;

"I live with my father's sister. For her children she allows them to go to school all the time but, as for me, she asks me to go to the market and sell during school hours" (Girl, 8 years).

"She came with me to Tamale after my father died. She promised to take care of me. First, she allowed me to be going to school. I don't know, but I am sure because I was doing better than her children, she removed me and asked me to be selling to support her. It has been so until one of my teachers came and begged" (Girl, 14 years).

The narratives above highlights how the practice of foster parenting promotes child labour in Tamale. As narrated by the victims, many foster parents engage the children into income generating activities at the expense of the child's education. This violates the rights of the child to education (Serra, 2009). As again revealed in the narratives, in situations where they come back home with little or no sales (income), the children are subjected to abuse. The practice of fostering fuels child rights violation including child labour. This finding corroborates the study of Beck et al. (2015) which suggested that fostering aids child abuse.

The Vicious Cycle: Child Labour and Its Effects of Education Achievement of Children

One of the basic rights of children in Ghana is the right to education. Every child, by spirit of article 38 is expected to access free compulsory basic education. However, children involved in child labour are far from benefiting from this constitutional right. In this research, it was found that child labour affects the educational achievement of labourers. This research found among others limited access to education, poor academic performance, early school dropout, sleeping in class, isolation, poor learning habit and depletion. The analysis below shows the impact of child labour on educational achievement of children.

Reduced Learning Time

Studies have found a strong relationship between quality learning time and positive academic achievement (Carroll et al., 2023; Edmonds, 2007; Beegle et al., 2006). A learner's ability to regularly attend school on time, have enough time to read and complete assignment determines the quality of academic achievement of the learner. In this research, it was found that child has an effect on the quality learning time of child labourers. Child labourers who are able to attend school experienced reduced learning time. They experience irregular class attendance and the long hours of work makes it difficult for them to concentrate in class and complete assignment. Narratives by the victims and their teachers suggested that the activities the child labourers engaged in has tremendous effects on the quality of time they have for learning which affects their educational achievements. Below are some excerpts of the narratives:

"...by the time I reach school (after selling) in the morning is already first break. Meaning I missed the first and second lessons. This affects my ability to understand what has been thought" (Boy, 10 years)

"...for me I go to the market after closing. But during market days my parents don't even allow me to come to school. From morning to evening I am always in the market. By the time I come home, I am very tired and I can't read. When they give us assignment, I am not able to do it. So, the teachers always whip me for it. This affects my confidence and my learning" (Girl, 9 years).

"...yes, it affects me a lot. This is the third time I have been repeated in Basic Five (5). The thing is that I don't get time to read after school. And even when I go to school, I sleep mostly because I am always tired. I have to sell before coming to school and after school I go and sell. This affects the time I get for my books and so when we write exams I don't do well" (Boy 14 years).

The teachers narrated the following;

"...most of the victims we have here do not regularly attend class. In a week some could come twice or thrice with some not even once. This affects their ability learn effectively in order to progress with their education" (TR 3).

"...anytime we make follow ups on learners we have repeated, we find out that they highly engaged in income generating activities by their parents or guardians. What this means is that such children don't have enough time to learn. And when you are teaching, you will find such children sleeping in class. This has serious impact on their academic progression" (TR 5).

"The experience of these children does not give them quality time to learn what they are being thought. Can you imagine going to sell before coming to school and missing one or two lessons? Can you imagine the stress after work and your ability to study? Even adults cannot bear this, talk less of children. So you will them (child labourers) not progressing with their education (TR 2).

All the narratives above by both the victims and the teachers points to the fact child labour has a significant effect on quality of learning time for victims. The inability of these children to get enough time to learn what they are thought in school, affects their academic progression and growth. Most of them end up being repeated whilst others drop and concentrate on their activities. This result confirms the work of (Carroll et al., 2023, Afriyie et al. 2019) which reported child labourers have lower academic progression rate due to inability to meet assessment criteria.

Poor Academic Performance

Another theme generated with regards to the effects of child labour on educational achievement of victims in Tamale metropolis is the facts that it leads to poor academic performance of child labourers. The research found that children who attend school whilst engaged in child labour activities perform poorly in their academic activities. It was found that children who engage in child labour activities struggle to keep up with their peers academically. Many of them obtain lower grades in exercises, assignments and end of term examination. In an interview with teachers, it was disclosed that students who engage in child labour activities obtain lower grades in every academic exercise. Expects of the narratives are presented below;

"...many of these children have hyperactive disorder as a result of situations and experiences they go have to go through every day. This affects their level of concentration in class and which translate in to their poor performance" (TR 1).

"Yes, we are aware of such issues happening. Some teachers report several issues like to us upon noticing. We help some of them by taking their primary responsibility away from their caretakers to the state as in accordance with the children' Act (Act 560)" (SWO).

"...it has enormous effects on their academic progression. Because most them will skip class and others will not get time to learn. This can affect their academic performance" (SWO).

"...due to the child lacbour activities most of them are not regular in school. They mostly come to school late and whilst in school they are tired. This affects their concentration level. So, you will finish and give them assignments or test, these group of people will perform poorly because they do not understand all that you taught them" (TR 5).

"The activity has a lot of negative impact on the performance of the children. In many cases they come to school late, of which they lose some few lessons. In the evening when they close, they can't read but will have to the market and sell. By the time they reach their houses is late and they are tired. They are therefore unable to read what they have been taught in school. When you give them exams they perform poorly" (TR 3).

In a focus group discussion with the victims, some of them narrated how the activities affects their class performance. Here are excerpts of their narrations:

"I am even going to stop the school. Because anytime they give us work, I get 2/10 or 3/10 or even 0/10. I think I am not good. Maybe because I don't get time to read. So, I will just stop and look for money" (Girl, 11 years).

"...every day before I come to school, two lessons are over. After school, I go to the market, by the time I get home I am already tired and I can't learn. This makes me not to perform well in class" (Girl, 10 years).

The above narratives suggest that children engaged in income generating activity whilst going to school perform poorly because they are unable to learn from what they are thought, which ultimately affects their academic performance. This supports the findings of Ray (2019) and Edmonds (2007) which revealed that child labour affects the academic performance of victims.

School Drop Out

Studies such as Ananga (2013) have highlighted the impact of child labour on school dropout. In the current research, it emerged that children who engage in child labour have risk of dropping out from school. It emerged that when children are forced to work at a young age, they drop from school prematurely, missing out on essential education and skills. Many of the children expressed lost of hope in their educational progression due to poor performance, whilst others seem interested in making money rather than going to school, which they believe

may not yield any economic benefit for them. In a focus group discussion, some of them gave narratives as follows:

"...I will just stop and be free. Because anytime they give us exams I don't do well. I think is better I stop and concentrate on my father's farm" (Boy, 14 years))

"...and me too. In my school, anytime they bring our papers my friends will be laughing at me. I don't think school is for me..."

"...at some point I stopped. But my teacher who likes me told me to try and continue. he encouraged me and told me I can do it. So, he has organized night class for me. So now I am doing well (Girl, 12 years)."

"Some of my friends we work with have lost hope and stopped. They said schooling is not for them. They said they will look for money instead of wasting their time for school" (Boy, 15 years).

In an interview, a teacher narrated that:

"Some of them have dropped out from school. Currently we have five known child labourers who have dropped out. When we made follow ups, we realized that there are varied reasons. Some are asked to stop by their parents in order to fully concentrate on the income generating activities and others due to low self-esteem as a result of poor performance..." (TR, 4).

"Many of these children will lose hope, especially when they are not performing well. Those who are even performing at some in time will feel they are wasting their time since no one will support their academic progress" (TR 3).

The data above reflects a complex interplay of factors that contribute to child labours decision to drop out from school. Poor academic performance, peer influence, parental pressure and low self-esteem are some of the key drivers of the decision by child labourers to quit schooling. This decision limits their educational attainment and future opportunities, as they lack the necessary skills and qualifications for better-paying jobs in the future. These findings support the work of Ayanga (2013) and Doepke et al. (2012) who reported that child labour leads to an increase school dropout rate of children.

Breaking The Chains: Stories of Victims Who Overcame Child Labour and Excel in Their Education

Breaking away from the chains an overwhelming effort by victims. Several research reporting the stories of individuals who have succeeded despite getting involved in the activities of child labour show it requires individual determination, tenacity, guidance and counselling, social and community support and state support (Cara, 2022; Amanga, 2013). in this research, we sampled individual who have broken the chains of child labour and achieved their education goals. Whilst pointed to their individual efforts, others mentioned factors such as the family, community, teachers, NGOs and the state as facilitators of their efforts to break the chain. Below are some of the stories of the former victims who have succeeded.

"I was highly involved in the child labour activities for about fifteen years. I was always on the Volta Lake fishing whilst my friends are in school. Our Sunday school

teacher convinced my father to send me to school. Initially, my father declined, but upon several pleas by the teacher my father agreed on the condition that it will not prevent me from helping him. It was difficult combining school and work at that age. My passion caught the attention of an NGO who supported me and convince my father to allow me attend school full time. I did with the support of the NGOs and now I just graduated for my first degree at UDS" (FV 4).

"My involvement in child labour was to support in taking care of my family and education. I was determined to sacrifice my life for the life of my siblings to be better. So, whilst involved in child labour, I was still having time for my studies. At dawn I will study before going to sell. I always make sure that I go to school on time. Immediately after closing, I go back to the market and work. In the evening before I sleep, I must learn even though I am exhausted, but the determination to break the cycle of poverty pushed me to always learn. This has taken me to this stage where I obtained my first degree in medical laboratory" (FV 3).

"I gave up and dropped because my parents will take me nowhere. They made me believe that I must work to gather what I need for marriage at an early stage of my life. Thanks to one of my teachers who counselled and made me to understand that I have potential and he disabused the orientation. I became so passionate and they linked me up with CAMFED who supported my education throughout. I am currently in my final year as a medical student in UDS" (FV 1).

"I was involved in farming activities even whilst in class, my father will call us all to go to the farm. I had little time for learning which was affecting my performance, but there was a teacher who encouraged me not to dropout from school. He volunteered and organized night classes for me. This facilitated my progress. My father believed in me and the value of education after our BECE where I became first in my school. My admission to TAMASCO helped me to completely break from the shackle of child labour which facilitated my academic progression" (FV 2).

"I was brought from our village to live with my aunt after my parents' death. My Aunt introduced me into child labour and never gave me chance to go to school. She once abused me after I went to work and I brought nothing. The case was reported to DOVVSU who arrested her and handed me over to a children's home. I lived in the home and was later supported by an NGO to the level I am now" (FV5).

The narratives above provide insights into the experience of individuals who were involved in child labour but eventually overcame the challenges to pursue education and achieve academic success. The narrative shows that the involvement in child labour activities has dire consequences on the general development of children and requires various degree of efforts to overcome it. The narratives highlight personal determination and sacrifices made by them to overcome the hurdle to pursue education. This evident when a participants narrated how they worked at down or participate in night classes to improve their lives through education.

The narratives also brought to light the important role NGOs such as CAMFED have played by providing financial assistance, counselling and opportunities for the victims to be educated. This aided victims' effort to break through the challenges of child labour to succeed.

The excerpts from the narratives above suggest that teachers including Sunday school teachers have been instrumental in helping the victims to break the chains of child labour by convincing parents to appreciate the value of education and agree to allow their children to attend school. The data also showcased how legal interventions is necessary for countering the problem of child labour (Hennessy, 2023). The narratives above show the role of government, NGOs, civil society organizations in addressing the issue of child labour practices and also supporting victims to achieve educational success (Hennessy, 2023). The narratives suggests that the state and non-state actors such as NGOs and civil society organizations have important role to play in dealing with the menace of child labour in Tamale metropolis. As indicated by some of the participants, institutions such as the CAMFED, Social Welfare, DOVVSU, and CHRAJ supported their efforts to break free from the woes of child labour and achieve educational success. Following from these findings, the researchers advocate for a comprehensive approach that will involve the use of social and legal interventions, family and community support, individual resilience and external support from the state, NGOS and CSOs to help in dealing with the child labour menace in the Tamale metropolis and to also help victims in achieving educational success. This will support victims to grow into responsible adults who can support drive towards achieving a sustainable development at the community, nation and the world. This finding corroborates the works of Gunu et al. (2021) and Hemenoo et al. (2018) which revealed the experiences and coping strategies adopted by children involved in child labour activities. The findings also aligned with the recommendations of UNICEF (year) on how to deal with child labour practices.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has extensively explored the factors contributing to the occurrence of child labour in the Tamale metropolis and how child labour activity affects the educational achievement of victims. Amidst all the challenges posed by child labour in limiting the ability of victims to achieve their educational success, the paper presents stories of hope, highlighting how some victims have been able to break away from the woes of child labour to achieve educational success. The paper revealed how a combination of social-economic and cultural factors such as poverty, peer influence, gender roles, cultural norms and fostering are contributing to the increasing growth of child labour activities in the Tamale metropolis. The paper presented narratives of victims, parents, teachers and some experts that clearly captured the grim realities faced by some poor families which influence their decisions to engage children in child labour activities without regards to education of the children. The findings of the research also brought to light on how children influence each other into child labour by glamorizing the child labour activities to each other. Additionally, the research also provided how the practice of fostering exposes children into child labour activities.

Furthermore, the paper presented excerpts of narrations from victims, parents, teachers and experts highlighting the detrimental impact of child labour activities on the educational achievement of victims. Consequences such as reduced learning time, poor academic performance, irregular school attendance school dropout among others were identified. Notwithstanding some of these challenges, the research presented narratives of individuals who were once victims and have succeeded in achieving their academic success. Their stories highlighted how individual determination, support from families, communities, teachers, NGOs, and state institutions are necessary in facilitating the efforts victims in overcoming the woes of child labour and achieving educational success.

The results in this research highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to ending child labour in the Tamale metropolis. The paper argues that economic interventions alone are insufficient, advocating instead for a holistic approach that challenges gender roles, addressing societal norms, and create a supportive environment for the education of every child in Ghana. The success stories highlighted in this research brought to light the need for collaborative efforts from families, communities, NGOs, and the state to address the issues encountered by child labourers, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to access education and build a brighter future. This paper also advocates that the Ghana Education Service should encourage effective school-community relations. This will establish partnership and collaborations between parents and school management to tackle situations where children engage in child labour without the parents' awareness.

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