



Impact of Child Labour on Children's Academic Activities in Krachi East District

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author JI, the first author was involved in all the stages of the work including the literature search, collection of data, analysis and drafting of the manuscript. Author FHA assisted in literature search and methodology. Author EG assisted in data collection and editing of the final draft report. Author BAK assisted in the literature search and editing of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Child labour is one of the contemporary issues that has attracted the attention of many researchers. Most school children all over the world are engaged in child labour. This research investigates the effects of child labour on children academic activities in the Krachi East District in Ghana. The research adopted the mixed method. The purposive and snow ball sampling technique were used to select one hundred and sixty (160) victims of child labour. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was edited by experts in child labour and this helped to achieve validity. Data were analysed using tables and figures. It was realized that 68.7% of the children were engaged in agricultural activities and the major reasons for their plight include large household size, parental illiteracy and poverty. Child labour leads to low academic performance. The study recommends that government should support children from poor homes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Child labour is social problem which has attracted the attention of many researchers. Globally, it is estimated that 246 million children aged 5-17 years were engaged in some form of child labour [1]. The concept child labour is engaging children in any work that affects their education and health [2]. Child labour is a serious global problem because it deprives children from acquiring useful skills, knowledge attitudes and values necessary for meaningful life. [3].

Of the 246 million children aged 5-17 years are engaged in child labour around the world, some 179 million are found in the worst forms of child labour. It is observed that the incidence of child labour is very high in most African countries. Africa has the highest prevalence of child labour of about 41% [1].

The incidence of child labour is extremely high in Ghana as found in other African countries and this has major repercussions on human capital development. It was observed in Ghana that the number of children involved in child labour increased from 1.2 million in 2003 to 6.3 million in 2007 [4]. Kim and Kantor [5] observed that most of child workers were school going children. About 83% of children involved in child labour in Ghana were engaged mostly in agricultural activities [4].

Successive governments in Ghana have put strategies to address the issue of child labour so as to promote the development of the human resource. Some of these strategies include free and compulsory basic education, school feeding programme and free supply of textbooks [6]. Other measures included free supply of school uniforms and exercise books.

It is however, sad to note that despite these strategies initiated by government, child labour is still high in the Krachi East District of the Oti region. The number of school children involved in child labour in the district was around 39% as compared to the national rate of 20% [7,8]. Most of the school children in the Krachi East District are involved in economic activities at the expense of their education.

The Krachi East District is one of the youngest districts in Oti Region. It was established by a Legislative Instrument (L.I. 1755) and was

inaugurated on the 19th of August, 2004 at Dambai, its capital. The District was carved out of Krachi West district. The Krachi East District has a population of 116,804 (60,730 males and 56,074 females). The District is dominated by the savannah vegetation which accounts for about 75%. The 2010 Population and Housing Census indicates that, about 78% of the population in the district who were 15 years and above were economically active. Most of the economically active population were engaged in agriculture with few in industrial and commercial sectors. The breakdown of the labour force include agricultural sector (72.2%), commerce (11%) and other sectors (16.8%). The common food crops cultivated in the area are cassava, pepper, beans, yam, maize, rice, tomatoes and groundnut. The main cash crops grown in the area include cocoa, cashew and oil palm. Fishing as occupation is engaged by those who live along the Volta Lake and the Oti River [9].

1.1 Statement of Problem

Child labour is a critical issue in the Krachi East District of the Oti region. A lot of school children are involved in child labour to the detriment of their schooling. Though there are laws and policies regarding engaging children in work that affects their education, it is not uncommon to see school children in the district engaged in child labour. These victims have to face multiple tasks in school as well as work. The lifelong effects are that these children are denied learning, literacy and life skills which are essential 21st century skills. The long term effects are that the victims of child labour are deprived relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to live a meaningful life. Child labour is a sad situation children have to go through because it violated their educational rights. No research has however been found on the extent to which child labour affects children's academic activities in the Krachi East District of the Oti region. This study investigates into the major causes and impacts of child labour in the Krachi East District of the Oti Region and how it could be eliminated.

1.2 Causes of Child Labour

According to Mustafa [10], the major causes of child labour include poverty, breakdown of marriage and death of parents. Family conditions such as dysfunctional families, poverty and single parenting are major reasons why most

children work (The Mirror, Saturday, July 19, 2008; [4,11-13]. There are many causes of child labour. Some of the causes of child labour include large family size, ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, irresponsible, single parenting, and poor parental care and love, as well as loss of both parents [4,13].

1.3 Effects of Child Labour on Children's Education

Child labour has a lot of effects on children's life and education in particular. According to Kelsey and Peterson [14] child labour is a persistent and contemporary global issue of concern because of its impacts. The effects of child labour on children's education includes not regular to school, going to school late, passive in class, poor academic performance and dropping from school [11]. Ghana Statistical Service -GSS [7] indicated that child labour results in emotional and psychological imbalance among children which tend to affect their academic activities. Victims of child labour are burdened with work to the extent that they are denied rest, comfort and sleep. They always look very tired and they are not able to concentrate and learn well. This denies them from acquiring useful and essential life skills which affects them at the long run [11]. ILO-IPEC (2006) further stated that child labour can leave lasting psychological scars on children and deprives them of useful skills needed for the world of work.

1.4 Measures to Address Child Labour

Measures to address child labour started as far back in 19th century when Britain and Germany enacted laws on child labour in 1802 and 1839 respectively. In addition, the United States also enacted a law to prohibit child labour in 1916 (World Bank Encyclopedia vol.3 1992). Since then there have been many measures to eradicate child labour. One of these measures includes the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly in 1945. Article 30 of the Declaration indicated that no child should be engaged in an activity that was destructive to his or her rights, [6].

The General Assembly of the UN adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on 16th December, 1966 to address human rights including children's rights. Article 10(3) of the Covenant specifically addresses the issue of child labour. It

states that all nations should put measures to protect all children and that no child should be engaged in economic activity that affects his or her education or health (<http://www.UN.org/over/rights.htm>).

The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 2nd September, 1990 was another important measure to address the issue of child labour. Article 32(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that states should put measures to protect all children from doing any economic activity that will deprive them from education [15-18].

and UNESCO also engage in activities to address child labour. The Dakar Framework for Action came out with a proposal; with articles 3 and 7 geared towards the addressing the issue of child labour. For instance, Article 3(2) stated that commitment must be made to remove all forms of child labour whilst that of 7(2) stated that each member states should take strategies to eliminate child labour [19-22].

The African Union (AU) has also contributed towards the elimination of child labour. In order to eliminate child labour, the AU came out with a Charter on the Welfare and Rights of the Child in November 29, 1999. Article 15 (1) states that "Every child shall be protected from all forms of economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." (<http://www.umn.edu/humarts/africa/afchild.htm>).

The government of Ghana had made many efforts to address child labour. Some of these efforts include the ratification of the Convention on Children's Rights in 1990, establishment of the Ghana National Commission on Children in 1991, incorporation issues of child labour into the 1992 constitution and the enactment of the Children's Act, Act 560 in 1998. These laws and conventions prohibit child. For instance, Article 87(1) of the Children' Act, Act 560 indicated that nobody shall engage a child in economic activity that will deny the child of education, health or development [23-28].

The purpose of this study is to find out how child labour affects children's academic activities and ways to address child labour in Krachi East District of the Oti Region in Ghana.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Which economic activities do school children in Krachi East District mostly engaged in?
2. What are the reasons for engaging school children in child labour in the Krachi East District of the Oti Region?
3. What are the effects of child labour on children's academic activities in Krachi East District of the Oti Region?
4. What measures could be adopted to address child labour in Krachi East District of the Oti Region?

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The study used both quantitative and qualitative designs (mixed method). For the purpose of this research, the concurrent nested design was found appropriate. This is because the concurrent nested design gives precedence to one stage of data collection which controls the study, while the second stage is embedded or nested into the study and plays a supporting role. Creswell (2003) posits that the term 'concurrent' indicates that both qualitative and quantitative data are being collected at the same time. However, in concurrent nested studies, one of the methods dominates whilst the other one is embedded, or nested. The dominant method in the current study is qualitative and this is embedded or nested in the quantitative data.

2.2 Population and Sampling Procedures

All basic school children in the Krachi East District constitute the population. The target population however includes only the basic school children engaged in child labour in the district. The purposive and snow ball sampling techniques were used to select one hundred and sixty children engaged in child labour in the Krachi East District of the Oti Region. The purposive sampling technique was used because the researchers were only interested in children engaged in child labour [29,30]. The snow ball technique was used because according to Kwabia [31] the snow ball is suitable for gathering qualitative information when there is no sample frame [32]. With this method, the researchers were assisted by members of the school communities to identify victims engaged in child labour. Victims of child labour in this case are those school children who were identified to be working as well as attending

school [33]. Names that were mentioned as child workers were traced and those found were interviewed. Some of the victims also assisted the researchers to identify other victims.

2.3 Instrumentation and Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was used because it helps to obtain reliable information and also ensures a wider coverage [34-38]. The questionnaire was made up of 25 items mostly close ended questions. The Likert scale was commonly used. The questionnaire was put into five major sections. These include bio-data, main child labour activities, causes of child labour, effects of child labour and mechanisms to address child labour. Permission was sought from parents and school authorities before the researchers distributed the questionnaires to respondents. The permission was meant to seek consent of the respondents. The respondents were also assured that the information was meant for academic purpose and will be treated with high level of confidentiality.

In addition to the questionnaire, the researchers also analyse the academic performance of the victims of child labour using the school-based assessment records.

2.4 Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire was vetted by experts - professors, child labour Coordinators and Social Welfare officers before going to the field [39]. They read through the questions to determine whether their contents were adequate and relevant. They also helped to identify any ambiguities. The instruments were later pilot tested at two Junior High schools in Nkwanta district. The instrument was reviewed and this helped to achieve validity of the instrument.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were analysed using tables and figures. The analysis and discussions were based on the major research questions. The results were compared with existing literature.

3.1 Research Question 1

Which economic activities do school children in Krachi East District mostly engaged in?

The responses from the victims of child labour on the main work they often do are shown in Table 1.

It could be observed from Table 1 that 103 (68.7%) of the children engaged in child labour were involved in agricultural related activities, 28 representing 18.7% were involved in trading while only 3 of them representing 2% were engaged in constructional activities. This agrees with ILO [1] when they indicated that about 71% children engaged in child labour are involved in agricultural activities. This also confirms with Ghana Statistical Service [9] when they indicated that 72.2% of the economic active population in the Krachi East District were engaged in agricultural activities. Since most of the people are engaged in agricultural activities, they engage the children in such activities. It can be concluded that most of the children engaged in child labour in the Krachi East District were engaged in agricultural activities.

3.2 Research Question 2

What are the reasons for engaging school children in child labour in the Krachi East District of the Oti Region?

The study inquired on reasons why the school children work and their responses are shown on Table 2. This was scaled in five points (from 1: strong agreed to 5: strongly disagree).

It could be seen from Table 2 that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that most of the issues are the reasons why they work apart from divorce. It could be observed from the table that the items the victims strongly agreed in descending order included parental poverty (90.7%), provision of education needs (86.7%), raise money for their families (79.3%), parental illiteracy (74%), large household size (58.7%) and poor parental care (58%).

It could be concluded that the major reasons why the school children in the Krachi East District work include parental poverty, illiteracy of parents, large household size and poor parental

care. This agrees with Mustafa [10] when he enumerated the major causes of child labour to include poverty, death of parents and dysfunctional families. This assertion also confirms with GSS [7] when they stated the major causes of child labour to include poverty, large family size, illiteracy and poor parental care [40].

3.3 Research Question 3

What are the effects of child labour on children's academic activities in Krachi East District of the Oti Region?

The researchers inquired from the respondents on how they feel about the work they do and their responses area shown in Fig. 1.

It could be observed from Fig. 1 that majority of the victims of child labour (65%) were unhappy because of their involvement in child labour while 32% of them indicated that child labour is burdensome and stressful. It is only 3% of them who feel happy for working. The analysis shows that child labour is worrisome to the children.

The responses from the children on effects of the work they do on their academic activities are summarized in Table 3.

Majority of the respondents agreed to all the items in Table 3 as effects of child labour. It could be observed from Table 3 that the items they strongly agreed as effects of child labour in descending order include absenteeism (89.3%), poor performance in examinations (87.3%), lateness (86%) and inability to do homework (81.3%). The ILO [11] confirmed this when they indicated that the educational effects of child labour include absenteeism, going to school late, inactive in class and poor academic performance [41-43].

Table 1. Main economic activities child labourers engaged in

	n	%
Agricultural activities	103	68.7
Domestic activities	11	7.3
Construction	3	2
Trading	28	18.7
Others	5	3.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: field data, 2020

Table 2. Reasons why school children are engaged in child labour

Classified in five points: 1 (strongly agreed), 2 (agree), 3 (uncertain), 4 (disagree), and 5 (strongly disagree).

Reasons	1		2		3		4		5		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Parental illiteracy	111	74	17	11.3	0	0	14	9.3	8	5.3	150	100
Divorce	35	23.3	31	20.7	3	2	77	51.3	4	2.7	150	100
Parental poverty	136	90.7	4	2.7	0	0	7	4.7	3	2	150	100
Poor parental care	87	58	30	20	3	2	22	14.7	8	5.3	150	100
Large household size	88	58.7	21	14	9	6	23	15.3	9	6	150	100
Educational needs	130	86.7	3	2	0	0	9	6	8	5.3	150	100
Money for my family	119	79.3	3	2	0	0	21	14	7	4.7	150	100

Source: field data, 2020

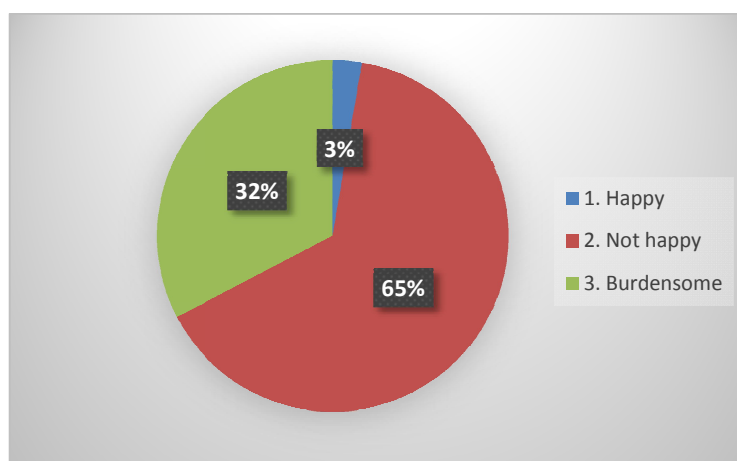


Fig. 1. How children feel for working

Source: field data, 2020

Table 3. Effects of child labour on children’s academic activities

Effects of child labour	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Absenteeism	134	89.3	16	10.7	150	100
Lateness to school	129	86	21	14	150	100
Inability to do my home work	122	81.3	28	18.7	150	100
Poor performance in exams	131	87.3	19	12.7	150	100

Source: field data, 2020

Table 4. Number of days victims of child labour absented themselves from school the previous term

	ABS	%
≤5	9	6
5 – 9	25	16.7
10 – 14	32	21.3
≥ 15	84	56
Total	150	100

Source: field data, 2020

The attendance registers were checked to ascertain the fact on the attendance of the victims and the number of days they absented themselves from school is recorded in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that 84 of the respondents representing 56% absented themselves from school for 15 days or more within the term while 32 (21.3%) absented themselves for 10 to 14 days. Table 4 shows that none of the victims was always regular to school. This agreed with their responses that child labour makes them to come to school late.

In order to assess the academic performance of the victims engaged in child labour, the researchers used the School Based Assessment records. The performance of the victims in the core subjects is displayed on Table 5.

Table 5 shows the performance of the victims of child labour in the four core subjects. The table shows that most of the victims scored below 50% which is considered as the pass mark. In all, 93.3% of them scored $\leq 50\%$ in English language, 91.4% of them scored $\leq 50\%$ in Core Mathematics, 86% of them scored $\leq 50\%$ in Integrated Science and 77.3% of them scored $\leq 50\%$ in Social Studies. The poor performance of the victims as shown in Table agrees with ILO [11] when they indicated that child labour leads to weak academic performance.

Table 5. Performance of victims in the core subjects

Scores	English language		Core Mathematics		Integrated Science		Social Studies	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%
11 – 20	10	6.7	9	6	4	2.7	2	1.3
21 – 30	49	32.7	52	34.7	51	34	20	13.3
31 – 40	64	42.7	60	40.0	56	37.3	58	38.7
41 – 50	17	11.3	16	10.7	18	12	36	24
51 – 60	6	4	7	4.6	12	8	16	10.7
61 – 70	2	1.3	4	2.7	5	3.3	11	7.3
71 – 80	2	1.3	2	1.3	4	2.7	7	4.7

Source: field data, 2020

Table 6. The average performance of the students in the core subjects

Subject	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation (+/-)
Core Mathematics	34.2	32.8	32.0	11.4
English language	33.8	33.0	32.9	10.2
Integrated science	36.4	34.4	31.7	12.7
Social studies	42.5	39.6	36.8	13.3
Average	36.7	34.95	33.35	11.8

Source: field data, 2020

The average performance of the students in the core subjects is calculated and displayed on the Table 6. It could be observed from Table 6 that the mean of means for all the core subjects was 36.7%. The mean performance of the victims of child labour for the subjects in a descending order includes Social Studies (42.5%), Integrated Science (36.4%), Core Mathematics (34.2%) and English Language (33.8%). This performance could be described as weak academic performance.

Comparing the mean with the median and mode, it was realized from Table 6 that the mean for each of the core subjects was greater than the median which was also greater than the mode for each of the core subjects. This situation is called positive skewness [44]. This shows that the standard in terms of performance of the students is low [44]. In addition, Table 6 shows the standard deviation for the subjects include, Mathematics (+/- 11.4), English Language (+/- 10.2), Integrated Science (+/- 12.7) and Social Studies (+/- 13.3).

3.4 Research Question 4

What measures could be adopted to address child labour in Krachi East District of the Oti Region?

In order to answer this research questions, respondents were given some items to respond to and their responses on what parents and guardians should do to address child labour are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. What parents/ guardians should do to address child labour

The role of parents/guardians	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Pay all fees	150	100	0	0
Provision of feeding money in school	139	92.7	11	7.3
Provision educational needs	150	100	0	0
Not engage you in child labour	121	80.7	29	19.3

Source: field data, 2020

Table 8. The role of NGOs towards elimination of Child Labour

The Role of NGOs	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	n	%	ABS	%
Public education	138	92	12	8	150	100
Provision of feeding money in school	150	100	0	0	150	100
Financial support to parents	136	90.7	14	9.3	150	100
Provision of your educational materials	145	96.7	5	3.3	150	100
Financial support to victims	150	100	0	0	150	100

Source: field data, 2020

Table 7 shows that all the respondents agreed that their parents/guardians should pay their school fees and provide them with their educational needs materials. In addition, 139 of them representing 92.7% indicated that their parents/guardians should provide them money for feeding in school while 80.7% also agreed that their parents or guardians should not engage them in child labour. This implies that, the children agreed that their parents or guardians have a lot of roles to play in order to get them out of child labour. This agrees with Children's Act, 1999, when it states that parents are responsible for the provision of children's needs including educational, health and basic needs [23,3].

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) also have some roles to play to address the issue of child labour. The respondents were asked on the role of NGOs and their responses are summarized in Table 8.

Most of the respondents responded to the items in affirmative indicating that such issues are the roles of the NGOs towards the elimination of child labour. Those who answered in the affirmative in descending order were: financial support to victims, provision of feeding money in school, provision of educational materials of the victims, provision of financial support to parents and public education. On the role of NGOs towards elimination of child labour IPEC [12] recommended that NGOs should undertake activities to support children, raise awareness and mobilize society to take actions against child labour.

The respondents were also of the view that the government should absorb all expenses involved in education, provide means of transport from their homes to schools and provide all the needed educational resources to eliminate child labour.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the data collected, child labour has several effects on children's academic activities in the Krachi East district. The results indicate that child labour lead to absenteeism, poor academic performance, lateness, inability to do homework, passive in classroom activities, and school dropout. It is necessary to adopt different strategies to address the child labour issue in the district to enable the children benefit fully from education.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It was observed that most of the children engaged in child labour are involved in agricultural activities. It is recommended that government and other organizations should provide the need support to farmers to enable them apply capital intensive farming. Mechanism of agriculture should be encouraged. Adopting of modern technologies in the agricultural sector will help reduce human labour needed in the sector and this will go a long way to address child labour.

It was also observed that most of the children work in order to raise money for their parents because of parental poverty and illiteracy. It is

recommended that government and other organization should come to the aid of poor parents by supporting them financially. Poor parents could also be given loans at a lower interest to enable them expand their economic activities. In addition, the government should implement fully the free education by absorbing all fees. All laws and policies on child labour should also be enforced. Addressing child labour will require the adoption of different measures and strategies.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standard or university standard guideline, participants' consent and ethical approval have been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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