

Human Rights Issues of Child Labour and Economic Activities: The Way Forward

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Abstract

This study sought to explore the issues of child labour and its human rights implications within the context of the spirit and goals of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The issue was also examined in line with the national and other international instruments and principles on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. Child labour is seen as a global phenomenon. Just like other developing countries, Ghana has percentage of its children engaged in labour. This study was therefore centred on the human rights issues of child labour and economic activities in the Aowin and Suaman Districts of Ghana. The objectives of the study were to assess: the causes of child labour in the Aowin and Suaman Districts; and the economic activities in the districts in which majority of child labourers are engaged in. *Sequential* mixed method approach was employed. Questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussion and observation were employed as the data collection instruments. A total of 500 respondents were selected from five different target groups, namely, teachers, head teachers, children, opinion leaders and parents/guardians for the study. Purposive, convenience and snowballing sampling techniques were employed for the study. The findings of the study indicated that the fundamental reason why children are forced to work in the study areas is poverty. Cocoa farming sub-sector is identified as the major agricultural activity where most (88.4 percent) of the children are engaged in the Aowin and Suaman Districts. It is recommended that there should be sustainable livelihood strategies like resourcing identified vulnerable families to carry out viable ventures that will help reduce poverty in the catchment zone.

Keywords

Aowin District, Child Labour, Economic Activities, Human Rights, Suaman District

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1. Introduction

The issue of child labour is a widespread and a growing phenomenon. It has become a focus for research in various academic disciplines such as history, economic history, psychology, social policy, sociology and politics [1] and hence, a matter of grave concern over the past decade especially in developing countries.

Worldwide 218 million children between 5 and 17 years are in employment. Among them, 152 million are victims of child labour; almost half of them, 73 million, work in hazardous child labour. In absolute terms, almost half of child labour (72.1 million) is to be found in Africa; 62.1 million in the Asia and the Pacific; 10.7 million in the Americas; 1.2 million in the Arab States and 5.5 million in Europe and Central Asia [2]. In terms of prevalence, 1 in 5

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children in Africa (19.6%) are in child labour, whilst prevalence in other regions is between 3% and 7%: 2.9% in the Arab States (1 in 35 children); 4.1% in Europe and Central Asia (1 in 25); 5.3% in the Americas (1 in 19) and 7.4% in Asia and the Pacific region (1 in 14). Almost half of all 152 million children victims of child labour are aged 5-11 years. 42 million (28%) are 12-14 years old; and 37 million (24%) are 15-17 years old [2]. Therefore, it has become a subject for discussion in the international arena especially by children's rights activists.

However, there seems to be controversy on the nature of child labour. First, there is lack of agreement on what activity and at what stage an activity constitutes child labour. Second, the meaning of child labour tends to vary from society to society and from culture to culture. These give a lot of problems to the implementation of United Nations (UN) conventions on the issue of child labour. While some individuals and organisations define the term as engaging anyone below the age of 18 to earn income, others concede that such an activity should affect the child one way or the other [3]. Such definitions are short of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) proposal. According to [4], child labour covers all economic activities carried by all persons less than 15 years. The ILO and Children's Act 560 (1998) of Ghana proposed a minimum age of 13 years for light work, a minimum age of 15 years for normal work and a minimum age of 18 years for hazardous work. Other scholars such as [5] and [6] saw child labour as employment of children who are not in school.

It might be necessary therefore to provide an operational definition of the term child labour. For the purpose of this research, child labour is considered as any form of activity which affects children below the age of 18 years education or health. An activity could be considered as child labour depending on how it negatively affects the child. In many cases, participating in household, farm and off-farm activities gives children an opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge they need if they are to succeed as farmers or in other occupations in the future. In addition, supporting the family business and livelihood strategy may give them self-esteem, social security and a sense of belonging to the community. However, in many other cases children work under conditions which endanger their safety and health and/or deprive them of an education. ILO defines this kind of work as 'child labour' and designs and implements policies to eliminate it.

Notwithstanding the widespread nature of child labour, little attention has been given to the practical implementation of policies on it especially in developing countries. The attempt at the global level to address the problem started as far back as the period of industrial revolution in Great Britain where

Parliament passed the first law on child labour in 1802 to prohibit the use of children below 18 years in any commercial activity [7].

Despite the global efforts, the prevalence rate is rather high in developing countries, especially Africa which has the highest incidence of child labour. An estimate of the ILO in 1995 indicated that 41 percent of all African children between five to fourteen years were involved in some form of economic activities which could be described as child labour. This compares with 21 percent in Asia and 17 percent in Latin America [8]. The socio-economic set up in Africa contributes to the high prevalence rate of child labour. Most parents in Africa are illiterates and self-employed. Children therefore receive training on how to work by participating in the work their parents or guardians do.

The cultural set-up in Africa also serves as impediment for the implementation of policies on child labour. For example, it is not easy for a child to report his or her parents for abusing his or her rights. Hence, the cultural set-up in Ghana therefore encourages the employment of children in work thereby aggravating the high prevalence rate in the country.

The Ghana Child Labour Survey (GCLS) shows that 2.47 million children aged 5-7 years (that is, about 39 percent of the estimated 6.36 million children in the age group) were engaged in economic activities. Half of rural children and one-fifth of urban children were economically active. Eighty-eight percent of the working children were unpaid family workers and apprentices, while 5.9 percent were self-employed. As many as 1.59 million children were working while attending school. Nearly 20 percent of children (about 1.27million) were engaged in activities classified as child labour. The phenomenon is prevalent in all regions of the country [9] and [10].

There is also a broad consensus that some worst forms of child labour are prevalent in Ghana. These include kayaye (head porters), child domestic labour, the Trokosi system (ritual servitude), commercial sexual exploitation of children, quarrying and galamsey (small scale mining), fishing and cash-crop agriculture. Significant numbers of child labourers are also found in transportation, "chop bars" (traditional restaurants) and, especially, petty trading, with street children becoming an increasingly visible phenomenon [10].

The problem however is that most of such victims are school going children. These children are forced to give up benefits of education in order to provide the immediate gains associated with labour because of their economic and social circumstances. At times children are sold into slavery, engaging them in hazardous activities such as rock quarrying in mining areas, illegal mining activities, fishing especially in the coastal areas among others.

Evidence from the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and the Department of Social Welfare in the districts indicates that most of the researches conducted on children are mostly on child neglect and child maintenance. It is in the light of filling this knowledge gap that the researchers deem it fit to investigate the human rights issues of child labour and economic activities in the Aowin and Suaman Districts of Ghana. The following research questions guided study: (1) Why do children work in the Aowin and Suaman Districts?; and (2) What types of economic activities are children engaged in? The research covered issues of child labour and economic activities. It was carried out in seven communities in the Aowin and Suaman Districts of the Western Region. It covers all activities of children below 18 years on regular bases. These include commercial agricultural, artisanal small scale mining and street hawking. The research further investigated the children's background, the main work they do and the reasons why they work.

2. Literature and Conceptual Perspectives

This literature was reviewed under the following themes: the concept of child labour; possible causes of child labour; some economic activities children engage in, and theoretical framework of the study. Child labour as a concept defies a clear cut definition. Thus, several authors or scholars and organizations have defined the concept differently based on their perceptions. Hence, there is no single universally accepted definition to the concept. There is a controversy between the age limit of a child and when a child is expected to engage him or herself in economic and non-economic activities. According to [11], [12] and [3], a child is seen as any person below the age of 18 years. They therefore see child labour as the employment of children below the age of 18 years in economic activities. This is supported by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The [13] on the other hand see a child as any person below the age of 15 years and thus define child labour as the involvement of children below the age of 15 years in economic activities.

In spite of the above, it is believed that the definition of child labour is derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Convention 138, and 182, and the Ghana Children's Act 1998 (Act 560). To them child labour involves all work that is harmful and hazardous to a child's health, safety and development; taking into consideration the age of the child, the conditions under which the work takes place, and the time at which the work is done [14]. According to the [15] cited in [16], child labour refers to work that (i) is mentally, physically, socially and morally

dangerous and harmful to children; and (ii) interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, by obliging them to leave school prematurely, or by requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

The [15] elaborates and clarifies that child labour is not the participation of a child in work that does not affect his/her health and personal development, or interferes with his/her schooling. Such work "includes activities such as helping their parents care for the home and the family, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays". It also involves work that "contributes to children's development and to the welfare of their families; provides them with skills, attitudes and experience, and helps to prepare them to be useful and productive members of society during their adult life" [15, p. 89]. Hence, [17] distinguished between child labour and child work. To them, child work normally refers to activities that are light and for that matter considered appropriate while child labour refers to activities likely to impair children's health and development hence is generally considered harmful and inappropriate. For the purpose of this work, the researchers view child labour as any form of an activity which tends to affect children below 18 years; their education and health.

A number of factors account for the high incidence of child labour in economic activities in developing countries especially in sub-Saharan Africa of which Ghana is of no exception. Thus, according to [18], social and economic scholars have attributed the practice of child labour to poverty. To them, developing countries provide an enabling environment for child labour. In many developing countries, it is normal for children to support the family and household economy which Anthropological studies have considered it as culturally determined. It is believed that the economic pressure of social living in poor economies, particularly in rural locations often encourages parents to send their children to work [1]. Children engage in economic activities for a wage since this seems to be the only "survival strategy" available to them and their families whose lives are characterized by constant struggle for survival.

According to the [19], it is estimated that, 93.0 percent of children engage in economic activities in order to contribute to the economic welfare of households. This same source further indicated that 58.8 percent of children work to supply family income while 34.2 percent children work in helping to operate household enterprise. Although child labour is largely attributed to poverty, which in turn forces children out of school, the truth of this claim is contestable.

In Ghana, basic school education is free, and child labour

continues to thrive. One would expect levels of child labour cases to drop significantly. Although poverty plays an important role in accounting for child labour, it does not do so exclusively and exhaustively. [20, p. 10], contended that child labour is not necessarily a result of poverty, but there is a strong relationship between the two as “child labour is often found in socially and economically marginalized communities.”

Another reason for child labour prevalence is that of children readiness to accept lower wages despite conditions that are dangerous and damaging. These children see work as “a chance for self-determination and responsibilities” [21, p. 48]. Children provide cheap labour which is on high demand. Jobs which children do are seasonal while adults work almost on a permanent basis. Job security is hugely compromised by child labour illegality. This illegality augments employers’ power to hire and fire as labour laws do not protect working children.

In another development, it is not surprising or uncommon to come across children working as a result of broken families [22]. When either of the parents dies, divorce or separate, children are required to work for the family. Orphans are mostly adopted by their close relatives to work for them. It is also found out that family disruption is seriously affecting the lives of children. Intolerable situation at homes that the children are subjected to often compel them to take up this occupation in order to sustain themselves without having to depend much on their parents. The [4] attested to the above assertion by indicating that majority of child labourers find themselves in difficult family situations like single parents, family illness or incapacitation and dysfunctional families. To them, dysfunctional families are those plagued by alcohol or drug abuse.

Again, some causes of child labour in Africa have been identified as economic decline, war, famine, and HIV and AIDS. Often, studies have identified poverty as the main cause of child labour. It appears poverty in Africa has been aggravated by other factors such as war, famine and HIV and AIDS. Most orphans often end up living with relatives of extended family. As management of large families blotted by a huge number of orphaned dependants proves an uphill task, children are forced to engage in economic activities to support themselves and their families. Hence, most children take up hazardous jobs. These jobs prevent children from attending school at an early age [23].

The [8] contends that one major cause of child labour in economic activities is ignorance among parents. It is an undeniable fact that most parents in Ghana are illiterates and for that matter do not have an in-depth knowledge about the impacts of child labour issues. These parents attitude towards

child labour is indifferent believing it provides public space for socialization and character development without taking into consideration the educational impacts. This has resulted in children engaging in economic activities to help them survive as individuals and that of their families. The term ‘economic activities’ may be defined to cover all activities related to the production of economic goods and services for sale or for household or for own consumption, during a specified time period. It could be any effort made by an individual, mental or physical, with the intention to earn something in return. Thus, for an activity to be called as an economic activity there must be an effort and also, the effort should be with a motive to earn something in return.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers perceives economic activity as a broad concept that encompasses most productive activities undertaken by children whether for market or not, paid or unpaid, for a few hours or full time, on casual or regular basis; it excludes chores undertaken in the child’s own household and school. Children are involved in a number of economic activities as forms of child labour and for the purpose of this study, the researchers focused on agriculture activities-cocoa production, street hawking and artisanal small scale mining. This has become a contemporary human rights issue because, according to [2] child labour is concentrated primarily in agriculture (71%), which includes fishing, forestry, livestock herding and aquaculture, and comprises both subsistence and commercial farming; 17% in Services; and 12% in the industrial sector, including mining.

Several scholars have come out with analyses that utilize varied theoretical paradigms aiming at assessing the causes and consequences of child labour in these sectors. Prominent among these scholars are [24]. According to [24] it is a widely held view that child labour is basically a by- product of poverty and hence policies to eradicate the issue should be geared towards economic development and increasing income of poor people. They argued that one major cause of child labour is the household decision. With these parents may often view children in terms of their value as assets and as such decided on the number of children to have.

The above theory serves as the basis for the understanding of the causes and impact as well as ways for eradicating child labour. Although the poverty-child labour link may seem obvious, tackling other areas such as family size, and parental decision may help to eliminate child labour.

The causes and effects of child labour are critical issues since they impede the development of human capital in Ghana and this forms the basis for the conceptual framework for the study. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework on causes, effects and solution analysis of child labour. The arrows

connecting the circles pointing towards child labour at the centre indicate the causes of child labour. Similarly, those arrows connecting the rectangles pointing from child labour

at the centre indicate the effects of child labour and those directed towards the causes indicate the solution to child labour.

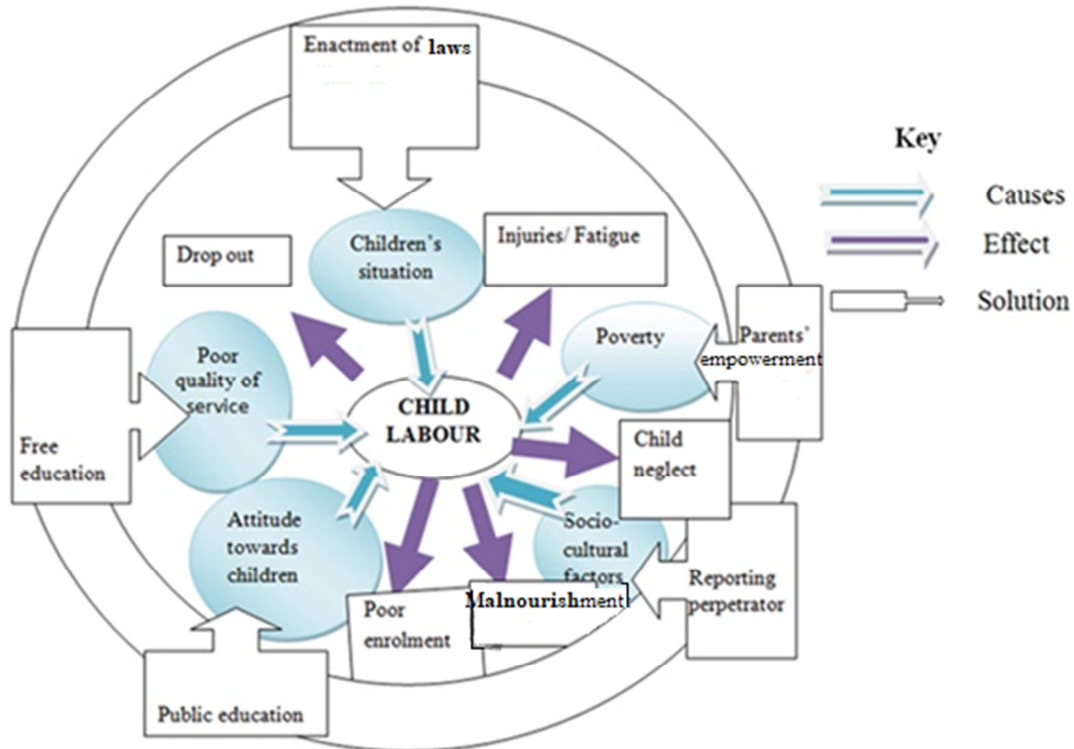


Figure 1. Conceptual framework on causal analysis of child labour.

From Figure 1, it is evident that the various causes of child labour are poverty, attitudes towards children, poor quality of service, children situation and socio-cultural factors. This at the end will result in child neglect, school dropouts, poor enrolment, injuries/fatigue and malnourishment. It is also observed from the figure that, in order to remedy the problem of child labour, there should be enactment of bye-laws, free education, public education, parents' empowerment and reporting of perpetrators to the appropriate offices.

3. Methodology and Profile of Aowin and Suaman Districts

Aowin and Suaman Districts lie in the mid-western part of the Western Region of Ghana and they share boundaries to the South with Jomoro District, to the East with Wassa Amenfi District, to the North with Juabeso District and Sefwi-Wiawso District and to the West with the Republic of La Cote D'Ivoire. The total land area of the two districts is 2,717 square kilometres. This constitutes about 12 percent of the Region's area of 23,921 square kilometres. The capitals of the Aown and Suaman Districts are Enchi and Dadieso respectively. Other major settlements in the two districts are Boinso, New Yakase, Jema, Asemkrom, Omappe, Sewum,

Kwawu, Karlo, Old Yakase, Achimfo, Yankomam, Jensuu, Yiwabra, Amonie, Adonikrom, and Abochia. Figure 2 shows the map of Aowin and Suaman Districts.

According to the [25] population and housing census, the Aowin and Suaman Districts have a population of 121,186 made up of 50,474 males and 70,712 females. It was found that there are 312 settlements within the two districts with Enchi and Dadieso, being the district capitals, and Boinso, Karlo, New Yakasi and Jema being the major settlements. The population growth rate for the district is 4.7 percent, which is higher than the regional average of 3.2 percent. The high growth rate is caused by the influx of migrant farmers from other parts of the country into the Districts. The 2000 Population and Housing Census shows that there are about 25,919 households in the district with a household size of 4.6. This however, varies for the towns. Dadieso and Enchi, the two major towns in the district have average household sizes of 5.4 and 3.9 respectively. The district population is rural. The proportion of the district population in rural settlements is 84.3 percent as against 15.7 percent of the population in towns (Population size above 5,000). The major settlements with population above 5000 are Enchi and Dadieso.

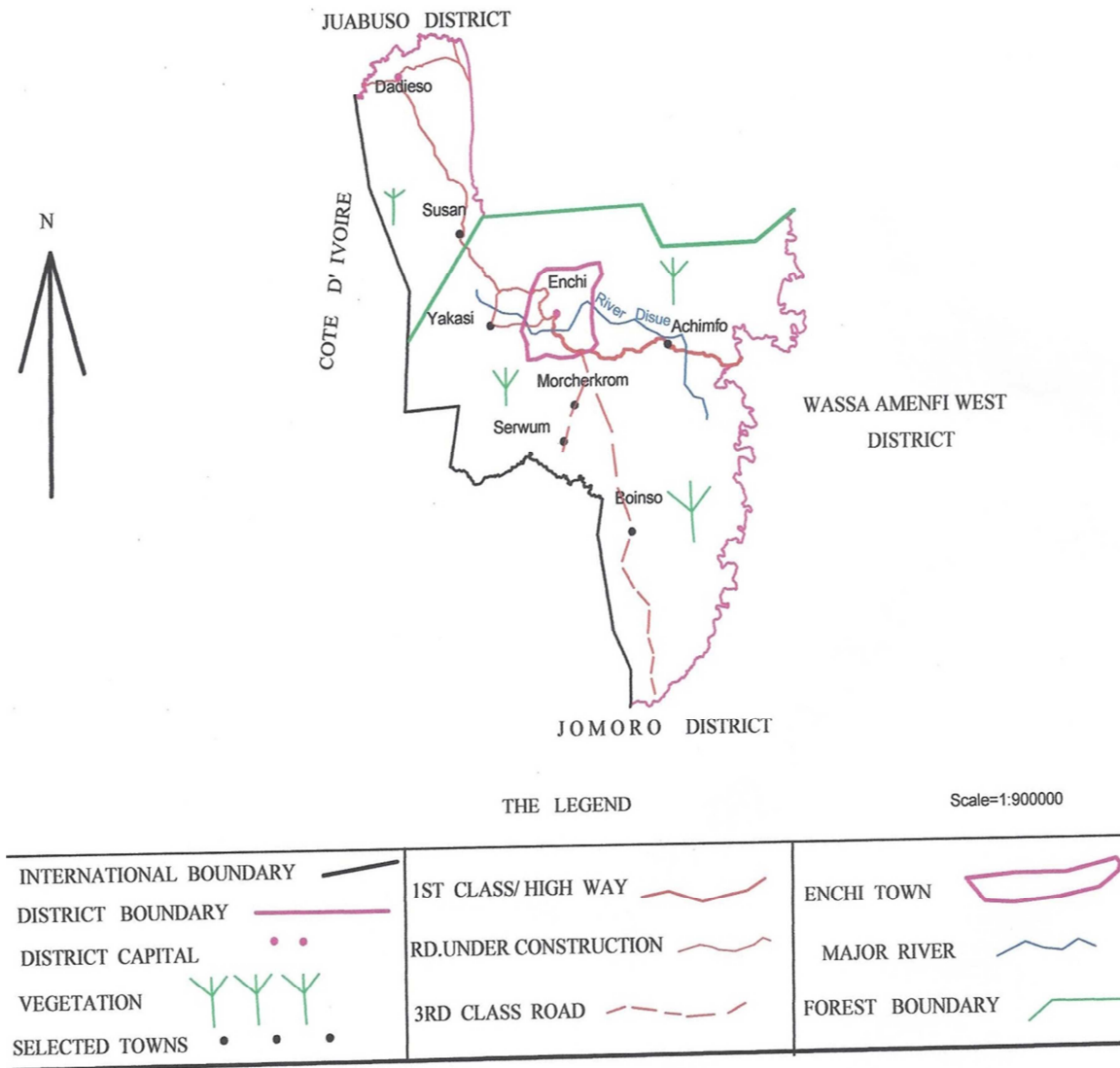


Figure 2. Map of Aowin and Suaman Districts indicating the selected communities.

Source: Survey Department, Enchi. Cartographic Section.

Sequential mixed method design was employed. The design allowed the researchers to triangulate data collected from multiple instruments (in this case, questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion and observation) to provide an in-depth analysis for the study. The population for the study were children both in school and out of school, teachers, opinion leaders and parents. Again, the Ghana Education Service and the Aowin and Suaman Districts Assemblies as key institutions in the districts were also sampled. The information gathered from the District Education Directorates and the District Directors of the Department of Social Welfare indicates that ten communities within the districts have high prevalent rate of child labour activities. According to the statistics obtained from the Aowin and Suaman Districts Education Directorates, the total number of pupils within the ten communities with high prevalent rate of child labour activities is 8829. In determining the finite

sample size for the study, the mathematical method or formula provided by [26] was used. Below is the procedure.

$$\text{Formula: } n = \frac{N}{1+N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where n=sample size, N= population (8829) and α represents the margin of error which is 0.05 with confidence interval of 95%. By substituting 8829 and 0.05 into the

$$\text{Formula} = \frac{8829}{1+8829(0.05)^2} n = 383$$

Therefore, a total of 383 children were sampled from the 8829 for the study. This number included 193 children in school and 190 children out of school. In addition to the 383 children that was sampled, 70 teachers including head teachers, 35 parents, heads of three relevant institutions (advocacy groups) - Director of Social Welfare, Director of Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice

and National Commission on Civic Education and nine opinion leaders - District Chief Executive, District Education Director, three Assembly members, two heads of religious institutions and two Chiefs were surveyed for the study. This is to ensure that the sampled mean will be closer to the population mean to minimize errors. The large sample size was necessary to take care of biases which could arise from sampling fluctuations. The large number of children required for the study was due to the fact that they are the main focal point around which the research was revolved. Again, a large number of teachers were also required because the role they play in the lives of school children give them a better understanding of the impacts of child labour on their education.

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed. Specifically, purposive, convenience and snowballing sampling techniques were employed. The simple random technique - lottery type was used to select the communities and parents or guardians of child labour victims for the study in order to ensure that every member of the sample frame had an equal chance of being selected for the study. The involvement of parents or guardians helped to gather relevant information on family background and the causes of child labour. Purposive sampling technique was employed in sampling the number of schools and children out of schools within the seven selected communities out of the ten within the two districts with high prevalent rate of child labour activities. These are Enchi, (Aowin District Capital), Dadieso (Suaman District Capital), Boinso, Serwum, Morcherkrom, Achimfo, Yakasi, Susan, Kwawu, and Jema.

There were 119 public primary schools and 77 public junior high schools in the two districts at the time of conducting the research. Purposively, a total of 22 schools were sampled for the study. Convenience sampling technique was employed to select the 70 teachers from the seven communities. With this sampling technique, the researchers had to talk to teachers who were available and ready to be talked to.

With the selection of children in school, because of lack of reliable data or sample frame on victims of child labour in the districts, opinion leaders from the districts education directorates, human rights advocates, chiefs, head teachers and teachers were consulted. They helped in contacting children involved in child labour activities because they live with them. The researchers then contacted those child labour victims identified by the teachers, head teachers, the districts education directorate and the opinion leaders as a point of reference to snowball others till the 193 pupils were obtained. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select the 12 opinion leaders and the remaining 190 children who were out of school for the study.

To enable the respondents supply the needed data for the study, teachers and head teachers were tasked to answer questionnaires, while interviews were conducted for children, parents and opinion leaders. In order to obtain additional information about the children, observation and focus group discussion were also employed to supplement the questionnaire outcome.

The observational research tool was employed to gather relevant information about the children. The use of observation was quite useful in getting a better understanding of context; crosschecking information and possible differences between what people do and what they say. In using questionnaires and interviews, it was necessary to supplement these sources with direct observation in order to establish the realities on the ground and to cross examine the people's responses. Interactions and observed behaviours included their engagement in economic activities, lateness to school and sleepiness during lesson delivery. Finally, focus group discussion of five groups of four was held with some identifiable parents within Enchi and Yakasi communities. This was done to gather unbiased and balance opinion from both sexes on child labour related issues.

Analyses of the data collected in this study were guided by both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The quantitative data were analysed by employing simple percentages, while the qualitative data were analysed by employing the interpretative techniques based on the themes arrived at in the data collection. The themes were related to the research questions and interpreted on the number of issues raised by respondents. These were based on questions on the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and the observation of children. Ethically, names of people in the research are pseudonyms.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section focuses on demographic characteristics of respondents, causes of child labour and the economic activities children are engaged in the Aowin and Suaman Districts. The analyses of the characteristics of respondents would contribute to a better understanding of the demographic profile of the study population in relation to child labour issues in the districts.

Age and sex characteristics hints on who constitutes child and are subjected to child labour. Majority, 269 (70.2%) of children fell within the age bracket of 12-17 years, 92 (24.0%) were between the ages of 7-11 years, and the remaining (5.7%) were less than 7 years. Thus, the distribution shows that most of the children subjected to child labour fell within 12-17 years age group. The survey also revealed that (53.3%) of the children were males, while (46.7%) were females. This

indicates that more males than females were engaged in child labour in the study area. This meant that the nature and type of economic activities in the districts requires more males to be engaged than females. However, [4] stated that females are involved in child labour more than their males' counterparts. Thus, the above results might be influenced by the perception of labour in the study area. It is estimated that 58% of all children in child labour and 62% of all children in hazardous work are boys. Boys appear to face a greater risk of child labour than girls, but this may also be a reflection of an under-reporting of girls' work, particularly in domestic child labour [2]. There is an indication that, some female's work such as domestic activities might not be considered as economic activities and females engaged in such activities might not be regarded as engaging in child labour.

The occupation of parents in the districts determines to a very large extent the rate of child labour phenomenon in the area. The survey revealed that the people in the districts are predominantly cash crop farmers. It was also discovered that, cocoa farmers are in the majority (60%), oil palm farming were (5.7%), cassava farmers constituted (11.4%) and (22.9%) of the respondents were traders. This signifies that, since cocoa farming is heavily labour intensive, parents who cannot afford to hire the services of labourers to work on their farms, tend to use their children thereby depriving them from attaining quality education.

The causes of child labour in the Aowin and Suaman Districts is discussed here. Responses from children who were engaged in child labour in the districts on whether they

go to school or not, revealed that majority of them (90.3%) claimed they go to school. Results gathered from children respondents as to the exact ages they started working as child labourers in the Aowin and Suaman Districts, it was realized that 35 percent of them claimed they did not know the age they were when they started working, 24 percent also claimed that they started working when they were less than 8 years and 19 percent claimed they were between the ages of 13-17 years. The statistics shows that most of the children in the district started working as child labourers at a very tender age which they themselves could not be able to disclose. It also suggests that on average, children in the selected communities are compelled by some factors within the environment to enter into the world of work at the age of eight years and are thus unconsciously subjected to child labour at the cost of their health, education and security.

The survey sought to find out from the children why they started productive work at such tender ages. Details of findings have been presented in Table 1 using 'yes' or 'no' to affirm or disagree with reasons put forward by the study. Accordingly, 71.5 percent of the children sampled claimed they work because they want to raise money to meet their personal needs. However, apart from majority of children working to be able to raise money for their personal needs, all the other reasons presented had majority of the children giving negative responses to them. Nevertheless, the survey recorded as high as 280 representing 74.1 per cent out of 378 responses who disagreed that, they work because their parents are separated.

Table 1. Children's responses on why they work.

Reasons	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Acquire personal needs	274 (71.5)	109 (28.5)	383 (100)
For payment of school fees	180 (47.6)	198 (52.4)	378 (100)
To support family members	126 (33.3)	250 (66.1)	378 (100)
Deceased parents	43 (11.4)	335 (88.6)	378 (100)
Separation of parents	98 (25.9)	280 (74.1)	378 (100)
Divorced parents	126 (33.3)	252 (66.7)	378 (100)
Forced by parents	124 (33.0)	252 (67.0)	376 (100)

Source: Field Survey. March, 2017.

From hindsight, it could be observed that, the prevalence of child labour in the districts is caused by the need to raise money to meet personal needs such as food, clothing, school uniforms, textbooks among others. It could imply that their parents do not make these needs available for them due to negligence or lack of funds. This therefore compels the children to engage themselves in an economic activity to raise money for their personal needs.

Questions were asked parents to confirm or decline the claim that children in the Aowin and Suaman Districts work

actively because they want to get money to acquire their personal needs. Eighty per cent of the parents confirmed that children work to raise income to feed the family, while 73.3 percent said their children work to raise money for their own personal needs. 'Death of parents', 'Separation of parents', and being 'forced by parents to work' seem to be insignificant causes or reasons why children work because they have been declined by 94.3 percent, 80.0 percent and 71.4 percent of parents respectively as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Parents' and guardians responses on why children work.

Why Children Work	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Raise money for children needs	26 (73.3)	9 (25.7)	35 (100)
Payment for school fees	18 (51.4)	17 (48.6)	35 (100)
To support the family	28 (80.0)	7 (20.0)	35 (100)
Because parents are dead (orphans)	2 (5.7)	33 (94.3)	35 (100)
Separation	7 (20.0)	28 (80.0)	35 (100)
Divorced parents	11 (31.4)	24 (68.6)	35 (100)
Forced by parents to work	10 (28.6)	25 (71.4)	35 (100)

Source: Field Survey. March, 2017.

The parents attested that, the fundamental reason why children work is poverty. Poverty compels children to work in order to feed the family and also to provide for their own personal needs. Significantly too, the findings from the respondents justified the assertion that, most of these children are forced to engage in economic activities which require much physical strength, energy, and skills thereby subjecting them to child labour.

A member of the male parents of household discussion group at Yakasi could not find enough words to explain why he has to let his children work for him and other people on the farm; demonstrated it by calling his son who had been made to drop out of school at age nine due to his inability to afford the boy's school uniform and books. As he pointed to the boy, he exclaimed:

Mr, it is not my wish to engage my children on the farm to clear land, harvest cocoa using sharp tools and to control mistletoe but that is the only way. I do not have the money to hire the services of labourers to work for me. Providing clothing for them and paying their school fees is sometimes

a problem for me. (Focus Group Discussion, 2017).

It was gathered from his demonstration that, child labour in the districts was not just a phenomenon that children are deliberately subjected to, but hardship in homes has accounted for the need for children to work. Thus, generally, the focus group discussions among the male heads of household revealed that the children work and become child labourers because of poverty.

The head teachers of basic schools sampled for the study also expressed their views on the causes of child labour in the Aowin and Suaman Districts. Seventy percent of the head teachers strongly agreed and 30.0 percent agreed that child labour is caused by poverty on the part of parents. Also, 40.0 percent strongly agreed and 50.0 percent agreed that child labour in the area is caused by breakdown of marriages. With regard to irresponsible parenting as a cause of child labour 30.0 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 60.0 percent agreed respectively. On the other hand, 40.0 percent disagreed that child labour is caused by children's readiness to accept lower wages (Table 3).

Table 3. Causes of child labour from head teachers and teachers perspective.

Causes	Strongly agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	H.T	T	H.T	T	H.T	T	H.T	T	H.T	T
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Poverty on the part of parents	7 (70)	31 (52)	3 (30)	19 (32)	0	5 (8)	0	3 (5)	0	2 (3)
Large family size	1 (10)	14 (23)	6 (60)	21 (35)	0	11 (18)	2 (20)	10 (17)	0	4 (7)
Illiteracy on the part of parents	1 (10)	14 (23)	5 (50)	27 (45)	2 (20)	8 (13)	1 (10)	6 (10)	0	5 (8)
Ignorance on the part of parents	1 (10)	11 (18)	7 (70)	29 (48)	0	4 (7)	1 (10)	8 (13)	0	8 (13)
Break down of marriage	4 (40)	25 (42)	5 (50)	27 (14)	0	3 (5)	0	4 (7)	0	1 (2)
Lack of parental love and care	1 (10)	11 (18)	6 (60)	18 (30)	2 (20)	12 (20)	0	10 (17)	0	9 (15)
Irresponsible parenting	3 (30)	22 (37)	6 (60)	24 (40)	0	7 (12)	0	3 (5)	0	4 (7)
Attitudes of children	1 (10)	4 (7)	2 (20)	18 (30)	3 (30)	7 (12)	2 (20)	18 (30)	1 (10)	13 (2)
Inaccessible and poor quality of service	-	4 (7)	3 (30)	14 (23)	4 (40)	20 (33)	2 (20)	14 (23)	0	8 (13)
Readiness to accept lower wages	-	2 (3)	3 (30)	19 (32)	2 (20)	13 (22)	4 (40)	17 (28)	0	9 (15)

Source: Field Survey. March, 2017.

Note: H.T = Head Teacher, T. = Teacher

Furthermore, the survey found out what teachers think is the causes of child labour in the Districts. The results as demonstrated in Table 3 shows that, out of 60 respondents, 52 percent and 32 percent strongly agreed and agreed respectively that poverty on the part of parents is the main cause of child labour, while 5 percent disagreed to this reason. Illiteracy on the part of parents was accounted for by

45 percent respondents agreeing and 23 percent strongly agreeing whereas 10 percent disagreed and 8 percent strongly disagreed that child labour is caused by illiteracy on the part of parents. Data gathered from both Head teachers and teachers implies that, children work for a variety of reasons, but the most important reason of all is poverty. Children work to ensure the survival of their family and

themselves. Though children are not well paid, they still serve as major contributors to family income in the district. The responses from both head teachers and teachers confirm the assertion of [24] that, child labour is basically a by-product of poverty.

Typical economic activities child labourers were engaged in the districts are discussed here. In the Aowin and Suaman Districts of Ghana, as in many other parts of the country, children have traditionally worked alongside their parents to grow cash crops or food crops for the family. They also engage themselves in small-scale artisanal mining and quarrying as well as street related activities such as portage and itinerant selling.

Children's responses on the main work they do shows that, 221 (31.6%) of the children interviewed engage in agriculture. Their reason was that there was no other vibrant and readily available economic activity in the informal sub-sector as compared to the farming sub-sector. The agriculture or farming sub-sector is the main engine that drives the whole economy of Aowin and Suaman Districts. The people cultivate varieties of cash crops such as cocoa and food crops like maize, cassava, plantain among others in the districts which are essentially an agrarian economy. In addition to agriculture/cash and food crop production, street related economic activities such as portage and hawking and stone quarrying sub sectors also engaged 109 (28.4%) and 22 (5.7%) of the children interviewed respectively. Other economic activities children undertake in the districts include small scale mining (1.8%), construction works (1.8%), manufacturing (3.4%) and domestic services (24.8%). About 60 percent of the children claimed they engage in farming activities because their parents are farmers. Few of them said even though, they usually work for their parents, they sometimes make time off to work for other farmers for money. This implies that, majority of the children are engaged as labourers by their parents/guardians while less the time was used by them to work for other farmers for money.

To buttress children assertion, parents/guardians responses on the work their children do, also indicates that, 66 percent confirmed that agriculture is the main economic activity where majority of the children in the area are engaged in, 23 percent of them said their children are engaged in street related activities as porters and itinerant sellers with the remaining 11 percent claiming they are engaged in domestic services.

The implication of the above is that contrary to popular perception in high-income countries, most working children are engaged by their parents into the work they do in the study areas rather than in trading, mining, manufacturing establishments or other forms of wage employment.

Opanyin Kwaku Ndoli, a parent from Enchi emphasized:

I am a farmer and I cultivate cocoa on commercial bases and food crops such as maize and cassava alongside for consumption by the family. The nature of the work I do demands more labourers which come at a cost. Though my two boys are 12 and 14 years old, they help me a lot on the farm. Farming is essentially the activity they engage in more than any other work. (Focus Group Discussion, 2017).

Parents' perceptions on where their children work indicates clearly that farm work was a justifiable economic activity tremendously subjecting most children as child labourers in the districts. In almost all cases the survey recorded 63 percent of respondents confirming that agriculture or farming is the main economic activity promoting child labour in the districts. Thirty-one percent asserted that their children work in streets as hawkers, 3.0 work at construction sites, while 3.0 percent fall under the other fields. One of the parents out of worry reiterated:

We suspect that most of these children are involved in unpaid labour exchanges where neighbouring families help one another on their farms, but these unpaid workers may also be children who are paid in kind with meals or food. (Focus Group Discussion, 2017).

Table 4. Head teachers' perceptions on the common child labour activities in the districts.

Child labour activities	Strongly agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Domestic service	3	30.0	4	40.0	0	0	2	20.0	0	0
Agriculture	8	80.0	2	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stone quarrying/sand winning	1	10.0	3	30.0	1	10.0	2	20.0	2	20.0
Construction work	0	0	2	20.0	3	30.0	2	20.0	2	20.0
Street related activities	2	20.0	4	40.0	3	30.0	0	0	0	0
Small scale mining	1	10.0	1	10.0	3	30.0	3	30.0	1	10.0
Manufacturing	1	10.0	0	0	3	30.0	3	30.0	1	10.0

Source: Field Survey. March, 2017.

From Table 4 on data gathered from head teachers, it can be observed that the highly prevalent economic activity within the rural communities in the district is agriculture (cash/food

crop production) which recorded the highest reported strongly agreed cases of 80.0 per cent and 20.0 percent agreed cases. Domestic services (30.0 per cent for strongly

agreed and 40.0 per cent for agreed cases), manufacturing, stone quarrying and small- scale mining each recorded 10.0 per cent whereas 30.0 percent, 20.0 percent and 30.0 percent respectively disagreed to the notion that children work in these sectors. These were found to be the most common economic activities driving majority of the children into child labour in the rural Aowin and Suaman Districts. Child labour becomes highly predominant during rainy season when farmers are expected to take advantage of the rain to cultivate their crops for a higher yield. Thus, even though the rainy seasons create a conducive environment for farming activities in the rural areas, they also pose a great challenge for the children within the study communities.

These assertions are in supports of what [2] stated that, child

labour is concentrated primarily in agriculture (71%), which includes fishing, forestry, livestock herding and aquaculture, and comprises both subsistence and commercial farming; 17% in Services; and 12% in the industrial sector, including mining. This shows the predominant rates of child labour in the agriculture and other sectors which clearly portray the human rights related issues of the social canker in the study areas.

There was the need for the identification of the main farming sub-sector where the problem of child labour predominantly emerges before it can be solved in order to erase a wide range of misconceptions in the minds of people about the existing situation in the study areas. This will help develop pragmatic policies to reduce the menace in order to improve upon the wellbeing of the children in the districts.

Table 5. Teachers views on the agricultural sub-sector most children are engaged in the districts.

Crops	Responses											
	Strongly agree		Agreed		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Cocoa	34	57	19	32	6	10	1	2	0	0	60	100
Oil Palm	8	13	14	23	18	30	13	22	7	12	60	100
Maize	11	18	24	40	15	25	7	12	3	5	60	100
Cassava	9	15	26	43	12	20	13	22	0	0	60	100
Yam	2	3	19	32	20	33	14	23	5	8	60	100
Rice	7	11	21	35	16	27	14	23	2	2	60	100
Plantain	10	16	19	32	17	28	13	22	1	2	60	100

Source: Field Survey. March, 2017.

Table 5 shows that, 89 percent of the teacher respondents (i.e. strongly agreed, 57 percent and 32 percent for agreed) identified cocoa farming as the major agricultural sub-sector activity where most children are engaged thus enhancing the problem of child labour in the Aowin and Suaman Districts with only 2 percent disagreeing to this fact. Maize farming (58 percent affirming to it whiles 16 percent differing) and cassava farming (59 percent affirming whereas 22 percent differing) has been ranked by respondents as also engaging substantial number of children. Yam farming recorded the lowest children involvement in the area with only 35 percent affirmation.

In addition to the above, in an interview with the opinion leaders and advocacy target group of the study, an opinion leader added that, children formed the 'bedrock' for the supply of labour for cocoa production in their communities. He therefore stressed that:

The number of forced child labourers in these areas cannot be under estimated as children are involved in hazardous activities and subjected to mistreatment. Children typically perform the same arduous tasks and work the same hours as adults, but receive less pay. (In-depth Interview, 2017).

This comment shows the prevalent nature of child labour in the study communities. It is on this that societies have to be

more serious in tackling the menace of child labour.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Child labour victims in the districts fall within the 12-17 age brackets. There are more males than females child labourers in the districts. This might be attributed to society's perception of employment. Most of the works that girls engage in are hidden from public view. Domestic service is considered as one of the major sector of girl child employment.

Background of children's family exposes them to involve themselves in economic activities. Child labour is fundamentally caused by family background. Majority of the parents or guardians of the children had low level of education and thus engaged in agricultural activities. Majority of these parents or guardians were not aware of the value of education among their children.

Child labourers and parents of victims believed children are forced to work because they want to raise money to meet their personal needs such as food, clothing, school uniforms and textbooks. Majority of teachers, advocacy groups and opinion leaders were of the view that, it is because of poverty that children are compelled to work in order to feed the

family and try to provide for their own personal needs. Poverty is the fundamental reason why children are forced to work. Thus, the major reason for child labour in the districts is poverty.

Agriculture (cash and food crop production) is the main work children are engaged in. It was rarely children's choice to work, but for the decision born out of environmental and economic demands, necessitate the need to compel them to work on the farm.

Certain types of extremely harmful or extremely exploitative child labour are in clear conflict with international law, and need to be prohibited. Children need to be granted legal protection from abuse and maltreatment of forced labour. Enforcement of existing laws by the government, bye-laws by the Aowin and Suaman District Assemblies and ratified conventions need to be enforced to deter profiting children from the worst forms of labour.

Strategies to reduce general poverty and increase incomes are likely to have a positive effect on reducing child labour. The relationship between child labour and poverty differs largely depending on local conditions, and should be examined at the country level, such that appropriate interventions can be designed. Improved income will reduce the pressure on all family members (including children) to be involved in low return, harmful, and time-consuming activities to meet household needs. Sustainable livelihood strategies like resourcing identified vulnerable families to carry out viable ventures will help to reduce poverty in the catchment zone. Micro credit programmes may be an effective way to address child labour. Education should be given on wealth creation strategies.

Since farming is the main economic activity of the people in the area and labour intensive in nature, capital intensive agriculture should be encouraged. To this end, government, donors and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) should provide farmers with the necessary farm inputs. This when effectively done will go a long way to reduce the use of human power in agricultural activities and this will curb the high incidence of child labour in the districts since majority of children are engaged in the sector.

Also, public education should be intensified by the government, the Aowin and Suaman District Assemblies through the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) to create the awareness on the impact of child labour. Thus, the education should not just gear towards a mere passing of information but most importantly towards attitudinal change.

Government should set up Child Labour Monitoring and Inspection Team (CLMIT) at the districts and community

levels and empower them to go beyond the formal sector to identify and prevent children from being exploited and also ensure that prevailing practices related to child labour are in accordance with the Labour and Employment Act, 2003 (Act 651).

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