

Assessment of Causes and Effects of Child Labour on the Academic Performance of Basic School Pupils in the Assin-North Municipality

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Abstract: *The study sought to examine the forms, causes and effects of child labour on the academic performance of Basic school pupils in the Assin-North Municipality. A descriptive survey was the research design used for the study. In all, a total of 50 respondents made up of 10 teachers, 35 pupils and 5 parents were purposively selected as the sample size. A purposive sampling procedure was used to select the sample size. Questionnaire and interview were the 2 main instruments used for the study. Data from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics namely frequency and percentage, whereas data from the interview were qualitatively. The study revealed that pupils were aware of the various forms of child labour engaged in by their friends and these include hawking, carrying loads, run errands, fetching water, and begging for arms. Also, it was observed that poverty, parental influence and broken homes were some of the causes of child labour in the study area. Finally, it was revealed that child labour affects pupils' academic performance in the schools. It was therefore, recommended that parents must endeavour to send their children to school and also take good care of them. In addition, government should impose stringent measures to abolish child labour activities in the country.*

Keywords: - Child labour, assessment, academic performance, effects, forms, causes.

INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of science education is to develop each learner's (child's) ability to acquire knowledge in specific subjects and improve their conceptual understanding so as to solve numerous problems confronting the society (N.R.C., 1996). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the stakeholders in education to provide these learners or children with better and quality education so that they become useful citizens in future in the society.

Gunnarson, Orgagem and Sanchez (2004) also pointed out that children are the pride of every parent and that they form a special link between the present and future generation in the society. This implies that it is the responsibility of the parents and the society to provide the educational needs for these children so that they may be in schools. However, most of these parents and the entire society have neglected their responsibilities towards these children allowing them to fend for themselves, thereby engaging themselves in several forms of "illegal, harsh and hazardous activities" often regarded as child labour.

The legal definition of a child in Ghana is anyone who has not reached the age of maturity, which is 18 years (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2003). There are several definitions for child labour, however, for the purpose of this study, the term "child labour" is defined as any activity, economic or noneconomic, performed by a child between the ages of 4 to 17, that is either too dangerous or hazardous for the child to do and has negative implications to the health, education, moral and general development of the child.

The issue of child labour is believed to be an old phenomenon; and it is as old as Methuselah. Historically, the phenomenon "child labour" is a social problem associated with the rise of industrial production and capitalism (Feigben, 2010). According to Shahrokhi (1996) the issue of "child labour" appeared in earlier ages in agricultural societies, but during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century in Great Britain it was especially conspicuous and began to be opposed. It was one of the biggest scandals of the 19th century, spreading to other countries as they industrialized (Shahrokhi, 1996). However, this issue of child labour is not confined to only the industrialized world but also it is a widespread problem in developing countries as well of which Ghana is not an exception.

A recent study of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) revealed that 350 million children worldwide over are engaged in child labour work (ILO, 2004). This horrific statistics implies that over one-fifth of the world's children aged 4 -17 years are exploited in different forms of child labour menace. The study further stated that the Asian Pacific region is the largest culprit of child workers of 122 million in total

and it is followed by sub-Saharan Africa (49.3 million) and Latin America and the Caribbean (5.7 million). Weston (2005) opined that still large numbers of children toil in appalling conditions and are ruthlessly exploited to perform dangerous jobs with little or no pay, and as a result of these conditions, oftentimes suffer severe physical and emotional abuse.

Child labour all over the world has been seen as major obstacle impeding the general development of the child in many scope of development including education. Studies (Canagarajah & Nielsen, 1999; Heady, 2003; UNICEF, 2007) in Ghana and elsewhere have shown that several factors might cause school children to engage in child labour and that it has negative repercussions on the academic performance of these students in schools.

According to Ghana Child Labour Survey (2003), child labour is the work that denies children of education or does not allow children to benefit fully from school. Example of such work may include selling of goods like dog chains, shoe polish, dusters, insecticides, iced water and several other items of rather marginal significance. It is alleged very often that many of these children frequently become victims of gambling, drug abuse, prostitution, armed robbery and various acts of delinquency and truancy. The public as a result tend to see these children as constituting a social problem. In a survey conducted by the Ghana News Agency (2001) following public outcry in the fishing communities of the Ketu District in the Volta Region showed that Basic school students at the coastal areas have become the main source of child labour to fishermen. The outcome of the survey postulated that the practice had negative implications on the academic performance of children engaged by the fishermen in their fishing activities. The study further revealed that most of these children fail their BECE examination and as a result, they cannot climb higher on the academic ladder as compared to their counterparts in the cities who are always punctual and very assiduous to their academic work. The study suggested that this phenomenon may be happening in other parts of Ghana most especially in the farming communities such as that of Assin-North Municipality.

It is in the light of this, that this study was carried out to assess the forms, causes and effects of child labour on the academic performance of the Basic schools in a typical selected farming Municipality in Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

Through extensive interactions with the teachers and students in the Assin-North Municipality, it was observed that the Basic school pupils who should be in schools during school hours were rather found in the street and lorry stations carrying loads; running errands, selling at chop bars and doing other menial jobs. These young pupils often engage themselves in all forms of child labour menace. Most boys were also found loading and offloading goods from cars whereas some girls also indulge in hawking, commercial sex trade and selling various kinds of goods. These developments might have serious or negative repercussions on the academic performance of these pupils in their Basic schools.

Studies (Diokno, 2000; 2009; Gunnarson 2003; ILO, 2006) have shown that several causal- factors might have triggered the issue of child labour and that child labour phenomenon has serious negative implications on the academic performance of pupils in schools globally.

It is against this background that the study was conducted to assess the forms and causes of child labour as well as its effects on the academic performance of Basic school pupils in the Assin-North Municipality.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the forms, causes and effects of child labour on academic performance of Basic school pupils in the Assin-North Municipality. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Examine various forms of child labour activities engage in by the Basic school pupils.
2. Find out the possible causes of child labour among Basic school pupils in the Municipality.
3. Evaluate the effects of child labour on the academic performance of the pupils in schools.

Research Questions

The following three (3) questions have been formulated to guide the study;

1. What are the various forms of child labour activities engage in by the Basic school pupils?
2. What are the possible causes of child labour among Basic school pupils in the Municipality?
3. How does the child labour effects the academic performance of the Basic school pupils?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This aspect of the study seeks to review related literature associated with this study. The review was done briefly under forms of child labour, causes of child labour and the effect of child labour on pupils' academic performance.

Forms of Child Labour

Several forms of child labour have been mentioned and are available in the literature. Studies (Marcus, 1998; Gunnarson, 2003; GSS, 2003; Weston, 2005; Feigben, 2010) have reported several forms of child labour globally and the highest forms are in the Asia and in Africa.

According to Ghana Statistical Service (2003) children surveyed under the child labour issues, 57% of them were engaged in agriculture, hawkers, forestry and fishing; 21 percent worked as street vendors, selling food, iced water and other items. Other occupations were washing cars, fetching fire wood and water, pushing trucks (large wheelbarrows) and carrying goods as porters.

Feigben (2010) reported that the common forms of child labour globally include factory work, mining, prostitution, quarrying, agriculture, helping in the parents' business, having one's own small business (for example selling food), or doing odd jobs. Some children work as guides for tourists, sometimes combined with bringing in business for shops and restaurants (also work as waiters).

Studies by (Heady, 2003; Weston, 2005; Badu-Akosa, 2014) also mentioned hawking, domestic servant in private household and child begging on the street as forms of child labour. Marcus (1998) and Harsh (2001) also indicated forced labour, slavery, prostitution, trafficking, employment in drug trade, criminal activities, begging and occupations dangerous to child's health and security of the children as different forms of child labour in their studies.

According to UNICEF (2008) most forms of child labour occurs in the informal sector which include assembling boxes, polishing shoes, stocking a store's products, hawking or selling things on the streets, at work in agriculture or hidden away in houses far from the reach of official labour inspectors and from media scrutiny.

Causes of Child Labour

Researchers (Marcus, 1998; Basu & Van, 1998; Odonkor, 2007; UNICEF, 2008) opined that poverty is the main determinant of child labour supply and that child labour significantly increases the income and the probability of survival of the family. On his part, Marcus (1998) stated categorically that the wide scale poverty is among the most reasons why children engage in child labour. Basu and Van (1998) also confirmed that the primary cause of child labour is parental poverty.

On his part, Moyi (2010) also mentioned adult unemployment, parental influence and urbanization as some of the causes of child labour. Studies by (Boafo, 2002; Odonkor, 2007; Badu-Akosa, 2014) also attributed the causes of child labour to streetism, truancy, peer influence and school-related problems as some of the causes of child labour.

Effect of Child Labour on Pupils' Academic Performance

Negative impact of child labour on students' academic performance have been reported by several researchers (e.g. Canagarajah, & Nielsen, 1999; Heady, 2003; UNICEF, 2007). These researchers have shown that child labour has detrimental effects on learning achievements or academic performance of students especially in the key areas of language, sciences and mathematics.

Canagarajah and Nielsen (1999) revealed vehemently that child labour interferes with child's education. Their study further revealed that either school attendance is foregone in favour of work, or learning is inefficient, either because the children are not allowed to spend time doing their homework or because they are unable to pay proper attention in school because of fatigue.

Heady (2003) indicated that in Ghana, children who engaged in child labour spent an average of one hour per week less in school. Thus, they always absent themselves from school for the sake of their work. In their study, Gibbons, Huebler and Loaiza (2003) reported that child labour is associated with poor performance, higher repetition and dropout rates in schools. In a similar study, Feigben (2010) opined that when children under age work, their labour time disrupts their schooling and in majority of cases prevent them from attending school altogether.

It is obvious that literature is full of enough evidence for forms (types), causes and effects of child labour on the academic performance of the learners in schools. It must therefore, be explored to broaden the scope of knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This design used for this study was descriptive survey. This is because the study sought to assess the views of the respondents on the forms, causes and effects of child labour on the academic performance of Basic school pupils in Assin-North Municipality. The design allowed the use of multiple data collection tools in seeking to address the research questions posed by the study in an in-depth manner (Anane & Anyanful, 2017).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The total sample size for the study was 50 respondents made up of 10 teachers, 35 pupils and 5 parents were selected. A purposive sampling procedure of the non-probability procedure was used to select the sample size. These respondents were selected because of their willingness to participate in the study. The 35 pupils (consisted of 15 upper primary school pupils and 20 JHS pupils) were involved in the worst forms of child labour activities. In addition, these pupils were selected because per their records in the school register, they always absent themselves from school.

In addition, five (5) parents of such pupils and ten (10) teachers who have in-depth knowledge on the child labour issues were selected for the study. The parents were selected in order to find out their views on the issues of child labour; find out why they involve their children in child labour and also to cross check responses given by pupils. An on the spot evaluation of the causes of child labour, the type of jobs they do before and after school, average number of days pupils attend school, and effects of child labour on the pupils' academic performance were assessed in the study.

Research Instruments

The study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data-gathering instruments. Two (2) instruments namely questionnaire and interview were used to collect data from the respondents. Questionnaire constituted the quantitative part while the interview constituted the qualitative part of the instruments. The interview was done using an interview guide. In addition, written documents such as diary notes and audiotapes were made to augment information that was obtained from the main instruments. These were done to ensure the triangulation of the data.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The questionnaire and interview guide items were designed, scrutinized and presented to two (2) senior lecturers at the University of Cape Coast for their comments and improvement of the items in the instruments.

Data Collection Procedure

Permission was first sought from the school authorities of the teachers and pupils used for the study. Consents of the parents, teachers and pupils used for the study were also sought. A week before the collection of the data, the respondents were met and had an open and frank discussion. A fixed date was set aside for the study. In the morning of the agreed date, questionnaire was administered to all the 50 respondents in the selected school in persons by the researcher to ensure complete coverage, evade bias and guarantee high return rate. This gave the researcher opportunities to interact with the respondents. The questionnaire was administered and collected on the same day and this ensures 100% return rate. After the administration of the questionnaire, a face-to-face interview session was conducted for only 30 respondents made up of all the 5 parents, 10 teachers and only 20 pupils using the interview guide. The interview session lasted five (5) minutes for each pupil.

Data Analysis Method

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. Items in the questionnaire were analyzed in quantitatively using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. On the other hand, data obtained from the interview guide were also analysed qualitatively.

Data obtained were organized and edited to ensure consistency. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 17.0 for windows was used for data analysis; and Microsoft excel program was used to present the data into Tables and charts. The recorded conversations with the students were transcribed, analysed and summarised thematically after the interview session.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Results

The analyses of the results were done to answer the three research questions posed by the study. The analysis of the results from the questionnaire and interview were done and presented into four (4) thematic sections covering the:

1. Socio – Demographic characteristics of the Respondents.
2. Forms of child labour engaged in by the pupils.
3. Causes of child labour among the pupils.
4. Effects of child labour on the academic performance of the pupils.

Analysis of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents' socio-demographic characteristics information on sex and age were sought. The findings with respect to pupils' sex are presented in Table 3 below:-

Table 1:-Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	36	72
Female	14	28
Total	50	100

Source: (Respondents' questionnaire, 2017)

Results in Table 1 shows clearly that, majority of the respondents 36 representing 72% were males while, 14 pupils representing 28% were females. This means that majority of the views expressed in this study were from males. This statistics in agreement with the findings of (Bhalotra & Heady 2001) that males (boys) engaged in child labour activities than that of females (girls).

Presentation of Results by Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the various forms of child labour activities engaged in by the Basic school pupils?

In answering research question 1, the respondents' responses to on the various forms of child labour activities engaged in by the Basic school pupils in the Municipality were analysed and presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Forms of Child Labour Activities Engaged In By Pupils

Forms of child labour	No. of Respondents (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
Hawking	50	100
Agriculture (e.g. farm work)	49	98
Carrying loads at lorry stations	46	92
Run errands	30	60
Fetching water	25	50
Washing	20	40
Quarrying	15	30
Prostitution	8	16

Source: (Respondents' questionnaire, 2017)

Data in Table 2 reveals that all the respondents representing 100% agreed that the most common form of child labour engage in by pupils in the study area is hawking; 49 respondents representing 98% also indicated agriculture (e.g. farm work); 46 respondents representing 92% also mentioned carrying of loads; 30 respondents representing 60% were also involved in running errands whereas 4 pupils representing 8% engage in fetching water for a living. Two (2) pupils representing 4% were engage in washing. It could deduce from Table 2, that majority 24 pupils representing 48% of pupils do engaged hawking.

In addition, other forms of child labour mentioned by the respondents during interview session include factory work, mining in the form of galamsey, helping in the parents' business, having one's own small business (for example selling food), or doing odd jobs. Some children work as guides for tourists, sometimes combined with bringing in business for shops and restaurants (where they may also work as waiters), begging for alms and also cutting herb to feed farm animals.

Research Question 2: What are the possible causes of a child labour among Basic School pupils?

In answering research question 2, the respondents' responses to the causes of child labour among Basic school pupils in the study area were analysed and presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Causes of Child Labour among Basic School Pupils

Causes of Child labour	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parental poverty.	50	100
Peer influence.	48	96
Child's desire for quick money.	47	94
Truancy.	45	90
Parental influence.	40	80
School related problems.	38	76

Source: (Respondents' questionnaire, 2017)

As shown in Table 3 above, it is clear that several factors may cause or lead to child labour. All the 50 respondents representing 100% indicated that parental poverty is the major cause of child labour; 48 of the respondents representing 96% mentioned peer influence whereas 47 respondents representing 94% also opined that the child's desire for quick money was the cause.

Again, 45 respondents representing 90% indicated truancy; 40 respondents representing 80% attributed it to parental influence; with only 38 respondents representing 76% indicated school related problems is the major cause of child labour among Basic school pupils in the Municipality.

In addition, the respondents also mentioned single parenting, sheer ignorance on the part of some parents, socio-cultural beliefs, parental unemployment, death of their parents; broken home, and parental illiteracy as other causes of child labour during interview session. Some of the pupils interviewed also stated that they were not good academically and therefore, see no reason(s) why they should waste their time attending school whereas they can work and earn money.

Research Question 3: How does the child labour effects the academic performance of the Basic school pupils?.

In response to research question 3, the respondents' answers given to the effects of child labour on the Basic school pupils' academic performance in the Municipality were analysed and presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Effects of Child Labour on Pupil's Academic Performance

Statements on effects of child labour on performance	Responses		
1. How often do you or your ward/student absent him/herself from school in a week because of child labour activities?.	Absent days	Frequency	(%)
	a). Once	2	4
	b). Twice	15	30
	c). Thrice	20	40
	d). Four times	8	16
	e). Every day	5	10
	Total	50	100
2. Do you or your ward/students have enough time to do his/her home work and assignments?	Yes	No	
	1 (2%)	49 (98%)	
3. Do you feel tired in school after engaging in school activities the previous day (only school pupils must answer this question).	Yes	No	
	34 (94%)	2 (6%)	
4. What has been the academic performance of you or the child after he or she engage in child labour activities?	a). Increase	b). Decrease	c). Same
	0 (0%)	48 (96%)	2 (4%)
5. Do you think that child labour negatively affects academic performance of pupils?	Yes	No	
	50 (100%)	0 (0%)	

Source: (Respondents' questionnaire, 2017)

Table 1 depicts the responses given by the respondents concerning the effects of child labour on the academic performance of the Basic school pupils in the study area. The respondents' responses to question one (1) concerning the average number of times they absent themselves from school. Out of the total 50 respondents, 20 respondents representing 40% indicated that they themselves (pupils) or their wards (parents and teachers) absent themselves thrice in a week; 15 respondents representing 30% mentioned twice; 8 respondents representing 16% four times; 5 respondents representing 10% indicated everyday; with only 2 respondents representing 4% absent themselves only once.

Again, as to whether the academic performance of the pupils has increase, decrease or the same after engaging in child labour activities (as in question 4), as high as 48 respondents representing 96% indicated decrease in academic performance; whereas only 2 respondents representing 4% indicated the same in academic performance; with no response for the increase in academic performance of their wards. With regards to whether pupils who engage in child labour have enough time to do his/her homework and assignments, as much as 49 respondents representing 98% indicated big “No” with only 1 respondent representing 2% indicated big “Yes”.

To ascertain whether child labour negatively affects academic performance of pupils (as stated in question 5), all the 50 respondents 100% affirmed “yes” with “No” response for the same question item. This implies that all the respondents in this study believed that child labour actually affect academic performance negatively.

In response to the issue of the effects of child labour on the academic performance of the Basic school pupils in the study area, a very interesting response were obtained from the interview session with the 20 pupils. When asked what are the effects of child labour on your academic performance?; a typical response is captured in the words of a JHS 1 pupil:

“Hmmm Sir, my performance has decrease considerably. I always place first or second position in my class but now am not even near 20th position ever since I engage in this tedious work at chop bar. I always sleep in class because I get tired after pounding and cleaning of bowls at the place. I sometimes close at 11.30pm at night. I wish to stop but there is no money since there is no money in the house. I want government to stop all child labour issues and arrest those adults’ perpetrators”.

Discussion of the Results

The results of this study showed that the respondents who took part in this study were aware of the various forms of child labour engaged in by the Basic school pupils in the Assin-North Municipality. The main forms of child labour activities identified among these pupils include agriculture (e.g. farm work); carrying of loads; running errands fetching water for a living; washing; factory work, mining in the form of galamsey, helping in the parents' business, cutting herb to feed farm animals and among others. However, the most common form of child labour among these pupils was hawking. This result is in agreement with the findings of (Heady, 2003; Weston, 2005; Badu-Akosa, 2014) that hawking, domestic servant in private household and child begging on the street as major forms of child labour.

It was also found out that there were several factors that cause child labour among the Basic school pupils in the study area. The main principal cause of the child labour was the parental poverty. Other causes identified in this study include peer influence; the child's desire for quick money; truancy; parental influence; school-related problems; single parenting, parental unemployment, death of parents; broken home; parental illiteracy and poor academic performance of pupils in schools. This finding is consistent with the results of pioneer researchers (Marcus, 1998; Basu & Van, 1998; Odonkor, 2007; UNICEF, 2008) that poverty is the main determinant of child labour and that child labour significantly increases the income and the probability of survival of the family.

The study also revealed that pupils who engaged in child labour activities always absent themselves from school. Out of the five days in a week, majority of the respondents (20 out 50) who often involved in child labour issues indicated that they usually absent themselves thrice; whereas 15 out of 50 also indicated that they absent themselves twice. The present study also revealed that pupils who engaged in child labour activities often get tired in school having engaged in child labour activities the previous day. As the review of the data in Table 4 showed, a greater proportion of pupils agreed to this statement. This is in agreement with the findings of Heady (2003) that children who engaged in child labour spent an average of one hour per week less in school.

Again, it was also found out that a pupil who engaged in child labour activities did not have enough time to do his/her home work and assignments. This finding supports the result of Canagarajah and Nielsen (1999) that child labour interferes with child's education because of that the children are not allowed to spend time doing their homework.

The study also revealed that child labour impacted negatively by decreasing the academic performance of the Basic school pupils. All the 50 respondents in the study unanimously opined that child labour is a bad issue which actually affect academic performance negatively and that it should be stop and also government should arrest those adults' perpetrators. This result lend credence to the findings of

Gibbons, Huebler and Loaiza (2003) that child labour is associated with poor performance, higher repetition and dropout rates in schools.

Conclusions

This study has shown that respondents (teachers; pupils and parents) were aware of various forms of child labour Basic school pupils in the Assin-North Municipality engaged in at their school. The most common form of child labour in the study area was hawking. Others include agriculture (e.g. farm work); carrying of loads; mining in the form of galamsey; and among others.

It could be concluded that parental poverty was the chief cause of child labour in the study. Other causes identified in this present study include peer influence; the child's desire for quick money; truancy; school-related problems; single parenting, death of parents; broken home; parental illiteracy and poor academic performance of pupils in schools. It was also concluded that child labour had impacted negatively on the academic performance of the pupils; and that pupils who engaged in child labour did not have enough time to study and do their homework/assignments.

Recommendations

Based on the key findings and conclusions drawn, it is recommended that: -

1. This study should be replicated using a much larger sample. This would provide a basis for more generalisation of conclusions to be arrived at about the causes and effects of child labour on the academic performance of pupils in Basic schools in Ghana and elsewhere.
2. Parents must endeavour to send their wards to school and take good care of them so as to prevent pupils from engaging in various forms of child labour.
3. Government of Ghana through the security agencies especially Ghana Police Service should enforced the laws on child labour enshrined in the constitution of Ghana by arresting and persecuting pupils and their "slave masters" who involve in child labour.

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