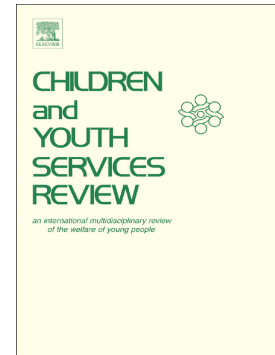


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Causes of Child Labour: Perceptions of Rural and Urban Parents in Ghana

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Abstract

The study focuses on parental perceptions of causes of child labour in rural and urban areas of Ghana. The research is grounded on qualitative research techniques by specifically utilising in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to collect the necessary data for the study. In this approach, the data gathering happened in Phases 1 and 2 of the research study at the research sites in rural areas, and urban areas. The 60 participants included government officials, representatives from NGOs, and both parents whose children were involved in child labour and parents whose children were not involved. Much theoretical and empirical evidence is presented to argue that child labour has a multiplicity of causes including cultural practices, socialisation, poverty, and lack of mechanisation of work. This paper finds that the socio-cultural contexts of child labour play a critical role in children's involvement in farming in the rural area while poverty also contributes to children's engagement in artisanal fishing work in the slum urban communities in Ghana. This paper recommends that child labour must be tackled in a coordinated manner on a cross-sectoral basis and there is the need to adopt policies that would address the category of work that falls within worst forms of child labour (WFCL). Additionally, policy-makers and NGOs must consider the link between economic deprivation and child labour when implementing programmes designed to combat the problem.

List of Acronyms

AMA: Accra Metropolitan Assembly
 BECE: Basic Education Certificate Examinations
 CDW: Child Domestic Work
 CHRAJ: Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice
 CSO: Civil Society Organizations
 DFID: Department for International Development
 ESP: Education Strategic Plan
 FCUBE: Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
 GDP: Gross Domestic Product
 GES: Ghana Education Service
 GHC: New Ghana Cedi
 GLSS: Ghana Living Standards Survey
 GPRS: Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
 GSS: Ghana Statistical Service
 IBRD: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
 ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 ICO: International Cocoa Organization
 IITA: International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
 ILO: International Labour Organization
 JHS: Junior High School
 MDG: Millennium Development Goals
 MOE: Ministry of Education
 NGO: Non-governmental organization
 PTA: Parent Teacher Association
 SDG: Sustainable Development Goal
 SHS: Senior High School
 TLM: Teaching and Learning Materials
 TU: Tulane University
 UDHR: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 UNDP: The United Nations Development Program
 UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
 UNICEF: The United Nations Children and Educational Fund
 USAID: The United States Agency for International Development
 USLD: The United States Labor Department
 WB: The World Bank
 WFCL: Worst Forms of Child Labour

1. Introduction

Child labour is a legal concept with solid moral undercurrents rather than a dispassionate situation basically explained by statistics. Expressing legal standards in cross country data is extremely challenging. The standards set by International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions express a global reference point (Diallo, Etienne & Mehran 2013). Nevertheless, the ILO statistics offer a fixed depiction of what appears to be a dynamic and extremely varied situation (Quattri & Watkins 2016). There is a distinction between child labour and child work in relation to domestic and global reporting perspectives. Child labour expresses a subcategory of employment or working situation (Quattri & Watkins 2016). The legal limits that distinguish child labour from “acceptable” child work is defined by three Conventions. The most rounded and extensively adopted global definition of the minimum age for admission to work is offered by ILO Convention 138 (1973). This Convention was approved by 169 countries and requires that ratifying countries set a minimum threshold of 15 years for admission to work, permitting a certain measure of discretion in developing countries to set a minimum threshold of 14 years. The age threshold is elevated to 18 years in relation to hazardous work. Hazardous work encompasses sectors such as mining and construction and other occupations such as metallic and electrical engineering activities, textile, wood-cutting, leather product machinery, and street vending. Convention 138 sets out to draw aspects of the distinction between child work and child labour. In participating in light work, the Convention sets the minimum threshold at 13 years but permits developing countries a certain measure of discretion to set the threshold at 12 years. Light work is explained as any harmless work by children that totals less than 14 hours a week. This is permissible work because it is not harmful to children’s health and does not compromise their school attendance or other training activities.

The extent to which child labour is the result of economic forces or cultural norms and values is a major area of contention amongst scholars. In his study, “Getting Rid of Child Labour”, Ahmed’s empirical results evidently confirm that poverty is just an insignificant explanatory element behind the occurrence of child labour. In order of position, poverty came last among the seven causes of child labour. It is believed that child labour prevents children from attending school, hampers productive learning and refuses children a prospect to acquire the knowledge and skills they require to break free from poverty, and that their nations need to promote inclusive growth and human development (Quattri & Watkins 2016). However, there is rather fluidity in the interaction between child labour and school enrolment since some children combine work with education (Post 2018). There is a view that suggests that cultural attitudes towards childhood play a role in explaining the persistence of child labour (Zelizer 2005). Cultural values and practices contribute to the existence of child labour by shaping intra-family choices (Kabeer 1994) and mediating the effect of economic forces (Nieuwenhuys 2005). The focus of this paper is to provide a critical synthesis of the causes of child labour at the research sites in rural areas and urban areas. Examining parents’ perceptions of the causes of child labour is an important topic of study, since parents plays a crucial role in the development of the child, and parents largely determine whether a given child will be engaged in work, and what kind of work they will perform (Bowlby 2008). The development of the child is grounded on interactions with others, and is moulded particularly by the child’s parents.

The justification for comparison between rural and urban case study communities was underpinned by the fact that both areas offer interesting contexts for assessing the causes of

engaging children in economic activities in terms of parental knowledge and the effectiveness of the legal regime. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana introduced special provisions geared towards guaranteeing the rights of children as a unique group. This included an expansive set of rights designed to foster children's welfare and development. These constitutional provisions place obligations on Parliament to legislate to ensure and safeguard the welfare and development of children in Ghana. The legal regime on the protection of children was consolidated in 1998 in Ghana through the passage of the Children's Act (Act 560) 1998 (Twum-Danso 2009). The Act draws together previous child-related laws and makes necessary amendments which are tailored to meet UN and ILO benchmarks. On 5 December 2005, Ghana reached another major milestone in the protection of children's rights when legislation was passed to outlaw human trafficking within, to, from, and through Ghana ('Human Trafficking Act 694'). The Act's provisions were mainly motivated by the United Nations Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, particularly women and children (Palermo Protocol), which is the main international legal framework to fight trafficking (Sertich & Heemskerk 2011). The passage of this Act is also relevant to the protection of children from exploitative work. Despite the passage of the above new laws and policies to curb child labour in the two areas under study, parents still engage their children in farming and artisanal fishing work. Even though the rural and urban areas vary in size, population, nature of economic activities, infrastructural development and religious composition, they have a young age structure and a high incidence of child labour (Flora 2018; GSS 2014b). The demands on children to support family income in both rural and urban Ghana are such that a projected 21.8% of 5-17 year-olds are engaged in economic activities (GSS 2014b). Children involved in economic activities comprise 22.7% of boys and 20.8% of girls in rural and urban Ghana and the percentage of urban children in child labour was 12.4% compared to 30.2% of children in rural areas (GSS 2014b).

The lack of consensus in research on the relationship between child labour and its actual causes in the rural and urban areas may lead to questioning policy proposals that are intended to eliminate child labour. While the prevalence of child labour in the farming and artisanal fishing sectors have been extensively reported, little empirical consensus has been built on the causal conditions in households in developing countries (Adeoye et al. 2017). Some empirical results suggest that poverty is only a minor explanatory factor behind the incidence of child labour (Ahmed 1999). Therefore, Bhalotra (2003) observes that viewpoints that dwell on socialisation through parental perceptions of work or cultural practices, and efforts to shape economic models that relate to choices, deprivation and child labour have not been adequately researched. Furthermore, much research in rural and urban Ghana on causes of child labour tends to dwell on paid labour and underemphasise family work based on socialisation (Ray 2002). There is therefore a need to carry out a comparative analysis between rural and urban Ghana to investigate this assertion.

1.1 Why do parents put their children to work in rural and urban Ghana?

This research question is critical in directing the analysis of the study owing to the need to develop a scientific understanding of "causes of child labour" and formulate policies and programs to address them. The study reveals the following: Child labour has multiple, intersecting causes in both communities under investigation. In the rural areas, poverty, the socialisation of children, family livelihood and lack of mechanisation were the most common parental perceptions coming out of the data analysis, with socialisation acknowledged as the

most common cause of child labour. Mostly, all parental participants highlighted socialisation/culture as the main cause of child labour, while also pointing to other causes such as poverty and lack of mechanisation. In urban areas, the same category of causes of child labour were recognised by parental participants, with poverty being the foremost cause. Even though poverty is revealed as a perceived cause of child labour in both urban and rural settings, more parental participants (the focus group discussions, participant observation, stakeholder interviews and parental interviews) suggested poverty in the urban area than in the rural area.

The paper is presented in 7 sections, and sets out to explore parental perceptions of the causes of child labour in rural and urban areas of Ghana. In the first section, the aim and research question driving the paper are introduced. Section 2 discusses child labour in Ghana. Section 3 presents the concept of ecological perspectives, which provides a conceptual framework for the paper. Section 4 presents the methods and research design of the study, detailing what was done, how it was done, and why it was done and describes the study area. Section 5 presents the main findings that emerged from the study. Section 6 discusses the findings of the study. This paper is concluded in Section 7. Here, the research is assessed for what it has revealed about parental perceptions of the causes of child labour in rural and urban areas of Ghana.

2. Child Labour in Ghana

Child labour is an age-old practice which is widespread in all parts of Ghana (Asuming-Brempong et al. 2007). Children in Ghana are under pressure to make a contribution to family income, leading to 28% of children between the ages of 7 and 14 years engaging in remunerated economic activities (DFID 1998). They are required to work towards family subsistence at an early age in most regions. Child work forms part of the socialisation process of equipping children to take up adult skills in future life (ICO 2016; Löwe 2017). This socialisation process is in the form of an informal “apprenticeship”, during which basic work ethic and skills are taught. For example, children accompany their parents to their farms to work as a means of passing on basic farming skills to them. They begin to gain insight into their parents’ farming activities and become acquainted with the simple tasks of farming such as weeding, pod plucking, pod gathering and heaping, scooping of cocoa beans, carting of fermented beans and drying of beans (Ruf 2011). Children’s farming activities also include carrying water for spraying, and carting of dry beans to sale hubs (Pasanen 2016). Tilling of the land and harvesting of crops which are harder work begin a little later when children are around 10 years of age (Löwe 2017).

A majority of children in rural areas are involved in economic activities in the agricultural sector, whilst children in urban areas primarily work in trade, child domestic work (CDW), fishing and construction. The number of children who were engaged in economic activities in the textile and footwear sectors is minimal compared to the number working as CDW (ILO, UNICEF & WB 2016). In Ghana, children below the age of 14 years constitute a significant part of the labour force in the cocoa and fishing industries (Kapoor 2017). Additionally, 40% of those working in rural areas are between 5-19 years of age (Mull & Kirkhorn 2005).

Ghana has a total child population of 2,236,124 in the cocoa-growing areas with an estimated 957,398 (42.8%) engaged in light work, 918,543 (41.1%) engaged in child labour and estimated 878,595 (39.3%) engaged in WFCL (Kapoor 2017). Furthermore, the percentage of children working in the agricultural sector declines with age, dropping to 57.1% in the 15–17 age

category, even though they are usually engaged more in WFCL (USLD/TU 2015). Additionally, the number of children in WFCL in cocoa production declined by 6% (from 0.93 million to 0.88 million) between 2008/09 and 2013/14 in Ghana (USLD/TU 2015). The WFCL in Ghana predominantly involve the carrying of loads, CDW, ritual servitude, commercial sexual exploitation, stone quarrying, small scale mining, fishing and cash crop agriculture (Asuming-Brempong et al. (2007).

The percentage of boys (83.7%) who were engaged in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry was greater than the percentage of girls (70.0%) (GSS 2014a). In contrast, the percentage of girls who were involved in wholesale and retail trade (17.3%) was greater than the percentage of girls (7.9%). A slightly greater percentage of girls (4.4%) than boys (3.2%) were engaged in manufacturing. The percentage of girls in the accommodation and food service industry was 5.2% compared to 1.5% of boys in the same industry (GSS 2014a). It is estimated that there are 391,236 girls in cocoa-growing areas (or 36.8% of the total population of girls in this region) engaged in child labour, as opposed to 527,307 boys (or 63.2% of the total population of boys in cocoa-growing areas) (Kapoor 2017). Moreover, children are engaged in all adult tasks that are required of their gender at the age of 14 years (Hashim 2007).

Cocoa farming constitutes part of a larger agricultural livelihood strategy for households (Sumberg et al. 2012). The percentage of children who were involved in agriculture was greater in rural (87.5 %) than in urban (50.8%) areas (GSS 2014a). Greater percentages of children in rural savannah (92.7%) and rural forest (84.3%) were engaged in the agriculture sector compared to the rural coastal (74.2%) (GSS 2014a). Children in rural areas are more economically active than their counterparts in urban areas. Children in the rural areas are also more economically active at younger ages than other children in Ghana, with the highest proportion of children in the age 5-9 category (70%) engaged in some form of agricultural activity (Agbenyegah & Gockwoski 2002).

Approximately all the economically active children aged 5 to 14 years (99.8%) are engaged in some form of economic activity (GSS 2014a). The percentage of economically active children in rural areas is double the number in urban areas and this is true for males and females (GSS 2014a). The percentage of males aged 5 to 14 years who are economically active is higher than females in both urban and rural areas (GSS 2014a). Furthermore, the largest percentage (62.5%) of working children of both boys and girls aged 5–17 is to some extent involved in agricultural work (Mull & Kirkhorn 2005). The two principal harvest seasons are the small non-peak season from July to early September and the peak season from November to January. Ghanaian children (13%) between the ages of 5 and 14 are actively involved in farming activities (GSS 2007). There is intensive demand for labour on the Ghanaian cocoa farms which is seasonal. Ghanaian children (21.7%) are engaged in economic activities with a greater percentage (39.7%) located in the rural sector while 19.8% are in urban areas (Mull & Kirkhorn 2005).

3. Ecological Perspectives

The ecological perspective offers a conceptual framework for explaining people's way of life in the community context and further explains the community context itself (Trickett 2009). Furthermore, Trickett (2009) suggests that ecological perspective highlights how persons with

different cultural histories, skills, experiences, and resources react to personal difficulties, prospects, and constraints of the social contexts of significance to them. It points out that a historical perspective on the community context, highlighting the formative role of cultural and community history in explaining current community functioning (Trickett 2009). This approach is certainly reasonable since our knowledge and behaviours are guided by learned cultural scripts (Kral et al. 2011, p. 46). Consequently, knowledge about the local community is precondition and prelude to choices about what kinds of activities serve community goals and interests, and what individuals, groups, and social settings are most essential to the action goal according to the ecological perspective (Trickett 2009). Ecological perspective, therefore, evaluates how community traditions, resources, social structures and norms affect individual and group life. Therefore, in addressing a complicated socio-economic subject like child labour, it is extremely significant to understand and deal with human behaviour and problems in context. Many social interventions make minimal impact, or fail completely owing to the inability of policy-makers to understand the cultural and community contexts (Kral et al. 2011). This is so because the connoisseurs are found in the community. Interventions that are planned independent of culture are usually inclined to be ameliorative rather than transformative, and therefore tackle secondary causes rather than primary causes of a problem. Any intervention of a problem at an unsuitable level is probably going to disregard the most significant triggers of the problem (Jim 1992). Interventions that fail to understand culture usually have inadequate impact or fail because they do not change “the rules of the game”. (Kral et al. 2011).

4. Methods

The study was designed utilising qualitative research techniques by specifically utilising in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to collect the necessary data for the study. Qualitative research has a specific contribution to make by assisting us produce valuable ideas about social issues at a series of levels, from that of individual perceptions through to that of how global systems work (Green & Thorogood 2018). Qualitative methods comprise a set of approaches for answering questions regarding what occurs, why and with what impacts at varied degrees. Purposive sampling method was utilised to assist in identifying the targets to answer the research questions (Mason 2017). Purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain that involves well-informed experts (Lim, Shon & Yang 2018; Mason 2017). Furthermore, the investigator puts modalities in place to identify key informants who have the abilities and are willing to offer required information (Lucero et al. 2018; Mukherji & Albon 2018). The study specifically utilised focus groups, in-depth parent and stakeholder interviews, and participant observation techniques. The justification for applying these techniques is due to the lack of research in the study context and the need to obtain detail information to answer the research question. The detailed and complex data produced by semi-structure interviews is appropriate to offer clarifications (Draper & Swift 2011). A semi-structured interview schedule was applied to get information in the participants’ own words, to provide a narration of situations and to produce

detailed information. My research question: “Why do parents put their children to work in rural and urban Ghana?” is supposed to offer varied accounts and consequently, language and content was made simple to comprehend by both professionals and parents alike. The interviews took place in varied settings comprising of the offices of the professionals and parents’ own homes. Majority of the interview settings were chosen at each participant’s convenience. The parental interview schedule comprised of 14 questions; stakeholders’ interview schedule is made up of 20 questions; focus groups’ interview schedule contained 13 questions; participants’ observation interview schedule comprised of 12 questions and the interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

The sample size was 60 participants and they included government officials, representatives from NGOs, and both parents whose children were involved in child labour and parents whose children were not involved. I conducted a total of 10 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from government agencies, departments and non-governmental organisations (5 stakeholders in each of the two areas under study). I moderated focus group discussions with 30 participants in total in the two areas under study. The focus groups were made up of parents, opinion leaders in the communities and traditional authorities. I recruited parents for the focus group discussions on parental attitudes towards child labour and human rights in the two communities under study. A total of 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents whose children are involved in child labour activity and those whose children are not involved in this kind of work from each of the two communities under study. Finally, participant observations were also conducted to investigate children’s natural working environment and to contextualise the empirical findings, helping to illuminate parental perceptions of human rights and child labour. A total of 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents in the participant observations (5 parents in each of the two areas under study). The inclusion criterion for selecting participants for this study was being a parent who was a farm/boat/canoe owner with children engaged/or not engaged in child labour in the two communities under study or stakeholder in child welfare with expert knowledge.

I became the data collection instrument to assist in addressing the issue of validity and reliability (Bryman 2015). Therefore, my competence and interviewing skills and ability was the basis of reliability of the data gathered. Truthfully, my interview methods were improved and the quality of data improved as the research advanced (Ruckenstein 2014). Additionally, I improved interviewer reliability by conducting two pre-pilot interviews to get experience and the critical skills (Appleton 1995). Furthermore, I tackled the issue of reliability in the context of equipment used in the interview. I used a tape recorder to record all interviews, subsequently, improving reliability (Richards 2014). Therefore, I reported the findings in a way that was intended to express their tentative nature (Denscombe 2014). Likewise, I have evidently used auditability in this paper recounting each stage of the research procedure, amplifying and justifying what was done (Cope 2014).

I ran into possibilities of researchers bias to influence this study due to fact that I am a social scientist myself. Nevertheless, I was determined to overcome this by assuming a neutral stance and declining to give my own views during the data gathering process (Ormston et al.

2014). Hence, I checked and referred the data and the tentative interpretations to the research participants to approve of its credibility and accuracy at the end of the data analysis (Cope 2014). The goal was to establish if the findings recapitulated the participants' own experiences and explanations about the issue at stake. Similarly, the explanation of the analysis seems to be articulated in other areas. I triangulated my data by utilising different sources to confirm the developing findings (Carter et al. 2014). I considered my data and relevant literature which made me sure that the issue at stake as perceived by participants was accurately conveyed as possible. The data analysis was structured, comprising the creation of thematic matrices that systematically analysed data to ensure degrees of abstraction.

4.1 Limitations/Difficulties of the research

- The translation of participants' views from local language into English language that expresses participants' perceptions is one of the limitations of this study.
- Self-reporting of the participants brings about the problem of how much these views echoed the perceptions of the target population.
- I faced the problem of carrying out the study efficiently and effectively while upholding validity.
- Another problem was biased sample and biased returns because I applied purposive sampling in this qualitative research format.
- Furthermore, I did not give equal opportunity to many stakeholders in the target population to be interviewed.

4.2 Closing-the-Loop

- The application of propositions, for instance, was an avenue for us to reduce language of emotion and prove to the reader of my disconnection from the analysis.
- Furthermore, I standardised our interview schedule, the methods, findings and conclusion format which we designed to decrease rhetorical excess.
- Moreover, I used scientific language ostensibly to lessen multiple meanings from words in the interest of accuracy.
- Additionally, I conducted our study analysis to focus on the research language and we also managed the data in a relatively neutral fashion.

In this study, data gathering happened in Phases 1 and 2 of the research study at the research sites in rural areas (Ankaase, Anwiankwanta and Kensere), and urban areas (Jamestown, Korle Gonno and Chorkor). According to the 2010 *Population and Housing Census*, its total population is 20,451 (GSS 2012). Anwiankwanta, also known as Anweankwanta, is located at an elevation of 201 meters above sea level and has a total population of 29,748 (GSS 2012). Kensere is located at an elevation of 228 meters above sea level with a total population of 15,637 (GSS 2012). Jamestown, Korle Gonno and Chorkor are the three urban fishing communities under study in the Accra Metropolis. According to the 2010 *Population and Housing Census*, Jamestown has a population of 16,221 (GSS 2012). The second community, Korle Gonno is a well-established and typical indigenous coastal community known as Ga Mashie meaning King of Ga. According to the 2000 *Population and Housing Census*, it was estimated that the

population of Korle Gonno was 27,826 residents, projected to increase to 44,088 by 2008 (AMA 2008), while the total population of Chorkor stood at 23,853 (GSS 2002; Trickett 2009).

5. Results

My data indicate that a variety of factors contribute to the engagement of children in child labour in the areas under study. Key amongst them are the socialisation of children, poverty and lack of mechanisation of work. Although poverty is a significant factor in both rural and urban areas, interviews with parents also suggested that the relatively high prevalence of child labour in rural areas was because child work is a deeply rooted cultural practice, and because cultural structures in rural areas have been more sheltered from foreign intrusion than in urban areas.

Rural Areas

Socialisation Process

Many parents consider child work to be part of the socialisation process for children in local rural communities. It is part of the culture of many communities to socialise their children to take over from them in future. A parent said:

I believe I've to bring up my children in the way I was brought up. This is because my parents socialised, me to learn work ethics and that has made me who I am today. I don't see that when my children work in my farm during weekends and vacations, that can be called child labour.

Another parent explained:

My children help me to expand my farm. I also use the money I get from farming to look after them. It is also a way of training my children to take over from me when I am not around. I allow my children to work because of my children's future.

Many view the engagement of children in economic activities to enhance social competencies, build a sense of identity, strong emotional character, and gain career skills. The amount of time spent in a working context relates to better acquisition of the skills, knowledge and experiences linked with that context. The Director of CHRAJ explained:

Parents will engage their children in child labour because of the work socialisation process.

This is further supported by discussion in the focus groups, which suggested that work provides children with an avenue to develop their social and emotional competencies, including a strong work ethic. Some view children who are not working as uncultured and lazy. A parent said:

Whatever work I assign to my children is not intended to harm them but to train them to have strong work ethics that will in turn help them to have a better future. Children who go against cultural expectations by refusing to work are seen by society as deviants.

Participants in parental interviews noted a variety of benefits that children learn through work. As one parent explained:

Children use their abilities, express their interests, and exhibit creativity through work socialisation. Children also can work with people and to be useful to the society.

The more time they spend working on a task, the more skills, knowledge and experiences they gain. Parental participants in the participatory observation suggested that farmlands serve as a training ground to provide children with necessary skills that will be more useful to them in the future than attending school. As a Principal Labour Officer said:

Parents tell us that they know children in the community who have successfully completed their education, yet they don't have jobs. Some parents believe putting their children into farm work is worthwhile because their children develop their employment skills that get them ready jobs.

This view was supported by interviews with parents in rural areas. As one parent commented:

Why should I enrol my children in school if they're going to be unemployed after finishing? For me, I believe it will make more sense to engage them in my farming for them to acquire some skills that will help them in their future lives.

The issue of graduate unemployment is a hindrance to school enrolment since a significant number of parents mentioned that as the reason they put their children to farm work which will guarantee them a sustainable future income. Many parents believe that “good” children combine schooling and working. As one parent said:

I believe during the weekends children must make themselves available for farm work. Totally withdrawing from farming activities by a child is a sign of rebellion and stubbornness.

A similar view was expressed by the Director of CHRAJ:

In most parts of the rural areas it is within the culture for children to work to support their parents at an early age. If a child refuses to work, then society sees that child as a deviant, uncultured, disrespectful or even lazy.

This reflects the view that children have an obligation to their parents and to the community. Many focus group participants explained that the acquisition of abilities to work and solve problems raises children's capacity to produce goods and services. This investment of children's time in a work environment increases their lifetime incomes and promotes the growth of the local economy. As one parent said:

Children who don't support their parents on the farm are deviants. Parents won't toil and use their money on such children.

This development reinforces the economic and emotional ties in child work which has significant implications for parents' role in the payment of children's school fees. Child work is considered as a form of social support which is a major means by which parents and families get income to pay children's fees. They underpin the informal arrangements significant for a family's survival.

Poverty

Some participants in the study consider poverty to be a contributing factor to the engagement of children in work in Ankaase, Anwiankwanta and Kensere. Children need to work to bring in more money so that the household can meet the essential needs of all its members. Closely related to this, in farming communities, children sometimes need to work on the farm because the household cannot afford to pay for the services of farm labourers. A third possibility is that children need to work to pay for school fees, textbooks and transportation. The idea that there is a link between poverty and child labour was endorsed by a significant number of parents and stakeholders. A Director of CHRAJ said:

I think poverty plays a major role in child labour practice. No matter the number of intervention programmes that are brought in by NGOs and government, if parents are deprived, the practice will persist.

Many participants in the focus groups echoed this view. One parent explained:

The harsh economic situation demands that my children work to support me to take care of the entire family.

Another parent said:

We're all not on equal financial status. Some parents can care for the entire family without child work. Some of us too need our children to work to supplement family income.

Poverty has been a particular problem in recent years because of lower prices for cash crops which have put local farming families under pressure and led to a loss of local jobs and worsening deprivation. Many parents believe that engaging their children in child labour is the only way for families to avoid poverty. This point was reinforced by another parent who explained:

I don't know how I'm going to exit poverty in this difficult economic environment if my children do not support me on the farm to increase productivity. My children even appreciate the current predicament and they're happy to support me with farm work.

My field work also revealed that the financial strain on families in rural areas has a variety of further consequences. A parent said:

I can't put my children in school and access good health care if I don't allow my children to work to increase my income, so child work is necessary for me.

This clearly indicates that a further consequence of poverty is that some families cannot afford to enrol all their children in school, and instead prioritise the education of those deemed to be the most academically talented. As one parent told me:

I normally assess my children's level of intelligence to decide which of them to enrol in school. Children who fail their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which is their final examination join me on the farm to do farm work. I can't allow my children to sit at home without doing anything.

This implies that many parents assess their financial situation before deciding whether to put their children to work. This view was reinforced by interviews with stakeholders from the Labour Department. As a Registrar of CHRAJ explained:

Imagine a father who has a huge farm but has no money to hire the services of labourers. The farmer is likely to use his own children because farm work must go on anyway.

Parents also referred to the need for farm labour when explaining why they put their children to work:

Those of my children who aren't intelligent are put into farming activities to support those children who are in school. The farm work is huge, and I cannot do all by myself. We don't have the money to hire the services of labourers, so we're compelled to engage our children in work.

Some suggested that this need for labour was partly because many farmers could not afford to mechanise their farms. As a parent whom I interviewed in one of my participant observations commented:

The enormity and the tedious nature of our work demands many farm labourers. This is because I don't use machines here neither do I have the means of acquiring them. The only option left to me is to ask my own children to help me.

Focus group participants also explained that there is often a need for children to work in order to help finance their own education. A parent in a focus group explained:

Some children are eager to be in school, yet their parents can't afford it and therefore they want to work to get enough money to enrol. Let me tell you the truth. That's the only way such children can to enrol in school.

This view was echoed by some stakeholders. For example, a registrar of CHRAJ said:

When school authorities sack some of these kids for non-payment of school fees, some children feel they can work to support their education. Most often, the times that some children support their parents on the farm are the times that they are supposed to be in school.

Consistent with the idea that poverty is a key factor contributing to child labour, many parents pointed out that the farmers and households who are not involved in child labour are relatively well-off. As one focus group participant said:

Rich people do not engage the services of children because they have money to pay for the services of adult labourers. Hence, they hire the services of adults.

Commercial farms can also afford to make greater use of machinery, which reduces the need for labour. In contrast, there is a low level of mechanisation on family farms in Ghana. A relatively wealthy parent pointed out:

My children even don't know where all my farms are because they don't go to farm and I don't compel them to do so. It's therefore not true that all parents in

this community put their children to work. Many of the parents who do that, do that because of poverty.

Although NGOs in Ghana are increasingly taking up poverty alleviation strategies which were formerly carried out by state agencies, a number of participants noted that more needs to be done. A Director of CHRAJ said:

I think there are options open to us as a society. If the various NGOs working in these communities can support deprived parents financially, then children can be made to stop working and go back to school.

Overall, many the parents and stakeholders who were interviewed believed that poverty was a major factor in contributing to child labour in Ghana. However, the idea that poverty is the main cause of child labour was also challenged by some participants who argued that social relief programmes such as Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), School Feeding Programme, Capitation Grant, Free School Uniforms and Exercise Books have made school affordable for most families. For example, a Principal Labour Officer said:

Mostly, child labour is blamed on poverty in these communities. However, I believe poverty is only used as an excuse. Parents have enough resources to enrol their children in school without engaging them in child labour.

State agencies offer incentives to parents who remove their children from child labour practices and enrol them in school. In view of this, a Labour Officer observed that some parents deliberately withdraw their children from school and put them into work so that they can then receive the incentive payment when they are subsequently re-enrolled. This assertion is reinforced by literature elsewhere (Skoufias et al. 2001).

Long Distance between Communities and Schools

The long distance between schools and residences in many rural communities also contributes to child labour because it is easier for children to work on a nearby farm than it is to attend school. A parent said:

I don't see why I should enrol my child in school if the school is far apart from my community. How does the government expect our children to get to school? Our farms are just around the community, so we can just as well train our children to be farmers.

This opinion was reinforced by other stakeholders. For example, a Labour Officer in the rural area said:

Distance makes it difficult for children to go to school regularly. What is now being done is to build community schools for children to enable them to be in school.

Participants suggested that if schools are built in every community, parents will not have the excuse to withdraw their children from school and engage them in child labour.

Urban Areas

Poverty

According to a Director of the Social Welfare Department, child labour in urban areas is a poverty issue. The Director explained that most of the children who go to sea and sell on the streets come from deprived homes. Children must assist their families by working to supplement their families' income. A Director of the Child Resource Institute expressed a similar view:

Basically, the problem is about poverty. Many livelihoods of parents are hand to mouth businesses, so they are unable to pay for their school fees. That is why you see many children at home and not going to school. We are working with limited facilities, so we are unable to enrol as many children as we should in our school.

Many parents interviewed in urban areas suggested that parents engage their children in work because of deprivation. A parent said:

I don't get enough income from my fishing business to enable me to shoulder all the family responsibilities, so my children need to help me to increase our family income.

However, other participants believed that although many parents would want to enrol their children in school, they are not prepared to make the economic sacrifices required to achieve this. Some also have misplaced priorities when it comes to the allocation of their financial resources. As one parent said during an interview:

Some parents spend their income on parties and funeral clothes rather than their children's education. For me it's a matter of spending on things that one believes really matters.

This view was to some extent strengthened by a Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department who said:

Some parents often opt for the option of least resistance, that is, putting their children into work instead of school. Given the choice where all parents have the capacity to enrol their children in school, all parents will want their children to be in school. Children working is not a preference for parents.

Others point out that among poor families' children enrolment in school is often dependent on them being able to go to sea with their parents. One focus group participant said:

Children go to sea and sell for their parents. Let's be clear and honest on some of these issues. Parents push many of their children you see going to sea or selling in this community into work. We see children who are five, six, seven, eight, years selling around. Their parents send them, and they don't sell for themselves. Children sell because of poverty; parents need money to put their children in school that is why they put them into work.

Education in Ghana is supposed to be free as provided under the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy but, it is not free because parents are required to pay different kinds of school levies. The various levies that schools charge parents have watered down the

substance of FCUBE, along with other welfare programmes that were supposed to make education more accessible, such as the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme. This view is shared by the Deputy Director of Social Welfare, who drew on his own experience to illustrate the point:

I have a house help who's enrolled in a public school. I pay various fees not less than GHC 50 every term. This amount of money cannot be borne by the average Ghanaian. The school feeding programme on the other hand is limited to some few schools since it is on a pilot basis.

Parents who cannot afford to pay the various school levies are likely to engage their children in economic activities to help them meet this cost in the future. However, there is no guarantee that they will earn enough to be able to afford to put their children back to school. A parent explained:

Education is supposed to be free, yet parents are asked to pay development levy, parent teacher association levy and library levy, so some parents engage their children in work to enable them pay for all these levies.

As in the rural areas, there were some urban participants who believed that poverty is no excuse for failing to enrol children in school. Parents should find the resources for this, even if it would mean selling family assets. As one parent commented:

I sold my parcel of land to pay for my children's Senior High School education when he qualified from the Junior High School to enter SHS (i.e. Senior High School).

However, once again, the dominant view among participants was that poverty was a key factor in explaining why children are engaged in child labour.

Cheap Labour

The need for cheap labour is another reason for engaging children in fishing. Children have little or no bargaining skills when it comes to employment matters. Some adults therefore take advantage of children's vulnerability in negotiations to make more profits. A focus group participant said:

Some parents and fishermen consider children as cheap labour. Many parents want to make more profits.

Adults charge higher rates for their services, so canoe/boat owners will often prefer to hire children instead. Often, they will not want to give a percentage of their catch to the child labourers on board either, which is the practice when adults are employed. As one parent said:

Boys of 8 to 9 years will not demand much from fishermen when there is a catch. Most children are ready to accept a meagre amount of money as remuneration.

Some stakeholders explained that adults who engage children in child labour activities are just lazy. A Principal Labour Officer said:

Some adults do not want to work hard. Other adults also use children to work for them because their labour is very cheap.

Many participants believe that the total elimination of children from fishing will affect the local economy. A focus group participant suggested:

Our family businesses will collapse if we take our children out of fishing. It is part of our culture for children to get deeply involved in what we (parents) do.

Some adults can intimidate children in bargaining for their services. However, those adults lose sight of the fact that a well-developed adult can contribute more than a child. It is also common for children in Ghana to be raised by family members or other adults who are not their biological parents, and many participants suggested that children in these situations were particularly vulnerable. Thus, many children living with relatives other than their biological parents are especially likely to be involved in child labour and suffer other forms of abuse. As one said:

The kind of treatment some children go through in their homes portray the insensibilities of their guardians. It is also an indication that such children aren't living with their biological parents.

After returning home from fishing, many are then expected to perform difficult household tasks before going to bed. This was reinforced by a participant in focus group who said:

It's known in this community that most of the children who go through various forms of abuses don't live with their biological parents

In Ghana, foster care is under-regulated and this leaves children whose biological parents are not present particularly vulnerable to child labour (Kuyini et al. 2009).

Lack of Mechanisation

Lack of mechanisation is another factor contributing to child labour in urban areas. The artisanal nature of fishing makes the work difficult to do. Parents therefore need more assistance to be able to carry out their trade. As one parent explained:

Our work (fishing) is not mechanised so it is quite difficult and therefore, we need the support of our children to be able to do our work. I have five children, I have put the two most brilliant ones in school, and the other three are working to support me look after the brilliant ones. I can't also bring in other people's children to work with me. It's better I work with my own children.

Focus group participants observed that child labour is widespread in the area under study although the government has outlawed it. A focus group participant said:

This is because there is inadequate mechanisation of artisanal fishing industry. The work is quite difficult, and fishermen need more hands.

Other stakeholders also believed that a lack of mechanisation contributes to child labour. A headmaster of a school said:

I think many parents are using their children to work because their work is not mechanised. The State needs to support parents to mechanise their work to help eliminate child labour.

Participants suggested that if government can help artisanal fishermen to mechanise their activities, child labour may be reduced.

Socialisation

Parents in the participant observation suggested that fishing activities serve as a vehicle to adequately prepare children for the future. Thus, children are engaged in work as part of the cultural socialisation process. Parents see child work as a training ground for children to understudy their parents in the work environment, preparing them to carry on the family business in the future. A parental participant in one of the participatory observation groups said:

I don't believe when my child work with me during his leisure times in my fishing business it is child labour. Engaging my children in fishing is simply a traditional system of schooling which doesn't violate the rights of my children.

According to stakeholders, the involvement of children in fishing is part of the culture of the communities and an important means for them to develop psychosocial skills. Involvement in child-friendly work helps children learn to take turns, be helpful, share, and care for others. A parent said:

I can boldly tell you that the practice is influenced by the culture of the people. In the olden days owners of canoes always wanted to have male children to take them to sea. If fishermen bring forth only female children that means anybody who marries their daughters will inherit their canoes. Society consider these male children as helpers of the family business. I didn't go to school because the culture had some form of influence on my education. I was always interested in working.

Some of the household work enables children to understudy their parents to become responsible adults capable of managing themselves. A parental participant in one of the participant observations said:

I want my biological children to benefit from my business. I take my children to sea as part of the succession plan to take over from me.

Some stakeholders also observed that some children who participate in fishing are engaging in both work and recreation. While earning an income to help support their household, they also can play and swim for leisure. According to a Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department:

The recreational activities of the people should enable us to understand that child labour is not necessarily about poverty.

This is another reason why an understanding of the social/cultural context is important in understanding child labour. However, many participants also believed that some children are

made to perform an excessive amount of work that goes beyond what they need for the purpose of socialisation. A focus group participant explained:

I think some parents overburden children with work because our society see child work as part of the socialisation process.

This assertion is reinforced by many more participants in the parental interviews. For example, a parent explained:

Sometimes it's difficult to confront or report a parent to the police if you see a child being overburden with work in this community. This is because we all understand the socialisation principle is a core value in our society.

This indicates that although most parents believed that sending children to work was an important part of the socialisation process, some also believed that this practice was abused by some adults who made children perform exploitative and dangerous forms of work.

Illiteracy and Ignorance

Lack of parental education is another factor that contributes to child labour. A Director of the Social Welfare Department explained:

If a child has an educated parent, no matter the economic hardship, they will still find a way of enrolling their children in school. There are public schools, which do not cost so high as compared to the private schools. Parents can therefore enrol their children in the public schools where there are safety nets like the FCUBE, Capitation grants, school feeding programme, free school uniforms, free exercise books etc.

Many focus group participants also agreed that the ignorance and irresponsibility of some parents contributes to the problem of child labour. A parent reiterated this point:

For me, I think ignorance brings about irresponsibility. How can you tell me that parents who use their money to do unnecessary things can't pay for their children's schools fees? They simply don't know the importance of schooling, so they abandon their children and put their money in wrong things.

Many participants in the focus groups noted that some parents abandon their children because of strained relations with their partner. Other parents have enough savings to buy clothes for ceremonies, yet they are unable to pay school fees for their children.

6. Discussions

The main aim of this paper is to explain the reasons children become involved in child labour in rural and urban areas of Ghana. Child labour has multiple, intersecting causes in both communities under investigation. Although some economists and sociologists believe that child labour is the result of economic deprivation, this paper find that the socio-cultural contexts of child labour also play a critical role in children's involvement in fishing and farming work in Ghana. Much empirical evidence is presented to demonstrate that child labour has a multiplicity

of causes including cultural practices, socialisation, poverty, and lack of mechanisation of work (Ersado 2005). The economic structure in rural Ghana is different from urban areas. The rural area under study is agrarian local economy. Many of the local population grow mostly cocoa, cassava, plantain, vegetables, fruits and other staples. Household survival depend mostly on agrarian activities consisting of subsistence and cocoa which is a major cash crop in the communities under investigation. These crops feed the local households and provide reasonable amount of money for them. In the urban areas, the local population are engaged in artisanal fishing which is associated with lower incomes and income instability owing to extensive seasonal fluctuations in fish catch. Akaba and Akuamoah-Boateng (2018) echoes this claim by pointing to fluctuations in proceeds in artisanal fishing. Artisanal fishermen in these urban communities are largely poor since they have smaller boats and gear, and catch relatively smaller quantities of fish compared to the large-scale commercial fishing vessels (Grainger & Parker 2013). The fishing vessel often utilised by artisanal fishermen is a big dug-out wooden canoe. Artisanal fishing communities have higher rates of fertility and population growth rates (GSS 2015b). Higher fertility in artisanal fishing communities has been attributed to the high demands for labour in fishing and the role of kin-based labour (Marquette et al. 2002).

I differentiate between the rural communities where the socio-cultural consideration applies and the urban communities under study where poverty is the major cause of child labour. In the rural areas, the socialisation of children, poverty, family livelihood and lack of mechanisation were the most common explanations emerging from the data analysis, with socialisation identified as the most common reason for child labour. Engaging children in child labour to socialise them is not limited to Ghana but prevalent in other developing countries. In other developing countries in which farming and artisanal fishing are main industries and school education is not supplied sufficiently, as found in this study, making children succeed the parents' job and, for this reason, teaching children the job by parents may be the best way for their subsistence. In the rural communities under study, for example, if household needs GHC 100 to survive and school fees is GHC 20 and the parents earn GHC 120, children do not have to work for the family's survival and therefore, they can attend school. However, children may work and not go to school even in this situation. It can be assumed that the socialisation by the parents has occurred and that school education is lost due to the socialisation process in this instance. In the rural communities under study, socialisation is not a completely hopeless situation since children do not become impoverished when they become adults. Nevertheless, it becomes difficult for the economic situation of generations of such a family to be improved. Children cannot accumulate human capital that can be used in the more productive industry without school education. Therefore, they cannot save towards the future and as a result they cannot provide their children with adequate education. The country will find it difficult to exit poverty if it is comprised of such households.

The high level and continuous engagement in child labour presents a difficulty in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set for 2030 (Quattri & Watkins 2016). These goals include the eradication of poverty, decent quality learning for all children up to secondary school level, reduced inequality and the creation of decent jobs (SDG 2017). High level children engagement in child labour is in conflict with these targets, particularly those connected with education (Guarcello, Lyon & Valdivia 2015). There is long-term negative impact of utilising child labour as a socialisation process in Ghana and other parts of the developing world. Besides the exposure to risk of injury, these children are deprived of the opportunity to acquire what Amartya Sen describes as 'human capabilities' – the knowledge,

skills and competencies needed to expand choices and extend opportunity (Sen 1997). Children who make early entry into the world of uncertain, untrained, low-paid work are improbably going to accrue the education they require to get decent work and exit poverty across generations. Widespread child labour is a barrier to human development since it undermines the human capital on which dynamic and inclusive economic growth, increasing productivity and social progress is based. It is no accident that child labour is firmly connected with low income both across and within countries.

In urban areas, the same causes of child labour were identified, with poverty being the leading cause. Although poverty is mentioned as a perceived cause of child labour in both urban and rural settings, more participants (the focus group discussions, participant observation, stakeholder interviews and parental interviews) indicated poverty in the urban area compared with the rural area. In the urban area for example, if the family needs GHC 100 to survive but parents earn only GHC 70, children must work to earn at least additional GHC 30. Therefore, child labour in the urban communities under study is because of poverty and cannot be taken as a socialisation process even if children have an opportunity to learn how to engage in their parents' work while engaging their children in child labour. Quattri and Watkins (2016) points out that children are pushed into child labour by economic deprivation reinforcing the view that parents make the decision to engage their children in child labour as a 'distress choice' meant to meet a minimum income level. Moreover, even if education is free, children will not receive education because they must work and cannot attend school. In this context, children forfeit their schooling owing to poverty and not due to their socialisation process.

The results of my analysis suggest that more children in the urban areas under investigation work because of poverty than the rural areas under study. Additionally, more parents in the urban area under study view poverty as the major cause of child labour than the rural area under investigation. Although, poverty as a reason for child labour holds in both urban and rural areas, but it is more pronounced in urban area. In contrast, the 2016 Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report, suggests that households in urban areas continue to have a lower average rate of poverty than those in rural areas (Cooke, Hague & McKay 2016). The report further indicate that urban poverty has declined in present times more rapidly than rural poverty leading to a doubling of the gap between urban and rural areas. Presently, rural poverty is nearly 4 times as higher than urban poverty compared to 1990s when rural poverty used to be two times higher than urban poverty (Cooke, Hague & McKay 2016). There seems to be tension between my findings and the 2016 Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report. This divergent interpretation from my study is based on participant observation, focus group discussions, and stakeholder and parental interviews. In seeking explanations for these divergent results, I uncovered in my study that contextual factors need to be taken into consideration to be able to explain the contradiction. I explain the elements underpinning this trend and demonstrate that it is the extent to which geographic adjustment of economic welfare in the Ghana influences the measurement of poverty. Additionally, Nolan, Waldfogel and Wimer (2017) find that there is a more communal way of living in the rural areas than urban areas which serves as robust antipoverty system and safety net. This is the case in both geographically unadjusted and adjusted measures of poverty. Furthermore, rural communities below 200 percent of the poverty line are more likely to receive support through their communal way of living (Nolan, Waldfogel & Wimer 2017). The communal way of living is more effective antipoverty and Social Security system in the rural areas than their urban counterparts, and that this is the situation across racial/ethnic groups (Nolan, Waldfogel & Wimer 2017). This finding is consistent with literature elsewhere in the

world. For example, Ye (2017) explains that urban communities are heterogeneous “melting pots” drawing people from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Migration has brought new diversities to enrich as well as complicate the dynamics of urban communities. This has also resulted in a renewed interest in the possibility of the regular intercultural encounter in shared places. There is also a higher percentage of female-headed families in urban communities, which are more vulnerable to poverty. The inability of deprived households to cater for the family motivates them to engage their children in economic activities. Enrolling children in school is a luxury that deprived families are often unable to afford.

Furthermore, participants in both the urban and rural areas engage their children in work for reasons of socialisation. This is consistent with the findings of a recent study by Adu-Gyamfi (2014) who found solid evidence that children in Ghana engage in work for cultural and socialisation reasons. Child labour may be considered harmful to people from Western cultures, but traditionally *child labour* has played a crucial role in the rearing of Ghanaian children, helping them learn the importance of work, alongside practical skills that are regarded as essential to being a valued member of the family and community. Childhood studies in anthropology have claimed that “childhood is socially constructed and it changes depending on the historical and cultural setting” (Montgomery 2008, p. 51). The findings of the study support this view and show that a proper understanding of the causes of child labour must pay attention to cultural variations in how the idea of “childhood” is constructed.

As the paper has established, poverty is the factor most likely to be identified by parents as a cause of child labour in the artisanal fishing slums in the urban area. This means that in addressing the problem, the government should be careful not to implement policies that widen inequality and leave poorer families and children worse off. In many cultures in the developing world, work is viewed as a means of helping to socialise children, contributing to their personal development. However, according to parental participants in my study, there are limits to the kind of work children should be expected to perform. “Child labour” problems should be understood in the context of WFCL, hazardous work or the abuse of children in work, rather than work socialisation (White 1999).

7. Conclusion

In Ghana, child labour is a complex practice as in other developing countries, that must be tackled in a coordinated manner on a cross-sectoral basis. Any constructive effort will need combined methods that range from the control of labour markets, education, child welfare and varied strategies for poverty reduction. There is also the need for a framework of dialoguing which is intended to change attitudes. Based on the findings from the focus group discussions, participant observation, stakeholder interviews and parental interviews, an adequate policy response that includes: designing an enhanced evidence base approach to reflect the level of child labour and the schooling status of child labourers, concentrating particularly on urban fishing slums and conducting studies that reflect the reported experiences of children. Furthermore, there is the need to make the elimination of child labour a leading goal of education policy. In 2015, the overall expenditure on education to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 3.9% (GSS 2015a). Therefore, there is the need to increase the total expenditure of education to about 4–5% of GDP, with a stronger focus on overall equity and education delivery in artisanal fishing slums of the urban areas.

This paper recommends improvement in the quality of education in artisanal fishing slum communities and promoting the school readiness of fishing slum-dwelling children through universal early childhood provision in fishing slums (Quattri & Watkins 2016). Further, there is the need to invest in the human resources required to make sure that regulatory agencies are equipped to carry out effective inspections. Additionally, punitive fines need to be imposed on employers found to be engaging under-age children in work. Again, inspection arrangements need to be reviewed for the artisanal fishing sector to ensure that fishermen comply with national laws.

It is also important that community schools for children be built in every locality to enable children to be in school to address the problem of schools being far from communities. This is because parents and stakeholders identified travel time as a factor discouraging children from regularly attending school. Issues relating to access, quality and teacher training also need to be addressed, and interviews again suggested that teacher quality discouraged parents from sending their children to school.

This paper recommends educational programmes for parents on the need to enrol their children in school and other vocational apprenticeships. This is intended to correct the perception that working is more beneficial for children than education and training. In some of the areas under study, as discussed in section 5, parents already had a good understanding of why WFCL is wrong, partly because of existing media campaigns. There is a need for various children's rights NGOs and government agencies responsible for children's welfare to collaborate on providing better education for parents, especially in the fishing and cocoa growing/farming communities (Figiel, Kuberska & Kufel 2014). Apart from government efforts to address WFCL, there is also the need for the design and implementation of scholarship schemes for academically talented children from disadvantaged families in these communities.

There is the need for steps to be taken to combat the conditions of poverty and economic vulnerability that contribute to the problem of child labour. Poverty itself should be officially declared as an infraction of the rights of the child nationwide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) makes provision for the freedom from want. Additionally, Article 27 of the UNCRC acknowledges the right to "a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development". This standard is acknowledged by the economic and cultural rights since 1966 in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This reinforces the argument that poverty violates the rights of children by thwarting their optimal development. There is need for primary prevention interventions that focus on community poverty in general. The government should institute income transfers and/or subsidies for deprived households with children in school. This is critical for child labour reduction. The implementation of social relief programmes, such as free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE), the school feeding programme, the capitation Grant, free school uniforms and free exercise books, should be strengthened to cover all children in Ghana. As discussed in section 5, education in Ghana is supposed to be free as provided under the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy but, it is not free because parents are required to pay different kinds of school levies. The various levies that schools charge parents have watered down the substance of FCUBE, along with other welfare programmes that were supposed to make education more accessible, such as the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme. This would help take deprived children from work and enrol them in school. There is also the need for systemic and intervention programmes with legal

backing by the government of Ghana to offer professional social work programmes and services that go beyond the constitutional provision outlined in their national constitutions (Kaltenborn et al. 2017; Tsikata 2010).

This paper recommends the adoption of policies that would address the category of work that falls within WFCL. Additionally, policy-makers and NGOs must consider the link between economic deprivation and child labour when implementing programmes designed to combat the problem. Adopting more advanced forms of technology in agriculture and fishing would also help combat child labour. This was one of the factors that helped to curb the use of child labour in 19th century Europe. In Ghana today, mechanisation would mean that routine and repetitive tasks could be carried out by machines instead of children. This would increase the motivation for children to stay in school to improve their skills. The government could also provide local farmers and fishermen with credit facilities with flexible repayment terms to help them mechanise their operations or adopt labour-saving technologies (Cofie 2015; Yirga 2012).

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Highlights

- The study focuses on parental perceptions of the causes of child labour.
- The research is grounded on Concurrent Parallel mixed methods research design.
- Child labour has a multiplicity of causes including socialisation and poverty.
- This paper recommends the adoption of policies that would address WFCL.
- The link between economic deprivation and child labour must be considered.