Child Labour Versus Realising Children's Right to Provision, Protection, and Participation in Ghana

Obed Adonteng-Kissi

Published online: 05 Apr 2020.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Child Labour Versus Realising Children's Right to Provision, Protection, and Participation in Ghana

Obed Adonteng-Kissi ⬦

Department of Social Inquiry, College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia

ABSTRACT

The need to establish universal standards to protect children led to the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). I drew on literature exploring the UNCRC and children's rights to provision, protection, and participation. This paper aimed to ascertain challenges of enforcing children's rights to provision, protection, and participation in rural and urban Ghana drawing on the experiences and perceptions of 60 government officials, NGO representatives, and parents. Semistructured interviews were conducted with parents (10), stakeholders (10), focus groups (30); and participant observation techniques (10) were utilised to gather the required data and purposively sampled across rural and urban areas in Ghana. Interviews were recorded, and transcribed utilising a framework approach as the qualitative data analysis method. Acceptance of childhood as understood in the UNCRC is different from traditional child-rearing patterns in rural and urban Ghana.

IMPLICATIONS

- Social workers' knowledge about dealing with dilemmas posed by rights to provision, protection, and participation for children may be enhanced.
- Social workers can improve their knowledge of factors that challenge the enforcement of children's rights for children engaged in child labour and the possible tension between children and parental rights in their everyday social work practice.
- Social workers can introduce culturally sensitive parenting programs and develop their own contribution towards monitoring and implementing the rights to provision, protection, and participation for children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted in 1989 and ratified in 1990 with additional provisions to guarantee the rights of children. In February 1990, Ghana was the first country to ratify the UNCRC, just three months after its adoption (Twum-Danso, 2009). The adoption and ratification of the UNCRC was in reaction to human rights violations perpetuated against children on a global scale. Generally, child labour is considered by UNCRC to be a human rights violation (Articles 32 & 35,

UNCRC, 1989). However, child labour should be examined within a sociocultural context rather than viewed simply as a violation of children's rights. The rights of all children should be respected, but understanding of what this entails will vary from society to society. This is because of differences in the cultural and economic environment (Elder, 2018; Lancy, 2018). This is particularly important in the Ghanaian context where engaging children in farm and fishing work is considered by many parents to be an important part of work socialisation that is beneficial for children and society (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018). In some cases, it is also an economic necessity (Nardinelli, 1990). The rights adopted in the UNCRC can be categorised into three groups: protection rights, provision rights, and participation rights. It is, therefore, necessary to answer this research question: "What factors challenge the enforcement of UNCRC principles of rights to provision, protection, and participation for children engaged in child labour in rural and urban Ghana?"

Despite its accomplishments, the UNCRC is not without challenges. Some of the provisions of the UNCRC conflict with each other and this creates problems. For example, the duty to act in the best interest of the child may conflict with the participation rights enshrined in the UNCRC (Thomas & O'Kane, 2000). Acting in the best interests of the child may impose a paternalistic duty on parents (and, in some cases, the state). However, the right to participate in decision-making seems to go against this paternalism. Again, the opinions of the child should be given considerable weight, even when they clash with the views of parents, which also appears to be inconsistent with this paternalism (Archard & Skivenes, 2009). Additionally, the UNCRC does not suggest that any one right or Article of the UNCRC should have priority over the others.

How UNCRC Challenges Traditional Child-Rearing Patterns

There is a disconnect between Westernised and non-Westernised cultures of child-rearing styles (Sharley, Ananias, Rees, & Leonard, 2019). The UNCRC was informed by Western ideals of childhood and does not consider the cultural variations that promote children's contribution to their family and schooling (Westwood, 2013). Western patterns of child rearing attempt to take children away from the workplace and provide them with a form of childhood that promotes child welfare according to Western standards (Liebel, 2004). The UNCRC has been used by many countries to measure progress in the improvement of the life chances and prospects for children (Twum-Danso, 2009). Nevertheless, the UNCRC could challenge the prospects, aspirations, and goals of children who may never hope to realise the idealised rights provided for in the UNCRC (Westwood, 2013).

Implementing measures to operationalise the UNCRC obligations pose critical challenges to some countries (Farran, 2012). While countries' progress on children's rights are not reported by the monitoring committee (UNCRC Committee on the Rights of the Child), adequate resources are not available to developing countries to monitor progress (Westwood, 2013). Additionally, investment in health and education delivery and other social infrastructure in developing countries is made difficult by scarce national resources. The UNCRC gives children equal status with adults. Although children have rights, they are incapable of exercising those rights due to their immaturity and innocence (Twum-Danso, 2009). Respect for children's rights and the Western idealised notions of childhood make room for freedom, innocence, and dependence (Westwood, 2013). However, these principles and real economic and political power cannot be realised by

many children in the developing world (Masten, 2014; Quennerstedt, 2010). Monetary and systemic interventions and programs are created through adult-focused concerns and push children into child labour. Other elements also expose children to deprivation and displacement. Discounting non-Western countries' perspectives of the real situations of children has intensified criticisms of the UNCRC and perspectives on children's rights (Westwood, 2013). Many critics view the UNCRC as a concept founded on entitlement and social justice, and inconsistent with the principle of communal help and responsibility that underpins child-rearing patterns and ideas of childhood in non-Western settings (Kjørholt, 2007). The development and ratification of the UNCRC has led to the introduction of Westernised-thinking into non-Western countries (Mbise, 2017). This has muted Indigenous voices, in the process ignoring Indigenous wisdom and knowledge (Hetherington, Coates, Gray, & Bird, 2013).

The need for localised children's rights regimes is a familiar discourse that reinforces the design of appropriate and culturally significant methods, consistent with a nation's social, political, and economic environments (Semali, 2012). In culturally and linguistically diverse Ghanaian communities, Indigenous knowledge on this complex subject is desirable. In order to draw on Indigenous practices of knowing to advance knowledge in social work practice and understanding what constitutes children's rights in the local context, there is the need for a community-based participatory study (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009). Knowledge of and responses to children's rights in Ghana should be consistent with issues such as health, deprivation, and inequality in the localised setting where children live (Osei-Hwedie & Rankopo, 2016). It is significant to acknowledge that already, Ghana is committed to minimising poverty and the impacts of poverty, through initiatives such as the free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE), free senior high school (FSHs), the national health insurance scheme (NHIS), capitation grants, and school feeding programs (Mullen, 2019).

The Rights of the Child and UNCRC

The UNCRC is acknowledged as one of the major international legislative frameworks regulating the practice of child labour. It also seeks to protect children from economic exploitation or worst forms of child labour (WFCL) that interfere with their education or is harmful to their health and mental, physical, and social development (Article 32, UNCRC, 1989). The key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on worst forms of child labour (WFCL) are the ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999) and the ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age of Employment (1973) (Dennis, 1999; Noguchi, 2002). Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182 defines WFCL as the following: all forms of slavery or practices comparable to slavery, sale and trafficking of children, and work which, by its nature or the conditions in which it is carried out, has the likelihood to harm the health, safety or morals of children. Article 1 of ILO Convention No. 182 unambiguously obligates ratifying countries to take "immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of worst forms of child labour (WFCL) as a matter of urgency". The UNCRC also places an obligation on countries to put in place mechanisms to make primary education compulsory and free for all, and to encourage secondary education (Article 28, UNCRC, 1989). Additionally, the UNCRC requires countries to pass minimum age laws regulating

engagement in employment, working hours, and conditions of employment (Article 32 [2], UNCRC, 1989). Article 38 of the UNCRC (1989) sets international standards in relation to children in armed conflict. The UNCRC also requires member countries to offer up-to-date interventions and tougher monitoring programs in relation to child labour. In view of its near universal ratification, there is a legal obligation on all countries to respect the provisions of the UNCRC. This gives the UNCRC the status of *opinio juris* in the sense that countries feel a sense of obligation to prohibit child labour regardless of whether they have signed up to the UNCRC (Meron, 1989).

Rights to Provision, Protection, and Participation

The core principle underpinning the UNCRC is outlined in Article 3 of the UNCRC (1989), which states that the principle of the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all actions concerning the child (Spitz, 2005). The UNCRC makes provision for a variety of different rights. Article 12(1) of the UNCRC (1989) provides that

> State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

The rights to provision and to protection principally deal with the identified needs of the child and require states to adopt far-reaching national policy safeguards to ensure that children enjoy a reasonable standard of living, secure and complete access to appropriate education, guaranteed protection from all forms of exploitation, cruelty, and abuse, and protection from a social environment that is detrimental to their health and wellbeing. In addition, Articles 32 & 35 of the UNCRC (1989) deal with forced labour, exploitation, child trafficking, and the need for children's "rights to be protected" universally. The last requirement is particularly important as it makes clear that the provisions of the UNCRC are intended to apply to both developed and developing countries. All states that are party to the UNCRC are required to integrate the protection of these rights into all aspects of national policies and programs (Twum-Danso, 2011). In addition to these three specific categories of rights protection, the UNCRC also imposes a more general duty to act in the best interests of the child, as mentioned above. Article 3(1) of the UNCRC (1989) states that "in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration".

Methods

Research Design

The research is designed in a qualitative exploratory study technique by using in-depth stakeholder and parental interviews, focus groups, and participant observation methods to collect the needed data for the research in Ghana from 1 April 2015 – 30 June 2015. One advantage of qualitative exploratory research is that the use of open-ended and probing questions provides participants the opportunity to respond in their own words,

particularly if there is limited information on the subject (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Therefore, a semistructured interview schedule was used to get information in the participants' own words, to produce an account of conditions, and to provide detailed information.

First, the rural area under study comprised these farming communities: Ankaase, Anwiankwanta, and Kensere, which are all in the Asante Bekwai Municipality. The populations of these communities are: Ankaase (20,451), Anwiankwanta (29,748), and Kensere (15,637) (GSS [Ghana Statistical Service], 2012). Second, the urban area under investigation covered these fishing communities: Jamestown, Korle Gonno, and Chorkor, which are all in the Accra Metropolis. The populations of these communities are: Jamestown (16,221), Korle Gonno (27,826), and Chorkor (23,853) (GSS, 2012).

I recruited 60 participants, some of whose children were involved in child labour and some whose children were not. Purposive sampling was applied for selecting all the participants deliberately identified by me to offer specific information about the study population. The inclusion criterion for choosing participants for this study was being either a parent or a stakeholder in child welfare with expert knowledge. Methods (Table 1) comprised:

- semistructured interviews with stakeholders from government agencies and key stakeholders (see Table 2)
- semistructured interviews with both parents whose children were involved in child labour and parents whose children were not involved in child labour (see Table 3)
- interview schedule for selected parents involved in participant observation (see Table 4)
- focus groups with parents and opinion leaders (see Table 5).

Data Generation Activities and Data Analysis

The focus groups' interview schedule contained 13 questions. Additionally, the parental interview schedule comprised of 14 questions; stakeholders' interview schedule was made up of 20 questions; participants' observation interview schedule comprised of 12 questions and each interview lasted between 30 and 90 min.

I applied a framework technique as the major qualitative data analysis approach in this paper. A framework approach is generally used in applied policy research and it is a qualitative data analysis technique (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). The framework technique clearly indicates the research objectives upfront, grounded on the research (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000). Hence, it starts with deduction but ends with the generation of inductive data as it tries to accurately express original accounts and observations. Considering this, framework analysis is significantly arranged, comprised of the creation of themes that methodically analyse data with a view to higher levels of abstraction being

Table 1 Method of Data Collection

Methods	Rural area	Urban area	Total
Stakeholder Interviews	5 participants	5 participants	10 participants
Parental Interviews	5 participants	5 participants	10 participants
Focus Group Discussions	15 participants	15 participants	30 participants
Interviews with participants in Participant Observation	5 participants	5 participants	10 participants
Total	30 participants	30 participants	60 participants

Table 2 Stakeholder Interview Schedule

1. Do you think parents understand contemporary meaning of children's right to protection, provision, and participation?
2. What do you think is the local people's own concept of children's rights?
3. What is your understanding of the local culture here in this community?
4. Do you think the local child-rearing styles are misunderstood by the international community/outside world?
5. Can you explain the significance of work in child rearing in the local culture of this community?
6. Do you think the local culture allows children to express their views?
7. What is the impact of poverty on children's involvement in decision-making in all matters affecting them?
8. Do you believe contemporary definition of children's right to protection, provision, and participation is consistent with parenting styles in this community?
9. What part of the local culture is inconsistent with children's right to protection, provision, and participation if there is?
10. Do you think there is any part of the local culture which conflicts with children's right to protection, provision, and participation that should be reformed?
11. Do you think parents believe they need to involve their children in decision-making, protect them, and provide for their needs if they do not engage in work?
12. Is the concept of children's right to protection, provision, and participation foreign to your local culture?
13. What are some of the challenges of your agency in enforcing children's right to protection, provision, and participation in this community?
14. What should be the position of the government on issues relating to the traditional way of child rearing?
15. What is the level of children's involvement in decisions concerning them in this community?
16. Do you think the engagement of children in work affects their education and health in this community?
17. What is the relationship between parents and children regarding work?
18. Do you think parents need children to work to contribute to family income in this community?
19. What do you think are the views of parents about the Western parenting style and children's right to protection, provision, and participation?
20. How are you addressing factors that pose challenges to enforcing children's right to protection, provision, and participation in this community?

Table 3 Parental Interview Schedule

1. Why do you engage your children in work?
2. What do you think is the meaning of children's right to protection, provision, and participation?
3. Do you think your parenting styles conflict with the Western definition of children's rights?
4. Can explain your views about Western parenting style?
5. Do you think your children have the right to protection, provision, and participation, if they do not engage in work?
6. What does your culture teach you about engaging your children in work?
7. What is the nature of your relationship with your children?
8. Why do you think the cultural meaning of engaging children in work is important to you?
9. Do you think engaging your children in work affects their education and health?
10. Does the international community/outside world understand your parenting styles?
11. Do you think engaging your children in work violates their rights to protection, provision, and participation?
12. What are some of the problems you have with State parties and NGOs when you engage your children in work?
13. Do you involve your children in decisions concerning themselves?
14. What are some of the challenges of involving your children in decisions involving them in this community?

Table 4 Interview Schedule in Participant Observation

1. Why do you engage your children in work in this community?
2. Do you understand the meaning of children's right to protection, provision, and participation?
3. What are your views about the Western parenting style?
4. Do you think your local culture has impact on children's engagement in work?
5. What do you think your culture teaches you about engaging your children in work?
6. What kind of relationship exists between you and your children?
7. What value do you put on the cultural meaning of engaging children in work?
8. Can you say when you engage your children in work, it affects their education and health?
9. Is it true that your parenting styles are misunderstood by the international community?
10. Do you think engaging your children in work violates their rights to protection, provision, and participation?
11. What are some of the problems you encounter with children's welfare agencies and children's rights NGOs when you engage your children in work?
12. Is it true that engaging your children in work challenges their right of involvement in decisions affecting them?

Table 5 Focus Group Interview Schedule

1. Why do you engage your children in work in this community?
2. Do you understand the meaning of children's rights to protection, provision, and participation?
3. Can you say your style of child rearing is influenced by the way you were brought up?
4. Can we say children have the right to protection, provision, and participation in this community?
5. Do you have problems with children's welfare agencies and children's rights NGOs when you engage your children in work?
6. Do think your culture has an impact on your children's rights to protection, provision, and participation?
7. Can you say there is an economic explanation to children engaging in work in this community?
8. Do you involve your children in decisions concerning them and what do you think are the challenges of involving your children in decisions involving them in this community?
9. What are some of the challenges faced by the children's welfare agencies; children's rights NGOs and law enforcement agencies on the implementation of children's right to protection, provision and participation and why?
10. Can you say the UNCRC and new laws in Ghana are obstacles to the Ghanaian cultural way of bringing up their children?
11. Do you think parents would have economic/social difficulties if their children are stopped from engaging in work?
12. What are your views about contemporary children's rights and Western parenting style?
13. What do you think the government should do to be able to fully implement children's right to protection, provision, and participation in this community?
14. How should we deal with economic and social challenges of enforcing children's right to protection, provision, and participation in this community?

reached. The stages of framework analysis are identified in the literature (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003). I applied the stages of the framework in the conduct of this research. I started the analysis with the verbatim transcripts, and a process of familiarisation. I became immersed in the data through a close reading of the original accounts and listing the knowledge and themes that repeated themselves.

The second stage of the data analysis was the identification of themes. This comprised drawing on a priori knowledge about accommodating diverse cultural values regarding the research objective and the emergent themes, to list broad analytical classifications that might be utilised to label the data. The analytical classifications acknowledged in the themes were then applied in the data through a process of indexing. This involved coding the transcripts for each theme and identifying the data that were confirmation for a precise theme or subtheme. The indexed framework was then charted in a spreadsheet, which included separating the data that act as confirmation for each theme during the fourth stage of the analysis. The final stage is mapping and interpretation of the data, such as comparing the charted data, and searching out the patterns and connections that offered explanation. The themes identified a priori and to develop from the original accounts during the framework analysis led to the substantive theme: "factors that challenge the enforcement of rights to provision, protection, and participation for children engaged in child labour" being identified in the data and accounted for it.

Trustworthiness

The background, qualifications, experience, and credibility of the investigator are critical in qualitative research since the investigator is the key instrument of data collection and analysis (Eisner, 2017). Therefore, my competence and interviewing skills and capability became the basis of ensuring trustworthiness of the data collected and analysed. My interviewing technique evolved during the course of the data gathering as I

engaged with participants and refined my approach. Additionally, I improved interviewer reliability by implementing two pilot interviews to gather experience and the relevant skills. I utilised a tape recorder to record all interviews, subsequently, improving trustworthiness. Furthermore, I audited the study, explaining each stage of the study process, amplifying and justifying what was done. I addressed issues of bias by ensuring I took a neutral stance, bracketing out my own views throughout the data collection process. Consequently, I checked and referred the data and the tentative interpretations to the study participants to confirm its credibility and authenticity at the end of the data analysis. Largely, my results were complementary as well as supplementary to one another. I triangulated my data by applying different sources (e.g., interviews, focus group data) to confirm the emerging findings and to determine the extent to which I had reached saturation. I considered relevant literature, which made me confident that factors that challenge the enforcement of rights to provision, protection, and participation for children engaged in child labour as perceived by the participants was as accurately conveyed as possible.

Ethics

I obtained ethics approval from the La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee to undertake focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and to observe and interact with participants while they worked with their children in the farming and fishing areas. In abiding by the principles of the University Ethics Committee, I respected cultural differences and protected the rights of children before, during, and after the study. I requested that participants sign consent forms and provided participant information statements to them before undertaking participatory work with their children. All steps taken by me before, during, and after the research followed ethical standards.

Results

In this section, I include an analysis of the factors that challenge the enforcement of rights to provision, protection, and participation for children engaged in child labour in rural and urban Ghana. I carried out a total of 10 semistructured interviews with stakeholders from government agencies, departments, and nongovernmental organisations, namely: The Labour Department; The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ); The International Child Resource Institute (ICRI); and The Department of Social Welfare. I recruited five stakeholders in each of the two areas under study. I moderated one focus group discussion with 15 participants in each area under study. Furthermore, a total of 10 semistructured interviews were carried out with participants whose children were involved and participants whose children were not involved in child labour. Lastly, participant observations were also conducted in order to investigate children's natural working environment and to contextualise the empirical findings, helping to illuminate the subject matter. A total of 10 semistructured interviews were carried out with participants in the participant observations (five parents in each of the two areas under study).

Rural Area

A stakeholder suggested that economic constraint is one factor that challenges the enforcement of UNCRC principles of rights to provision, protection, and participation for children engaged in child labour in the area under investigation. This position was echoed by a Labour Officer who indicated that the Labour Department is not able to effectively protect children from child labour practices whenever people make report to the department because of resource constraints. A Principal Labour Officer said:

> When our team goes on child labour inspections and we rescue children engaged in child labour, we've no shelter to lodge them. Because of this, the police are reluctant to embark on inspections with our team. In the past, we had placed rescued children in the homes of close relatives but, we realised those children suffered worse maltreatment during our follow up.

Stakeholders suggested that it is always difficult to effectively enforce children's rights to provision, rights to protection, and rights to participation in the Ghanaian culture. A parent indicated, "Our culture teaches our children to believe that work socialisation is meant to provide training which will ensure a better life in the future".

In view of this, participants suggested that children start to learn their parents' trade at an early age even if that child is in school. Additionally, most of the farm work does not take the child out of school. A Principal Labour Officer said:

> The Ghanaian culture gives parents more power over their children. Thus, there is virtually no children's rights to participation in family decisions since parents' views on matters concerning the child carries a lot of weight. It is quite difficult for children to disobey their parents in matters relating to child labour. The cultural set-up makes it obligatory for children to understudy their parents through work. Many parents don't view engaging their children in work as children's rights violation.

Some stakeholders suggested that aspects of Ghanaian culture are inconsistent with the UNCRC, but many parents allow the culture to influence their way of parenting. A Labour Officer suggested, "The government needed to have taken the Ghanaian cultural values into consideration before accepting to sign the UNCRC". Other participants suggested that Ghana should not take an extreme position on issues relating to culture but rather take a middle ground so that children's rights are not totally neglected while reforming aspects of the culture that is out of tune with modernity. Other participants suggested that if they engage their children in farm work, it does not mean they are punishing them. A parent explained: "Engaging their children in farming is the cultural way of training their children to become better adults in future and take over from parents".

Some participants also pointed out that the children's rights concept is foreign to the Ghanaian culture. A parent explained:

> Most of us were brought up at a time when the concept of children's rights was not very pronounced, yet our parents did not harm us. I think they rather groomed us to be better people. There's too much freedom in children's rights and freedom for children rather destroys them. As for me, I am not going to adopt Western parenting style.

Some participants suggested that the Western countries are rich, so they can afford to bring up their children applying children's rights concept. A focus group participant suggested, "Western countries have the means to put in place intervention programs

and policies to address social problems when they occur". Other parents suggested that a developing country like Ghana may not be able to design and implement intervention programs and policies.

Urban Area

A coordinator of ICRI suggested that the UNCRC itself was formulated based on the Western culture. Hence, participants suggested that many provisions of the UNCRC and particularly children's rights to provision, rights to protection, and rights to participation conflict with aspects of the Ghanaian culture and therefore they are bound to encounter challenges. Participants enumerated some of these challenges as a conflict of cultures, economic constraints, and differences in history. A parent explained:

> The Western countries are much industrialised, and they have access to electricity and water throughout the day. A child can flush the toilet ten times a day and that will not bother the parent because water is in abundance. There are learning aids and computers for children. Parents who are not working have access to parental and child support from the State which help them to function well.

However, stakeholders indicated that the culture in Ghana and high level of deprivation do not allow children to express their views freely on all matters affecting them. Participants in the focus group and participant observation pointed out that in the Ghanaian culture people believe in the child taking responsibility at an early age. Some participants explained that elsewhere in the world children can report their parents to the law enforcement agencies for emotional abuse, but this is not possible in Ghana. A focus group participant said:

> I believe the UNCRC can't work effectively here because of our cultural context. I know our law enforcement agencies are already encountering problems in the implementation of children's right to protection, provision, and participation as captured in the UNCRC. I'm not too sure whether our traditional chiefs and queen mothers who could gradually educate, create awareness, and sensitise our people believe in this provision. Parents believe they own their children, so they have the right to mould and rear them in culturally appropriate way.

Participants suggested that government should put in place certain structures before the UNCRC can be fully implemented in the area under study. Stakeholders explained that some disadvantaged parents need the labour of their children to contribute to family income. Parents suggested that if children's engagement in fishing work is effectively eliminated, then families would encounter economic difficulties. A coordinator of ICRI explained:

> We've our own form of children's rights in the Ghanaian culture. Our concept of African child rights is quite different from what is put forward by the UNCRC. This is where the conflict comes in. The Ghanaian culture teaches the child hygiene and survival skills. The UNCRC comes with academic skills.

A participant in the focus group explained that new laws and the children's rights convention, which are geared toward protecting children, should not be an obstacle to the Ghanaian cultural way of bringing up their children. For example, the Ghanaian culture requires parents to allow their children to work in fishing and this should not be outlawed by new laws and the children's convention. A participant of the focus group said:

> Apart from work socialisation argument of child labour, parents will be compelled to engage their children in fishing work if they're poor, so there's also economic reason to child labour. In my own situation, I used to be a newspaper vendor on the streets. I had to sell newspapers on the street of Accra in the morning before going to school. My parents used to tell me that they were training me to be tough in life so that I'll be capable of facing the challenges of life.

Many of these parents also enrol their children in school despite the fishing work.

Discussion

The results of my analysis indicate that the implementation of the rights to protection has mainly been obstructed by culture and sometimes poverty. In many places in rural Ghana, household chores and farm work are regarded as normal parts of childhood that help nurture children, at least as long as child labour is not hazardous or ambiguous WFCL (Asuming-Brempong, Sarpong, Asenso-Okyere, & Amoo, 2007). This is because some degree of involvement in farm or fishing work can assist children in their personal development and create an attachment to the labour market at a young age (Blunch & Verner, 1999). Additionally, some level of farm or fishing work will instil in children a hardworking spirit and prepare them to take on bigger challenges in adulthood. Further, culture is a major construct that tends to sustain fishing work by children in the coastal communities notwithstanding many efforts to eliminate it. Usually farming and fishing are family businesses, so parents want their children to continue the family tradition. Cultural socialisation allows children to acquire the knowledge, skills, and characters that allow them to be worthy successors to their parents (Löwe, 2017). In the coastal communities some of the basic adult responsibilities involve taking care of one's family and the capacity to effectively carry on the family business. Hence, it is the desire of many parents in the coastal communities to inculcate a strong work ethic in their children. Protection rights refer to a child's right to be protected from certain harmful activities. For example, Article 19 of the UNCRC (1989) states that:

> State Parties shall take appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child.

States are required to encourage the identification, investigation, and reporting of child abuse in accordance with Article 19 of the UNCRC (1989).

The results of my analysis present clear and consistent evidence that the enforcement of the rights to provision has largely been impeded by culture, poverty, and unemployment. Thus, provision rights, otherwise known as positive rights, which mean that children should be provided with access to necessities such as food, water, health care, education, and social security, encounter challenges in rural and urban Ghana. Family poverty compels parents to engage children in WFCL in Ghana. The deprived socio-economic environment drives families to put their children to work (Bonnet, 1993). Deprived families are particularly vulnerable to natural catastrophes such as locust plague, wars, and the death of family members. This socio-economic deprivation has an impact on the nature of childhood and parent–child relations. Those exposed to economic and social deprivation during childhood have a substantially higher risk of being engaged in

WFCL by parents. Thus, deprivation serves as a catalyst for pushing children into early WFCL.

The UNCRC divides positive rights into two further categories—physical and qualitative rights. Physical rights relate to the physical wellbeing of the child, and primarily include the right to life and the right to physical health care. Many children in rural areas are involved in economic activities in the agricultural sector, whereas 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. 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, 2014).

In view of this, it is difficult to realise qualitative rights—which are rights that facilitate the development of a child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their maximum potential—in addition to the right to access education that promotes respect for the child's parents and his or her own cultural identity, language, and values (Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2017). The UNCRC stipulates that children should be provided with programs to facilitate their mental and social development. It also asserts the right of every child to education, without discrimination, and places emphasis on making primary education compulsory and available free to all (Article 28, UNCRC, 1989). This principle was translated into the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) and in the targets set out in the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000). Further, Article 28, UNCRC (1989) provides that State Parties should promote the development of diverse forms of secondary education, including general vocational education, and use all available means to make them accessible to all children and teenagers who have the ability to benefit from them.

Evidently, the results of my analysis indicate that the enforcement of participation rights is hindered by Ghanaian cultural values. A significant number of the discussions on children's rights have dwelled on Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989), which makes provision for participation rights. These rights include the right to have the capacity to act under certain conditions and take part in the decision-making process. In Ghana, however, it is believed that well-nurtured children are those who are obedient to their parents and elders. Therefore, parents do not expect their children to challenge their views (Twum-Danso, 2011). Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989), which makes provision for the participation of children in matters affecting them, is therefore inconsistent with the views of many Ghanaian parents. Twum-Danso (2010) indicates that culturally deviant conduct is seen as a sign of improper parenting as these children are assumed to be ignorant of the cultural values of the society. Further, children are perceived to be humiliating their families if they conduct themselves in a way that is inconsistent with the norms of the Ghanaian society. In light of this, Twum-Danso (2009) points out that children are nurtured from infancy to be submissive and respectful to their parents and the elderly. Considering the value attached to respect and humility, in most families, parents expect their children to be respectful and obedient. Similarly, Sarpong (1974, p. 70) contends that parents perceive ideal children to be "respectful, charming and smiling when in the company of adults, ready to go, without hesitation, on the errands

of adults". Gyeke (1996) notes that children should regard themselves as subservient to adults, and hence must subject themselves to adult regulation.

These Ghanaian values appear to be inconsistent with the UNCRC (1989), which expects parents to guide their children and not to impose their views on them. Article 5 of the UNCRC (1989) makes provision for the right to parental guidance and other rights. This article explains the position of children relative to the adults who have responsibility for them. It highlights that any direction and guidance offered by parents or other guardians must be consistent with the child's changing capacities to reinforce children's exercise of their rights. First, Article 5 of the UNCRC (1989) acknowledges children as those who exercise their own rights. Second, it highlights the extent of adult support required to help children to make decisions and must consider the capacities of the individual child. Thus, it means a handover of responsibility from responsible adults to children to decide when children acquire the competence to do so. Hence, children are entitled to engage at the fourth level of decision-making. The rights to freedom of expression, religion, conscience, and association can also be exercised directly by children when they have the capacity to do so. These rights, together with the right to information, can be understood as constituting the right to participation which seems to conflict with the Ghanaian culture.

Limitations

One of the challenges of this study was translating participants' views from local languages into English in a way that adequately expresses their views. Translation inevitably involves the translator's own interpretation of what has been said. Hence, elaboration and language might have served a persuasive function in this research. Another limitation of this study is that it relies on self-reporting by participants. This means there is a risk that the responses of some of the participants did not reflect their true perspectives because they wanted to impress me, or other participants, thereby leading to a "social desirability bias". Biased samples and biased returns became a challenge in view of the use of purposive sampling in this research. Moreover, all parents in the population did not have equal opportunity to be interviewed. It was difficult and sometimes impossible to locate personal farms and workplaces of potential participants in the study. I attempted to decrease the challenge of self-reporting by using a consent form and providing explanations at the start of the study. The use of propositions, for example, was a way of minimising emotional language and convincing the reader of the investigator's disconnection from the analysis. There is also a standardisation of interview schedule, the methods, theory, findings, and conclusion format that is planned to reduce rhetorical excess (Eisner, 2017). Scientific language apparently reduced the multiple meaning from words in the interest of precision. This is the reason why common terms were assigned "technical meanings" for scientific purposes.

Conclusion

Ghana is a signatory to several international conventions and treaties that protect children's rights, including the UNCRC. However, the enforcement of many of these rights has been impeded by cultural practices, poverty, and unemployment. Cultural attitudes towards childhood play a part in explaining the high prevalence of child labour in

Ghana. The engagement of children in farm and fishing work, therefore, cannot exclusively be explained in the context of endemic poverty. Examining different cultural arrangements is critical in explaining the development of children's skills, social relations, and roles in a culturally structured social and institutional world. Further, the implementation of the provisions of the UNCRC has turned out to be more difficult requiring financial, technical and human resources for prevention, awareness creation, and sensitisation; monitoring and evaluation; serious accountability; early intervention; services; rehabilitation; and training. Professional support and occasionally community support are required for children and parents affected by WFCL, including offenders. What may be achieved in terms of the implementation of the provisions of the UNCRC is restricted within the present state of the child protection field in rural and urban Ghana. The lack of technical expertise, resources, and the holistic approach to enforce provisions of the UNCRC are revealed by the increasing unmet needs. These growing unmet needs include the demand for more information, skills for children and parents, more advanced knowledge, and effective services provided by professionals within a better coordinated national child protection system in Ghana. Understanding the sociocultural factors that drive child labour and resource constraints in Ghana and the developing world, in general, are necessary to design and execute the most suitable mechanisms for intervention and prevention. In view of factors such as history, culture, religion, and the geography in which children grow up, professionals must rise above just transferring Western concepts of parenting into their professional work and rather, develop parenting styles that are suitable for the local culture while promoting the best interests of the child. "Child labour" problems in Ghana and the developing world should be understood in terms of WFCL, which conflicts with Articles 32 & 35 of the UNCRC (1989), rather than work socialisation. Further, aspects of the Ghanaian culture that appear hazardous must be modified to be consistent with the UNCRC.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Obed Adonteng-Kissi http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9324-7138

References

Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2018). Parental perceptions of child labour and human rights: A comparative study of rural and urban Ghana. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *84*, 34–44.

Archard, D., & Skivenes, M. (2009). Balancing a child's best interests and a child's views. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, *17*(1), 1–21.

Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, *32*(1), 15–27.

Asuming-Brempong, S., Sarpong, D., Asenso-Okyere, K., & Amoo, P. (2007). *Labour practices in cocoa production in Ghana: National Programme for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cocoa (NPECLC)*. Retrieved from allafrica.com/stories/200811210849.html

Blunch, N., & Verner, D. (1999). *Revisiting the link between poverty and child labour: The Ghanaian experience, Bonn, June 2000*. Policy Research Working Paper 2488. Paper presented at the European Society for Population Economics' conference, the World Bank Africa technical families human development 3 and Latin America and the Caribbean Region Economic Policy Sector Unit, Bonn.

Bonnet, M. (1993). Child labour in Africa. *International Labour Review*, *132*(3), 371–390.

Brydon-Miller, M., & Maguire, P. (2009). Participatory action research: Contributions to the development of practitioner inquiry in education. *Educational Action Research*, *17*(1), 79–93.

Dennis, M. (1999). The ILO convention on the worst forms of child labour. *American Journal of International Law*, *93*(4), 943–948.

Eisner, E. (2017). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Elder, G. (2018). *Children of the great depression*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Farran, S. (2012). Children of the Pacific: Giving effect to Article 3 UNCRC in small island states. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, *20*(2), 199–223.

GSS. (2012). 2010 *Population and Housing Census (PHC) summary report of final results*. Ghana Statistical Service. Retrieved from www.statsghana.gov.gh/

GSS. (2014). *Ghana Living Standards Survey 6 with Labour Force Module (GLSS6/LFS) 2012/2013: Three-cycle labour force report*. Retrieved from www.statsghana.gov.gh

Gyeke, K. (1996). *African cultural values: An introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing.

Hetherington, T., Coates, J., Gray, M., & Bird, M. Y. (2013). *Decolonizing social work*. New York, NY: Ashgate Publishing.

ILO, UNICEF, & WB. (2016). *Understanding Children's work: An inter-agency research cooperation project*. Retrieved from http://www.ucw-project.org/

Kjørholt, A. T. (2007). Childhood as a symbolic space: Searching for authentic voices in the era of globalisation. *Children's Geographies*, *5*(1–2), 29–42.

Lancy, D. (2018). Work in children's lives. In D. F. Lancy (Ed.), *Anthropological perspectives on children as helpers, workers, artisans, and laborers* (pp. 1–30). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Liebel, M. (2004). *A will of their own: Cross-cultural perspectives on working children*. New York, NY: Zed Books.

Löwe, A. (2017). *Creating opportunities for young people in Ghana's cocoa sector*. London: Overseas Development Institute. Retrieved from www.odi.org.

Masten, A. S. (2014). Global perspectives on resilience in children and youth. *Child Development*, *85*(1), 6–20.

Mbise, A. T. (2017). The diffusion of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) more than the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child (ACRWC) in Africa: The influence of coercion and emulation. *International Social Work*, *60*(5), 1233–1243.

Meron, T. (1989). *Human rights and humanitarian norms as customary law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mullen, J. (2019). *Rural poverty, empowerment and sustainable livelihoods*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Nardinelli, C. (1990). *Child labour and the industrial revolution*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Noguchi, Y. (2002). ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and the convention on the rights of the child. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, *10*, 355–369.

Öhman, M., & Quennerstedt, A. (2017). Questioning the no-touch discourse in physical education from a children's rights perspective. *Sport, Education and Society*, *22*(3), 305–320.

Osei-Hwedie, K., & Rankopo, M. J. (2016). Developing culturally relevant social work education in Africa: The case of Botswana. In M. Gray, J. Coates, & M. Yellow Bird (Eds.), *Indigenous social work around the world* (pp. 231–246). New York, NY: Routledge.

Pope, C., Ziebland, S., & Mays, N. (2000). Qualitative research in healthcare: Analysing qualitative data. *British Medical Journal*, *320*, 114–116.

Quennerstedt, A. (2010). Children, but not really humans? Critical reflections on the hampering effect of the "3 p's". *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, *18*(4), 619–635.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage.

Sarpong, P. (1974). *Ghana in retrospect: Some aspects of Ghanaian culture*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation.

Semali, L. M. (2012). 15. Cultural perspectives and teacher education: Indigenous pedagogies in an African context. In T. Maynard & S. Powell (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 2002: Teacher education-dilemmas and prospects* (pp. 155).

Sharley, V., Ananias, J., Rees, A., & Leonard, E. (2019). Child neglect in Namibia: Emerging themes and future directions. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *49*(4), 983–1002.

Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Dillon, L. (2003). *Quality in qualitative evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence*. National Centre for Social Research, Government Chief Social Researcher's Office. Retrieved from www.strategy.gov.uk

Spitz, L. (2005). Implementing the UN convention on the rights of the child: Children's rights under the 1996 South African constitution. *Vanderbilt Journal for Transnational Law*, *38*, 853–887.

Thomas, N., & O'Kane, C. (2000). Discovering what children think: Connections between research and practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, *30*(6), 819–835.

Twum-Danso, A. (2009). Reciprocity, respect and responsibility: The 3Rs underlying parent–child relationships in Ghana and the implications for children's rights. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, *17*(3), 415–432.

Twum-Danso, A. (2010). *The construction of childhood and socialisation of children: The implications for the implementation of article 12 of the convention on the rights of the child in Ghana*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Twum-Danso, A. (2011). Searching for a middle ground in children's rights in Ghana. *Journal of Human Rights*, *10*(3), 376–392.

UNESCO. (1990). *Meeting basic learning needs. World declaration on education for all*. Paper presented at the world conference on education for all, Jomtien. New York, NY: UNESCO. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/background/jomtien_

UNESCO. (2000). *The Dakar framework for action. Education for all: Meeting our collective commitments*. Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121147e.pdf

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the rights of the child*. UN General Assembly document A/RES/44/2.

Westwood, J. (2013). Childhood in different cultures. In T. Maynard & S. Powell (Eds.), *An introduction to early childhood studies* (p. 11). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.