

CHILD RIGHTS, CHILD LABOUR AND ISLAM: THE CASE OF MUSLIMS IN THE TAMALE METROPOLIS, GHANA

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ABSTRACT

The experience of Ghana shows that child labour and child rights are intricately linked and constitute a complex phenomenon. This paper interrogates the knowledge, attitude and practices of Muslims on child rights and child labour in the Tamale Metropolis. Using a participatory data collection technique; interviews and focus group discussions, the study found that Muslims have a good understanding of child rights and work tried strenuously to guide against these rights. However, despite the efforts by Muslims to uphold of the rights of the child, certain customary practices such as child fosterage, occupation skills development and poverty militate against the protection of the rights the child. The study concludes that children rights are respected by Muslims but child labour seems to be regarded as training meant to prepare the children to become responsible adults in future.

Keywords: *Child rights, child labour, Muslim, attitude, knowledge*

1. INTRODUCTION

Macroeconomic policies have powerful effects on children [1]. They shape public spending on basic services such as education and health and influence how households respond to changing economic conditions, often in ways that are not good for children. Waddington argues that rapid trade liberalization harms poor countries if it is not preceded by public investments, especially in education. Competitiveness in international trade has in many cases been achieved in ways that are potentially detrimental to children: exploiting child labour¹ is one example.

Children all over the world are regarded as vulnerable because they are exposed to sexual abuse (rape and defilement), child trafficking and child labour. Child labour is a major problem to developing nations especially countries witnessing high rates of poverty. When parents/guardians are poor they consciously or unconsciously engage their children in work with the aim of generating more income or any form of assistance for household welfare maximization. Commercial sexual exploitation and the recruitment of children as combatants are on the ascendancy. Children are subjected to especially cruel and exploitative working conditions, which not only disrupts their schooling but also and often prevent them from schooling all together. Child workers become vulnerable to diseases, which many get worse and significantly accounts for poverty. It is thus common knowledge that child labor poses a great danger to not only the children involved but also to their parents/guardians, and society at large.

¹ Child labour is defined in this present study as children's work in the farm, house or market which violates the rights of children, and limits the conditions and resources that would ensure that they maintain a healthy and normal development.

Njoku [2] stated that majority of children exist in such an awful conditions that their growth and development is severely hampered. These children suffer from hunger, illiteracy, homelessness, poor health, diseases and even social and ethnic discrimination. Apart from Asia, African families appear to be most affected worldwide by the crimes of poverty and the deteriorating status of children. Owing to the degradation of African families, millions of children are abused and exploited through labour. Though the global number of child labourers shows consistent reduction since 2000, the figures are still unacceptably high. For instance, child labourers stood at 250 million in 2000, reduced to 208 in 2004 and by 2010 it stood at 215 million. This shows a reduction of seven million less than in 2004 [3;4 and 5]. In the case of Ghana, ILO [3] indicated a reduction of child labour by 31% of children engaged in hazardous work, between 2004 and 2010. The experience of Ghana also shows that children aged 5-17 years who participated in economic activity were 76.4%, and out of this figure 49.7% were involved in hazardous work [6]. The private informal sector according to GSS (ibid) is leading is leading (76.3%), in terms of employing child labourers, followed by the agribusiness (14.6%) and the private formal (8.0%) sectors [6]. Child labour, especially in the informal sector is a common phenomenon in both urban and rural areas in Ghana. A higher proportion of the female (81.8%) working children were employed in the private informal sector compared to males (72.5%). Also significant is the fact that in all the regions, the private informal sector engaged most of the working children; this is also true across the age groups [6].

Children occupy a vulnerable position in the labour market because they lack bargaining power and do not enjoy employment privileges such as paid leave, social security and medical insurance. Though severely underpaid, children remain major contributors to family income in Ghana. Mensah and Hammond [7] estimated wages of street children in Accra to be just around the minimum wage. They further noted that retrenchment arising out of structural adjustment prescription also compound the poverty drive in some cases. When aggregate demand for labour, especially in the formal sector falls, it is quite natural to expect that a household which had thus far kept its children out of the labour market may now send them out to look for work. This would be done to provide "insurance" against the risk of the household

loosing all its income if the adult members become unemployed.

In Ghana, the government has placed the protection of children's rights on top of its development agenda. It is in the realization of this ambition that the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs was to formulate and implement policies that protect the rights of children and women. NGOs and civil society organizations have also been involved in the sensitization of people on child rights as well as how to protect these rights. The 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana provides for the rights of children. It emphasises that every child has the right to be protected from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to his/her health, education or development. Furthermore, the constitution states that a child shall not be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and that no child shall be deprived by any other person of medical treatment, education or any other social or economic benefit by reason only of religious or other beliefs [8].

Islam teaches that children are the nucleus of a healthy society and as such their rights and the rights of every family member should be protected. The Qur'an (66: 6) .makes it clear that "O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones" [9].

Tamale is one of the fastest growing cities in Ghana and with an annual population growth rate of 3%, the population is expected to be more than 1,000,000 by the year 2020. Average household size is estimated at 7 persons. One of the contributory factors to the rapid population growth is polygamy. Over 90% of the population in Tamale are Muslims. Illiteracy rate is high despite the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy in Ghana. About 70% of the people in the city earn income below the poverty line. In an environment where poverty rate is high such as in Tamale accessibility to urban services like potable water, good health and sanitation are not only poor but also people are often denied justice and respect of human right. The phenomenon of child labour has become an important development setback to the town because of its concomitant problem of streetism. Streetism involves children under 18 years working and/or even using the street as home. The government, represented by the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TMA) is currently making moves to reduce child labour that manifest itself in

several ways including streetism and child trafficking.

A number of policies and programmes have been initiated by the government to deal directly or indirectly with the problem of child labour. For example, the Social Welfare unit of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has committed itself to creating awareness among traditional rulers, district assemblies, churches, women's groups and the media on child labour laws. Attempts have also been made to prosecute offenders where necessary. The government in 1998 enacted, the Children's Act, which seeks to protect the rights of children, including the rights to education, health and shelter. Nevertheless, an important weakness of the Act is that though it prohibits exploitative child labour it does not specify the maximum number of hours of work that a child could safely engage in, and the time period within which a child could work--- be it at night or dawn.

It is obvious that the translation of the aforementioned constitutional rights of the Ghanaian child and the ILO conventions into reality is a difficult one. It requires the identification and analysis of the knowledge, attitudes and practices of people especially in an environment where illiteracy and poverty rates are high. It is important to learn that promotion of the rights of children must necessarily be formed on an understanding of the religious, socio- cultural and economic milieu within which the whole concept of children's right is intended to function. There is no empirical evidence on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of Muslims on child rights and child labour in Tamale Metropolis. This paper has three main objectives; first is to examine Muslims knowledge about child labour and child rights, second to investigate Muslims attitudes towards child labour and child rights and finally to examine their practices on child rights and child labour with the aim of providing policy recommendations that improve the overall development of the child.

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHILD LABOUR AND CHILD RIGHTS IN GHANA

Child Labour

The term "child labour" refers to some specific economic activity undertaken by children that are not in conformity with the provision of national and international legislations, such as the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) and International Labour

Organization (ILO) Convention Nos. 138 and 182 [10]. According to [3], Child Labour refers to hazardous forms of work that disrupt the healthy development of a child, and has the potential of limiting or damaging the physical, mental, social or psychological development of children and undermine their childhood, development and education. These kinds of works are also defined as exploitative labour by the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560). The Act sets 15 years as the minimum age for employment in general work, 13 years for light work and 18 years for hazardous work [11].

This means that, any economic activity engaged by children that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is not child labour. GSS [12] mentioned such work to include activities such as helping their parents within the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. It concluded that "these kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life"[12: 36].

The Ghana Statistical Service's [12] Child Labour Survey (CLS) showed that 21.8 percent of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour. According to this report, boys constitute 22.7% compared to 20.8% girls and that more rural children (30.2%) than urban (12.4%) children are engaged in child labour, while rural savannah, where this study was conducted had the highest (34.6%) proportion of children in child labour" [12:ix].

Child labour is common in all regions of Ghana with varying proportions. In the Upper West, Upper East and Brong Ahafo regions 53.8%, 54.7% and 44.5% respectively of children are engaged in economic activities, respectively.

Table 1: Child Economic Activities by regions

Region	Estimated Pop of children age 5-17 years	%	Children in economic activity	
			Estimated Population	Percent of population
Western	838,313	100	225,702	28.5
Central	793,125	100	101,481	13.2
Greater Accra	1,204,870	100	83,328	7.2
Volta	766,836	100	245,094	33.4
Eastern	920,812	100	336,935	38.3
Ashanti	1,727,891	100	537,057	32.8
Brong Ahafo	916,757	100	382,738	44.5
Northern	891,273	100	278,445	37.3
Upper East	362,761	100	161,388	54.7
Upper West	274,964	100	124,010	53.8

Source: GSS, 2014

From the Table 1, it is only Greater Accra regions that has children less than 10% engaged in child labour. According to the GSS (ibid), the majority of the children (76.8%) worked in the agriculture and fishery sectors, while 14.9% worked in the service sector, especially as sales workers. The rest worked in elementary occupations (3.9%), while 4.2% are engaged in craft and related works.

Child Rights

Ghana as a country has committed itself to ensuring the protection of the rights of the children. This is clear in the 1992 Constitution² of the Republic of Ghana and the number of international conventions on the rights of children ratified. By ratifying these conventions, Ghana has agreed to implement these conventions by adjusting her domestic laws to reflect the principles and norms contained in those instruments. For example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child seeks to protect children from all forms of abuse. Like other conventions, Ghana was the first country in Sub-Saharan African to ratify this Convention on 5th February 1990. Thereafter, the convention has influenced the implementation of legislations in Ghana. i.e. the Children's Act of Ghana.

Despite this, Ghana is still battling with a lot of challenges with regards to child protection, child labour, child trafficking, etc. In Ghana, the state

²The preamble of the constitution categorically provides for the protection and preservation of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all Ghanaians of which children are an integral part.

agencies mandated to protect the child are not doing enough to ensure that children trafficking are halted, even though the District Assemblies are supposed to protect the welfare and promote the rights of children within their area of authority [13].

Under section 27 and 28 of the Children's Act, the District Assemblies have been mandated to establish Child Panels which shall have non-judicial functions to mediate in criminal and civil matters which concern children. The Act further elaborates composition and meetings of Child panels. This provision though explicit in the Act, is completely missing in a greater number of District Assemblies in the Northern region.

Ghana's Children's Act 1998 (Act 560)

This Act seeks to reform and regulate laws pertaining to children. The Children's Act talks about the rights of the child, maintenance and adoption, and issues relating to child labour and child protection. Section 5 of the Act stipulates that 'no person shall deny a child the right to live with his parents and family and grow up in a caring and peaceful environment unless it is proved in court that living with his or her parents would –lead to significant harm to the child; or subject the child to serious abuse; or not be in the best interest of the child'.

Section 8 of the Act deals with the right to education and well-being: it states that 'No person shall deprive a child access to education, immunisation, adequate diet, clothing, shelter, medical attention or any other thing required for his or her development'. It also stresses on protection of children from exploitative labour. It states that "No person shall subject a child to exploitative labour..." The Act further provides for the general protection of the child from torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including any cultural practice which dehumanises or is injurious to the physical and mental development or well-being of a child. It also deals with betrothal and child marriages and states that no person shall force a child to be betrothed, be the subject of dowry transaction or be married, and the minimum age of marriage of whatever kind shall be eighteen years.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study methodology was participatory in nature. The approach elicited diverse views on the attitudes of Muslims in the Tamale Metropolis on child

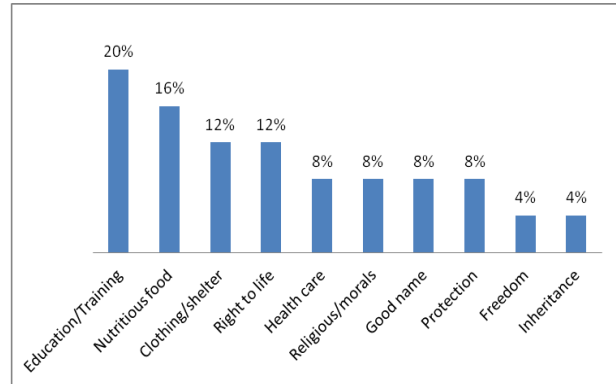
rights and child labor. This information was obtained from parents, Moslem scholars, traditional authority, and children (randomly selected across the Metropolis). Specific techniques used to collect data include interviews, key informant interviews and focused group discussions. Data were obtained by interviewing Imams, Arabic instructors, parents/guardians and students on important factors like knowledge, attitude and practice on child right and child labour. In all, four hundred and fifty (450) people participated in the study. Key informant interviews were directed to Imams, chiefs, the Metropolitan Chief Executive and the Director of Social Welfare. The selection of the interviewees was purposive because it was based on those who had relevant knowledge and in-depth information regarding child rights and child labour in Islam. Information derived from the interviews were then confirmed with results obtained from six separate focused group discussions held men, women and children. A dissemination workshop was held during which stakeholders involving parents, traditional authorities, Arabic instructors, staff of the Metropolitan Assembly and the Department of Social Welfare participated made useful contributions. The essence of involving policy makers in the workshop was to ensure that the findings of the study are owned and utilized.

4. FINDINGS

Knowledge About The Rights Of Children

The results in Figure 1 indicate that Muslims consider the rights of the child very important. The majority of the respondents were of the view that Islam guarantees the child the right to survival even if it is still a fetus. To this end, they maintained that, even abortion for whatever reason is discouraged in Islam. According to the respondents, Islam also stipulates taking care of children, guaranteeing them the right to breastfeeding and nursing, and ensuring the maintenance of their physical and moral rights. Islam prohibits the violation of any of these rights, by warning parents against negligence. To the majority of them, every child has both physical and moral rights. The physical rights include the right to ownership, inheritance, bequeathal, to give donation, and endowments as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Basic Rights of children in Islam



Source: Field Survey, 2015

When asked to rank the basic rights of the child in order of importance, as many as 20% of the respondents indicated that educating the child is the most important right of the child followed by the provision of food (16%) and clothing/shelter (12%). Expatiating further on why the majority of the respondents placed high premium on educating their children, one of the Islamic Scholars interviewed in Tamale quoted the Prophet of Islam who is reported to have said: “whoever has a daughter, tutors her on good morals, educates her well and feed her properly; she will be a protection for him from hell fire”. Respondents explained good education to mean physical, mental and moral preparation and development of the child so that the child can become a good individual in society. For them, it is the right of Moslem children to have good health and to be protected from all sort of harm. Moslems believe that given good names³ to their children has positive influence on their behavior and life. To this end, nicknames that do not portray positive behavior or reflect good image are discouraged in Islam, since some of these name are often playthings and of bad connotations. Islam therefore teaches that good names have positive influence on a person’s outlook and gets associated with his or her life till death.

Moral rights as indicated by respondents include the right to have a good name, the right to know who their parents are, and their lineage, and to have sound religions and moral guidance. These rights are expected to be enjoyed by every Moslem child

³ Names that will reflect upon their good behavior of the child

including orphans, displaced victims of war, and the like. Respondents further revealed that, children right from birth have the right to a full two-year nursing period, during which the child has the right to be breastfed. This finding is in line with the teaching of the Holy Quran, which indicates that “Islam prescribes two years breastfeeding and commanded that children be breastfed until they attain their full power and strength, for breast feeding has a great impact on the growth and development of the child” (Quran 31:14). Though difficult to enforce, the majority of the respondents recognized the fact that, children have the right to be brought up in a decent and clean environment, even in an event of separation between their parents. Muslims try strenuously to enforce this, because Islam enjoins parents who are incapable to raise their children under such circumstances to give the children to be brought up by their closest relative who is capable.

Respondents mentioned that Islam emphasizes the right of children to life. To buttress children right to life, one of the respondents quoted Imam Mohammed Muhtar, an Islamic scholar, who was reported to have said that “the child has a right to life, neither the father nor the mother has the right to take the life of the child, whether a boy or a girl by killing it or burring it alive”. This is in line with the teaching of the Holy Qur’an that children’s lives should not be removed because their parents are poor. “And do not kill your children out of fear of poverty, we shall provide for them and for you. Truly, the killing of them is a great sin” (Quran 6:151). Children also have the right to inherit their parents.

A common feature of family life in Ghana is that a son will work with and for his father ([14]. Respondents generally indicated that it is the duty of a child to assist the parents in whatever work they are engaged in. For them, this is the best way for children to learn skills for themselves in future.

Results of the focused group discussions on child labour revealed that Islam does not encourage children to work to provide food for their parents at a very tender age. The child may help his father in cultivating his farm or to do some work in his workshop if he has one. It is lawful for children to help their fathers in these respects and similar ones so long as this will not be over exhausting to the child. Children from families that are so poor and cannot afford their basic needs may work, but their work should be appropriate to their age and within

their physical capabilities. In other words, a child in that case is not to be over burdened with tasks beyond his capabilities as a child. This finding is similar to the conclusions of [15] that if there is a big farm that needs labour, it can be productive for the household to employ its own children because one does not have to hassle to hire workers each season, spending extra money and supervising them.

The child’s personal and wealth should be under the guidance of his or her family or the state until he or she reaches the age of legal responsibility. The child has right to a good moral upbringing, receiving a good education and training, and learning skills that will qualify the child to earn his or her livelihood and lead an independent life. Talented children must be given special care so that their energies can be developed properly. All this must be done in the framework of the Islamic Shariah. Islam also prohibits the exploitation of children in fields of labour that may affect their physical, mental and psychological state.

The study found that children in this study area are not strictly brought up in Islamic way, but a mixture of tradition and Islamic culture. Also, the general customary law of a child’s entitlement to maintenance from his father is not in the true sense of “debt” but a personal obligation imposed by the customary law on the father and as a principle that childbearing and responsibility must go together. This situation creates an avenue through which many parents get away with. Mends [16] points out that traditional society places high value on child bearing and child nurturing. In the same vein, Islam also places high premium on child bearing and nurturing. However, children are considered more as the property of their parents and entire patrilineal or matrilineal family than as distinctive individuals and personalities with special needs and rights, which must be given priority. This is also true in the study area, as children are raised with Islamic and traditional values. Consequently the opportunities available to children for their personal advancement are extremely limited not only by the property attitude of society but also by the levels of social and economic development of their society.

Knowledge About The Effects Of Child Labour On The Child

The problems of child labour inevitably lead to some consequences on the children, their parents, society and the nation at large. The consequences of

child labour on the victims are, however, mixed. The majority (65%) of community members interviewed did not find anything wrong with street children. They maintained that the children earn income on their own, and that is a sign of high achievers. This enables them to acquire basic things like food and clothing. They further opined that the children learn or acquire vocational skills and learn how to engage in trade, (of the buying and selling type), and that these are the same skills that will be needed to make them responsible adults later in life. Others maintained that teaching a child to work is important because it contributes to the growth and development of the child.

Table 2: Effects of Child Labour on the Child

Response	Freq.	%
Retards children education	144	32
Injures children (Health hazard)	126	28
Teenage pregnancy	72	16
Drug addicts	54	12
Sexually transmitted diseases	54	12
Total	450	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Nevertheless, thirty-two percent (32%) of the respondents indicated that child labour affects the education of the child and twenty eight (28%) mentioned injuries as an effects of child labour on the child. Another sixteen percent (16%) attributed teenage pregnancy to child labour or the abuse of the rights of children whereas 12% each of the respondents identified drug addicts and sexual transmitted diseases as some of the consequences of child labour on the child (Table 2).

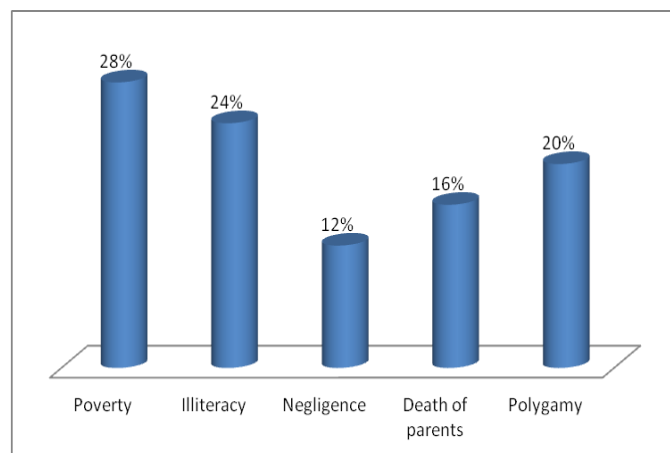
Muslims Attitudes towards Child labour

Despite the overwhelming knowledge in child rights among the Moslems in the Tamale Metropolis, one could also observe the attitude of Muslims that influence their behavior with regards to the respect and implementation of these rights. This results from factors such as poverty and socio-cultural or customary practices. The results show that poverty is the root cause of the abuse of child rights in the study area. The respondents mentioned that though they are aware of the right to educate their children, poverty prevents them from educating their children. Thus, in the midst of poverty, there is a high tendency that some children are left unattended. The results corroborate earlier

findings of Consortium for Street Children (CSC) in 2003 that the major factors pushing children onto the streets in Ghana are primarily poverty and domestic violence. Similarly, [17] explained that economic status of the average Ghanaian family and the need for younger member to find some resources to supplement that of their parents account for the abuse of children.

Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents also blamed polygamy as a contributory factor to abuse of child rights. This is common in polygamous families that are unable to cater for many wives and children (Figure 2). Twenty four percent (24%) of the respondents opined that child labour in Tamale is caused by illiteracy⁴ and lack of knowledge about the proper upbringing of children, and the rights that accrue to the child.

Table 2: Causes of child labour in Tamale Metropolis



Sources: Field Survey, 2015

When children are neglected by their parents they find themselves in areas that are often dangerous to their lives. Sometimes they engage in hazardous work on their own volition to generate money for themselves. During the focus group discussions, participants frequently mentioned that polygamy sometimes leads to irresponsible parenting to the extent that some parents neglect their children for fear of being discriminatory. They claimed some parents do not care about sending their children for vaccination leading to needless child mortality.

⁴ Illiteracy in terms of secular perspective inavailability or the lack of information on the proper upbringing of children and the rights that accrue to the child.

Afrifa [18] documented that the Ghanaian a child who is currently plagued with a myriad of problems results from dereliction or neglect of duties of care and protection impose on his/her parents and other caregivers. The majority of the respondents blamed inadequate parental responsibility, absence of control and guidance, and over permissive atmosphere at home; love of adventure, home environment such as insecurity arising from broken home, child abuse or being orphaned as compelling factors. The findings further show that children are a highly visible and dominant force in the labour market at the expense of their mental and physical development.

Culture and tradition also demand that parents ensure that their children under study them or are trained in their parents' profession or sent out to be trained. For instance, farmers children, especially the boys are expected to follow their farmer to farm. The idea is to prepare the child for his/her future career. For respondents, a situation where children are engaged in farming activities, selling on the streets in support of their parents is not considered as child labour.

Attitude Of Muslims Towards Child Rights

Attitudes are basically opinions and feelings about something. The study therefore sort to establish the kind of attitude Muslim parents in respect of children and the rights of children, after measuring their knowledge about child labour. Results from the focus group discussion further show that some Muslim parents focus on strict up bring of the children that seems to overshadow their attitude towards the children. It is argued that many children do not want to help their parents/guardians and wish to have life easy, but some still held the view that these children are under the control of their mothers, who have refused to obey their husbands, the consequence of which falls on their children. The belief is that if a woman disobeys her husband then she loses God's blessings for herself and the children. The results indicate that the majority (57%) of the respondents have never engaged the services of a street child. The explanation is that they sympathize very much with such children. Results of focus group discussions provided evidence to show that some parents engage the services of these young children without paying them just because these children do not have anyone to ensure they are paid for their services and to protect their rights.

Another 38% of those interviewed had different views about children. They indicated that generally child labour should not be encouraged in any society that seeks to build its future as far as human resource development is concerned. The explanation is that children have potentials that could be tapped for national development if they are educated or trained properly.

Practices That Promote Child Labor

Usually, a social phenomenon such as child labour is influenced by several factors. The results show that socio-cultural, religious and economic factors account for the abuse of children's rights. Four major cultural practices were identified. These include child fosterage, forced marriage, polygamy and irresponsible parenting.

Fosterage is a traditional cultural practice where children are given to relatives and friends to raise up. Usually aunts take their brothers daughters as fostered children [19]. Under the child fosterage, respondents indicated that the current economic conditions do not allow the aunts and other relatives to take proper care of fostered children. They maintained that fostered parents are not able to meet the basic needs of the fostered children and sometimes the fostered children are highly maltreated and pushed into working, selling provision on the street among others. The custom demands that fostered children are not permitted by to run back to their parents. Under such circumstances, some fostered children take to the streets to assert their freedom or just to escape from punishment or engaged in menial jobs to make a living. Also young girls who are forced into marriages rebel against their parents, by vacating their marital homes or eloping with a peer. When that happens the parents refuse to send back the children because they consider such behaviour outrageous and anti-traditional. Under such situations, the children engage in any form of work to make a living.

Furthermore, there is widely held belief that children must acquire traditional skills (e.g., butchery, blacksmithing, carpentry, fitting, trading, etc) at tender age so as to be responsible during adulthood is another cultural practice that promotes child labour in Tamale. Yet, some religious and cultural practices like polygamy contribute to child neglect and hence child labour. As indicated earlier, Tamale is a Muslim dominated area and the majority of the respondents are from polygamous families with an average of 8 children per

household head. Results of the focus group discussions revealed that many of the street children hail from polygamous families and the majority of them are engaged in activities considered as child labour. The reason is that some polygamous homes produce many children than they can adequately cater for. For example, results from the study show that 28%, 21% and 15% of the respondents have an average of 5, 4 and 3 children, respectively, whereas 17% indicated that they have an average of more than 6 children. Participants further explained that marrying more than one wife also poses rivalry between the wives and the children which may lead to conflicts at home; if not properly handle, with the obvious result of abuses on children's rights.

Some economic reasons, though not widely practiced, are also identified as responsible for child labour the Metropolis. This is a situation where respondents described as some "irresponsible parents" demanding that children contribute to household income. This emanates from the inability of these parents to cater for the basic needs of their children due to poverty and infirmity. Unemployment and underemployment of labour due to factors like prolonged dry season, land infertility and land tenure systems as well as limited job opportunities cause parents to force children to work for income to supplement or provide for the household income.

5. CONCLUSION

Child labour and child rights are complex phenomenon and sometimes appear to be illusive and difficult to enforce in Ghana. The two phenomena, particularly child labour seem to be foreign and mean different thing in Ghana. What appear to be giving skills training to the children to prepare them for future in the study area may be considered as child abuse and child labour.

Muslim parents are fully aware of child rights as they draw lessons from the teaching of the Holy Quran with regards to the right to breastfeeding and nursing, and ensuring the maintenance of their physical and moral rights as well as the right to education. They are mandated by the teaching of the Quran to take proper care of their children and protect them from all sort of child labour. However, most parents are not able to practice this to the later, due to socio-cultural practices and other factors such as poverty, illiteracy, polygamy, death of parents and negligence are responsible for child labour in the study area. It is recommended that the

Children Act of 1998 (Act 560) should be reviewed to incorporate legislation of a maximum number of hours beyond which a child aged less than 18 years could work and the time period for which work is permissible, in order to ensure that children protected from exposed to hazardous conditions and exploitation. Pro-child interventions relating to economic growth, trade and macroeconomic policy are critical to overcoming poverty. Child labour should be used as an indicator of poverty reduction and must be mainstreamed into the poverty reduction programmes of the government. Improving living conditions in the Metropolis could also encourage children to stay away from the street.

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