

**Research Article**

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Streetism and its Implications on Learning at the Basic Schools in Somanya, Ghana**Kwakwa Ebenezer Appiah^{*1}, Prof. P. Osei-Poku², Osei Adiyaa³**¹Mount Mary College of Education-Somanya²Faculty of Educational Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana³SDA SHS –Agona/Ash**Article History**

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Abstract: This study investigates the streetism phenomenon and its implications on learning and interventions to enhance the learning of the street children at the basic school. Qualitative research design and phenomenological study method was adopted for the study. Two research questions were answered. A sample of 20 respondents were selected from five public basic schools in Somanya in the Yilo Krobo municipal of Ghana.

The data collection process involve interview, using interview guide with the elicitation of relevant information from interviewees. Data was analysed through the thematic content analysis which involves transcribing data and reading through it for issues or inconsistencies, after which transcribed data was captured into the NVIVO software. The software allows ordering, categorisation, and organisation of data collected into the set objectives of the study. The study revealed that street children are often not punctual and irregular at school; are often apathetic towards learning and they lack concentration in classroom. The study revealed interventions such as government introducing poverty alleviation programs, organization of private counselling by school for parents and street children on the relevance of education and dealing with teachers with negative attitude towards street children in the school as ways of enhancing the learning ability of street children in Somanya. The study recommended that: government and stakeholders of education should continually make arrangement to cater for the physical and academic needs of street children in the form of relevant intervention programs orchestrated including the ones revealed by the study to reduce the ills of the poor parenting, poverty and negative attitude of teachers.

Keywords: Street children, Streetism, Intervention, Basic School.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the presence of policies, relevant state agencies and state institutions, (MMDAs, police, the social welfare department, the constitution of the 1992, the penal Code, the Act on the rights of the Child -Act 560 and the Act 2003 on Juvenile justice, family and child welfare policies, Beggars and Destitute Act 1969-NLCD 392 among others) to address the phenomenon of child streetism in Ghana, the problem still exists. The ever ascendency of the number of street children in Somanya, might have been a great worry for many people, including the authors. The phenomenon of streetism has been study across many disciplines and there are different explanations linked to it. Data from many studies indicate that the socio-economic and cultural contexts and the area in which the street children live affect how people understand and conceive the concept (Owoaje et al., 2009; & Stephen & Udisi, 2016). Owoaje et al. (2009) found that street children in a rural context are children who live with their parents and work on the street to earn a living, making the explanation of the concept distinct from that in popular literature that shows street children as children without family links. In line with this rising common perception of street children, we argue that, how streetism is impacting on learning of learners who are street children in Somanya, be investigated.

As street children are the same as other children, street children also have the right to obtain a decent education to get knowledge and to play around. However, street children are used to working rather than learning. Several children stop their schooling due to the fact they have to offer help to themselves and that of their families. To some street children, the actual time for their work coincides with school time. Others cannot afford school fees let alone buy school requirements including uniforms (Boakye-Boaen, 2006). Thus, what we find is the usual practice of street children not being punctual at school or terminate the school entirely.

This study therefore sought to investigate the streetism phenomenon and its implication on learning at some selected public schools within the Somanya Township of the Yilo Krobo Municipality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ennew (2003) discussed streetism as the ways of living, coping and surviving on the street. It involves spending most of the time in the street, deprivation of basic right such as hygiene, nutrition, education and security (Crombach & Elbert, 2014). According to Dr. Jamiludin et al. (2018), those who live, work, and use all their time on the street and are between 7 and 15 years'

are referred to as street children. UNICEF grouped street children as children of the street and children on the street based on the children's street-life engagement. Children 'of the street' are children who are homeless, work, and sleep or live most of the time on the street without family support and children on the street are those who are mainly involved in the street for economic activities but have links with their families (UNICEF, 2006). In Ghana, the activities of begging, hawking in traffic, working for local eateries, shoe shining, head pottering, truck pushing etc. are identified among street children (Hatloy & Huser, 2005).

Many studies have revealed some social, economic, cultural and policy related factors that promote street child phenomenon. These factors include death of one or both parents and the guardian of the street child, poverty, family disintegration, violence and abuse on children, large family size, urbanisation, desire for freedom and independence and inadequate housing, (Kibrom, 2008; Alenoma, 2012; Kebade, 2015; Adeyemi & Oluwaseun, 2012; Abebe, 2009; Abebe, 2009; Senaratna & Wijewardarna, 2013; WHO, 2000; & Kopaka, 2000).

However, literature centred mostly on the promoters and effects of the street children phenomenon and there is limited knowledge about the education of such children, (Le Roux & Lewis, 2001). From research conducted in major towns in Sierra Leone by Cummings (2017), it was reported that there is a gap in policies and an absence of response from the education authorities concerning the teaching and learning of street children.

A research by Special Attention Project (SAP) in Accra-Ghana, which was operating an educational centre for street children established that quite a number of children who live independently in the streets have severe difficulties in learning to read and write, and to a lesser extend in mathematics and this makes re-integration in mainstream education extremely difficult. (Special Attention Project, 2007).

Consequently, SAP conducted a research again in 2011. This research consists of about twenty-three (23) children who are living in the streets of Accra. Data was collected from their families and their former schools. The findings were that, all street children were identified as 'weak students', with poor performance in core subjects and street children coping with learning difficulties in school, often combined with behavioural problems. (Special Attention Project, 2011).

Moreover, a research conducted by Dladla & Ogina (2018), revealed learners' who are street children depicts behaviour which was disruptive and not adhering with school rules and expectations. The integration of street children in schools is, therefore, perceived as imposing additional demands on teachers and causing stress among learners who are not street children, which

impacts negatively on their academic achievement (Engelbrecht, 2006).

Alam & Wajidi (2014) suggested that "the process and techniques of educating the street children must be friendly and simple" as street children require excess sympathy and affection than others.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Qualitative research design which involves phenomenological study was used to answer the research question of study. The population for the study was 20 respondents, comprising head teachers (5), classroom teachers (5), parents (5) and street children (5) which sampled based on purposive sampling technique from five public basic schools in Somanya in the Yilo Krobo municipal. The data collection process involve interview, using interview guide with the elicitation of relevant information from interviewees. The Research instrument (structured interview guide) was subjected to face and content validity by experts and it could be identified that the items are associated with the purpose of the study. Consequently, a trial was not carried out due to the fact that, the positive criticism by experts enhanced data gathering and augment the results of the research. After the collation of data, each of the items was given generic titles, for instance data concerning the first respondent was labelled STParticip 1 while the last respondent was titled STParticip 20. Data was analysed through the thematic content analysis of data collected, involving transcribing data and reading through it for issues of consistence. The transcribed data was fed into the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) computer software QSR Nvivo so as to easily identify themes, patterns and classifications in the data. Nvivo uses word frequencies, the recurring nature of a phrase or specific expressions in the transcribed data to emphasize appearing themes, trends and patterns. In order to highlight trends, patterns, themes and categories, the researchers' employed word-frequency query to do so as to underscore recurring words in the transcribed data. Words such as "poor", "depression", "performance", "stubborn", "poverty", "lack", "single", "difficult", "regularity", "punctuality", and "academic" came to the fore. By means of text-based query, certain recurring phrases used by interviewees were also noted, such phrases include but not limited to "inability to concentrate", "poor academic performance", "drop out of school", "irresponsible parenting", "adversely affecting", "high poverty level", "government intervention", and "street children".

Detecting emerging themes and patterns underscoring each of the two-pronged research questions on the study, text-based query reflective of each of the underlying was entered. The NVIVO software allowed ordering, categorisation, and organisation of data collected into themes in line with research objectives to disclose answers for the research question. The use of Nvivo was very enriching because it facilitated the generation of valuable themes, patterns and trends in

participants' comments and enhance the ability of the study to provide insightful, encompassing, reliable and well-validated research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results based on the research question: "What are the implication of streetism on the learning ability of street children at the selected public basic school schools in Somanya?".

In respondents' response to the question "Are you aware that there are some street children in your class", majority (92%) of the teachers and head teachers responded "Yes", by this it means streetism is rampant among pupils in the selected schools. In order to decipher the implication of these phenomenon, both the interviewees were questioned regarding punctuality and regularity of street children in school, most (89%) of the entire participants indicated that "Yes". The following excerpts from the rational, clear and concise responses of participants gave credence to one of the major implications of streetism on the street children learning ability:

"Most of these children (street children) do not come to school on time, and when you punish them for lateness they will not come for one or two days in a row".

ST Participate 14, classroom teacher, with 9 years of working experience.

"Street children are often irregular at school and very stubborn so much so that they don't respect authorities whether in the home, at school or in the community because sometimes their parent brings them to school yet they will miss school again and again".

ST Participate 8, head teacher with 10 years of working experience.

"I am tired of my child ooo, he is too stubborn and always want to run from school, if he goes today, he will miss two or three days. When he even decides to go he will first go to his friend near the school, so they will get to school after school have opened. This boy is really troublesome".

Single Parent (mother) with 8-year old street child

"I stay with my grandmother. She sells koko and I have to help her before I come to school, so I get to school late, sometime when I go to see my friends near school because I don't have food so when I finish I will come late to school and sometime I don't go to school"

Street child in Primary Three at the basic school

A closer examination of the excerpts reveals that irregularity and late coming and refusal to attend school is one of the serious implications of streetism on the learning ability of street children. As the interviewees indicated, these children do not see the seriousness of coming to school and when they do, several limiting factor prevents them from coming. For example, one of the parents stated that her boy "*does not want to go to school*", another teacher stated that "*street children do not respect any authority both at home and school*". Other interviewees identified some pertinent implications of streetism on the learning ability of street children as shown below in the following excerpts:

"Children involved in streetism perform poorly academically with several becoming drop out".

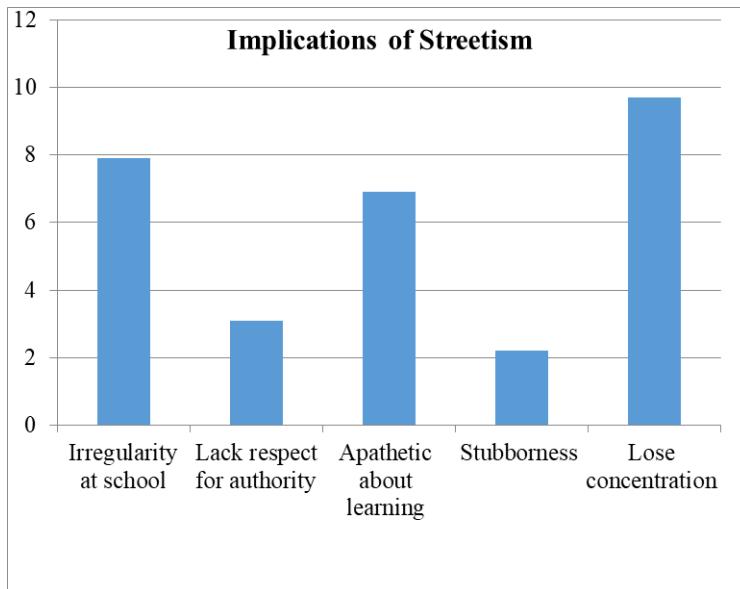
STParticipit 2, head teacher with 7 years of working experience.

"These children, I mean street children, are very difficult to handle. They often lose concentration in classroom; isolate themselves often depressed and sometimes erratic in their behaviour".

STParticipit 11, Classroom teacher with 8 years of working experience.

Responses of the interviewees as depicted in the excerpts above revealed that streetism is having negative implications on the pupils in relation to their learning ability.

In effect, streetism seriously limits the learning ability of children at the basic school. This conclusion was reached in view of the interviewees' comments that streetism makes street children go late to school, miss school, stubborn, apathetic of learning at school and it makes them lose concentration. This is depicted in Figure 1 below.



Implications of Streetism on the Learning of the Street Child

All the interviewees (100%) indicated that streetism is a menace to the learning ability of the street child and as such, interventions to enhance street children learning ability are relevant. Hence, most of the participants proffered practical ways learning ability of street children can be enhanced. The following excerpts are representative of their comments.

"Parental control is vital in enhancing learning ability of street children, as a result, in my opinion, this issue should be thoroughly discussed at PTA meetings and if possible, head teacher should arrange for private session with parents or guardian of street children so as to proffer practical suggestion on helping the children to focus on learning".

STParticpt 20, head teacher with 14 years of working experience

"The government should establish poverty alleviation programs to provide residents with better livelihood and better orientation towards education".

STParticpt 17, head teacher with 11 years working experience

"In my opinion, I think the government should sensitize the public regarding the ills of preventing girl-child from attending school. Moreover, parents of this children should be educated on the need for good parenting".

STParticpt 11, headmistress with 13 years of working experience

"I fend for myself by hawking or doing other jobs because my father is unemployed. Please, I beg that the government should intervene and provide my father with a work or financial

assistance to start a business to enable me concentrate on my education".

STParticpt 2, a pupil in class 4.

The excerpts above clearly demonstrated that these interventions and many more will go a long way to enhance the learning ability of the street children. Some (65%) of the participants also indicated that teachers with negative attitude towards street children should be dealt with and if these teachers persist they should be suspended.

CONCLUSIONS

The critical investigation conducted in study clearly demonstrated that streetism is a social menace and has serious impact on pupil's ability to learn. Street children are often not punctual and irregular at school; are often apathetic towards learning and they lack concentration in classroom. The study revealed interventions such as Government introducing poverty alleviation programs, organization of private counselling by school for parents and street children on the relevance of education and dealing with teachers with negative attitude towards street children in the school as ways of enhancing the learning of street children in Somanya.

Recommendations

It is recommended by the researchers that teachers in areas where streetism are felt in Ghana, investigate how such a menace is negatively affecting the learning ability of the street children in order to offer appropriate help. This will help check the phenomenon of "streetism undermining Ghana's effort of attaining Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) for her citizenry" as reported by the Centre for Constitutional Order (CENCORD, 2018) in

collaboration with the University of Professional Studies, Accra, (UPSA) Faculty of Law.

The study revealed that street children often lose concentration during classroom discussions; it is therefore recommended that effort should be made to understand why a street child losses concentration and appropriate help should be given in this regard. As a result, knowledge and skills of teachers at Somanya-Ghana, needs to be enhanced by the government to enable them effectively handle street children in their respected classroom.

The government and stakeholders of education should continually make arrangement to cater for the physical and academic needs of street children in the form of relevant intervention programs orchestrated including the ones revealed by the study to reduce the ills of the poor parenting, poverty and negative attitude of teachers. Schools should offer quality education to retain all street children once they are in school.

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