

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT OF WOMEN IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA: A CASE OF TEENAGE HEADPORTER IN GHANA.

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ABSTRACT

It is seen that child labour with regards to the head portering business in Ghana is predominantly made up of people from the three northern regions of Ghana. Many of them are from the rural areas who migrate to the two larger cities of Kumasi and Accra in Ghana and use themselves as means of transport to carry wares of clients as well as commuters. The head porters as street children are clearly within the low income earning category, however, they exhibit a high degree of determination to succeed in their chosen career. Despite the fact that earnings in this occupation are low, those pursuing this occupation arrange their living arrangements so as to maximize their savings. The rigors of the occupation, the low income and the degree of overcrowding associated with the business often lead them into contracting diseases and pregnancies. Institutions such as governmental and non-governmental are educating, counselling and imparting vocational skills to the children in order to rehabilitate them.

Keywords: Sub-Sahara Africa, Ghana, Teenage, Head Porters, Streetism, Child labour.

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In Sub-Sahara Africa, the nature and extent of child labour and the severity of the forms of exploitation vary from one region to another and from country to country. In Ghana, the spatial patterns of population mobility are basically a consequence of the location of different migration opportunity zones in the country. Ghana can broadly be divided into (i) the forest region in the south (ii) the savannah region of the north and (iii) the savannah of the south-eastern coastal plain. Related to this is the distribution and utilization of both human and natural resources. Thus, today there are regions of varying levels of economic and social development which are connected by streams of people who move from one region or locality to the other in order to avail themselves of real or perceived opportunities (Brown, 1986).

Contribution of rural women as means of transporting goods from one point to another in Africa has received substantial attention over the years (Howe and Barwell, 1987, Bryceson, 1993). An important finding of the research into the transport contribution of women is that women and girls are used as carriers and use themselves as a means of transport. The above has necessitated the need to explore the travel and transport situation of low-income urban teenage girls in Ghana; that is the social and economic circumstances of head-load carriers or "head porters". Petty trading is primarily the occupational province of women (Apt Van Ham et. al.1992). The commercial head load portering by girls is to be understood within this context.

Women traders and most people from the general public use "head porters" to move goods between markets and purchasing points and transport facilities i.e. lorry parks and "trotro" stations (Achempong and Esposito, 2014). In this respect, "head porters" or female head porters must be viewed as part of the transport structure of the developing world. Transport functions which are performed by technology in the developed countries are performed by human energy in the developing world thereby making human transport an integral part of the transport structure in this part of the world.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Child labour remains a widespread and growing phenomenon in today's world. A major problem of this migration is the movement of children to work for money. Child labour is a problem affecting our society and the world today which calls for concerted efforts on the part of policy makers to ensure that the right policies are put in place to ensure that the lives of these innocent ones are protected. The UN defines child labour as "all forms of economic exploitation, any work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development"(African Newsletter, 2000,Bhukuth,2008,Martin,2013) The ILO has a broader definition. To them, "child labour is

remunerated or unremunerated work by a young person under a certain age, the work of which impairs the young's personal development, health, safety, well being physically, mentally and psychologically, impairment of which is in violation of national or international law" (African Newsletter, 2000).

Many children worldwide work in extremely dangerous situations and in exploitative and abusive conditions. According to the new worldwide estimates of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there are at least 250 million children aged between five and fourteen years of age engaged in economic activities. Most of them are in developing countries, where child labour is predominant. For almost one-half of these children (120 million) the child labour work is carried out on a full-time basis.

Originally, the job of carrying goods at the market was done by male porters. These porters were hired by both traders and buyers to carry their goods for a fee. However, with the change in the economy and the socio-cultural system, more women have had to take up jobs to reduce the financial burden on their families. But since most of these females lack the requisite capital to engage in trading, they have no other alternative than to enter the portering business (Coffie, 1992).

Since the beginning of farming, children have worked in agriculture. They continue to do so today – hoeing, seeding, and spreading fertilizers and pesticides. Parents who do not need their children's labour may hire them out to their neighbouring farmers, for work in nearby plots. In this way, children often contribute to the family income. To the very poor, this type of child labour is not seen as exploitative, but as an economic fact of life or even a benign influence on children because it teaches them responsibility at an early age (African Newsletter, 2000).

Some people have given different views concerning the causes of child labour. Many people believe it is directly related to poverty. Some will say it is due to dysfunctional families whilst others will say it is because using children is cheaper than using adults (African Newsletter, 2000). With adults you have to enter into an employment contract whereas the employer when using children is able to dictate the terms and the conditions of work (Ambrose and Mitchell, 2007). Whatever reason one gives to justify Child Labour, the fact still remains that working children are affected physically, mentally and psychologically and their development towards becoming responsible adults is hampered (African Newsletter, 2000).

Countries such as Ghana with weak enforcement of Child Labour laws have a comparative advantage over countries where the laws are enforced. Most head porters are exposed to parasites and communicable diseases. They are undernourished, making them particularly vulnerable to all kinds of problems. Hundreds of millions of children grow up in these nests of squalor, misery and alienation. Millions drop out early from school – if they attend school at all. Driven by low family income many start working at a very young age, labouring for

money on the streets of Accra, Kumasi and some of the major cities of the country (WHO, 1987b).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimated that the overall number of children under fifteen years who were 'economically active' at the beginning of the 1980s was around 50 million. Other estimates give figures of 75 to 100 million (ibid). Virtually all economically active children (98 percent) are found in the developing countries. The percentage of these children varies from one country to another. Also, a report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said 61 percent of child workers were in Asia, followed by Africa with 32 percent and Latin America with 7 percent (ILO, 1996, Chaaban and Cunningham, 2011).

In the 1990s, a new framework emerged in the shape of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It incorporates specific provisions for the protection of children in armed conflicts as well as proclaiming the right of all children to basic health care, nutrition, and education. In its first four (4) years, the Convention has been ratified by some 150 governments. No other human rights convention has ever progressed to this first stage so rapidly. It is UNICEF's hope that the Convention would be ratified by all countries for the survival, protection and development of children so that any country which will fall below that standard will be ashamed. (ILO, 1996).

In Ghana, where there is such a widespread adult unemployment, there are job opportunities for most children. This is due to the fact that, it is in the interest of the employers to take on children as they can get away with paying much less than even the minimum wage laid down by the government for adult workers. Children in Ghana, unlike their adult counterparts can also be forced to work overtime without being paid for it. Physical violence for instance, is one of the most frequently cited and thus familiar types of violence against children. Five themes emerged in perceptions of physical violence for which forced labour is one of them. Forced labour capture situations and descriptions of work which the person is given no choice in where he/she is sent and what work he/she is assigned.

The rest of the paper is structured this way. Section two is for the literature review, section 3 is for the methodology with section 4 dwelling on the empirical findings of the research of the study. The study ends with conclusions and prospect for further research in this subject area.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Determination of the Sample Size

The target group for the research is the teenage head porters who work on the streets of Accra and Kumasi Metropolis with no fixed place of usual residence.

Getting the actual number of teenage head porters proved very difficult as their actual number is unknown due to logistical constrain on the part of the statistical service of Ghana and other bodies mandated to undertake such assignment. Due to this, a case study method of data collection was used. According to Taschereau (1998), there are no rigid rules for the sample size when dealing with case studies. This result from the fact that the validity or otherwise of the research has more to do with information richness of the cases selected and more so on the credibility of the researcher than the sample size. The sample size selected depends on what the researcher wants to investigate and the resources at his disposal.

Hence, we adopted the method of sampling 120 teenage head porters from both Accra and Kumasi Metropolis with 60 each coming from these two areas. These children were selected from vantage points such as the Kaneshie/circle, Odorkor, Agbobloshie market and central railway stations in Accra and Aboabo, Kegetia railway and lorry stations in Kumasi. These places were selected as the children are known to flood there to carry wares of their clients. In the case of institutional responses, the Directors of eight institutions both governmental and Non-governmental were also selected as they provide services to these street children. Finally, 12 people who patronize the services of the head porters were selected from the general public to find out their perception of the head porters.

4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 AGE DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of children according to age is shown in Table 3.1, below.

Table 4.1: Age Distribution

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
6-8	0	0.0
9 - 11	8	6.67
12 -14	40	33.33
15 – 17	72	60
TOTAL	120	100.0

The sample shows a predominance of children between the ages of fifteen and seventeen (15-17) years constituting 60 percent of respondents. This group is followed by children between the ages of twelve and fourteen (12-14) years constituting 33 percent. Together they constitute 93 percent of the respondents. For children who are between the ages of nine and eleven (9-11) years, they constitute only 6 percent of the total respondents.

It could be realized from the above statistics that the children due to enter adulthood constitute the greater number among the head porters. This does not auger well for the districts as most of the manpower needs of the country is lost technically as they are out of school. It could be concluded that the regions from which these children migrated from are losing their economically active youth who may be a burden to the community in years to come since they may have to depend on other people when they are unable to do this job in the old age. These migrated children may also become a burden on the cities, as they will be competing with the urban residents for the limited employment opportunities and resources such as water, accommodation in the cities.

4.2 REGION OF ORIGIN

An investigation was conducted into the regions from which these children migrated.

Table 4.2: Province of Origin

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Northern Region	72	60
Brong Ahafo Region	4	3.33
Upper East	24	20
Northern Volta	14	11.67
Upper West	6	5
Ashanti Region	0	0.0
Western Region	0	0.0
Eastern Region	0	0.0
Central Region	0	0.0
Greater Accra Region	0	0.0
TOTAL	120	100.0

The results given by the respondent's shows in Table 4.2 indicates that the majority of them migrated from the Northern region (60 percent). The region is noted for its chieftaincy conflict which sometimes makes it almost impossible to embark on any economic activities. From our investigations revealed that the children could not stand the ethnic conflict that has plagued the region. As result of these conflicts, most of them have lost their parents and the economic livelihood and are thus encouraged to find jobs and income to supplement the needs of their families. It was also reported by the children that they were encouraged and connected by their elderly sisters into the trade.

It came as no surprise then that the children migrated from the savannah portions of the country where poverty is hard hit on the people. Their land is not the best for farming when compared with the forest zones of Ashanti, Eastern, Western and other parts of the country where life is less difficult. Apart from the three northern regions, the Northern Volta has a measure of its citizen's migrating to engage in the kaya trade. This part of the Volta region has the same soil type like the northern regions and find it difficult making ends meet. This has force a sizable number of them in the head porter trade.

4.3 ETHNIC COMPOSITION

In analysing the composition of the ethnic groups of these children, it was revealed from the table 4.3 that the Dagombas and Frafras dominate in the head porter trade.

Table 4.3: Ethnic Composition

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY(FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Kotokoli	13	10.83
Dagomba	73	60.83
Mamprusi	4	3.33
Frafra	20	16.67
Wala	4	3.33
Kokomba	6	5
TOTAL	120	100.0

Whereas the Dagombas from the Northern region constituted as high as 60 percent of the ethnic groups, the Frafras are made up of 16 percent of the respondents. The main factor serving as a pull factor for the migration of these children is economic. Their parents do not

have the means to see to their proper development, as a result, they need to supplement the family income by carrying wares. The Frafras, it has been realized, have unsuitable land for farming. Most of them too have parents who in the past have migrated to the south to work in cocoa farms and other jobs. This has been the trend, which the children are following. The two ethnic groups together make as high as 76 percent of those in the head porter trade.

The Kotokoli ethnic group from Northern Volta who have similar characteristics in terms of the soil and poverty also constitute 10 percent of the children engaged in the head portage business. It has being realised that almost all the children in this trade are people from the deprived communities of this country.

4.4 PLACE OF NORMAL RESIDENCE

Table 4.4: Place of Normal Residence

CATEAGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Rural Area	64	53.33
Urban Area	29	24.17
NO response/not indicated	27	22.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

From the data gathered, it came to light as indicated from table 4.4 that most of the teenage girls (53 percent) interviewed have been living in the rural areas before they migrated to pursue their present career. This high figure suggests that most of the teenage head porters migrated from deprived parts of the country where poverty has made it difficult for the children to attend school.

Those who migrate from the hinterland are twice as many as those from the urban centers (24 percent). More so, it is the rural areas where the illiteracy rate is high and as a result, getting employment in the formal sector becomes impossible. The informal sector cannot also offer employment all year round. This makes most of the parents of these girls unemployed. From the survey, the children reported that they are encouraged by their parents to move to the south to work as head-porters when they have little to do in their home of origin.

The non-response to the above question was as high as 22 percent of the total number interviewed. The high non responses may be attributed to the lack of confidence and trust in the researcher whom they perceived as an outsider. This makes them feel reluctant to open up and give more information as the case is.

4.5 WHETHER PARENTS ARE ALIVE

Having identified the fact that most of the children are from the northern parts of the country, attention was turned to find out whether their parents were alive. The result from the respondents can be found in the Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Whether Parents are Alive

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Father (alive)	33	27.5
Mother (alive)	21	17.5
Both parents (alive)	63	52.5
No response/ not indicated	3	2.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

From the data gathered, a sizeable number of the children have their parents still living. This shows that the children on the street engaged in the kaya trade are not necessarily orphans or children whose parents are dead or alive. 52 percent have both parents alive, with 27 and 17 percent of them having their fathers and mothers living, respectively. From the analysis made so far, it came out that the parents of these children cannot simply afford to look after their children because most of the children do not have parents who have gainful employment throughout the year.

As high as 75 percent of the children have their parents engaged in subsistence farming. This therefore is a crucial fact to be related to the situation of the head porter children.

4.6 OCCUPATION OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Trading, driving and farming featured largely in the economic activities of the parents/guardians of the teenage head porters interviewed.

Table 4.6: Occupation of Parents / Guardians

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Farmers	91	75.83
Drivers(fathers)	4	3.33
Traders(mothers)	17	14.17
No response / Not indicated	8	6.67
TOTAL	120	100.0

From the data provided in table 4.6, the source of livelihood of the parents of these children are outside the formal sector. Subsistence farming is the main occupation of their parents (75 percent). Looking at the kind of work that the parents are doing in relation to the size of their family, they had no other alternative than to supplement the income of the family. But as there is no work for most of them to do especially in the northern savanna area where the rain is unpredictable, 14 percent of the parents of these young girls are also engaged in petty trading which also does not yield enough income to sustain the parents, let alone the large family.

From the study conducted, most parents of these head porters children are not employed in the formal sector where they can earn regular income to look after their children. Since they depend on rain fed agriculture, the parents of these girls turn to be unemployed in most parts of the years. Thus they find it difficult to have regular income to look after their children in school.

4.7 EDUCATION

There were interesting revelations from table 4.7 when the children were asked questions concerning their educational background.

Table 4.7: Whether Respondents Attend School

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	-	0.0
No	36	30
Never in school	69	57.5
No repose / Not indicated	15	12.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

The empirical data revealed that as high as 57 percent of the teenage head porters have never attended school. The most potent factor contributing to non-attendance of school was that of poverty and this was why some parents/guardians could allow their children to earn income for themselves and the family on the streets. The economic factor is therefore quite considerable. Some of the children (30 percent), however, had attended school up to the primary school level but had to drop out of school due to a lot of factors beyond their control. According to the children, it became apparent that the school system itself is not motivating enough compared to the economic gains they make for being on the street.

From the data gathered so far, it came to light that none of the children had the opportunity of entering the senior secondary school (SSS) level where the opportunity to enter tertiary institution looks brighter.

4.8 AILMENTS CHILDREN SUFFER FROM

Table 4.8 gives a paints a disturbing picture of the kind of diseases that are easily contracted these teenage head porters as they go about their normal duties in their new place environment.

Table 4.8: Ailment Children Suffer From

	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Malaria	74	61.67
Stomachache	16	13.33
Guinea worm	2	1.67
Skin rashes	14	11.67
Headache	7	5.83
Pneumonia	2	1.67
No response/Not indicated	5	4.16
Total	120	100.0

It is a general fact that health is difficult to maintain if children are eating unhygienic food, drink from contaminated cups and remain in the sun for long hours of the day. Health related factors show some alarming incidents of illness among the children. For instance, 61 percent of the children complained more of malaria than any other disease. Their habitation in malaria infested and contaminated environment without any health protection contributed to this ailment.

13 and 11 percent of the children respectively complained about “Petty stomach aches” and skin rashes .There is much evidence indicating that, self-medication is the rule rather than the exception. This situation has dangerous consequences in the long run for their health maintenance. The above statistics confirms the fact that the children encounter a lot of health hazards in the performance of their chosen career.

4.9 HOW SPACIOUS ARE THEIR SLEEPING ABODE

It was noted from the survey study that most of the children do not only sleep in unhygienic places but also sleep in overcrowded areas, which will make it difficult should there be an outbreak of any epidemic.

Table 4.9: How Many People Sleep There

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
10 -20	37	30.83
21 -40	12	10
41 -50	4	3.33
51 -60	40	33.33
61 - 71	13	10.83
No response /Not indicated	14	11.67
TOTAL	120	100.0

For instance, from the interview conducted as portrayed in Table 4.9, 33 percent disclosed that they sleep with about 51 to 60 people. A further 30 percent also sleep in between 10 to 20 people.74 percent of the girls indicated that their parents have not even bothered to find out where their daughters lay their heads.

4.10 WHETHER CHILDREN PLAN TO RETURN HOME

From Table 4.10, the children were asked questions as to whether they have plans to return home.

Table 4.10: Whether Children Plan To Return Home

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	94	78.33
No	10	8.33
Undecided	16	13.33
TOTAL	120	100.0

It was revealed that 78 percent of the children plan to return home after they have accomplished their mission for being on the street. According to some of the children, their motives for being on the streets is to acquire some material things to start life with in order to supplement their families, thus, they wish to return home as soon as they have been able to do so.

From the survey, however, 8 percent revealed their unwillingness to go home now as they plan to stay on and make life in their new found homes. According to those who do not want to return home, they foresee themselves in the same problems back home which made them to journey to the south, specifically to Accra and Kumasi, even though they face problem of housing, harassment, health, feeding and low incomes.

4.11 DAILY EARNING

The issue of how much the head porters earn in a day gave a lot of revelation from the teenage head porters.

Table 4.11: Daily Earning

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
1,000-4,000	8	6.67
5,000-7,000	30	25
8,000-10,000	56	46.67
11,000-13,000	12	10
No respond/Not Indicated	14	11.66
TOTAL	120	100.0

From table 4.11, as many as 46 percent earned income between 8,000-10,000 cedis a day. 25 percent however, indicated that they are able to earn on the average between 5000- 7000 cedis a day, while 10 percent mentioned their daily income as falling between 11,000-13,000 cedis. Those who earn such high income were those who spend very little of their income earned and had to carry heavy loads to the detriment of their health. The children also reported that they also ate eat only twice in a day and their food did not contain most of the nutrients needed for proper growth. They do this, as reported by the children in order to save some money for the family back home.

4.12 SAVING IN A DAY

In keeping with the primary objective of raising money to buy personal belongings and also for investment or for occupational skill training, the overwhelming majority of the respondents regularly save a part of their daily earnings.

Table 4.12: Daily Savings

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (FR)	PERCENTAGE (%)
2000 cedis	9	7.5
3000 cedis	5	4,17
4000 cedis	43	35.83
5000 cedis	41	34.17
6000 cedis	13	10.83
No response/Not Indicated	9	7.5
TOTAL	120	100.0

The majority of the respondents (35 percent) indicated that, they are able to save 4000 cedis a day out of the income that they earn. They revealed that they could only save this amount as most of their earnings go into food and water. 34 percent of the respondents also indicated that they are able to save 5000 cedis everyday if they have the strength to work hard enough. The children could make an average savings of about 130,000 cedis per month, which is a

substantial amount for them. The implication is that the teenage head porters could have left the business after spending some few months or years on the job had they not been remitting their family members and relatives.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, although the Head porters are clearly within the low income earning category, they exhibit a high degree of determination to succeed. Child labour is common practice in Ghana especially within the two communities under study, these children appears to be self-determined to carry on the trade. These girls do not expect to be free from the burden and to return home in the not too distant future. Due to this determination, most institutions/organizations both governmental and non-governmental are educating, counselling and imparting vocational skills to the children in order to rehabilitate the teenage Head porters.

Despite the fact that earnings in this occupation are low, those pursuing this occupation arrange their living arrangements so as to maximize their savings. This includes sleeping in overcrowded environment. The rigors of the occupation, the low income and the degree of overcrowding associated with being a head porter should not blind us to the degree of disorganization already present. The object of policy must be to foster a degree of organization and to take care not to make them worse off than before. Enabling children to obtain better terms for what work they do may be the appropriate path to improvement. Redesigning education for working teenage Head porters so that it will be compatible with their occupational hours may be one of the most fruitful methods of approaching the low problem of non-enrolled children or dropouts ending up in the low paid job.

The new consensus on the elimination of teenage head porters from the trade should be accompanied by the realization that the process will take time. It has to be part of an overall effort for development and poverty alleviation. Finally, the political will to action is a precondition for the elimination of the teenage Head porters from our streets.

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