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Examining Rural Parents Indigenous Knowledge and Non -Governmental Organizationals' (Ngos) Interventions on Children Right to Education in Northern Ghana

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Abstract

The advancement and welfare of children are paramount to governments. UNICEF (2010) recommended that child protection groups incorporate local and indigenous knowledge into global best practice frameworks. In Ghana and other African nations, laws concerning children's welfare are primarily shaped by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1990). Notwithstanding significant efforts to formulate norms and standards, insufficient emphasis is placed on the disregard for indigenous knowledge related to children and its impact on the sustainable execution of child-centric initiatives. This study utilised an ethnographic approach to examine rural parents' perceptions of a non-governmental organisation initiative focused on children's rights to fundamental education and the illegality of child employment. Purposive sampling was employed to choose 25 individuals for the research. Interviewing was deemed an appropriate strategy for data collection, as verbal communication is prevalent in African culture, where information is conveyed through narratives, proverbs, stories, and folktales. The study's findings indicate that the NGO's staff fail to acknowledge the indigenous knowledge of rural communities, hence employing a top-down approach rather than a bottom-up strategy. Another conclusion indicated that parents reared children with the intention of instilling the community's traditional views. The research indicated that child rights programs adopted a universal concept of childhood, disregarding diverse interpretations, hence compromising the effectiveness and sustainability of these activities. The study advised that NGOs use indigenous knowledge into the formulation of child protection projects. The research advocates for a transition from a bottom-up strategy to a top-down approach in child development approaches.

Keywords: NGO Interventions; Indigenous knowledge; Child protection; Northern ghana

Introduction

Diverse cultures have varying child protection strategies. In a globalised context, the UN and World Bank have attempted to standardise child welfare through efforts such as the UNCRC, Education for All, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 concerning excellent education. Standardised frameworks employ "best practices" and criteria to enhance child well-being, although they may undermine indigenous knowledge [1,2]. Indigenous populations, scholars, and policymakers globally contest this standardised paradigm; nonetheless, evidence, particularly from Sub-Saharan Africa, is limited. The concept of child rights and the recognition of children as social agents have been extensively embraced by international organisations such as UNICEF, national governments (with the UNCRC being the most "successful" convention, ratified by all nations except the US), and civil society organisations (CSOs), including child-focused NGOs. The UNCRC's universal definition of childhood is perceived as an imposition of Western ideals of a "ideal" and "appropriate" childhood (Boyden, 2015). The objective is to alter detrimental group norms and practices affecting children. Burman (2003) asserted that the UNCRC's Western interpretation of children and

its norms have incited social conflict and discourse in collectivist nations. Ethnographic study indicates that several child-rearing practices persist in rural and underprivileged urban areas of Ghana since the colonial era [3,4]. Extended family members actively participate in child-rearing. Children serve as resources; they assist with domestic tasks and engage with younger siblings. Conventional values of obedience, accountability, and respect develop intergenerational connections. Children are required to fulfil these standards. They are crucial for communication among Ghanaian adults and children. Children must comply without reluctance. Responsibility necessitates adherence and proactivity, particularly within the household; youngsters demonstrate maturity by their endeavours. Respect necessitates that youngsters heed adults without interruption. Indigenous communal values contrast with the individual rights-based principles of the UNCRC yet align with Article 31 of the ACRWC. Children in traditional Ghanaian society are anticipated to adhere to their parents' guidance. The youngster is nurtured to choose the family's needs over their own [4]. Article 12 of the UNCRC confers upon children the right to express their views and engage in decisions that impact them.

In conventional Ghanaian homes, outspoken or aggressive children are regarded as rude, deviant, and uncivilised. Community members occasionally perceive such youngsters as disgraceful and indicative of inadequate parenting. In traditional Ghanaian households, children are socialised via labour, independent of their schooling [5]. Family activities such as the harvesting of yam, millet, and maize are feasible. In the absence of this occupation, children may forfeit essential skills and abilities, therefore impacting family welfare. Enforcing Article 32 of the UNCRC, which prohibits minors from engaging in labour or the most egregious forms of child labour until the age of 18, may result in familial separation. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) differentiates between child domestic employment (for a third party) and household chores, however any work that interferes with schooling is classified as child labour. Consequently, the traditional occupations of Ghanaian children are frequently perceived as exploitation or labour [6]. Research on child labour emphasises the most egregious types of exploitation, including child labour, sexual abuse, and parental trafficking [7]. Despite the divergent perspectives on children between Western and Ghanaian cultures, Ghana ratified the UNCRC in 1990 and included it into the Children's Act 1998, Act 560. The government established legislation derived from Act 560 to safeguard youth. Ghana has endorsed many child protection treaties, including the 1999 ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL). Ghana ratified the ACRWC in 2005, some years subsequent to the enactment of the Children's Act in 1998. The Children's Act does not include the ACRWC's acknowledgement of indigenous conceptions of childhood. Ghana implemented economic enhancements influenced by foreign organisations and established child welfare administrative bodies. The Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) program, funded by the World Bank, UNICEF, and Ghana, aims to enhance child development and welfare [8,9]. Government agencies safeguard the rights and welfare of children. The principal institutions are the Ghana National Commission on Children and the Department of Social Welfare. Notwithstanding robust political, legal, and economic frameworks for child protection, implementation encounters numerous challenges, including inadequate resources and an inhospitable environment for the universal notion of child protection in Ghana, especially at the community level beyond official and NGO sectors [10]. Diverse cultures have varying child protection strategies. In a globalised context, the UN and World Bank have attempted to standardise child welfare through efforts such as the UNCRC, Education for All, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 concerning excellent education. Standardised frameworks employ "best practices" and criteria to enhance child well-being, although they may undermine indigenous knowledge [1,2]. Indigenous populations, scholars, and policymakers globally contest this standardised paradigm; nonetheless, evidence, particularly from Sub-Saharan Africa, is limited. The concept of child rights and the recognition of children as social agents have been extensively embraced by international organisations such as UNICEF, national governments (with the UNCRC being the most "successful" convention, ratified by all nations except the US), and civil society organisations (CSOs), including child-focused NGOs. The UNCRC's universal definition of childhood is perceived as an imposition of Western ideals of a "ideal" and "appropriate" childhood [11]. The objective is to alter detrimental group norms and practices affecting children. Burman (2003) asserted that the UNCRC's Western interpretation of children and its norms have incited social conflict and discourse in collectivist nations. Ethnographic study indicates that several child-rearing practices persist in rural and underprivileged urban areas of Ghana since the colonial era [3,4]. Extended family members actively participate in child-rearing. Children serve as resources; they assist with domestic tasks and engage with younger siblings. Conventional values of obedience, accountability, and respect develop intergenerational connections. Children are required to fulfil these standards. They are crucial for communication among Ghanaian adults and children. Children must comply without reluctance. Responsibility necessitates adherence and proactivity, particularly within the household; youngsters demonstrate maturity by their endeavours. Respect necessitates that youngsters heed adults without interruption. Indigenous communal values contrast with the individual rights-based principles of the UNCRC yet align with Article 31 of the ACRWC. Children in traditional Ghanaian society are anticipated to adhere to their parents' guidance. The youngster

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Problem Statement

Ghana has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and incorporated it into national legislation. The implementation of these requirements is occasionally challenging due to discrepancies between local perceptions of child protection and the legislation established by the UNCRC [12-15]. The Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Ghana, and international entities such as the IMF, World Bank, and UNICEF typically neglect the use of local expertise in child safety efforts. These international organisations promote the UNCRC and Western child protection principles, acknowledging a child as a "rights-holder" independent of parental authority [16]. In nations that do not emphasise individuality, autonomy, and Western principles, the emphasis on children's rights has generated conflict between carers and children, occasionally exacerbating the issues that the UNCRC aims to address [15]. The understanding of the partnership between indigenous knowledge views and NGOs about child protection initiatives in rural areas of Ghana, particularly in Northern Ghana, is inadequate. This study project examines the conflicts that emerge when indigenous knowledge is disregarded or devalued by a child-centric NGO, along with the ensuing impacts on the sustained execution of the NGO's initiatives.

Main Research Question

Why is there the need for a blend of indigenous knowledge application and child protection interventions in Ghana?

Main Research Objective

To examine the impact of indigenous knowledge on child protection interventions in Ghana.

Literature Review

Throughout the majority of the twentieth century, investigations into children and childhood were primarily influenced by developmental psychologists, particularly stage theorist Piaget, who perceived children as susceptible and passive as they gradually evolved into adulthood [17]. The emergence of the new sociology of childhood in the 1990s challenged the notion of children's passivity; scholars recognised children as social actors with agency, capable of influencing their social environments [18]. The divergent perspectives on children as either fragile and passive or capable and socially active are both manifestations of Western ideology. The UNCRC encompasses both viewpoints, with the specific formulation varying according on the context. In dialogues on child work, children are depicted as weak and in need of protection; conversely, in debates about children's rights to make choices and engage in decision-making, they are represented as autonomous and socially engaged beings. King (2007) observes that the simultaneous rise of child rights, as articulated in the

UNCRC in 1989, and a sociological theory portraying children as autonomous, capable, and possessing agency, is not coincidental. Child rights and the acknowledgement of children as social agents have been extensively embraced by international organisations such as UNICEF, governments (the UNCRC is the most "successful" treaty to date, ratified by every country save the USA), and civil society, especially child-centric NGOs. The advocacy for a global comprehension of childhood via the UNCRC is perceived as an imposition of Western criteria for defining a "good" and "proper" childhood [11]. The main objective is to alter group norms and practices deemed detrimental to young. Burman asserts that in collectivist nations, the application of the UNCRC, which has a Western perspective on children and standards, has generated significant public strife and controversy. The portrayal of children as either passive victims or active actors neglects the recognition of diverse childhood experiences influenced by particular circumstances. Pupavac's study suggests that the implementation of child rights formulated in the industrialised Western context may not provide the desired outcomes in diverse cultural environments. In 1990, the African Union adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The majority of its provisions are based on the UNCRC with minor modifications; nevertheless, it includes an additional component not included in the UNCRC, item 31: Responsibility of the Child. This article delineates children's responsibilities and obligations to their parents and the broader community. The aim is to illustrate African cultural values associated with children, so honouring the many views of childhood.

Indigenous Knowledge

This research defines indigenous knowledge as the information accumulated over generations pertinent to a specific context, history, and culture; it pertains to a unique locality and traditional norms and values. It is frequently contrasted with Western knowledge and is associated with skills (beyond formal education) that empower societies to flourish. An increasing volume of research concentrates on indigenous knowledge in child studies within countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia.

African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (Iks) and Child Protection

Culture and child protection are interconnected, as Gough and Lynch elucidated: Culture may represent the predominant factor in child abuse and safety concerns. Children inhabit and contribute to it. It encompasses all activities pertaining to children. It is the foundation of our definitions of abuse and neglect, as well as our policies for safeguarding children and preventing harm. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) encompass cultural values, beliefs, practices, and areas such as politics, religion, education, agriculture, health, entertainment, and natural resource management (Castiano & Mkabela, Dewah & Mutula, Dondolo, Ossai, Vogel), which can either support or infringe upon child rights. Atwool asserts that Indigenous Knowledge Systems in pre-colonial New Zealand established a robust child protection framework grounded in extended family and kinship care. Children belonged to the whanau, not to their parents. Shutte posits that ubuntu asserts the interconnectedness of humanity, hence designating all adults in the community as accountable for every kid. Ubuntu signifies that the extended family influences more than only biological parents and offspring. Prior to colonialism, Africa has comprehensive informal child protection systems, which have since deteriorated (Mushunje). Prior to colonisation, Africa has social structures designed to assist the disadvantaged (Kreitzer). Extended families provided economic, psychological, and financial support to traditional African communities, necessitating official social services (Mupedziswa). African customs mandated that neighbours support all at-risk youngsters. Consequently, community assistance was given when children exhibited behavioural difficulties, and at-risk children were few (Magano, 2018). African tribes reject institutional child care because to the significance of family, heritage, and ancestral spirits (Mukushi). Historically, instances of neglected children were infrequent (Twesigye & Kitimbo). In Africa, extended family members frequently care for orphans and vulnerable children (Mupedziswa & Ntseane). According to Hlongwane, orphans were cared for or adopted by family, neighbours, and frequently strangers without remuneration under the principle of ubuntu. Believing that orphans are incapable of self-sufficiency, aunts, uncles, and grandparents provide housing, sustenance, clothing, education, emotional support, and healthcare to orphans in foster care. The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" suggests that children regard and respond to all members of the community, not alone their biological parents (Hlongwane et al.,). Child welfare underscores the capacity of families to furnish a secure environment for children (Kirst-Ashman, 2013). Extended families have historically provided care for vulnerable children (Mupedziswa), and their participation in child protection activities can be vital. IKS encompasses essential culturally relevant child-rearing knowledge. Magano (2018) referred to Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as "encyclopaedias that guide parents in child-rearing practices and the lessons to be conveyed within communities," encompassing norms, values, belief systems, narratives, and proverbs. They possess robust ethics and impactful African concepts. This research underscores the African principle that every kid must get specific guidance, with the community acting as carers. Conventional African childcare practices face challenges. The issues include HIV and AIDS, the increasing

number of orphans in extended families, the elderly age of carers, poverty, and the financial burden on carers. A research on orphan care in Zimbabwe revealed that senior carers aimed to revive "Ubuntu" and perceived orphan care as their obligation; yet, they experienced a deficiency of support from relatives and hesitated to solicit assistance from their own children owing to modernisation (Mafumbate & Magano). According to Lombard, social support for families may alleviate poverty in developing countries and enhance social engagement. Cultural changes in familial connections can impede extended family caring. Inadequate social support jeopardises families and heightens the probability of child maltreatment (Conley). Westernisation has prioritised the nuclear family, undermining communal caregiving traditions (Mufumbate, Meahabo, Mupedizwa). Extended families serve as ecological resources in several cultures, offering a substantial informal support network for individuals and families (Hepworth). Families in Sub-Saharan Africa experiencing crises derive significant support from extended family networks (Foster, Mupedziswa & Ntseane). In child welfare, families choose informal assistance over formal intervention; thus, organisations should collaborate with families and communities to protect children (Conley). UNICEF (2010b) recommended that child protection agencies integrate local and indigenous knowledge into international best practice models to ensure relevance and acceptability by local people. Cultural competency and local knowledge inform educational and training curricula to establish a socially relevant, community-driven, and sustainable social service workforce. Historical, political, religious, cultural, and environmental factors of the nation or region must be taken into account during contextualisation. Mtetwa and Muchacha underscore the necessity of examining the experiences of child protection interventions in rural Zimbabwe. The authors observe that traditional societies perceive children as community assets, and legal frameworks enable collective retribution. The government child protection system is perceived as intruding on familial matters and usurping community issues. Community members sometimes harbour resentment towards child protection professionals. Conventional African views on employment may clash with contemporary notions of child work and children's rights (Mtetwa & Muchaha). These examples illustrate the significance of social workers understanding local knowledge systems. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2016) asserts that the function of social workers in social protection may extend to their responsibilities in indigenous child protection. Top-down social safety programs and governmental policies frequently overlook families and communities. They inadvertently substitute organic care systems with policies that undermine intergenerational knowledge and wisdom, which have historically bolstered individual wellbeing. Mtetwa and Muchacha assert that Western child protection strategies may estrange local communities and obstruct service provision to at-risk children. Wessels recommended implementing community-based initiatives into child protection policy as the sole method to contextualise interventions in local cultures and institutions. South Africa has amended its legislation to acknowledge Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the customary practices of individual groups in child protection, rendering these arguments persuasive. Article 71 of South Africa's Children's Act 38 of 2005 permits the referral of designated children's legal matters to non-judicial mediation venues, including traditional authority. The legislation forbids lay forums from addressing suspected child abuse or sexual assault. Child protection social workers should embrace a multicultural perspective that aligns with service users' worldviews by adopting an Afrocentric rather than a Eurocentric approach while addressing African issues.

Material and Methods

Research Approach

Qualitative research is beneficial for studying understudied populations or phenomena (Henn). Qualitative research uses a lot of verbal data from people to understand complex phenomena (Fouche & Delport). Qualitative research revealed the complex nature of child protection and Tsonga Indigenous Knowledge Systems components that might improve child protection methods, as described by research participants. Mabvurira and Makhubele (2018a) posited in their research of African spirituality that foundational concepts, values, and reasoning cannot be measured using quantitative approaches. Qualitative research was appropriate for examining participants' thoughts, emotions, and experiences (Fouche & Delport).

Research Design

Ethnography involves listening, watching, documenting, and participating with research participants for eight months to understand their experiences and conduct [19- 33]. This study used this design.

Study Cohort and Sampling Methodology

The demographics and samples for the two data collection phases were examined independently. People are commonly the unit of study in social science research (Babbie). We selected participants using non-probability sampling to provide relevant data for the study (Makofane & Shirindi). The research recruited individuals using purposive sampling.

Data Collection Techniques

The ethnographic and qualitative data gathering aligned with the research topic. The predominant methods for collecting qualitative

data are semi-structured interviews, observations, and focus group discussions (Greeff, Makofane & Shirindi).

Conversations, proverbs, legends, and folktales are common in African culture, making interviews a good data collection method (Chauke, Magano, Nwoye). With approval, all interviews were audiotaped.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell's approach of data analysis, the researchers used theme analysis to evaluate qualitative data throughout the study. The paradigm states that data analysis begins before the interview (Creswell). Focus group talks, semi-structured interviews, and field notes collected qualitative data. Verbatim recordings and careful discourse analysis were made possible by using a voice recorder with participant agreement (Rubin & Babbie). The researchers took brief notes during interviews to focus on the topics, then produced more thorough field notes thereafter (Creswell). Categories, major themes, and recurring topics were used to compress the data (Schurink). Researchers identified data themes by carefully examining and re-examining the transcripts. Data was coded into separate components (Babbie, Nieuwenhuis). The researchers examined focus group data, including language, context, frequency of comments, and opinion breadth and specificity (Greeff). This method helped researchers grasp focus group participants' opinions and the themes that emerged from the debate.

Findings and Discussions

The research findings from the study samples are grouped into subjects and sub-themes in this section. Citations are from specific people; pseudonyms protect identity. A large portion of the results are observational.

Perspectives of Rural Parents on Early Childhood Development

Parents' perspectives on child protection significantly contrasted with those of NGO frontline workers and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Parents typically perceived children's physical safety, communal norms, and the capacity to cultivate group abilities as essential components of child protection. This research indicates that parents in Africa perceive early childhood education as emphasising local capacity development and Afrocentric literacy. A female spokeswoman articulates that in this community, both parents cultivate children and sustain the family through local agriculture and market procurement.

"... We also observe customs that keep children safe. In this community, it is proper training for a child to greet, be courteous and generally respect elderly persons. A child, when mature enough, will be expected to take up some duties such as caring for younger siblings or collecting water for the household. A child should be obedient to adults and must only talk when s/he is spoken to. Also, it is improper for a child to call attention to himself in a social gathering with adults...." (Participant 1, 2022).

The child rights advocated by the UNCRC are in contrast with agreements and obligations that mandate respect for adults and require children to remain silent unless spoken to. The perspectives of participating parents on child safety align with Nsamenang's (2005) conclusions that traditional African childhood development possesses an organisational coherence directed towards several objectives. Adolescents acquire the traditions of their community, which are frequently rooted on familial, professional, and quotidian experiences. At the research location, parents aimed to instill communal ideals in their children. This encompasses instructing on developmentally suitable standards. Experiential learning frequently results in marketable talents. Akos anticipates that youngsters would respect and follow all community elders due to mutual support and the necessity of learning from family and community members. Parents addressed intergenerational connections and children's self-expression.

".....Children express themselves and are creative when they play with their peers. But I think that children have a lot to learn from adults, and so for their own good it is essential for them to learn from adults, respect and obey them. I can and will only help a child who respects me not one who challenges me ....." (Participant 2,2022).

African youth must self-educate, according to Pence and Nsamenang (2008). They play with peers at home and elsewhere in participatory peer culture. Individuals learn community skills without parental oversight through these programs. Adults help children learn survival skills in their society. Participant 2 asserted that youngsters may acquire knowledge from grownups if they hold them in esteem. A youngster, influenced by UNCRC principles and focused on asserting individual rights, may overlook an essential environmental ability. Western values and contexts emphasise assertiveness in children (see to Article 12 of the UNCRC), promoting their involvement in decisions that serve their interests. Participants 1 and 2 assert that these characteristics indicate inadequate parenting and are not valued among youth.

Non-governmental organisations implementing projects inspired by the UNCRC to protect community children have advocated for child participation in decision-making and encouraged parents to respect children's rights; nevertheless, they have neglected indigenous knowledge regarding intergenerational relationships. The push for kid engagement by NGOs and school-based child rights groups appears to create tension between children and their parents.

Everyone expects children to be subservient, not just parents. After misinterpreting rural parents' expectations of their children, the NGO involvement to safeguard children may cause adults to withdraw crucial care and support. Rural parents are unconcerned by NGO children's rights activities due to their disrespect for reality. Man explains his confusion over children's right to education and child work ban.

We discussed suitable child care with NGO representatives recently. They said children shouldn't work on farms. What happens after school ends and kids are home? The official added that working while away from school is unacceptable because kid restrictions are constantly in place.

"... This was very new to me because during harvest time not only do I need them to help with harvest but extended family members will also expect the children to come and help with harvest..." (Participant 3, 2022).

This quote suggests that NGO administrators wanted to implement their childcare intervention regardless of rural parents' economic situation or cultural beliefs of child work. Participant 3 acknowledges children's entitlement to school but feels they should be allowed to work during holidays. In field observations, NGO frontline workers typically disregarded indigenous childhood knowledge as misinformed during intervention workshops. Performance and convincing rural parents to follow their childhood ideas were NGO priorities to prove their projects worked. Field research found that parents' strong attachment with indigenous knowledge and societal expectations around children made it difficult to persuade them to accept the NGO's childhood approach. Families socialise children, thus protective interventions must match family culture's intergenerational links and hierarchies. Governments can offer a formal framework for child safety, but if the indigenous idea of childhood disagrees with these acts and rules, protection may be impossible. Reports focused on rural NGO participation. Information was distributed top-down, therefore involvement was shallow. Indigenous child-rearing knowledge and local context were ignored.

".... When we meet with them at the workshops, we educate them on the importance of child protection, and we help them to know that if they keep their children in school and stop children from working on the farms the children will have a bright future. We also educate them on the child's right to education, to play and to express an opinion....." (NGO field officer).

The top-down educational system may explain why rural parents focus more on workshop benefits than child rights.

Community Perspectives on Child Labour and Education

Parents said the children's work demonstrated maturity, commitment, and skill enhancement. Parents believe this characteristic is beneficial for children and ought to be fostered. Consequently, children were frequently sold in the market, laboured in the fields with their parents, or assisted with domestic tasks, so allowing parents to engage in more productive activities. Parent interviews and school inspections indicated that early school enrolment was elevated. Children may lack the physical capacity to do strenuous tasks. Upon reaching an appropriate age, parents assessed whether to prioritise employment or education depending on which option would most likely provide a favourable future for their children. Even though most parents say education is good for their kids, an investigation into the children of participating parents found that many older children (under 18) worked in trades or agriculture, which the parents didn't mind. Maurice's (1993) thorough study found that Madagascan hamlet school enrolment declined as pupils matured because the educational material grew irrelevant to their needs. Parents complained that current schools were not good enough to prepare pupils for college. Although children may learn a skill and find a good job, the length of time needed for education to be beneficial seems to deter parents from enrolling them in formal institutions. Among a focus group, a member said that local schools encouraged lethargy among children and that:

"...It is crucial, ... for example let's take household chores, children need to learn how to handle such things from infancy so they can take care of themselves when the parents are not around and also for their future. Also, working on the farms teaches them the farming business which is a useful skill necessary for life in this community... if children go to school and come back and sit around doing nothing, they will surely become lazy and create a lot of problems for us...." (Participant 4, 2022).

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Ghana's Children's Act consider household tasks that conflict with school hour's juvenile labour. NGO frontline staff told participating parents this in workshops, yet participant 4's response suggests they valued household responsibilities. At the research site, students often fetched water and firewood in the morning before class. A participant said children's work shows maturity and responsibility:

"....But then how do people learn a skill if they do not work with someone who has expertise in that field? I think that they [children] must be allowed to work because it is a form of preparation for their future. If a child wants to become a farmer in future, he must learn the skill through working on the farms ... that is how my uncle taught me how to make Kente [traditional cloth] by learning and working with him and now I make money by making Kente. I don't think it is wrong for children to work with their parents...." (Participant 5, 2022)

Parents were hesitant to label their children's job as child labour. To foster independence in children, parents emphasised autonomy. They concluded that practical activities for children can enhance

their well-being. Parents acknowledged the advantages of education but lacked enthusiasm for child development. Parents valued work-based learning. This explains why parents may persist in exploiting their children, infringing upon educational rights and contravening rules against child employment. Despite the considerable effect of indigenous knowledge on child rights activities, NGOs, their financiers, and frontline workers ignored parents' views, which were mostly anchored in indigenous knowledge. Interactions and observations of the NGOs' frontline workers indicated that their primary objective was to demonstrate that their child interventions adhered to global policy, even at the cost of local reality.

Indigenous Knowledge as a Hindrance

Forefront NGO personnel advocated for international treaties and Western child-centric ideologies. They appeared either unaware of indigenous knowledge on children or deliberately disregarded it and the concept of communal households. NGO frontline workers often depicted rural parents as deficient in the knowledge required to nurture and safeguard their children in order to develop into "functional adults." Hobart posits that declarations of knowledge and the attribution of ignorance are essential issues in development, without which Western civilisation and its educated professionals may find it challenging to project sophistication and intelligence. Thus, NGO frontline workers saw the research location's children's problems as rural parents' faults. Therefore, NGO workers ignored local child care tradition and knowledge. Callaghan noted that Western-influenced child protection specialists often neglect "broader historical and geopolitical activities that have contributed to the impoverished contextual reality of the African continent" addressing African children. Child protectionists favour Western bushel measurements for African corn. Children had to work for their own well-being due to involved parents. The findings showed that children should learn to use their agency and resources. Extended family arrangements and responsibilities required children to work a certain amount. Parents said they routinely travelled for funerals, naming rights, and extended family food harvests. The absence of a parent for days or weeks meant that children needed to be prepared to flourish without them. Parents couldn't understand why NGO staff considered this vital teaching illegal. Focused on children's rights and the illegality of child exploitation, NGO frontline workers failed to notice that children were learning valuable skills via active labour. NGO workers ignored the benefits of labour skills, which may help youngsters assist their parents, manage self-care, and care for younger siblings in their absence. In contrast to school-aged youngsters, they expected children who worked to suffer in their development. Parents saw children's agency as responsibility, whereas NGO frontline workers saw it as participation. Parents think learning happens via collaborative efforts, whereas NGO frontline workers think it happens in school.

Integrating Indigenous and Western Knowledge of Childhood

The study revealed that all participants acknowledged early knowledge variety. To facilitate the adoption of the universal childhood paradigm in rural African communities, modifications may be necessary for global policies like as the UNCRC, foreign financial institutions, and Western-centric local child-focused NGOs. Child-centric NGOs may require the amalgamation of Western and indigenous skills. Integrating indigenous wisdom into NGO child protection projects is beneficial. Consequently, NGOs ought to promote initiatives that enable children to assist their parents during school vacations and harvest periods, rather than vilifying parents and asserting that children should not engage in agricultural labour. Disregarding this reality may cause rural parents to overlook child rights programs, while NGO field professionals may assert accomplishments that fail to effect substantial change.

Respecting Indigenous Knowledge with Seriousness

Local parents know how to protect youngsters. This indigenous wisdom should be respected to inspire parents to listen to others. In this setting, NGOs and government agencies should focus grassroots mobilising and identifying local institutions that can solve community concerns. Local parents that participate in child safety programs own and support them. These experiences may help rural parents form child safety committees using indigenous knowledge and global policy. Local committees might be supported by foreign funders, fostering varied child care systems rather than limiting them. This would honour the expertise of numerous civilisations and individuals that may be used to help children develop and thrive.

Emancipatory Cognition

Child-focused NGOs frequently instil optimism in parents by disseminating information through their planned intervention programs. This research consistently warned parents that children who chose work over school will fail. Parents think education secures their children's future, although rural formal education is poor [2]. In such cases, NGOs set unrealistic expectations. Child-focused NGOs should provide practical and emancipatory knowledge to change parental caring within communities where interventions are conducted. NGOs may reduce the adoption of foreign "best practices" since they may not have the same results in rural African family systems due to the social framework and intergenerational dynamics.

Conclusion

This essay compared indigenous child protection knowledge to kid-focused initiatives. The universal view of childhood in child rights-based interventions undermines their efficacy and durability. Participation was limited to parents.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study the following points were recommended;

1. NGOs have to include indigenous knowledge into their child protection program designs.
2. Adjust policies to shift from bottom-up to top-down strategy in child development.
3. NGOs should organize seminars, workshops, trainings to train and educate parents, traditional leaders, opinion leaders on the importance of merging indigenous knowledge and NGOs western child protection programmes
4. NGOs should let youngsters to aid their parents during school holidays and harvest seasons.

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