

# A question of omission of care or social reciprocity? A pilot study of low-income families' perception of child neglect in Ghana

Esmeranda Manful<sup>1</sup> and Inusah Karim <sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Child neglect is the most contested type of child maltreatment as its definition and measurement are more subjective, however, the less researched area of concern is the basis of its construction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore what low-income families deem as child neglect to inform more acceptable interventions for both Social Workers and families to ensure better outcomes for children. This paper presents the findings of a pilot study in Assin Assempanaye, a low-income community in the Central Region of Ghana. Adopting an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach with an in-depth interview guide, 18 parents from different households' views were explored using thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that age and expected social behaviour were the basis for neglect. Where omission of care for a child below 10 years was deemed as parental failure, for those, 10-17 years, the incidence of neglect was linked to the child's failure to conform to the reciprocal social relationship between a parent and a child. It is suggested that Social Workers have to address adolescent neglect differently in programme interventions by also focusing on social role expectations.

**Keywords:** child neglect; child welfare; Ghana; parenting; poverty

1. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology; Kumasi, Ghana.

**Address for correspondence:** emanful.cass@knust.edu.gh

## Introduction

The determination of adequate child care in most instances has shifted from families to the State, where child protection officers use standardized guidelines, influenced by domestic and international legal frameworks to intervene in child maltreatment cases. Child neglect, a type of child maltreatment, is described as a heterogeneous construct covering rather dissimilar negative child experiences, including poor quality of supervision, inadequate or insufficient availability of food, lack of school attendance, and lack of required medical attention (Mulder, Kuiperb, van der Puta, Stamsa and Assinka, 2018). Yet, the threshold for the intervention of child neglect instances makes it the most contested type of child maltreatment as its definition and measurement are more subjective as compared to other maltreatment types (Abdullah, 2022; Amoah, 2019; Doherty, 2017; Hornor, 2014; Laird, 2016; Manful and Abdullah, 2021; Platt and Turney, 2014). However, often the level of intervention in child neglect instances depends on the economic resources and institutional framework in a given country or context. For instance, Abdullah, Ayim, Bentum, and Emery (2021) highlight informal measures that promote child welfare practices in developing countries and argued that focusing on informal traditional community resources could be a helpful alternative when creating intervention strategies to prevent child neglect. This is evident in the different thresholds of neglect in all European and North American countries (Coope and Theobald, 2006, Lawrence and Irving, 2004). Suggesting that, child neglect interventions for countries that are more economically endowed will differ from those that are impoverished and have low to no government resources. Despite this, there is little evidence of techniques that could reduce the likelihood of child neglect and poverty among economically disadvantaged households (Sattler, 2022).

Since the understanding and identification of child neglect is thought to be the starting point for government or child protection officials to intervene (Dickens, 2007), the extant literature discusses the varied constructions of child neglect. Among the contemporary narratives of the construction of child neglect in Ghana, studies indicate growing attention toward community members and key informants alongside professionals' involvement in neglect interventions (Abdullah, 2022; Abdullah, Ayim, et al., 2021; Abdullah and Emery, 2022a; Abdullah and Emery, 2022b; Abdullah, Frederico, Cudjoe and Emery, 2020; Abdullah, Manful, Cudjoe and Boateng, 2021; Adonteng-Kissi, 2021; Manful, Abdullah and Cudjoe, 2019; Manful and Abdullah, 2021). Specifically, Abdullah, Manful, Cudjoe and Boateng (2021) discussed Ghanaian mothers' view of delinquent child maintenance and suggested a mandatory reporting of neglect by community members. In seeking for the concept of child neglect among community members, Manful and Abdullah (2021) also identified convergence and divergence of views. However, these studies involved participants who have had direct contact with Social Welfare Services. Yet, the findings of most of these studies on child neglect have led to concerns

that neglect is driven by poverty-based material hardship (Amoah, 2019; Deb and Ray, 2022; Laird, 2016; Manful and Abdullah, 2021). This implies that low-income families living in poor neighbourhoods would find it more difficult to provide adequate care for their children than their counterparts in better socio-economic environments and livelihoods. This makes it necessary to differentiate child neglect between families who have the resources to address the needs of their children from those who do not (Barnett and Belfield, 2006). However, linking child neglect to socio-economic challenges is a short story, there are other factors to consider, especially, in the sub-Saharan African context where poverty is dominant (Arndt, McKay and Tarp, 2016; Bywaters, Skinner et al., 2022; Palmer, Font et al., 2022). Regardless of the numerous studies that have considered community members' involvement and key informants in neglect interventions, more understanding is needed about the phenomenon among low-income families since poverty remains the strongest risk factor for neglect (Sattler, 2022) yet insufficient on the bases of its construction and measurement (Bywaters, Skinner et al., 2022; Palmer, Font et al., 2022).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore what low-income parents deem as child neglect to inform more acceptable interventions for both Social Workers and families to ensure better outcomes for children. As there is a general belief that the involvement of family members in decisions made about them is a more ethical and effective way to ensure the best outcomes for children (Herrera-Pastor, Frost, & Devaney, 2020). The findings provide additional information for practitioners and policymakers on crucial knowledge about potential strategies for minimising neglect and reducing it among low-income families aside from poverty-related risk factors. This paper presents the findings of a pilot study in Assin Assempanaye, a rural community in the Central Region of Ghana with limited access to Social Services. The main research questions were how is child neglect understood and what is perceived as its causes among low-income families. At the time of the fieldwork, households in rural savannah having an income of GH¢10,713.52 were described as low-income (GSS, 2019). Therefore, low-income family, in this study was operationalised as any family whose monthly income falls below 1000 Ghana cedis.

## **Profile of the study area**

The research took place at Assin Assempanaye in the Assin North Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana. It is located about five kilometres south of the Pra River in Assin Praso, on the Kumasi - Cape Coast highway in the Assin North District. Assin North Municipality is considered one of the poorest and ranked third in the region (Ghana Statistical Service, 2018). In line with this, a baseline study by UNICEF (2018) found that poverty and parental neglect are major threats to children's well-being in the Region. Assin Assempanaye has a population of 3,650

people with 1,158 households and shares boundaries with Assin Praso and Assin Dansame. Agriculture, which comprises farming and animal husbandry, is the major economic activity in the area. The community is saddled with several issues including child maltreatment. According to Ghana News Agency (2009), cases of neglect of parental duty and responsibility keep rising in the community and the Region at large. For instance, in 2012 the Domestic Violence and Victim's Support Unit (DOVVSU) recorded a total of 2,305 domestic violence including 1,115 child neglect cases with physical assault being 525 cases. The DOVVSU unit in the Region confirmed child neglect as a common social issue in the Assin communities and reported that most fathers within the communities failed to cater for their children while women also left children to their fate, especially when they felt overburdened (UNICEF, 2018). Also, the infrastructure of the community attests to the argument by McLloyd (2007) that a community with high levels of poverty usually has poor physical and social structures as well as fewer resources and amenities to support its members. It has no health facility and the only portable water available is a borehole which is not adequate to meet the demand of the population. The other forms of water sources are hand-dug, wells, streams, rivers and ponds which have a bearing on the incidence of water-related disease (GSS, 2021). Assempanaye has one basic school and a Senior High School which do not also meet the needs of the community. As a result, most of the children attend school outside the community and these children have to walk long distances to access better education. This affects school attendance and discourages parents from sending their children to school because of the long-distance children have to walk.

### **Recognition of child neglect in the public domain in Africa**

Child neglect gained more recognition and public attention in Africa as a social phenomenon when an organization known as the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), was set up in 1984 by some African countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, and Zambia. The principal aim was to prevent and protect children from all forms of maltreatment and ensure that the rights of children are realized. Soon after the passage of this collaborative treaty, many African countries including Ghana enacted several treaties and legislative instruments aimed at advancing the promotion and protection of people at risk of child neglect (Uzodike, 1990).

In South Africa, child neglect was seen as the most dominant subtype of child maltreatment before and after the 1994 election and as a result, there was an urgent need for social and psychological services and support for children which had become a particular concern (Lockhat, 2000). In 1996, despite the formation of ANPPCAN, a coalition was also formed in Kenya to create public awareness of child abuse and neglect, and to improve the provision of services to

victims. An earlier study in four areas of Kenya showed that child neglect issues were dominant in the country, though no organized response systems existed (Sumba and Bwibo, 1999).

With regards to legislation to address the issue of child neglect, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) also known as the Children's Charter was adopted in 1990 by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to protect the rights of African children by setting out their rights and defining universal principles and norms for the status of children. This comprehensive instrument called for the creation of an African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The mission of this committee was to promote and protect the rights established by the ACRWC which were applied to all member states or institutions recognized by the African Union. The Children's Charter recognizes the uniqueness of every child and shows that African children need protection and quality care. It also acknowledges that children are entitled to the enjoyment of any form of freedom of expression, religion, association, thought and conscience. The Charter aims at protecting the private life of children and protecting children against all forms of exploitation or maltreatment which disrupt the child's education, health, social, mental, spiritual, physical and moral development. However, the chronology of all these continental child protection frameworks is preceded by frameworks developed in the global north as international frameworks. Hence, the guidelines developed are intended for a more universal expectation of the best outcome for a child by practitioners with little room for examination of divergent views of parents.

### **Child protection legislation in Ghana**

Ghana reformed and consolidated its laws relating to children to the provisions in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) with the enactment of the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560). The Children's Act is the most significant legislation for the advancement and protection of children in Ghana (Manful and McCrystal, 2011). In the Children's (Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act 937), child neglect is described as a form of child abuse that occurs when a person who is responsible for the child fails to care for the child's emotional or physical needs. Also, Ghana has enacted several legislative instruments aimed at preventing and protecting children at risk of neglect, including the Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29), Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694), Person with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) and especially the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) (Ghana Justice for Children Policy, 2015). The prevalence of child neglect in Ghana is not different from other parts of Africa since child neglect though rooted in cultural factors and values are similar in the continent (John, 2006).

## Cultural values and child neglect

Culture is a society's common fund of beliefs and behaviours that help in defining the accepted principles of child-rearing and care, this includes the idea of what act of omission or commission might promote neglect (Korbin, 1997). In Ghana, there are strong collective social values about childcare and parenting (Nukunya, 2003) which can be both risk and protective factors to child neglect and maltreatment in general. According to Twum-Danso (2009b), respect, responsibility and reciprocity, continue to be central to parent-child/adult-child relations in Ghana and these sociocultural values have impacts on children's rights.

Children in Ghana are taught from a very young age that they must respect and obey all adults, show deference to adults, and heed their counsel (Boakye-Boaten, 2010). This emphasis on respecting adults is further supported by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which states that children have a responsibility to not only work for the cohesion of the family but also to respect parents and elders at all times and to assist them in times of need (Twum-Danso, 2009c). Asempanaye community is not an exception to these values where children are not expected to criticise authority figures or, for that matter, to doubt instructions. Also, children in the community are taught to be submissive when talking to older people and what language to use. This kind of socialisation starts from the time they are considered to "have sense," which is about the age of six or seven (Goody, 1970). From that point on, any disrespectful language or behaviour against an elderly person can lead to punishment which may result in neglect. Because of the respect children have for elderly persons, a study by Abdullah, Jordan et al (2022) suggested a collective value of Abiriwatia as a protective informal social control of child neglect.

In terms of responsibility, children are expected to be running errands for parents and other adults, help to keep the home clean by sweeping the yard, and perform other household chores. For families who are struggling to meet their fundamental necessities, children are relied on either to provide for themselves or the family. Due to such role expectations, children in the community are a crucial domestic and financial resource. This problem is similar to some regions in Ghana where low-income families depend so much on their children. This implies that reciprocity is a key element of Ghanaian socialisation where children grow up very aware that their parents' care for them is predicated on the idea of a pay-off (Twum-Danso, 2022). Thus, children are expected to care for their parents in the same way that their parents did when they were young, helpless, and dependent on them. However, such expectations sometimes become a risk factor for child neglect where children sacrifice their education to work to support their families. Based on such reasons, a study by Manful and Abdullah (2021) suggested that social work practitioners have to intensify awareness of some of Ghana's cultural practices that hinder better outcomes for children. Accordingly, Abdullah, Frederico et al. (2020) emphasised

the significance of culture and tradition when examining methods for alleviating child maltreatment. According to them, kinship care choices could aid in preventing both moderate and severe child neglect as well as cases of child neglect before they start. Adonteng-Kissi (2022) defended the requirement for social work professionals to become immersed in cultural customs and communication while taking various practical definitions and parental treatments into consideration.

### **Nexus of the rural poor and child neglect**

The socioeconomic disparities between rural and urban areas are on the rise, particularly in many developing and transitional countries (Forkuor, and Korah, 2022; Gordon, Booyesen, and Mbonigaba, 2020). Poverty remains predominantly a rural problem (Mare, Gecho, and Mada, 2022; UN, 2021), with a majority of the world's poor located in rural areas (Cooke, Hague and McKay, 2016, Hotez, 2021). The greatest African nations, in particular, have continued to be in poverty (World Bank, 2020). It is estimated that 85% of the 1.6 billion people identified as living in multidimensional poverty are in rural areas (Eshetu, Haji, Ketema and Mehare, 2022). Rural poverty is often discussed in conjunction with spatial inequality, which in this context refers to the inequality between urban and rural areas (Gordon, Booyesen, and Mbonigaba, 2020; UN, 2021). Winsemius, et al. (2018) argue that in Africa, those living in rural areas experience more poverty and less access to health care and education than urban dwellers. As a result, individuals living in rural areas tend to have less access to social services, worsening the effects of rural poverty (Winsemius et al., 2018). This supports the view that poverty and lack of resources are often the contributing factors that prevent parents from meeting the needs of their children (Amoah, 2019; Deb and Ray, 2022; Laird, 2016; Manful and Abdullah, 2021; McGinty et al. 2022), and it also suggests that poverty in some instances leads to unintentional child neglect.

Although in Ghana, the incidence of poverty has declined from 12.3% in 2017 to 11.3% in 2021 (Sasu, 2022), poverty is still described mainly as a rural phenomenon according to the Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report where 43.33% of the population reside (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The poorest parts of Ghana are the savannah regions of the north, where chronic food insecurity is widespread and livelihoods are more vulnerable (Chirawurah, Fishkin, Santuah, Siu, Bawah, Kranjac-Berisavljevic, and Giles, 2020). Aside from these regions, the Central Region is also one of the neglected regions in Ghana, it is ranked the fourth poorest area in the country according to the 2020 multidimensional poverty report (Mensah, Agyaho, Kofinti, and Sebu, 2020). This increases the chance of neglect for children within the Region. Compared to children in better socioeconomic class households, Sedlak et al. (2010) posited that children in low socioeconomic status households are seven times more likely to be neglected. However, not all parents who live in poverty

maltreat or neglect their children, and many who do neglect their children are not poor (Houshyar, 2014; Sattler, 2022). This highlights the importance of considering the available resources and cultural values when defining child neglect (Abdullah, Ayim et., 2021; Abdullah, Frederico et al., 2020) to determine the appropriate intervention Social Workers can employ to curb the phenomenon contextually and avoid the influence of international legal frameworks or foreign values in solving child neglect (John, 2006; Adonteng-Kissi, 2022).

## **Study methods**

### **Data collection methods**

The study employed a qualitative research design using an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA). This approach focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences (Smith and Shinebourne, 2012). It was employed to examine the meanings of child neglect to inform the understanding of the issue. This type of research method is easily readable and understood and works toward solving complex issues (Daniel et al., 2011), such as child neglect, by breaking down into meaningful inferences (Hennin, Hutter, and Bailey, 2020). To achieve this, researchers adopted a strategy that was more curious and facilitative rather than mere interrogative. Thus, participants were given more chances to share their experiences in a rich and depth manner without any interference. This method provided a great opportunity to gather precise and detailed data about what the people believed based on their experience of child neglect, particularly in the community.

Given this, a semi-structured in-depth interview guide was used to collect data from the research participants in this study. Before the interview, the researchers employed the gate-keeping method (Fusch and Ness, 2015), where a well-known and credible teacher in the community was used as the gatekeeper to ensure easy access to the community and the participants without difficulties. The gatekeeper was purposely used by the researchers to familiarise themselves with the participants in the community to avoid mistrust. Also, to avoid study biases, random sampling of every third household was adopted by the researchers to interview an individual within each household. The gatekeeper then facilitated access to identified research participants who fitted the eligibility criteria of the study.

### **Eligibility criteria**

The main eligibility criterion used was that research participants had to be adults



who had lived in the community for at least five years. This criterion was to ensure that participants had developed a sense of belongingness which enabled them to understand the cultural norms, values, and dynamics of the community (Mellor, Stokes, Firth, Hayashi, and Cummis, 2008, Zamor, 2005). Also, the parental status of participants was used as another criterion to determine the suitability of participants for the study. Thus, participants should have been a parent or had ever played a parenting role for more than two years before the study. This was to ensure participants had experienced parent-child relationships and were part of a family with at least one child. Another criterion was to ensure that research participants had witnessed parents neglecting their children within the community. This made participation and contribution to the study easier since participants had fair knowledge and experience about the phenomenon. The monthly income earned was used to determine the low-income status of participants. Hence, participants who stated that they earned below GHC1000.00 were considered to be from a low-income background. However, the focus was not on those who were in contact with social services for neglecting their children.

### **Ethical consideration**

Before the commencement of the interview, each participant was briefed on the purpose of the study, and assured of the complete confidentiality of information, anonymity, low risk and harm associated with the study (Rubin and Babbie, 2011). Respondents were assured that the oral interviews and transcriptions will be kept in a secure place and that no one, except the researchers, will have access to them. Participants were also granted the right to refuse to answer certain questions without any inhibitions (Silverman, 2013). In line with this, the researchers explained to participants their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time if they were uncomfortable with the line of questions. In addition, individuals who agreed to participate in the study also consented orally as evidence of their agreement before the commencement of each interview session. Only oral confirmation was attained because most of the participants had low literacy skills which hindered them from being able to read and append their signatures.

All respondents gave their consent before the interview began and researchers kept all the promises made. Specifically, the researchers allowed privacy, non-interruptions and the creation of an atmosphere in which the participants felt comfortable. Moreover, the anonymity of respondents has also been ensured in the presentation of data through the use of pseudonyms.

## Data collection procedure

The interviews were conducted together by both researchers in the Fanti and Asanti Twi languages. To ensure that the interpretations of the researchers reflected the meanings participants intended to put across, reflective clarifications, paraphrasing, and summaries were actively used during the interview. Additionally, study participants in referring to the ages of the children rather used the level (for most children lower primary- below 10 years; upper primary – 10 – 12 years; Junior High School – 13 – 15 years & Senior High School – 16 years and above) to establish the age differences. This categorisation is well known to the researchers.

Also, to capture the exact words of the participants, all the interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' approval. All the participants were interviewed in their homes after ensuring the absence of other people or distractions. The interviews averagely lasted 30 minutes per session. Although smaller concentrated samples are commonly utilised in IPA (Smith, Flower and Larkin, 2009), 18 participants were employed in the study to generate sufficient data to allow us to conduct an in-depth investigation (Noon, 2018), This is also influenced by the fact that, in IPA research, "there is no right answer to the question of sample size" (Smith, Flower and Larkin, 2009, p.56).

## Data analysis

Each interview was examined thoroughly and independently by each researcher before the exploration of emerging patterns. The researchers adapted the seven steps of IPA data analysis from Smith et al. (2009). Below is a description of the stages of the analysis:

1. First, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed ad-verbatim. The recorded audios were translated from the local languages to the English language during the transcription for easy analysis before the data was read severally by both researchers to ensure familiarity and accuracy in the original data
2. The meaning or semantic content of each transcript was explored. Both authors are native speakers of each of the two local languages and possess a contextual understanding of the language which enhanced not only the translation but the development of accurate meaning for coding.
3. After the transcribed data was organized, edited and coded to ensure complete and accurate information the emergent themes were developed thus, codes that shared similar meanings were merged and developed into main and subthemes.
3. The emergent themes were abstracted and integrated to search for connections across them.
4. Common patterns with the themes were identified. This was done by keeping

the previous themes open-minded to do justice to the individuality of each new case.

5. The themes were checked and discussed by both researchers to ensure accuracy using consensus and compromised decision-making in a case of disagreement.
6. Interpretations were made based on the themes that emerged from the interview data.

## **Trustworthiness**

The following techniques were employed to strengthen the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. First, the interview guide was evaluated by an expert in child welfare and her inputs were incorporated into the final interview guide. Also, to enhance the credibility and objectivity of the study results, frequent paraphrasing, reflections and summarizers were actively used in the interview process to keep the focus of the interview. This helped the participants to know that their messages were heard clearly (Geldard, Geldard, and Foo, 2017). Moreover, the transcribed data were independently analysed by both researchers. This process ensured that possible researcher bias is reduced (Silverman, 2013).

## **Findings**

### **Socio-demography of research participants**

All the 18 participants in the study were above 20 years and had experienced or witnessed child neglect within the community but had no history with social services concerning child neglect. Again, all the research participants had lived within the community for more than five years and had at least one child. The respondents were made up of 12 mothers and six fathers. The educational background of participants ranged from no formal education to tertiary-level education. Specifically, a third of the participants had formal education including one person with tertiary educational background. The predominant occupation was farming, the others were petty traders, tailors and teachers. Moreover, participants earned a minimum of 500 and a maximum of 900 cedis, averaging 764 cedis monthly.

Table 1 below shows the socio-economic demography of the research participants. The names (CM) of research participants in the table are pseudonyms.

Table 1  
Socio-economic demography of research participants

Pseudonym and age	Occupation	Monthly income	Educational level	Children	Years in the community
CM1 36	Driving	700	Senior high level	1	9
CM2 40	Trading	500	Junior high level	6	10
CM3 36	Trading	650	Lower primary	2	12
CM4 27	Farming	900	Junior high level	2	27
CM5 29	Sewing	600	Lower primary	3	20
CM6 22	Sewing	800	Upper primary	2	8
CM7 37	Farming	800	Upper primary	2	9
CM8 59	Farming	700	None	5	40
CM9 35	Masonry	900	Senior high level	1	20
CM10 24	Farming	850	Junior high level	1	6
CM11 42	Farming	700	Lower primary	3	38
CM12 54	Farming	900	None	2	50
CM13 55	Farming	750	None	4	35
CM14 53	Trading	800	Upper primary	2	30
CM15 35	Trading	900	Junior high level	3	35
CM16 20	Farming	600	Junior high level	1	6
CM17 31	Farming	800	None	2	7
CM18 29	Teaching	900	Tertiary level	2	10

## Construction of child neglect

To explore the perception of child neglect, participants were asked; '*What is your understanding of child neglect?*' Two main themes emerged from the in-depth interviews specifically, parental failure to provide basic needs and lack of parental guidance.

### *Parental failure to provide basic needs*

From the interviews, most of the participants explained their understanding of child neglect as a situation in which a parent or caregiver fails to provide for the basic needs of a child such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health. This was partly related to poverty and death, however, the majority of the participants also explained that parents or caregivers deliberately fail to provide such basic needs to their children as a form of punishment or deterrence. One participant shared the opinion that parents fail to provide the basic needs because of poverty and the undesirable attitude of a child, stating;

'It is the failure of parents to provide the necessary things of a child such as food, clothing, and education usually due to poverty but mostly it is caused by the behaviour of the child.' (CM, 8)

A further probe revealed that the failure to provide the necessary basic needs as a result of poverty or death was stated focusing on children below 10 years whilst parents' omission of care was blamed on the behavioural attitudes of children above 10 years. Thus, in determining the age categories, in most of the instances, participants used the educational level (lower and upper primary, Junior High School & Senior High School ) of their children to establish the age differences. Again, while some categorically mentioned the ages of their children during their submission, others pointed to children available during the interview sections as a focal point which made it easy to determine the age difference.

One participant explained the failure of parents to provide the needed basic needs due to the death of a spouse and poverty against children below 10 years

'It is when parents are unable to provide for their child such as food, clothes and education which is very common in this community. There are two kids in the next household who are 9 and 7 years old respectively, they do not go to school because the caregiver is a widow and doesn't have a job or get support from anyone. They come here for food sometimes' (CM, 6)

However, for children above 10 years, child neglect was related to the behaviour of the child. Parents identified neglect among adolescents as a social control mechanism. This is illustrated in the response of a participant:

'Many young children in this community do not go to school because their parents cannot afford it but for the old ones it is due to their behaviour". I abandoned my 13-year-old son to feed himself because of his stubbornness and this actually changed him after facing the reality' (CM, 3).

Another person added:

'It is a situation parents refuse to provide food, shelter and others to their child because of maybe what the child has done to the parents. I said this because my first child in Junior High School recently developed an attitude I didn't like, he goes out and comes back late. I made sure the door is locked before he returns and this punishment has changed him' (CM, 5)

This points to the fact that parents can intentionally neglect their children to ensure informal social control. Also, other participants argued that some parents intentionally neglect their children, especially their education because they preferred to have them contribute to the family income.

One participant narrated;

'It is a situation where parents fail to provide the fundamental needs of a child precisely education. I have witnessed in this community where some parents, both literate and illiterate, refuse to send their children to school because they needed them on their farms.' (CM, 9)

### ***Lack of parental guidance***

Other participants understood the concept as instances in which a parent or caregiver fails to provide the needed guidance. Participants believed most of the grown-up children in the community particularly, engage in indecent activities such as gambling and stealing because they lack parental guidance. In all these instances they referred to children older than 10 years. One participant who shared this view stated;

'I think child neglect is a situation where parents become unconcerned about a child's life such as what a child will eat, wear or do. This leads to the child living an independent life without the influence of his or her parents. In this community, you will see a lot of such children involving themselves in numerous activities like stealing, gambling and sometimes they work for people for money to survive' (CM, 1)

Another participant added;

'I will say when parents do not care when, who, where and what their child does, eat, drink, sleep and even the kind of friends or relationships they have'. (CM, 17)

## **Causes of child neglect**

Another important objective of the study was to find out the factors causing child neglect in the community. Participants responded to the question; '*In your opinion what factors do you think contribute to child neglect in this community?*' Three main themes emerged from the interview data namely; poverty, marital issues, and child's attitude.

### ***Poverty***

Poverty was one of the themes that emerged from the interview data. Many, who highlighted poverty, related it to educational neglect. Some research participants argued that sometimes parents end up shirking their responsibilities not because they are unwilling to provide for the needs of their children, but rather because the adverse effects of poverty caused them to overlook certain responsibilities. A participant narrated;

'Parents sometimes fail to provide for their children because of poverty. I said poverty because if I am unemployed how do I provide for the basic needs of my children? I sell this fried fish to support my daughter's secondary education and I believe without this fish business; I would not have been able to support her education to this level.' (CM, 5)

Another participant also explained why there is educational neglect in the community, particularly among children below 10 years;

'I think poverty is a major cause of child neglect in this community. Many young children do not go to school because their parents cannot afford it. Even sometimes what they will eat becomes problematic and how will such a person think of education for these young kids? (pointed to available children to determine the age)' (CM, 7)

However, some disagreed with this assertion that poverty is the cause of child neglect in the community; instead, they argued that it is the parents' attitude towards work that makes them unable to feed or care for their children. One participant stated:

'It hurts me when I hear one say he or she could not support his or her children because of unemployment. Some members of this community do not like to work and that's why you see a lot of young children roaming around'. (CM, 18)

### ***Marital issues***

Other participants also held the view that child neglect is mostly caused by divorce or separation which results in single parenting. One participant explained:

'I will say child neglect is caused by marital issues such as divorce which mostly causes this problem. When my parents separated, it became very difficult for my mother to take care of us alone or provide good parental care and control.' (CM, 4)

Another person added;

"From what I have experienced, I think it is caused by divorce and maybe a high birth rate. Most parents give birth to a lot of children they cannot cater for. Although my husband and I have not divorced but separated due to some reasons, he does not pay school fees, provide food or care for his children, I have six children and this has put more pressure on me as a single parent."(CM, 2)

Others also shared the opinion that parents are unable to seek their children's well-being because of unfortunate life events such as the death of a spouse. One simply said;

'Sometimes it could be the death of the parent(s) which will make the child suffer or experience neglect. .... To me, it is not deliberate that the living parent or family refuses to care for the child but often they do not have the means to support especially as a single parent.' (CM, 16)

### ***Child's attitude***

The majority of the research participants argued that child neglect occurs in the community solely because of children's attitudes toward their parents. They shared the opinion that adolescents within the community are neglected because they do not respect their parents or value their advice or appreciate what they do for them. This goes down to the fact that the interest or the desires of the parents about their old children are not achieved which influences some of the parents to neglect their children as a form of punishment. However, this claim was related to children who can work or perform household chores to help the family. A participant stated;

'A parent may decide not to interfere in the personal life of a child when the child does not listen to the advice or take instructions and in many instances, it discourages the parent from providing the child's basic needs.' (CM, 13)

Another parent added;

'It mostly occurs as a result of the child's bad attitude which may not be accepted by the parents, because no parent will spend on a child who does not listen to his or her advice'. (CM, 6)

Some participants, however, attributed such children's behaviour to their preference for educational activities than participating in farming depicting the imposition of parental values, desires and interests on older children. One participant explained;

'Some parents have refused to provide educational needs and care for their children because once they are enrolled in school, especially the Senior High School, they start using the school as an excuse not to participate or help in farming activities.' (CM, 11)

A participant shared her experience of how her son was neglected due to the child's attitude which she thinks did not align with her desires as a mother. She explained;

'Although poverty plays a significant role in the emergence of child neglect, the attitude of the child sometimes outweighs poverty. Parents might be poor but will be pushing and working hard to help no matter the circumstance. I abandoned my 17-year-old son because he was chasing young girls instead of focusing on his education. He never listened to my advice as a mother which made me neglect him'. (CM, 14)



## Discussion and implications

One of the understandings of child neglect by the participants of the study is the failure of parents to provide the necessities for their children, this conforms to the extant literature on child neglect (Abdullah, Ayim et al., 2021; Abdullah, Frederico et al., 2020; Asare, 2011, Canadian Incidence Survey, 2008, Cassey, 2013, Hildyard and Wolfe, 2007; Manful and Abdullah, 2021). Yet, the responses revealed two divergent constructions of child neglect mainly based on the age of the respective child. These findings raised arguments about “capability” and “willingness to care” as the central theme of child neglect (Gupta, Featherstone, and White, 2016). Thus, research participants associated the neglect of children less than 10 years mainly as a parental failure as a result of poverty, divorce, and death. In other words, study participants argued that some parents in Assin Assempanaye had the willingness to support their children but could not provide the needed support. This confirms the assertion made by the WHO (2018) that lack of support undermines low-income families’ capacity to provide the needed care for their children. As indicated by Sattler (2022) poverty constrains families’ time and resources, which limits parents’ ability to provide care for their children. However, for older children, (10-17 years) it was deemed a result of children not aligning with the social norm of reciprocity. According to the study, parents to some extent did not have the willingness to provide the basic needs for their children despite having the capability or resources. This was extensively related to the unacceptable behaviour of the child to that of the family’s social values and norms. As argued by Twum-Danso (2022) reciprocity is a key element of the Ghanaian socialization process which can ultimately be linked to the significance of children’s obligations and the necessity for them to respect and obey their parents and other adults. Coe (2011) also found that parents are much concerned about their child’s character because of the belief that children will grow up to be successful and able to reciprocate in the future, which is one of the predominant values in the community. Thus, children are trained to respect all elders, be humble towards adults, take their advice, and not challenge adults or question what they are told to do (Boakye-Boaten, 2010; Twum-Danso, 2009c).

Therefore, when a child fails to put an attitude that is deemed inappropriate towards parents, punishment is likely to have prevailed including neglect. This implies that linking child neglect to socio-economic challenges is indeed a short story, there are other factors to consider (Arndt, McKay and Tarp, 2016; Bywaters, Skinner et al., 2022; Palmer, Font et al., 2022). This corroborates the findings that respect, responsibility and reciprocity continue to be central to parent-child/adult-child relations among low-income families (Twum-Danso, 2009b). Specifically, the emerging findings also suggest that child neglect is parental failure to provide for the basic needs of a child and it includes the element of intentionality on the part of the parents or the caregivers as a social control mechanism. Although an emphasis was placed on educational neglect, it appears research participants in this study

were happy with just the enrolment of children in schools but parents' further involvement in the educational activities was not highlighted.

Additionally, participants in this study suggested that some parents imposed their interests and desires on their older children (10 – 17 years) without considering the child's freedom and rights; this contravenes one of the major underlining values of the UNCRC and also limits the ability of children to express their views (Twum-Danso, 2009c). Also, the narratives from the interviews were indicative that children were deemed the property of their parents hence they have to do as they are told. Thus, children are likely to be neglected when they portray undesirable attitudes toward their parents or their caregivers. Often such children who failed to adhere to their parents' opinions are blamed for their neglect; forgetting that the attitude of a child may be a reflection of the parents as a result of circular causality (Marvin and Stewart, 1990). Meanwhile, provisions in Ghana's Children's Act 1998, Act 560 stated that children should partake in decisions that affect them (Manful and McCrystal, 2011). Yet, the study identified that when children fail to do as they have been told, it may likely lead to neglect. This may be due to the kind of socialisation process in Ghana where children are expected to be silent in meetings with parents or grown-ups (Twum-Danso, 2009a). Particularly, among children from low-income families, Ridge (2006, p.25) stated that there is a profound issue of opportunities for participation and the feeling of being included. Such practice, according to Mensa-Bonsu and Dowuna-Hamond (1996) is not only an expectation of parents but a customary law that obligates children particularly, boys to assist their father in his station of life. Therefore, since Assin Asempanaye is a farming community, children are also expected to be on the farm with their parents to farm.

The causes of child neglect in this study were attributed to three different levels including the social/economic, intrapersonal and interpersonal/family (Turney and Tanner, 2005). It is argued in the extant literature that poverty is a major predisposing factor to child neglect (Amoah, 2019; Deb and Ray, 2022; Laird, 2016; Manful and Abdullah, 2021). As suggested by McGinty et al. (2022), having insurance expansions and supports for low-income families tends to reduce child neglect because poverty rates are higher and more persistent in rural communities than in urban areas (Belanger, 2015; Gordon, Booyesen, and Mbonigaba, 2020). As a result, Barnett and Belfield (2006) asserted the importance of distinguishing between parental failure to provide when options are available and failure to provide when options are not available. This was confirmed by some community members who believed poverty as a result of unemployment made them shirk their responsibilities. However, the study found that poverty is not always the major cause of child neglect even in the rural setting but the behaviour of a child which to Turney and Tanner (2005), is categorised as intrapersonal level. This confirms the argument that not all poor parents neglect their kids due to poverty, rather the existence of poverty makes poor families more susceptible to neglect (Sattle, 2022). Therefore, it is expedient to build the capacity of families to ensure the rights and

well-being of children (Dolan, Zegarac and Arsic, 2020).

Also, the behaviour of a child as the strong predisposing factor of child neglect in this study may be attributed to peer group influence, poor parenting skills especially communication patterns between parents and children, and the inability to carry on parenting activities (Svensson and Johnson, 2022; Zakaria et al., 2022). Therefore, the behaviour of the child according to the findings is reciprocal to parental failure to provide for the child's needs, which suggests that each factor influences the other.

Turney and Tanner's (2005) interpersonal level on the other hand focused on parental factors such as divorce, death, separation, and domestic violence. Importantly, divorce and death were confirmed by some participants in this study as causes of child neglect, especially among children below 10 years. However, this does not mean children above 10 years are not affected by these interpersonal factors.

### **Policy implication**

The study findings suggest that for research participants child neglect is determined by the age of the child. Specifically, for children below 10 years, neglect is a result of poverty, divorce and death of a parent(s) which is deemed as parental failure; but for children above 10 years, neglect was regarded as a child's failure to adhere to the expected social reciprocity roles in the household or society. This highlights the fact that irrespective of more than 30 years after the ratification of the UNCRC, some parents in Ghana still think of their children without considering their rights. This suggests that the perception of the status of a child has not changed entirely although legislation and policies have changed. Therefore, to ensure effective child protection and the reduction of the number of neglected children, parenting styles have to be considered by policymakers. Specifically, Social Workers and civil society have to continue with the advocacy work to create awareness of the status of children, especially in rural communities to build the capacities of parents. Also, Social Workers have to address issues of adolescent neglect contextually differently in programme interventions by also focusing on the social role expectations between parent and child relationships.

### **Conclusion**

This study suggests that the basis of the construction of child neglect includes the age and the expected social behaviour of the child. Neglect of the pre-adolescents was regarded as a parental failure whereas the adolescent was blamed for a parent's intentional neglect. Emphasis was on reciprocal social relationships between a

parent and the adolescent child, with parents justifying the failure to provide for their children due to the child's contravention of the social role expectation. This highlights the intentionality of neglect where the social status of a child having rights was lost to some research participants. Hence, the suggestion of building the resilience of families and communities by providing them with information and opportunities to dialogue on the changes in social expectations of parents and their children.

## Limitation of study design

The major limitation of this study design is its unrepresentative sample size of research participants however, it provides analytical insights into how low-income families perceive child neglect. Therefore, to make the findings more generalizable, a replication of the study in more rural areas nationwide is suggested.

## References

- Abdullah, A. (2022). Thresholds for Intervention in Child Neglect by Ordinary Citizens: Implications for Measuring Informal Social Control of Child Neglect. *The British Journal of Social Work*
- Abdullah, A., Ayim, M., Bentum, H., and Emery, C. R. (2021) Parental poverty, physical neglect and child welfare intervention: Dilemma and constraints of child welfare workers in Ghana. *Children And Youth Services Review*, 126, 106036.
- Abdullah, A., and Emery, C. R. (2022a) Dose–Response Relationship Between Protective Family Informal Social Control and Chronic Child Neglect: Does Household Size Matter? *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 08862605221123280.
- Abdullah, A., and Emery, C. R. (2022b). Caregivers' perceptions of informal social control practices to reduce child neglect: A qualitative study in Ghana. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 133, 105848.
- Abdullah, A., Frederico, M., Cudjoe, E., and Emery, C. R. (2020) Towards culturally specific solutions: Evidence from Ghanaian kinship caregivers on child neglect intervention. *Child Abuse Review*, 29(5), 402-415.
- Abdullah, A., Manful, E., Cudjoe, E., and Boateng, L. K. (2021) How did I know when to report physical neglect? Ghanaian mothers' views on delinquent child maintenance. *Practice*, 33(3), 233-249.
- Amoah, P. A. (2020) Perceptions of neglect and well-being among independent child migrants in Ghana. *Child Indicators Research*, 13(2), 455-479.
- Andoh, C. (2017) *Child Neglect, lead cause of defilement*. Accra, Ghana: Graphic Online.

- <https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/opinion/child-defilement-a-societal-menace.html>
- Adonteng-Kissi, O. (2022) Cultural Responsiveness in Child Protection: Stakeholders and Parental Perceptions of Working Children and Culture-appropriate Assessment in Ghana. *The British Journal of Social Work*.
- Arndt, C., McKAY, A. and Tarp, F. (2016) Growth and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. WIDER Studies in Development Economics. Oxford University Press
- Barnett, S. W. and Belfield, R. C. (2006) Early Childhood Development and Social Mobility. *The Future of Children*, 16 (2), 73-98.
- Belanger, K. (2015) *Having a Rural Impact on Poverty and Child Abuse: Hope and Care for the Future*. Texas: Austin State University Press.
- Boakye-Boaten, A. (2010) Changes in the concept of Childhood: Implications on Children in Ghana. *Journal of International Social Research*, 3(10).
- Bogdan, R. C. and Biklen, S. K. (2003) *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: MA: Ally and Bacon.
- Bywaters, P., Skinner, G., Cooper, A., Kennedy, E., and Malik, A. (2022) The Relationship Between Poverty and Child Abuse and Neglect: New Evidence.
- Cassey, B. (2013) *Performing Child Neglect in Social Work Practice (unpublished Ph.D. theses)*. Durham: School of Applied Social Sciences.
- Canadian Incidence Survey. (2008) *Canadian Incidence of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect Guidebook*. Canada: Default files Publication.
- Chirawurah, D., Fishkin, J., Santuah, N., Siu, A., Bawah, A., Kranjac-Berisavljevic, G., and Giles, K. (2020) Deliberation for development: Ghana's first deliberative poll. *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 15(1).
- Coe, C. (2011) What is love? The materiality of care in Ghanaian transnational families. *International Migration*, 49(6), 7-24.
- Cooke, E., Hague, S. and McKay, A. (2016) *The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report: Using the 6<sup>th</sup> Ghana Living Standards Survey*. University of Sussex.
- Coope, C. M. and Theobald, S. (2006) Children at risk of neglect: Challenges faced by child protection practitioners in Guatemala City. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 30, 523-536.
- Daniel, B., Taylor, T., Scott, J., and Derbyshire, N. (2011) *Recognising and Helping the Neglected Child: Evidence-based Practice for Assessment and Intervention*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Deb, S., and Ray, M. (2022) Child Abuse and Neglect in India, Risk Factors and Protective Measures. In *Child safety, welfare and well-being* (pp. 47-72). Springer, Singapore.
- Doherty, P. (2017) Child protection threshold talk and ambivalent case formulations in 'borderline care proceedings cases. *Qualitative social work*, 16(5), 698-716.
- Doku, P. N. (2022) Child maltreatment and associated sociodemographic factors among children affected by HIV/AIDS in Ghana: a multi-informant perspective. *AIDS care*, 1-8.
- Dolan, P., Zegarac, N., & Arsic, J. (2020) Family Support as a right of the child. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 21(2), 8-26. <https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v21i2.1417>
- Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit. (2017) *Child neglect, lead cause of defilement*. Accra, Ghana: Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit.
- Eshetu, F., Haji, J., Ketema, M., and Mehare, A. (2022) Determinants of rural multidimensional

- poverty of households in Southern Ethiopia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), 2123084.
- Finlay, L. (2011) *Phenomenology for therapists: Researching the lived world*. West Sussex, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Forkuor, D., and Korah, A. (2022) NGOs and sustainable rural development: experience from Upper West Region of Ghana. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 1-24.
- Fusch, I. P. and Ness, R. L. (2015) Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(9), pp. 1408-1416.
- Geldard, D., Geldard, K., and Foo, R. Y. (2017) *Basic personal counselling: A training manual for counsellors*. Cengage AU. Ghana News Agency (21<sup>st</sup> January 2009). Cases of child neglect rising in Central Region.
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2021) *2021 Population and Housing Census: National Analytical Report (Ghana)*. Accra, Ghana: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2019) *Ghana Living Standards Survey Round 7 – Main Report*. Accra, Ghana: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Ghana Statistical Service. (2018) *Poverty Trends in Ghana: 2005-2017: Ghana Living Standards Survey Round 7*. Accra, Ghana: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Goody, E. (1970) Kinship fostering in Gonja. *Socialization: The approach from social anthropology*, 51-74.
- Gordon, T., Booysen, F., and Mbonigaba, J. (2020) Socio-economic inequalities in the multiple dimensions of access to healthcare: the case of South Africa. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 1-13.
- Gupta, A., Featherstone, B., and White, S. (2016) Reclaiming humanity: From capacities to capabilities in understanding parenting in adversity. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 46(2), 339-354.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., and Bailey, A. (2020) *Qualitative research methods*. SAGE Publications Limited.
- Herrera-Pastor, D., Frost, N., & Devaney, C. (2020). Understanding contemporary Family Support: Reflections on theoretical and conceptual frameworks. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 21(2), 27-45. <https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v21i2.1420>
- Hildyard, K. L., and Wolfe, D. A. (2007) Cognitive processes associated with child neglect. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 895-907.
- Hornor, G. (2014) Child neglect: Assessment and intervention. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 28(2), 186-192.
- Hotez, P. J. (2021) *Forgotten people, forgotten diseases: The neglected tropical diseases and their impact on global health and development*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Houshyar, S. (2014) Poverty and Child Neglect: What we know and what we need to do. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 10-36.
- John, P. L. (2006) *What is Rural?* Beltsville: Rural Information Centre.
- Korbin, J. (1997) Cross-cultural perspectives and research directions for the 21st century. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 67-77.
- Ksoll, C., Lilleør, H. B., Lønborg, J. H., & Rasmussen, O. D. (2016) Impact of Village Savings and Loan Associations: Evidence from a cluster randomized trial. *Journal of Development*

- Economics*, 120, 70-85.
- Laird, S. E. (2016) Protecting children from nutritional and medical neglect in sub-Saharan Africa: A five-country study. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 25, 47-57.
- Laverty, S. M. (2003) Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: a comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2:1-29.
- Lawrence, R., and Irving, P. (2004) *Redefining fatal child neglect*. Child Abuse Prevention Issues No 21. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Lockhat, R. (2000) South African children: a history of adversity, violence, and trauma. *Department of Psychology, University of Western Cape Town*, 291-302.
- Maguire-Jack, K., Yoon, S., and Hong, S. (2022) Social cohesion and informal social control as mediators between neighborhood poverty and child maltreatment. *Child maltreatment*, 27(3), 334-343.
- Manful, E., and Abdullah, A. (2021) Conceptualisation of child neglect: A Ghanaian practice narrative. *International Social Work*, 64(3), 341-353.
- Manful, E., Abdullah, A., and Cudjoe, E. (2020) Decision-making on child neglect: Ghanaian social workers' views and experiences. *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice*, 3(2), 271-285.
- Manful, E. and McCrystal, P. (2011). Ghana's Children's Act 560: A Rethink of its Implementation? *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 19, 151-165.
- Marvin, R. S., and Stewart, R. B. (1990) A family systems framework for the study of attachment. *Attachment in the preschool years: Theory, research, and intervention*, 51-86.
- Mare, Y., Gecho, Y., and Mada, M. (2022). Assessment of multidimensional rural poverty in Burji and Konso area, Southern Ethiopia. *International Review of Economics*, 69(1), 49-69.
- Mensa-Bonsu, H. J. A. N., and Dowuona-Hammond, C. (1996) The child within the Ghanaian family. *The changing family in Ghana*, 5-20.
- McGinty, E. E., Nair, R., Assini-Meytin, L. C., Stuart, E. A., and Letourneau, E. J. (2022) Impact of medicaid expansion on reported incidents of child neglect and physical abuse. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 62(1), e11-e20.
- McLloyd, V. (2007) The impact of economic hardship on black families and children. *Child Development*, 311-346.
- Mellor, D., Stokes, M., Firth, L., Hayashi, Y., and Cummis, R. (2008) Need for belonging, relationship satisfaction, loneliness, and life satisfaction. *Personality and individual differences*, 45(3), 213-218.
- Mensah, B. F., Agyaho, F. J., Kofinti, E. R and Sebu, J. (2020) *Multidimensional poverty in Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Mulder, T. M., Kuiperb, K. C., van der Puta, C. E., Stamsa, G. J., and Assinka, M. (2018) Risk factors for child neglect: A meta-analytic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 77, 198-210.
- Noon, E. J. (2018) Interpretive phenomenological analysis: An appropriate methodology for educational research. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 6(1).
- Palmer, L., Font, S., Eastman, A. L., Guo, L., and Putnam-Hornstein, E. (2022) What does child protective services investigate as neglect? A population-based study. *Child*



- maltreatment, 10775595221114144.
- Platt, D., and Turney, D. (2014) Making threshold decisions in child protection: A conceptual analysis. *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(6), 1472-1490.
- Ridge, T. (2006) Childhood poverty: a barrier to social participation and inclusion. *Children, young people, and social inclusion: Participation for what*, 23-38.
- Rubin, A., and Babbie, E. (2011) *Research Methods for Social Work*. Belmont: CA: Cengage Learning Inc.
- Sasu, D. D. (2022) *International poverty rate in Ghana from 2017 to 2022*. Accra, Ghana: Statista.
- Sattler, K. M. (2022) Protective factors against child neglect among families in poverty. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 124, 105438.
- Sedlak, A. J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Peta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., and Li, S. (2010) Fourth national incidence study of child abuse and neglect (NIS-4). Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, 9, 2010.
- Siedman, I. (2006) *Interview as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Silverman, D. (2013) *Doing Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles, USA: SAGE Publication.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., and Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Smith, J. A., & Shinebourne, P. (2012). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 73–82). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-005>.
- Sumba, R., and Bwibo, N. (1999) Child battering in Nairobi and Kenya. *East African Medical Journal*, 688-692.
- Svensson, R. and Johnson, B. (2022) Does it matter in what family constellations adolescents live? Reconsidering the relationship between family structure and delinquent behaviour. *PLoS one*, 17(4), e0265964.
- The World Bank Group (2018) *Poverty and shared prosperity 2018*. Washington, DC: The World Bank
- Turney, D. and Tanner, K. (2005) Understanding and working with neglect: Research in Practice. *Every Child Matters Research Briefings*, 47-56.
- Twum-Danso, A. (2009a) Situating participatory methodologies in context: the impact of culture on adult-child interactions in research and other projects. *Children's Geographies*, 7 (4), 379-389. DOI:10.1080/14733280903234436
- Twum-Danso, A. (2009b). Reciprocity, respect and responsibility: the 3Rs underlying parent-child relationships in Ghana and the implications for children's rights. *The international journal of children's rights*, 17(3), 415-432.
- Twum-Danso, A. (2009c) The construction of childhood and the socialisation of children in Ghana: Implications for the implementation of Article 12 of the CRC. In *A Handbook of children and young people's participation* (pp. 155-162). Routledge.



- Twum-Danso Imoh, A. (2022) Framing reciprocal obligations within intergenerational relations in Ghana through the lens of the mutuality of duty and dependence. *Childhood*, 29(3), 439-454.
- United Nation. (2021) *Reducing poverty and inequality in rural area: key to inclusive development*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- UNICEF. (2018) *Child protection regional profiles: preventing abuse and violence against children across Ghana*. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Accra.
- UNICEF/GOG. (2011) *Report of the Mapping and Analysis of Ghana's Child Protection System*. Kowloon, Hong Kong: Child frontiers Limited.
- Uzodike, E. (1990) Child abuse and neglect in Nigeria socio-legal aspects. *International Journal of Law, Policy and Family*, 4 (1), 83-96.
- World Bank. (2020) Ethiopia poverty assessment: Harnessing continued growth for accelerated poverty reduction. [Google scholar]
- World Health Organization. (2018) Nurturing care for early childhood development: a framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential.
- Williams, S. E. (2017) Redrawing the line: An exploration of how laypeople construct child neglect. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 68, 11–24.
- Winsemius, H. C., Jongman, B., Veldkamp, T. I., Hallegatte, S., Bangalore, M., and Ward, P. J. (2018) Disaster risk, climate change, and poverty: assessing the global exposure of poor people to floods and droughts. *Environment and Development Economics*, 23(3), 328-348.
- Zakaria, E., Kamarudin, N. N., Mohamad, Z. S., Suzuki, M., Rathakrishnan, B., Bikar Singh, S. S., ... and Kamaluddin, M. R. (2022) The role of family life and the influence of peer pressure on delinquency: qualitative evidence from Malaysia. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(13), 7846.
- Zamor, R. C. (2005) *What is Community, and why is it important?* Boston, Massachusetts: Ikeda Centre for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue.