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Social protection a study of child protection in Winneba township

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SOCIAL PROTECTION: A STUDY OF CHILD PROTECTION IN WINNEBA TOWNSHIP

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Beatrice Benewaa, hereby declare that this research, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been duly identified and acknowledged has not been submitted either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

Signature: ……

Date: ……

Supervisor's Declaration

I certify that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba

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Signature: ……

Date: ……..……

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God and to my children, Nkunim, Sika and Nyamekye.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents		Page
DECLARATION		iii
DEDICATION		iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		v
TABLE OF CONTENTS		vi
LIST OF TABLES		ix
LIST OF FIGURES		x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS		xi
ABSTRACT		xiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION		1
1.1	Background to the Study	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	12
1.3	Purpose of the Study	19
1.4	Objectives of the Study	19
1.5	Research Questions	20
1.6	Significance of the Study	21
1.7	Delimitation of the Study	22
1.8	Limitations of the Study	22
1.9	Definition of Terms	23
1.10	Organization of the Study	24
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW		25
2.0	Introduction	25
2.1	Theoretical Framework	25
2.2	Concept of Social Protection	38
2.3	The Concept of Child Protection	49

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

2.4 General Benefits of Social Protection Measures 60

2.5 Impact of Social Protection on the Lives of Children 62

2.6 Social Protection in Ghana 65

2.7 Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana 70

2.8 Social Protection Measures that are Available for Children 75

2.9 Deployment of Social Protection Mechanisms in the Protection of Children 80

2.10 Challenges to the Social Protection of Children 88

2.11 Challenges facing the Social Protection of Children in Ghana 99

2.12 Factors that Enhance Social Protection of Children 101

2.13 Conceptual Framework 104

2.14 Chapter Summary 106

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY 108

3.0 Introduction 108

3.1 Research Paradigm 108

3.2 Research Approach 110

3.3 Research Design 111

3.4 Study Area 112

3.5 Population 115

3.6 Sample and Sampling Procedure 117

3.7 Data Collection Instruments 121

3.8 Trustworthiness 124

3.9 Data Collection Procedure 129

3.10 Ethical Considerations 130

3.11 Data Analysis Methods 131

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS 133

4.0 Introduction 133

4.1 Background Information 133

4.2 Presentation of Findings 136

4.3 Discussion 182

4.4 Summary 209

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 211

5.0 Introduction 211

5.1 Summary 211

5.2 Major Findings 212

5.2 Conclusions 214

5.3 Recommendations 216

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge 217

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research 219

REFERENCES 220

APPENDICES 246

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1:	Background Data of Respondents	133
2:	Pseudonyms of Participants	135

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1:	Conceptual Framework	105
2:	Map of Winneba Township	114

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCTs	Conditional Cash Transfers
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CMR	Childhood Mortality Rate
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRIN	Child Right International Network
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CT-OVC	Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
DFID	Department for International Development
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit
fCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM/FGC	Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting
GES	Ghana Education Service
GLS	Ghana Living Standard
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
LIPW	Labour-Intensive Public Works
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MCE	Municipal Chief Executive
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection

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NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NGO's	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHIA	National Health Insurance Authority
NHIS	National Health Insurance
NMR	Neonatal Mortality Rate
NPA	National Plan of Action
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NTU	National Targeting Unit
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PCSE	Panel Corrected Standard Error
PMR	Post-Neonatal Mortality Rate
PNDCL	Provisional National Defence Council Decree
RDT	Relative Deprivation Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHS	Senior High School
SPFAG	Social Protection Floor Advisory Group
SSNIT	Social Security and National Insurance Trust
U5MR	Under-5 Mortality Rate
UCTs	Unconditional Cash Transfers
UKAID	United Kingdom Aid
UNCRC	United Nations Conventions on the rights of the child
UNDP	United nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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ABSTRACT

The challenges facing children in the 21st century are as immense as challenges facing adults. Social protection of children is therefore important for the overall wellbeing of children. Despite the existence of child rights laws and institutions, social protection of children in Winneba Township remains inadequate, necessitating an exploration of the implementation gaps and challenges to inform effective solutions and as such, this study seeks to bridge this gap. The purpose of the study was to explore the social protection measures in place for children in the Winneba Township. The interpretivist paradigm was adopted for the study. The research approach was qualitative while the descriptive case study design was adopted. The study sampled 30 participants using purposive and convenience sampling procedures. Data were collected using semi-structured interview guide and a focus group discussion guide. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The results showed that social protection of children was perceived by the participants as involving identifying and intervening to end abuse of children, and protection of children's rights. It was also revealed that the social protection measures available in Winneba involved rescuing abused children and putting them in recovery, providing child maintenance and support for parents, and educating the public on child rights. Further, the study showed that social protection measures were deployed in Winneba through mechanisms such as investigation and mediation, collaboration and public sensitisation. Additionally, it was found that the main challenges hindering the social protection of children were finance, tradition or culture, institutional politics and knowledge of child rights. Finally, the study revealed that community awareness and sensitization, collaboration, funding and provision of resources, and education of stakeholders were factors which can enhance the social protection of children in Winneba. It was recommended that clubs should be formed by schools to ensure children learn about their rights and responsibilities, effective collaboration between actors should be encouraged and an improved budgetary allocation for child protection actors. This can help the agencies get the funding and resources needed to sufficiently ensure the social protection of children.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Parents are the first point of socialization for children. The care of the child is the primary responsibility of the parent (Igbinosa, 2014). The care of parents for their children is therefore of great importance in the life of the child (Mathibela & Mmamoagi Skhosana, 2021). Parenting has been defined as purposive activities aimed at ensuring the survival and development of children (Srivastav & Lal Mathur, 2021). It is considered as an activity that nurtures a child and fosters the overall development of the child.

Parental care is a key part of the social protection of children. According to Roelen (2013), social protection involves preventing the loss of parental care as well as in supporting preferred care solutions for children without parental care. Agbey (2017) supported this claim by mentioning that parents are supposed to be the primary caregivers of their children and are supposed to be at the centre of ensuring the social protection of their children.

In cases where parents do not provide the best of care for children, the burden of care moves to the state. According to the International Labour Organisation and World Bank (2015), social protection involving the state is an integrated set of policies designed to secure income security and support people across the life-cycle, paying particular attention to the poor and vulnerable. For children, social protection is considered a fundamental part of the state's aim to ensure that children are well taken care of, particularly the most vulnerable.

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From the global perspective, social protection has gained much attention over the years. Social protection for children was frequently highlighted in international dialogues prior to the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 19 of the UNCRC stipulates that children possess the right to protection against bodily and psychological harm and mistreatment (Children and Young People's Commissioner, n.d.). The subject of social protection, throughout the world, has gained prominence in international policy making and developmental circles over the years (Greenblott (2007) as cited in Dalinpuo & Nasse (2020). All states are required to establish 'social programmes' to ensure that children are properly cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone who looks after them (Myers, 2008). Social protection has long been a domestic concern of nations, which developed sophisticated institutional arrangements in order to protect against citizens risks and provide assistance to the destitute. Social protection has, however, been predominantly overlooked or addressed inadequately in most impoverished nations, where the focus has instead been on prioritizing economic growth (Norton, Conway & Foster, 2001).

UNICEF (2004), children's right was recognised as early as 1924 by the League of Nations during the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. This was succeeded by subsequent human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, which collectively acknowledged the fundamental human rights to be free from violence, abuse, and exploitation. These rights, equally applicable to minors, were further elaborated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.

The Parliamentary guide on child protection by UNICEF (2004) indicates that an international consensus emerged regarding the necessity for a new instrument to

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delineate the specific and unique rights of children. In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly, swiftly becoming the most widely ratified human rights instrument in history, achieving near-universal approval.

Realizing children's right to protection is not limited to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other instruments such as the United Nations and other regional instruments like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of the Organization for African Unity 1990 and the Geneva Conventions on the International Humanitarian Law (1949) all seem to throw light on the need to protect the rights of the child to safeguard their safety in every society they find themselves globally.

Ongoing economic and social disparities underscore the necessity for the enhancement, coordination, and maintenance of effective interventions, alongside innovations to address the increasingly challenging issues faced by children requiring social protection. A consensus is emerging among multilateral and bilateral institutions regarding the necessity to enhance the capacity of nations, particularly in the developing world, to formulate and fortify social protection policies and programs as an urgent response to social inequality, economic crises, disease, and associated vulnerabilities and exclusions (Norton, Conway & Foster, 2001; Garcia & Gruat, 2008; United Nations, 2018).

Notwithstanding swift advancements in the expansion of social protection across numerous nations, access remains unrealized for the majority of the global populace. Poverty endures even in nations with extensive social security systems, especially affecting children, youth, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, migrants, ethnic

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minorities, and indigenous populations. Countries must enhance efforts to actualize the right to social security for all individuals (UN, 2018).

Globally, international organizations and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) have catalysed the enhancement and prioritizing of essential social assistance programs aimed at reaching all vulnerable populations in society. Children are impacted by all Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty (Goal 1), hunger (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), climate change (Goal 13), and violence against children (Goal 16.2) (CRIN, 2018). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) emphasized that social protection policies are crucial for children's rights, well-being, breaking the cycle of poverty and vulnerability, preventing child labour, and enabling all children to achieve their full potential. Although child-specific benefit programs established by statute are present in 108 countries, they frequently encompass relatively limited segments of the population (International Labour Organisation, [ILO] 2022).

In countries like Chile and Brazil, there is an integrated national plan that use finances, and resources for the poorest and most vulnerable (Temin, 2008; European Commission, 2015). Lee, Majer and Kim (2019) added that in the United States, social protection covered support for the socially disadvantaged, such as social care, disability, and disease, excluding income security, education, healthcare and culture, and human service. Different countries around the world have different social protection measures.

In Africa, according to Roelen, Delap, Jones and Chettri (2016), children face stark challenges with respect to care and wellbeing with many children without, or at risk of losing parental care and experiencing low levels of wellbeing. The prevalence of formal

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state social protection is limited in most developing nations, particularly in Africa. Consequently, concerns regarding state social protection have primarily been stimulated by discourse in developing nations, where poverty and vulnerability are pervasive, in contrast to developed ones (Dalinpuo & Nasse, 2020).

Moreover, despite significant development of initiatives in developing nations, current social protection policies inadequately meet the income security requirements of children, especially in low- and middle-income countries with substantial kid populations (Andrews et al., 2012). As at 2015, about 18,000 children died the world over, mainly from deaths that could be avoided through adequate social protection programmes (ILO, 2022). According to UNICEF, nearly two thirds of children worldwide are not shielded from the lifelong effects of poverty and discrimination (UNICEF n.d). Thus, two out of three children within developing countries are not covered by any form of social protection, leaving them vulnerable to economic hardship and social exclusion. Thus, more efforts are needed to step up measures to ensure income security for children.

Several African countries have social protection measures for children. For instance, Mose (2015) noted that in Kenya, there is the 'Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children' (CT-OVC) which is a government-supported programme intended to provide regular and predictable cash transfers to poor households taking care of orphans and vulnerable children. Also, Porter and Dornan (2010) indicated that in Ethiopia, there is the Productive Safety Net Programme which has improved schooling outcomes among boys and girls. Jones (2011) noted that in Nigeria, social protection initiatives aimed to prevent child trafficking, exploitative child labour, and domestic violence. Camara (2022) noted that in Nigeria, the fundamental mechanisms

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of social protection comprise social assistance and social insurance, with the former pertaining to benefits provided in cash or kind, and the latter concerning social security funded by contributions based on insurance principles.

In Ghana, before and after the implementation of the SDGs, the nation established an extensive social protection system to mitigate primary life cycle risks and vulnerabilities. Evidence indicates that Ghana has established a commendable social safety system (The World Bank, 2016; OECD, 2019). A National Social Protection Strategy was established in 2007 and amended in 2012 (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2015). The National Social Protection Policy aims to halve poverty by enhancing effective social assistance for impoverished and vulnerable Ghanaians, and to significantly improve employment opportunities by promoting productive inclusion and decent work to support families and communities.

The social protection system in Ghana encompasses social assistance, scholarships, social insurance, and labour market programs. It has established a portfolio of social protection programs, including the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program. The nation's premier cash transfer initiative for the impoverished include orphans and at-risk youth, the elderly, individuals with significant disabilities, and, more recently, expectant women under the LEAP 1000 program. In-kind assistance programs (school feeding, free uniforms, and exercise books); a labour-intensive public works program (LIPW) for the impoverished unemployed; waivers for education and health insurance fees; scholarship programs; a three-tier social security system encompassing both formal and informal sectors; and various youth employment initiatives (MoGCSP, 2015). Consequently, it may be contended that Ghana has implemented social assistance programs that mitigate the primary hazards confronting

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its citizens. The nation is creating technologies to efficiently execute and manage social assistance programs. The nation possesses a governance structure that spans from the micro to the macro level, with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) developing and directing the comprehensive social protection strategy and vision for the sector.

By the end of 2022, LEAP had reached about 346,019 households throughout the country. Government, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) is currently undertaking a review of the programme's beneficiary composition to phase out non-extremely poor households and replace them with those identified as extremely poor by the National Household Registry (Ministry of Finance, 2023). As part of efforts being made by Government of Ghana to mitigate the impact of increasing cost of living on the poor and vulnerable, Government, in the 2023 National Budget (Pg.86; Par;371), increased monthly LEAP benefit levels by one hundred percent.

Despite the fact that Ghana has made tremendous progress in a number of areas, including economic growth, poverty alleviation, and democratic government, a substantial section of the people continues to live in poverty and is vulnerable to a variety of environmental, social, and economic threats and hazards. This led to the adoption of many social protection measures that were in accordance with the National Social Protection Strategy. These measures were put in place in order to reduce the consequences of extreme poverty and vulnerabilities in society, particularly among children who are at risk (Dalinpuo & Nasse, 2020). There is a debate regarding whether or whether the three particular social assistance programs (LEAP, LIPW, and NHIS

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exclusions) ought to be expanded in order to improve coverage for the destitute (Kotoh & Van de Geest, 2016; World Bank, 2016).

In order to correct the deficiencies that were identified, Ghana has put into place a social protection policy that specifically defines the boundaries of social protection, sets precise short-, medium-, and long-term objectives, and describes the components that are needed to establish a medium-term program to achieve these goals (FAOLEX, 2015). The National Social Protection Policy establishes a framework that enables social protection to be delivered in a manner that is holistic, cohesive, and appropriately targeted, while also ensuring that it is delivered in an effective and efficient manner (Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, 2015).

The framework for the delivery of policy, as well as the connections between the institutions involved, are described in the policy. The National Targeting Unit (NTU) was assigned the role of the host institution, with a particular emphasis on consolidating its operations. This included gaining relevant capabilities in data collection and public information, as stated in the policy (MoGCSP, 2015). A comprehensive assessment of poverty, as well as the related analyses that will assist targeting, will be conducted on a regular basis. This assessment will be influenced by in-depth involvement, scientific techniques, and adherence to worldwide best practices (Coady & Le, 2020; Ludeman et al., 2009; Tabor, 2002). Universal categorical transfers are considered to be less complicated to administer and entail lower administrative costs than means-tested programs; as a result, they should be taken into consideration. At the moment, there are no clear, cohesive goals for social protection programs that target children, especially those who are not enrolled in school, which can be successfully monitored (Jones, Ahadzie & Doh, 2009; UNICEF, n.d.; World Bank, 2016).

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The United Nations (2018) maintains that children are among the groups that are deprived of social protection in many countries. The UNICEF mapping analysis study in Ghana in 2011 indicated that, Ghana has no definite national policy framework for child and family welfare (Antwi, 2021). Although many of the social protection programmes rolled out in Ghana focus on children, these programmes appear to be small, fragmented and underfunded (UNICEF Ghana, 2009). Consequently, challenges remain in terms of coverage of the poor and generosity of benefits of key social assistance programmes.

Children are the custodians of the future; thus, the continuous existence of tomorrow's world is dependent on its children. The socialisation and integration of children is, therefore, crucial to the development of any society. When children lose their basic rights to survival and nurturing, it is a missed opportunity because their ability to develop into creative individuals and their social, cultural and economic contributions to the society are lost (UNICEF, 2012). Child protection is the preserve of the family, society and the state. In the past, traditional systems of reciprocity and fostering eased out hardships on impoverished parents and orphaned children. As society evolves, there have been shifts in the economy, which have threatened the traditional systems of child protection and that of the state. Many children are faced with care deficit while most of them find themselves being exploited for economic gains (Nukunya, 2003; Oppong, 2004 as cited in Participatory Development Associates Limited, 2020).

The subject of social protection of children is not alien to the subject of Social Studies. As to Okogu (2009), social studies education is a field that examines the interplay between individuals' lives and their surrounding environment. The core of social studies education is humanity, which is central to all global issues. The inadequate treatment

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of children in society cannot be an exception to humanity's broader issues. Social protection for children can be facilitated by social studies education. Aayaba (2009) asserts that social studies education seeks to instil good citizenship in students, hence safeguarding youngsters.

Howe and Marshall (1999) contend that social studies can meet the purpose of citizenship education by establishing in students values that are in accordance with and supportive of democracy, which Engle and Ochoa (1988) argue necessitates an emphasis on values. As a result, students can receive assistance in making crucial adjustments in their lives in order to function well within a democratic society through the use of values clarification in social studies classes. Given that students are constantly bombarded with a multitude of opposing values by the mainstream media, the importance of values-clarifying teaching should not be overlooked, as Murray pointed out in Howe and Marshall (1999). As a result, social studies education has the potential to instill suitable ideals, which can then lead to the fair treatment of children and all individuals in society as a whole.

Furthermore, Social Studies education strives to determine the motivations for communal life and to investigate the difficulties that follow it (Okogu, 2009). The subject encompasses issues connected to human physiology, society, politics, economics, and the environment. It also evaluates possible solutions to these challenges. As a result, the incorporation of social studies into the framework of child social protection can successfully draw attention to the problem of the insufficient treatment of children and, via the skills, values, ethics, and principles of social studies, deal with this challenge.

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The 1992 Constitution of Ghana makes provision for the institution of social protection within the Ghanaian context. For example, Article 36 (1) enjoins the state to take "all necessary actions to ensure that the national economy is managed in such a manner as to provide adequate means of livelihood and suitable employment and public assistance to the needy". Article 37 (2) also refers to "the protection and promotion of all other basic human rights and freedoms, including the rights of the disabled, aged, children and other vulnerable groups in the development processes" (Benson & Ngaasu, 2021). Despite the constitutional obligation of the state to provide Social Protection to the populace, the constitutional demands are by nature more general rather than specific and, therefore, insufficient to ensure concrete entitlements for persons in need of social protection (Benson & Ngaasu, 2021).

As Ghana is undergoing transformation on several fronts, including the transition to middle income country status, the social protection of children requires that clear-cut goals are established in policies and programmes geared toward achieving those goals. In order to effectively address issues on child trafficking, child labour and other forms of child abuse, there is the need for reliable access to social protection programmes that deal with the driving forces within them (Associates for Change, 2022). As such, this research sought to explore the social protection of children from the perspectives of core formal actors, carers and Non-Governmental Organizations to provide some insights and knowledge that can inform the theory, policy and practice of social protection in Ghana, and beyond.

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

The challenges facing children in the 21st century are as immense as challenges facing adults (Burns, 2018; Leicht et al., 2018). UNICEF research indicates that 3.65 million children in Ghana reside in poverty, with 1.2 million experiencing extreme poverty and lacking the resources to satisfy their fundamental nutritional requirements (GSS, 2021). As Ghana progresses as a middle-income country, child-sensitive social protection measures are required to avoid adverse impacts on children, and reduce or mitigate social and economic risks that directly affect children's lives (ILO, 2013; UNICEF, 2022). The past two decades have seen the rise of social protection as a policy instrument aimed at combating poverty and vulnerability in emerging nations (Fiszbein, Kanbur, & Yemtsov, 2014). Social protection is regularly categorized into three primary components: social assistance, social insurance, and labour market programs (Kanbur & Yemtsov, 2014; Barrientos, 2011; Dungey, Tchatoka & Yanotti, 2018; Hidrobo, Hoddinott, Kumar & Olivier, 2018).

In Ghana, the social protection system includes social assistance, scholarships, social insurance and labour market programmes introduced as a form of protection for the poor and vulnerable in Ghana (Dalinpuo & Nasse, 2020). The social protection system has helped ensure impressive strides in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction and democratic governance. Nonetheless, even though Ghana has made more important efforts to expand social protection compared to most countries in Africa (United Nations, 2018), a number of shortfalls exist (UNICEF Ghana, 2018). Challenges remain in terms of coverage of the poor and generosity of benefits of key social assistance programmes (Niño-Zarazúa, 2019; Shahidi et al., 2019). While the social protection of children require that clear goals are established in policies and programmes geared

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toward achieving those goals, it appears there are no clear, rallying goals for the social protection systems for children, especially out of school children, that can be monitored (ILO-UNICEF, 2019). Also, the challenge with social protection in Ghana is that those who really need them do not get access to them (Abebrese, 2021). Debrah (2013) has also pointed out that the failure to address cultural issues that perpetuate poverty is a problem with the LEAP programme. Debrah added that while the legal and policy issues relating to child protection and welfare are intact, there is generally a disconnection between what happens on the ground in terms of enforcement and application respectively.

According to the World Bank (2016), Ghana has a limited Social Protection coverage for children and the poor. This is because the Social Protection system in Ghana does not target children and vulnerable who actually need them most (Dalinpuo & Naase, 2020). The number of children residing in impoverished households exceeds the national poverty rate by 4.2 percentage points, notwithstanding the existence of social protection measures (UNICEF Ghana, 2015). This indicates that a greater number of youngsters are experiencing poverty relative to the general poverty levels in Ghana. In Ghana, more than 90% of children endure some type of abuse at home or within the educational setting (UNICEF, 2017). Kpalam (2023) disclosed that children in Ghana are receiving inadequate care and support, while an increasing number of minors resort to the streets to survive daily. All the information presented indicates a national concern regarding child protection in Ghana.

There have been a number of studies related to the issue under consideration in the Ghanaian setting. For instance, Abebrese (2021) explored the prospects and challenges of existing social protection programmes in Ghana. Associates for Change (2022)

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investigated the existing social protection policies and mechanisms that within the Ghanaian context which respond to child victims of abuse, worst forms of child labour in Mpohor Wassa East, Amenfi East and the Adansi South district. UNICEF Ghana (2018) also evaluated the child protection system strengthening initiatives in the Asokore Mampong, Lambussie Karnie, Shama, Talensi and Upper Denkyira districts. Additionally, Khurshid et al. (2020) on the other hand examined essential elements of the integrated social protection system that is beneficial to children. All of these studies showed that children are not given the best support in relation to protection from poverty and vulnerability.

Other studies, such as Hann (2016), examined child streetism in the La-Nkwantanang Municipality and discovered that economic adversity has compelled many youngsters to the streets to work in order to sustain themselves and their families. Kofinti (2020) evaluated household poverty in Ghana and Kenya, investigating the poverty-alleviating impact of social protection in Ghana concerning child poverty, and discovered that children from impoverished regions experienced deprivations in health and well-being. Dalinpuo and Nasse (2020) investigated social protection and child vulnerability in Ghana using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the Jirapa and Wa Municipalities of the Upper West Region, revealing escalating levels of vulnerability and orphanhood among children in the area.

Despite these investigations, substantial gaps persist that the current research aims to address. Initially, it was noted that the majority of current research has focused on topics such as childhood poverty and child labour (Amekuedi, 2016; Kofinti, 2020), along with the difficulties related to child protection programmes (Abebrese, 2011; Khurshid et al., 2020). Although these studies offer significant insights into the circumstances

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impacting vulnerable children, there remains a paucity of exploration regarding the role of primary formal actors in delivering social protection for these children in Winneba Township. This includes an examination of how social protection mechanisms are effectively implemented at the community level by key formal actors and those with a constitutional obligation to safeguard vulnerable children in Winneba Township, as well as the contextual factors that may facilitate or impede their efficacy. This gap is crucial as comprehending the actual implementation processes, including beneficiary identification, community engagement strategies, service accessibility, and institutional coordination, can determine whether policies are effectively reaching the target populations and attaining the desired outcomes. In the absence of such understanding, well-meaning initiatives may be inadequately executed, underutilised, or ultimately ineffectual, therefore constraining their influence on children's lives. Moreover, despite the intrinsic link between Social Studies education and themes of citizenship, human rights, and social responsibility, elements that are foundational to child protection, this area has not garnered much empirical focus within the Ghanaian setting. Consequently, the relationship between Social Studies education and the safeguarding of children remains inadequately examined.

Secondly, the current literature regarding the role of social protection in alleviating poverty has primarily concentrated on the social assistance aspect, particularly cash transfers, which have been largely analysed from a national policy viewpoint (Agbenyo et al., 2017; Cooke et al., 2016; Ragno, Hague & Handa, 2016). Although these macro-level assessments are significant, they frequently neglect the operational dynamics of these programmes at the local or community level, where actual implementation takes place. In terms of context, community-based deployment is essential, as it embodies the

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actual experiences of children and families, providing insights into local capabilities, cultural norms, and institutional dynamics that affect programme efficacy. The present study seeks to produce context-specific knowledge through community-level implementation to enhance the responsiveness, inclusivity, and efficacy of child protection initiatives. Current child protection initiatives often rely on generic or top-down approaches that fail to account for the unique needs and circumstances of local populations (Web, 2019). There is inadequate understanding of the complex factors influencing child protect in local communities hindering the development of effective interventions (Levesque, 2022). Addressing this gap could enhance the targeting, accessibility, and sustainability of social protection systems for at-risk children, thereby fostering their general well-being and long-term development. Existing Child Protection initiative frequently overlooks the disconnect between policy and practice in child protection which can be bridged through community level implementation (Gadda, 2020).

Finally, a theoretical gap persists in the existing literature about the frameworks employed to comprehend the social protection of children, especially at the community level. Although current research predominantly emphasises economic or legal viewpoints, it has inadequately included the Social Justice Approach, which prioritises fairness, equity, and the safeguarding of marginalised groups (Rawls, 1971; Fraser, 2003). This theoretical framework facilitates an analysis of the availability, equitable accessibility, and effectiveness of child protection programmes for vulnerable children in underserved regions such as Winneba. Characterising social protection as an issue of justice, rather than merely a charity or legal measure, reveals systemic disparities in

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resource allocation, execution, and accessibility. Evidence has been provided regarding the existing deficiencies in the breadth of prior studies and the methodology utilised.

Despite several studies on children, there appears to be an overall dearth of studies focusing on the social protection of children, especially in fishing and farming communities where child abuse remains a major social concern. In the Effutu Municipal which is a major fishing community, there is evidence that child safety is a major concern. Challenging Heights, an NGO which aims to reduce and prevent child trafficking and protect child rights in Ghana is situated in the municipality.

There have been some efforts to ease the experiences of such children. For instance, it is reported that a facility to serve as a temporary home for street kids and orphans has been constructed at Okyereko, near Winneba (Ghana News Agency, 2018). The facility is reportedly funded by Holland-based Foundation called Blessed Home, through its Ghana branch, Blessed Centre for children. The facility aims to accommodate, feed, clothe, take care of medical needs and provide education for street children. Another facility for children in Winneba is St. Anna's Home. The facility was set up to provide a comfortable home and family environment for abandoned and orphaned children, and as a primary school for poorer children from the surrounding region. The facility has provided home for children for the past 13 years.

Notwithstanding the presence of numerous child rights organizations and governmental entities, the Effutu municipality seems to be plagued by multiple forms of child abuse, including child labour, child prostitution, child neglect, and trafficking (Challenging Heights, 2018; Development Action Association, 2017). Sasu, Asare, and Ayensua (2015) noted that it is customary in Winneba to witness children engaged in fishing activities. In 2017, Mr. John B. Ninson, the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) of Effutu

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

in the Central Region, urged stakeholders at a town hall meeting to assist the assembly in its initiative to remove school-age children from the streets (Agbey, 2017). During the same meeting, Mrs. Rose Tenkurang, the Effutu Municipal Director of the Ghana Education Service (GES), expressed concern on the inability of a significant number of kids in the municipality to progress to senior high school, ostensibly owing to streetism. Similarly, the Development Action Association (2017), as referenced in Kplalam (2023), asserted that the alarming prevalence of child abuse in Ghana impacts all urban areas, with the problem being more severe in rural towns like Winneba.

Kpalam (2023) indicates that children as young as eight years old, who ought to be in school, are sold by their impoverished parents for a nominal sum ranging from 10 to 50 Ghanaian Cedis to work in the fishing sector in Winneba. A recent extensive study conducted by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) in Ghana on fishing communities indicated that numerous children aged 10 to 18 are directly or indirectly participating in child labour, with the most severe forms frequently involving children engaged in fishing in Winneba (CHRAJ, 2021). Koomson and Abdulai (2021) contended that child labour and trafficking remain significant issues in Winneba, and their intricate, multivariate character has diminished the efficacy of prior efforts.

In addition to the above, Ghana News Agency (2022) reported on the need for social protection of children in Winneba. Similarly, the Ghanaian Times (2021) highlighted the rise of child abuse in Winneba. UNICEF (2020) issued a report on the need for social protection of children in Winneba Township. Save The Children Ghana (2018), an NGO, also highlighted the need for child protection in Winneba. Recently, Adomah et al. (2023) revealed that parental neglect is a major problem in Winneba. They

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indicated that some parents in Winneba did not provide for the needs of their children, particularly in terms of their education and this greatly affected the lives of children in Winneba.

A lot of empirical evidence has been presented above to show that there are several child protection-related problems in Winneba within the Effutu Municipality including streetism, child abuse, child neglect and child labour. This begs the question whether social protection mechanisms for children are fully and effectively being implemented in the Winneba Township. Although some NGO's and state actors are doing their best. As such, this study sought to explore child protection in Winneba Township to understand the effectiveness of the mechanisms. This stems from the assumption that it is likely that children would continue to suffer within the community and their future and that of the nation as a whole would be in danger. According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey (2019), Central Region is the 4th poorest region in Ghana. This gives the indication that the central region is one of the poorest in Ghana. Since Winneba is in the Central Region, financial challenges are common in the township. Safeguarding children from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation is a collective obligation. Families, communities, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all play a crucial role in actualizing children's rights to protection. This study is essential to identify methods for enhancing the social protection of children in Winneba Township.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study sought to examine the awareness and implementation of social protection mechanisms for vulnerable children among core formal actors in Winneba, and explored strategies to enhance these protections.

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1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. ascertain the perception of stakeholders on social protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township;
2. explore the social protection measures that are available for children in the Winneba Township;
3. analyse how social protection mechanisms are deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township;
4. explore the challenges faced in implementing social protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township.
5. examine the factors that enhance social protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township;

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How is social protection of vulnerable children perceived by stakeholders in Winneba township?
2. What are the social protection measures available for vulnerable children in Winneba township?
3. How are social protection mechanisms deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba township?
4. What are the challenges to the social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba township?
5. What factors can enhance the social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba township?

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1.6 Significance of the Study

This research would inform emerging knowledge on child protection to inform policy and practice. It would help enhance Social Protection policy and mechanisms by assisting policy makers to tailor programmes to suit the specific needs of children in the Winneba Township.

The study would raise awareness of child protection within the Winneba Township and draw the attention of all stakeholders in child protection. The study will increase access to social protection mechanism services for the extreme poor and vulnerable children within the municipality. It will help to develop a comprehensive Social Protection system to address the main life cycle risks and vulnerabilities children face. It will provide pointers to the state of child protection using the case of Winneba. The results can help improve Ghana's impressive Social Protection system.

The study offers a good opportunity to demonstrate the action on Ghana's acceptance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, Goal 1 entrusts Ghana to work diligently to prove that Ghana is committed to bring poverty to an end in all parts of the country. The results may set the stage for further research to inform review of Ghana's National Social Protection Strategy and the Children's Act. The results can inform review of flagship Social Protection programmes, including LEAP; school feeding and free uniforms and exercise book, health insurance fee waivers; scholarship programmes; and youth employment programmes.

The study will assist in understanding protection, which will ensure that children grow up in a safe environment, which will promote their emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. The study will also help gain knowledge about child protection mechanism and help identify signs of neglect and abuse. It will also enable early intervention and

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prevention of harm. Actors of child protection, such as parents, teachers, traditional leaders, law enforcement agencies and policy makers will become aware of child protection laws and guideline and comply with legal obligations. The study will go a long way to empower children, which involves teaching them about their rights and reporting inappropriate behaviour to authorities. In the area of social responsibility, society will benefit from a generation of well-protected children who are less likely to engage in criminal activities which will distort the peace of the society, thereby ensuring a safer community for everyone.

Understanding child protection will help break the cycle of abuse, because the study explored the support system for families and individuals in need. In essence, learning about child protection is fundamental to creating a healthy, safer, stable and a more friendly society for children to be nurtured to become responsible adults.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to exploring the social protection measures available for children in Winneba, how they are deployed, factors affecting the delivery and the challenges associated with the social protection of children. Geographically, the study was delimited to Winneba Township. Winneba is a coastal town in the Effutu Municipality within the Central Region of Ghana.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study was confined to Winneba Township which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other towns in Ghana and beyond. The unique socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors specific to Winneba might not be representative of other areas. Due to the involvement of vulnerable children, obtaining informed consent restricted the depth of probing into certain issues because of the presence of guardians

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(parents, social workers and care takers). Some of the children's reluctance to speak up in a group setting posed a challenge to the focus group discussion. The researcher overcame this by conducting individual interviews, allowing the children to express themselves more freely and proving the researcher with essential insights.

1.9 Definition of Terms

The main terms used in the study are defined in this section:

Child protection: measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children. It also denotes providing food, shelter, health care and education for children.

Child: This is defined as an individual below the age of 18 years.

Risk: Refers to conditions surrounding the environment of a child that expose them to suffer harm. It includes poverty, abuse, neglect etc.

Social Protection: Social protection refers to the availability, accessibility, deployment, and effectiveness of child protection interventions that seeks to prevent children from vulnerability in Winneba Township.

Social protection measures: Refers to a set of projects or activities designed to reduce and prevent vulnerability in society.

Social protection programme: an integrated platform of effective social assistance, social inclusion and social services which stem from policies.

Vulnerable: In this study, vulnerable child is viewed in the context of family environment. It refers to children in families who experience extreme poverty, and forced to support himself or herself.

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1.10 Organization of the Study

The study is organised in five chapters. Chapter One deals with the introduction and this expatiates the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, and research questions which serve as a guide to the study. The chapter also covers the significance of the study, delimitation and limitations as well as definition of terms.

Chapter Two deals with the review of related literature. It covers the theoretical and conceptual framework as well as the review of related empirical studies. Chapter Three of the study focuses on the research methods for the study. This covers the research design, the population, sample and sampling procedures, the instrument used for data collection, data collection procedures and the data processing and analysis.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the results of the study. The data collected was analysed, interpreted and discussed to answer the research questions. Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study as well as the suggestions for further research.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The study sought to find out whether social protection mechanism for children is fully and effectively being implemented in the Winneba township and find ways of improving the social protection of children. In this chapter, literature related to the study are reviewed. The review is done under three main sub-headings. These are theoretical framework, conceptual review and the empirical review.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Four main theories are reviewed in this section. These are Social Rupture theory, the Relative Deprivation theory, theory of resilience and Livelihood approach and social justice theory. These theories are discussed in detail in this section.

2.1.1 Social Rupture Theory

Social Rupture Theory can be traced to the works of several authors who described social rupture in the early ages of industrialization and conflicts among nations (Durkheim, 1951; Garfinkel, 1967). Social rupture theory posits that experiences of rupture arise from individuals' encounters with the unexpected or abnormal. At the micro interactional level, "breaches" can be produced by violations of the "normal forms" of social interaction (Goffman, 1983; Tavory & Fine, 2020). Social rupture" is a term used to describe a significant and often disruptive change or breakdown in the social fabric of a society or community. It refers to a situation where the established norms, values, and structures that govern social interactions and relationships undergo a sudden and profound transformation, leading to a state of disconnection, conflict, or fragmentation (Castells, 1997).

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Social ruptures can occur due to various factors, such as political upheaval, economic crises, cultural shifts, technological advancements, or major social movements. These events can challenge existing power dynamics, social hierarchies, and traditional ways of life, resulting in a rupture or rupture-like conditions. During a social rupture, divisions within society may become more pronounced, leading to increased polarization, social unrest, and even violence. It can create a sense of uncertainty, fear, and loss of trust in institutions and authorities. At the same time, social ruptures can also provide opportunities for positive change, social progress, and the emergence of new ideas, values, and social structures.

Social rupture, characterized by significant disruptions in societal structures and norms, can have profound implications for child protection. When social fabric breaks down, children often become more vulnerable to various forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.

Arguments exist that social rupture affects child protection in several ways:

1. Disruption of support systems: Social ruptures can sever the support systems that children rely on for their safety and well-being. Institutions, such as schools and community organizations, may become dysfunctional or inaccessible, depriving children of critical resources and protective factors.
2. Family instability: Social ruptures, such as political upheavals or economic crises, can lead to increased stress, poverty, and displacement, which can strain families and heighten the risk of child maltreatment. Disruptions in essential services and social support networks can further exacerbate family instability.
3. Loss of protective environments: Social ruptures can undermine the safety of children's living environments. Disruptions in governance, law enforcement, and

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the justice system may result in weakened child protection mechanisms, leaving children more exposed to violence, exploitation, and recruitment into armed groups.

4. Displacement and separation: Social ruptures often lead to mass migrations, displacement, and refugee situations. These circumstances can separate children from their families, exposing them to heightened risks of trafficking, exploitation, and abuse.
5. Psychosocial impacts: Social ruptures can have significant psychosocial impacts on children. Exposure to violence, loss of loved ones, and the breakdown of familiar structures can result in trauma, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges, which further compromise child protection.

The logical conclusion that, the impact of social rupture on child protection requires a comprehensive response that encompasses immediate and long-term measures. These strategies include:

1. Strengthening child protection systems: Efforts should be made to bolster child protection systems by ensuring the availability of essential services, such as child helplines, safe spaces, and counselling programmes, even in times of social rupture.
2. Providing psychosocial support: Investing in psychosocial support services for children can help mitigate the emotional and psychological consequences of social rupture. These services can include trauma-informed care, counselling, and community-based interventions.
3. Strengthening family and community support: Prioritizing programmes that support families and communities in times of social rupture can help mitigate risks and build resilience. This can involve providing economic assistance, strengthening social networks, and facilitating access to basic services.

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4. Ensuring child participation and empowerment: Encouraging the active participation of children in decision-making processes and empowering them to express their views and concerns can promote their protection and resilience.

There are some assumptions of social rupture theory. Firstly, social rupture occurs when social environment feedbacks trigger the conflict monitoring response of individuals (Shaw, 2021). Shaw added that this response is induced by the invalidation of individuals' automatically generated inferences about the social situation. This invalidation may occur directly or through the production of inferences arising from ambiguous environmental signals. This first assumption means that whenever the social environment of people conflict what they expect, their responses are going to be based on the conflicting situation. In relation to this study, a social environment which is less protective of children is usually something that children do not expect. This is because homes are expected to be conducive and accommodating for children.

Secondly, when a fractured social context endures, individuals' lessened capacity to depend on automatic inferences and behavioural responses may result in reduced predictability in their actions, as they are compelled to consciously reengage with their circumstances (Shaw, 2021). This means that for children who are in ruptured social environments, their behaviours may become less predictable. This could explain why children in less protective social environments may be prone to engaging in socially deviant acts.

Social rupture theory posits that societal experiences of rupture define "unsettled times" (Sewell, 2005; Swidler, 2001) and arise in reaction to exogenous shocks (e.g., environmental disasters, global pandemics) or from endogenous factors such as the swift reconfiguration of social relationships due to industrialization and the

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destabilization of political institutions amid regime change (Ermakoff, 2015; Jansen, 2017; Sewell, 2005). Social rupture may arise from significant transformations in a culture's collective sense-making, instigated by social movements (Benford & Snow 2000).

Although typologies of social rupture can be developed across various dimensions, its fundamental characteristic is the experience of confronting an aspect in the social realm that typically contradicts expectations (Shaw, 2021). Thus, a comprehensive comprehension of social rupture, and the diverse forms of social change that usually accompany it necessitates that we move beyond merely enumerating its exterior causes and instead focus inward on the basic mechanisms that underpin the experience itself (Cerulo, 2010). A key notion examined in relation to social rupture theory is social exclusion. Silver (2007) defines social exclusion as a dynamic process characterized by the progressive multidimensional disintegration of the 'social link' at both individual and communal levels. Social connection refers to the social relationships, institutions, and perceived identities of belonging that form the basis of social cohesion, integration, or solidarity. The disintegration of social bonds can manifest in various ways: exclusion, neglect, segregation, aid, marginalization, and discrimination (Ravaud & Stiker, 2001).

Social exclusion is a systematic practice of social isolation that diminishes several aspects of social engagement (Barry, 2002). It involves a dynamic interplay between those who exclude and those who are excluded. Excluders are agents who employ particular strategies to exclude others and restrict access to resources and relationships. Although it may appear that the marginalized wish to disengage from society, their withdrawal may be a response to mistreatment. Exclusion involves the forfeiture of

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status, absence of acknowledgment, and frequently, humiliation (Silver, 2007). Social exclusion occurs when there is a breakdown in social cohesion.

The Social Rupture Theory is considered relevant to this study because it speaks of how the changes in the social environment can affect the responses and behaviours of those within the social environment. In relation to the social protection of children, it can be said that children who are exposed to unpleasant and abusive social environments which they were not expecting are likely to respond with inappropriate behaviours, and may also experience social exclusion. The concept of Social Rupture Theory is a recurring theme in the literature on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). This theory, proposed by Omwa and Titeca (2011), discusses a significant disruption in conventional family structures and the subsequent strain on traditional support systems for orphan care (Abebe, 2008; Abebe & Aase, 2007). This strain is attributed to the growing number of OVCs, which overwhelms the capacity of family and community support networks. This situation, as discussed by Chirwa in 2002, results in the breakdown of social support systems and safety nets, leaving an increasing number of orphaned children in dire circumstances. Chirwa further suggests that governments should establish structures to alleviate the challenges faced by OVCs.

Richter and Rama (2006) emphasise the pivotal role of families and communities in aiding vulnerable children. However, the economic burden of conditions like HIV/AIDS, especially in African nations, falls heavily on households, mostly those already impoverished. Only a small fraction of affected children receives external assistance, primarily relying on extended family, neighbours, church, and community support. The insufficiency of formal social protection measures for OVCs, particularly

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those affected by HIV/AIDS in Ghana, has led to the emergence of orphaned homes and caregiving centres.

The breakdown of traditional family support systems, according to Richter and Rama (2006), has necessitated the establishment of alternative care options such as orphaned homes and NGOs. Community care approaches, rooted in indigenous and traditional practices, often involve extended family members, usually grandparents or aunts, taking care of children in need. This form of informal care is widely accepted across cultures. Chirwa (2002) illustrates the Social Rupture Theory through the concept of a "traditional" childcare system, represented as concentric circles of blood and family relations, where orphan care is integrated into this framework.

Chirwa (2002) contends that the core of the system is the nuclear family, encircled by the extended family and the immediate community, including the neighbourhood, clan, tribe, and society at large. This hierarchy implies that the primary responsibility for child care lies with the nuclear family, progressively diminishing as children mature and gain more independence. If the nuclear family is unable to fulfil its role due to factors such as disability, poverty, parental inadequacy, or death, the extended family gradually steps in through what Chirwa terms the "economy of affection." The community, encompassing those in the same neighbourhood, clan, or tribe, follows the extended family in taking on child care. In Ghana, children are regarded as assets not only to their families but also to the broader community and society, thereby emphasizing the communal nature of child upbringing. The final layer of responsibility is assumed by the state, which employs various measures including laws, social policies, and welfare programmes to support child care. Beyond the state, the international framework is guided by legal instruments and human rights principles that

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pertain to child care, although the enforcement of these rights is ideally the responsibility of governments.

A social rupture arises when a crisis weakens and disrupts the structure, starting with the nuclear family through the loss of primary caregivers, followed by the extended family due to the death of alternative care providers, and eventually affecting the community due to the growing number of orphaned children alongside a decline in available caregivers. The consequences of this rupture extend outward, impacting society on a larger scale. In the context of HIV/AIDS, the effects begin before the actual death of a parent, and many orphaned children end up falling through safety nets, resulting in discontinued education, early marriages, child labour, and destitution. Chirwa (2002) also notes that social rupture can lead to property grabbing, with immediate family members often exploiting guardianship or the emergence of households led by children, females, or grandparents, as observed by Abebe and Aase (2007).

In situations where the immediate support structure for children is collapsing, it becomes crucial to establish an alternative support framework promptly and comprehensively. This framework might encompass a foster family responsible for child care and basic needs, a caring community advocating for their rights, a government providing legislation and services for child protection, and civil society organizations aligned with governmental efforts while ensuring transparency and accountability. However, while the Social Rupture thesis has been instrumental in highlighting the impact of adversity on families and communities, it has faced criticism for oversimplifying OVC programming and neglecting the intricate interplay between human agency and structural conditions within a community. This thesis assumes a

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linear continuum of care from the nuclear family to the community, overlooking the complexity of Africa's orphan care system, along with various contextual and structural factors that hinder communities from offering care and support. Additionally, the thesis tends to portray families and communities as homogenous entities facing similar challenges simultaneously, which contradicts the diverse realities as acknowledged by scholars like Abebe and Aase (2007). These scholars identify distinct family profiles, highlighting the varying resilience of families in the face of disruptions caused by HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the traditional orphan care safety net exhibits diverse capacities that significantly influence the extent of care and support received by orphans.

According to the parliamentary handbook on Child Protection by UNICEF (2004), Child protection is a special concern because it causes a breakdown in family and social structures, erosion of traditional system, creates a culture of violence, and creates weak governance, absence of accountability and inadequate access to basic social services for the child.

2.1.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation was described as the perceived feeling of deprivation when compared to a standard. Later in the 1960s and 70s, other sociologists studied Relative Deprivation Theory; these sociologists were Garry Runciman and Ted Gurr (Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966). The relative deprivation theory posits that individuals frequently perceive themselves as having less than a specific comparable benchmark (Liddell, 2021). Individuals may have a sense of deprivation about both material assets, such as currency or vehicles, and intangible assets, such as social standing or esteem. Individuals experience relative deprivation not only with material possessions but also in relation to justice and rights.

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Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) elucidates the subjective discontent arising from an individual's comparative status in relation to another's circumstances (Janse, 2020). For several individuals, relative deprivation signifies the absence of money or time necessary to sustain particular lifestyles, activities, and amenities to which a person or group has been habituated. Consequently, relative deprivation is a subjective discontent that afflicts numerous individuals (Liddell, 2021). This discontent arises from the juxtaposition of one individual's circumstances with those of another.

Relative impoverishment significantly impacts both behaviour and beliefs. This also include varying degrees of stress and political perspectives. The concept of relative deprivation is linked to the scientific notion of relative fitness, wherein an organism effectively overcomes its natural competitors, resulting in a greater number of offspring (Dambrun et al., 2006). Relative deprivation is frequently identified as a catalyst for the formation of social movements, which, in extreme instances, can result in political phenomena such as terrorism, riots, civil wars, and other forms of social deviance. A social movement is a collective endeavour, either official or informal, that seeks to address and transform a political or social issue (Janse, 2020). The idea identifies a correlation between individuals experiencing relative deprivation and their mobilization for social change as a reaction.

In the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans perceived themselves as deprived of the rights and privileges afforded to Caucasians, prompting the organization of a significant movement, termed the civil rights movement, to advocate for the attainment of these rights (Liddell, 2021). Moreover, some within the LGBTQ community perceived a deprivation of the freedom to marry and subsequently mobilized a social movement to advocate for the legal recognition of marriage. The

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civil rights movement and the marriage equality movement exemplify fraternalistic relative deprivation (Dambrun et al., 2006).

Runciman (1966) characterized fraternalistic relative deprivation as the perceived gap between the status of one's ingroup and the status that group members believe their group should attain. Egoistic or selfish relative deprivation differs from fraternalistic relative deprivation, as it involves an individual's perception of a disparity between their personal situation or status and that of a comparison reference group (Liddell, 2021). Consequently, selfish relative deprivation is mostly attributable to the unfavourable social standing of one individual in relation to another.

Additionally, Runciman (1966) gave four conditions for relative deprivation. The conditions are about object X in relation to Person A.

a. Person A does not have X
b. Person A knows other people who have X
c. Person A would like to own X
d. Person A believes it is realistic to own X

The relative deprivation theory is of relevance to the current study because it speaks of how deprivation in terms of resources can lead to social movements and change. In the current study, the level of deprivation in terms of resources that children suffer gives the indication that some social mobilization or action may be needed. This makes social protection important in the face of apparent deprivation in the society.

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2.1.3 Theory of Resilience and Livelihood Approach

This research utilizes the latest concept of resilience theory (Theron, Adam & Malindi, 2013). The livelihood approach, as part of resilience theory, is a significant actor-oriented perspective that has profoundly impacted development research and practice (Theron et al., 2013; Theron et al., 2014; Malindi, 2014). It comprehends and examines child protection through the lens of livelihood solutions that can significantly boost livelihoods (Malindi, 2009). Child protection is perceived as a survival imperative, as children must navigate various socio-political challenges for survival that would otherwise be unfeasible without protective resources mitigating the impact of risk factors (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). These protective resources exist within ecosystems and encompass families, communities, and cultures (Malindi & Theron, 2010).

Consequently, resilience theory views children through a lens of vulnerability, defined as intrinsic physical factors or processes, ecological influences encompassing socio-economic and political dynamics, along with exposure to community-related risks and adversities (Mashicolo, 2016; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Manyena, 2006). These processes elevate the probability of adverse developmental outcomes in children, including pathological behaviour (Malindi & Theron, 2010). In this context, a livelihood encompasses the capacities, assets (including stores, resources, claims, and access), and activities necessary for sustaining a means of life (Chambers & Conway, 1992). A livelihood is deemed sustainable when it improves capabilities and assets while offering possibilities that yield net advantages both in the short and long term (Mashicolo, 2016).

In the livelihood approach, impoverished individuals are central and are perceived to construct their livelihood plans based on essential resources known as capitals. The

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elucidation of livelihood commenced with human capital, followed by natural capital, physical capital, and financial capital, ultimately culminating in social capital, which emphasizes the quality of interpersonal relationships, such as the reliability of familial support or mutual assistance from neighbours. Furthermore, in urban livelihood research, essential infrastructure such as transportation, water, and energy was predominantly categorized under physical capital, alongside housing and production apparatus (de Haan, 2014).

The livelihood approach emphasized the organization of individuals' lives, prioritizing opportunity and agency above a focus on their destitution. It was primarily driven by the necessity to formulate more efficacious poverty reduction strategies. Furthermore, greater efficacy was anticipated from bottom-up and participatory approaches, emphasizing the lives and everyday needs of impoverished individuals, rather than from top-down interventionist strategies. In this regard, the livelihood approach significantly drew upon the contributions and insights of Sen (1981) concerning entitlements and sustainable livelihoods (Chambers et al., 1989).

This research adopts the livelihood method, positing that livelihood comprises a collection of "complex, contextual, diverse, and dynamic strategies devised by households to fulfill their needs" (Gaillard et al., 2009). The rationale for using this method is that the livelihood framework encompasses the broader environment in which social protection pertains to how the impoverished structure their livelihood choices. The methodology recognized that these techniques are ingrained in frameworks and regulated by institutions. The broader context was deemed essential as a significant aspect of social protection policies and interventions aimed to address the opportunities and limits within these institutions that may either facilitate or hinder the

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impoverished from developing effective livelihood strategies. Enhancing the efficacy of social protection programs and interventions would reduce the vulnerability of the impoverished, increase their well-being, and promote sustainability.

Consequently, concepts like as claims and access were deemed essential in the livelihood approach. These concepts indicate the potential to seek moral and practical support and to utilize the resource successfully in practice. Access is the mechanism that transitions stakeholders from endowment to entitlement (Geiser et al., 2011). This approach acknowledges the agency of impoverished individuals, emphasizing their ability to incorporate experiences into their livelihood strategies and to seek avenues for aspirations, ambitions, and problem-solving, which is central to the livelihood framework. Social protection programs should cultivate human agency that empowers individuals to transform social conditions. This research will analyse the social protection of children within the framework of sustainable livelihoods, viewing children as victims of societal conditions. Increased focus will be directed on children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The children's narratives will be seen as what has been termed "Voices of the Poor" (Narayan, 2000; de Haan, 2014).

2.1.3 Social Justice Theory

Social Justice Theory is a normative framework that examines fairness, equality, and equity in the allocation of rights, duties, and resources within a society. The philosophy supports the notion that every individual is entitled to equal economic, political, and social rights and opportunities. Social justice fundamentally aims to rectify structural disparities and guarantee that the advantages and disadvantages of social collaboration are allocated in manners that foster human dignity, participation, and inclusion (Rawls, 1971; Sen, 2009).

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John Rawls, a pivotal figure in Social Justice Theory, developed the concepts of the "original position" and the "veil of ignorance" in his landmark work, A Theory of Justice (1971). These theoretical instruments are employed to formulate principles of justice equitably and objectively. Rawls articulated two foundational principles: firstly, every individual possesses an equal entitlement to fundamental liberties; secondly, social and economic disparities should be structured to favour the least advantaged (the difference principle) and guarantee equitable opportunities for all. Rawls's theory provides a systematic framework for assessing the equity of policies concerning education, welfare, or child protection.

Amartya Sen (2009) further refined the concept by introducing the capacity approach, which understands justice as the actual freedoms that individuals possess to achieve well-being. Sen argued that institutions needed to give precedence not just to the fair distribution of resources but also to the improvement of the talents of individuals, specifically their true ability to pursue lives that they consider to be valuable. This approach is closely associated with social protection projects that aim to provide marginalized communities with the means to protect themselves. These initiatives focus on vulnerable children in particular by ensuring that they have access to education, healthcare, and safe living conditions.

The concepts of acknowledgment and redistribution are components of social justice theory, as explained by Nancy Fraser in 2008. Fraser argued that justice involves not only the cultural and social recognition of individuals but also the allocation of economic resources. Individuals who are marginalized, particularly children who belong to disadvantaged populations, are often victims of "status subordination,"

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according to her. It is necessary to address this phenomenon in conjunction with material deprivation in order to achieve genuine justice.

In social policy situations, Social Justice Theory serves as a robust framework for examining systematic inequalities and promoting revolutionary change. Child protection necessitates the formulation and execution of interventions that transcend mere charity and welfare, regarding assistance for children as an issue of entitlement and social obligation. It underscores the necessity of addressing institutional deficiencies, cultural prejudices, and inequitable resource distribution that compromise the welfare and rights of marginalised children. Social Justice Theory provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending and tackling inequality. The approach emphasises justice, equity, capabilities, and recognition, positioning social protection policies, especially those for children, as moral and legal imperatives essential to a just society rather than mere administrative measures. Social Justice Theory has been extensively utilised in social science and educational research to examine policies, institutional practices, and interventions affecting marginalised and vulnerable groups, including children. Its efficacy resides in its capacity to expose and confront the systemic obstacles that sustain inequality and social exclusion. In research concerning social protection, child rights, education, and public welfare, the theory has offered an essential framework for evaluating the equity, participation, and responsiveness of existing systems to the needs of the most disadvantaged.

Social Justice Theory provides a robust theoretical framework for analysing Child Protection in Winneba Township. The approach fundamentally focusses on guaranteeing equitable access to rights, resources, and opportunities for all individuals, especially the most vulnerable. Within the framework of child protection, Social Justice

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Theory asserts that children are not mere recipients of welfare but possess rights that entitle them to fair treatment, social inclusion, and the elimination of structural impediments to their development (Rawls, 1971; Sen, 2009). Utilising this theory to examine social protection policy in Winneba Township entails scrutinising how laws, policies, and institutional frameworks either support or subvert the tenets of justice. The idea necessitates a rigorous assessment of the equitable design and implementation of the state's child protection initiatives, the allocation of resources based on necessity, and the facilitation of substantial involvement from children and communities within the system. It necessitates the reformation of cultural values, legal frameworks, and administrative procedures to uphold children's dignity and address their particular vulnerabilities (Fraser, 2008).

In addition, Social Justice Theory advocates for the extension of social protection beyond the scope of temporary relief or targeted help; it should be transformative, addressing the basic causes of inequality and allowing individuals to lead dignified lives. This includes access to education, medical treatment, housing, legal rights, and safeguards against abuse, neglect, and exploitation for children and adolescents. The concept creates a normative foundation for viewing the protection of children as a societal obligation that is based on principles of equity, fairness, and the recognition of the full humanity and rights of children.

2.2 Concept of Social Protection

The formal concept of social protection originated in the 1870s, primarily due to the necessity for the preservation of mankind and nature (Ramia, 2002). Nonetheless, informal social protection has been present since the inception of human civilization via traditional familial and communal networks. The social protection agenda has

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gained prominence since the onset of the century, primarily due to escalating poverty levels and shifts in development practices focused on income security and redistribution across the life cycle, particularly for the impoverished (Moonga & Green, 2016). The significant increase is reported to have coincided with a reduction of contractual freedom (Ramia, 2002). The Great Depression of the 1930s required the safeguarding of individuals against economic upheavals (Hoefer & Curry, 2011). The comprehensive examination of social protection, however, originates from the early 20th century (Midgley, 2013). Moonga and Green (2016) asserted that the unique characteristics of the present iteration of social protection establish a connection to economic and social growth while also avoiding and mitigating extreme poverty through income (cash) transfers. This new approach posits that poverty basically arises from insufficient income or the inability to manage income risks (Holzmann & Jorgenson, 1999).

Social protection generally lacks a universally accepted definition. Its practical application is frequently suitable for the intended purpose and setting. In certain places, social protection is perceived as a framework of interventions designed to mitigate poverty, safeguard individuals from risks and vulnerabilities, and thereby foster social development (Kofinti, 2020). Social protection has been characterized in certain contexts as a mechanism to address contingencies by offering support to fulfill fundamental needs (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2007; Munro, 2008), efficiently managing social risks (Barr, 2004), and safeguarding rights (Ellis, Devereux & White, 2009; Munro, 2008; UNICEF, 2008). Social protection is regarded as a means to avoid and mitigate poverty while providing assistance to the most impoverished (De Haan, cited in Barrientos, Hulme & Shephard, 2005).

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Numerous alternative definitions of social protection exist in the literature. Ramia (2002) asserts that social protection encompasses all policies and institutions designed to safeguard individuals and specific groups against the adverse impacts of unregulated market forces. Olivier (2009) described social protection as a comprehensive system of fundamental social assistance, independent of traditional work relationships, based on the belief that society collectively bears responsibility for its vulnerable people. These definitions specifically encompass social security.

A more recent definition is provided by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as 'a set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life-course, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups' (UNICEF, 2019). In simple terms, social protection systems aim at providing protection for people against risks and shocks and equipping them with the ability to withstand the effects of such risks following the occurrence of adverse events (Qiu, Jessani & Bennett, 2018).

The World Bank (2016) stated that social protection encompasses various measures used by the state and other entities to address vulnerability and poverty, aiming to ensure assistance for segments of the population unable to support themselves for any cause. Social protection entails the establishment of sustainable measures to safeguard those experiencing extreme poverty and associated vulnerability and exclusion. Social protection aims to mitigate inequality by creating avenues for the engagement and support of marginalized and disadvantaged populations (UNICEF, 2009; Hann & Fertleman, 2016).

The overarching definition of social protection is a system of public and voluntary initiatives aimed at mitigating poverty, risk, and vulnerability within a certain society.

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This indicates that poverty, dangers, and vulnerabilities are varied and necessitate integrated actions involving multiple stakeholders. Social protection is regularly regarded as encompassing social assistance, social insurance, and labour market programs (Barrientos, 2011; Dungey, Tchatoka & Yanotti, 2018; Fiszbein, Kanbur, & Yemtsov, 2014; Hidrobo, Hoddinott, Kumar & Olivier, 2018).

Moreover, it is recorded that social protection signifies various concepts for distinct individuals and throughout different nations. Certain researchers (Morduch, 1999; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2007; Munro, 2008) have debated whether social protection ought to be considered from the needs perspective (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008) or the rights viewpoint (Ellis et al., 2009; UNICEF, 2008). Barr (2004) and the World Bank (2000) introduced an additional viewpoint known as the risk perspective. These viewpoints are interrelated and significantly influence the design, policy, and administration of social protection for children. Nonetheless, there are those who have an economic perspective on social protection.

According to Moonga (2015), social protection comprises all of the institutions that exist in the public, commercial, and voluntary sectors, along with formal and informal services and benefits that are intended to protect persons from vulnerability and risk while simultaneously advancing social justice. The people who receive and participate in social protection, the advantages of social protection, and the ways in which social protection operates are the primary aspects of this conception. Moonga said that the stakeholders would include the state, the business sector, voluntary groups, international development agencies, and people. The beneficiaries, on the other hand, would consist of disadvantaged populations and the working class, dependant upon the policy orientation.

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The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank are two of the several international institutions with various goals that have served as information brokers and policy experts in the delineation of the elements of social protection (De Haan, 2014; Lavers & Hickey, 2016). The World Bank defines social protection measures as programs that are aimed to help manage the risks faced by households who are disadvantaged, to improve market participation, and to provide vulnerable people with a safety net (World Bank, 2012). The International Labor Organization (ILO) considers measures pertaining to social protection to be fundamental components in the realization of the human right to social security for all people. In addition, the ILO considers these measures to be the "cornerstone of a human-centered approach to attaining social justice" (ILO 2021, p. 19).

Furthermore, some organizations take the perspective that social protection is a limited concept, regarding it as a form of social assistance that is primarily offered to "vulnerable" groups, such as widows, orphans, or those with impairments (James & Khadr, 2016). Other organizations make use of a complete strategy that includes activities to produce jobs, programs to support livelihoods, changes to the law, and even universal education (Hann & Fertleman, 2016; James & Khadr, 2016). This all-encompassing approach makes the differentiation between social protection and the more general notion of development unclear (Hann & Fertleman, 2016). It is a common trait throughout these definitions that social protection programs place an emphasis on increasing the resilience of individuals, households, or communities. Social protection can be defined as behaviours that can act as "seedbeds" for social change, according to the present study (Kabeer, 2007). The centrality of social protection in the overall development plan provides evidence for the idea that it should be considered a "global

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social policy" (Von Gliszczynski & Leisering 2016). This suggests that governments all around the world have placed a high priority on social protection programs.

2.2.1 Social Protection Services

Regarding social protection services, Kakuru, Rukooko and Tusabe (2019) conceptualise social protection services as involving three categories. These are cash transfers, in-kind social protection and public works programmes. Cash transfers are direct, regular, and predictable monetary disbursements that elevate earnings to mitigate poverty and vulnerability inside societal members (Arnold et al., 2011). Cash transfers may be allocated to households as a collective when they satisfy poverty or vulnerability standards, to individuals within specific demographic groups such as the elderly or disabled, or to families contingent upon the presence of certain individuals, including children, girls, or fostered orphans (Baird et al., 2009).

Cash transfers are categorized into two types: Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs), which allow beneficiaries to determine their expenditure; and Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs), which impose specific restrictions on beneficiaries, such as enrolling children in educational institutions. De Janvry and Sadoulet (2004) elucidated that conditional cash transfers (CCTs) serve two primary purposes: to furnish impoverished households with a minimum income threshold (mitigating immediate poverty) and to enhance the accumulation of human capital for subsequent generations (addressing long-term poverty). A substantial amount of research substantiates the efficacy of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) across the majority of the developing world, especially concerning education.

In-kind social protection entails the provision of economic and livelihood assets to households and individuals, hence enabling income creation, including food transfers

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(Holmes & Nicola, 2013). Public works programs, however, entail the providing of employment on infrastructure projects in exchange for cash or food (Norton et al., 2001). These social protection services are mostly employed by governments of countries to aid the citizens of the country. Their effectiveness in helping the vulnerable and alleviating hardships are however of varying levels (Kakuru et al., 2019). For instance, the public works programmes have been cited as being politically popular but arguably inefficient (Norton et al., 2001).

2.2.2 Social protection mechanisms and programmes

The focus of social protection programs is the creation of protection mechanism policies that are intended to ensure the safety of the individuals for whom the programs are designed. According to Kakuru and colleagues (2019), there are a wide variety of social protection methods in addition to social protection services. The protective mechanism largely involves the provision of social assistance programs for the severely disadvantaged populace in order to offer them relief from their deprivation. Secondly, the prevention strategy consists of avoiding the state of being deprived and alleviating poverty. They include social insurance for those who are suffering from economic disadvantages. In contrast, the promotive method involves increasing the actual incomes and capabilities of street children. It also includes providing springboards and opportunity ladders for these youngsters to escape from poverty. Furthermore, the transformative method tackles problems of social exclusion and justice by empowering individuals and communities. The fourth mechanism is the generative mechanism, which emphasizes the fact that livelihood security is improved by social protection measures (Lwanga-Ntale et al., 2008; Kabeer, 2008; Ganju et al., 2009).

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In terms of social protection programmes, the Asian Development Bank [ADB] (2001) identifies five broad classifications of social protection policies and programmes. These are labour market, social insurance, social assistance and welfare service, micro and area-based schemes, and child protection. Within the labour market classification are policies and programmes that focus on facilitating employment and improving efficiency in the labour market while the social insurance programmes protect people from the risks of unemployment, old age, occupational injury, disability and health (Moonga & Green, 2016). The labour market specialization ensures that basic standards at work are followed and the workers' rights and voices are respected (Barrientos, 2011).

Social assistance primarily aims at the impoverished and is funded through taxation, whereas the latter predominantly addresses life contingencies such as old age, injury, maternity, unemployment, and illness, and is financed through contributions from workers and their employers (Ferreira & Robalino, 2010). Social insurance is prevalent in both informal and formal sectors, although social assistance is mostly located in the formal sector (Moonga, 2015). The ADB (2001) claimed further that unlike social insurance, social assistance and welfare service programmes focus on specific vulnerable groups with inadequate means of additional support from risks and shocks. Moreover, micro and area-based schemes target vulnerability at the community level while child protection programmes promote the healthy and uninterrupted development of children (Moonga & Green, 2016). It is documented however that although the social protection system has several aspects, the prominent ones are social assistance and social insurance (Ferreira & Robalino, 2010).

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2.3 The Concept of Child Protection

The word 'child protection' is applied variably by diverse organizations and disciplines across multiple contexts. In this study, the phrase will signify safeguarding against violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Child protection primarily related to the intrinsic right of every child to be free from harm. It promotes other rights that, among other things, guarantee that children receive what is required for their survival, growth, and flourishing (UNICEF, 2004). Safeguarding a child against abuse or neglect is an essential part of protecting them. It is sufficient for a risk assessment to have concluded that there is a significant chance or threat of serious injury that will occur as a result of abuse or neglect. An actual occurrence of abuse or neglect is not required.

2.3.1 Social Protection of Children

Social Protection of children may date back to the ancient responsibilities of father and mother to make every effort to secure the welfare of their child. It may also date to the days in Africa where communities had shared responsibilities for child welfare and upbringing. However, academic discussion on social protection makes various points.

Sanfilippo, Neubourg, and Martorano (2012) assert that social protection is seen as a crucial element of poverty alleviation methods and initiatives aimed at mitigating vulnerability to economic, social, natural, and other shocks and pressures. Social protection is typically perceived as not merely 'protective' by safeguarding a household's income and consumption levels, but also as a mechanism to avert households from adopting detrimental coping strategies that adversely affect children (Martorano & Sanfilippo, 2012). Martorano and Sanfilippo asserted that social protection enhances household productivity, augments household income, and fosters children's development through investments in education and health, thereby aiding in

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the disruption of the intergenerational cycle of poverty and contributing to economic growth.

The complex vulnerabilities and risks impacting children indicate that they be a primary target of social protection efforts. Following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the necessity for various social protection programs, encompassing both preventative and responsive social welfare services, alongside a robust legal and regulatory framework, has garnered significant attention in scholarly discourse. Save the Children (2011) asserts that an effective child protection system necessitates a multidisciplinary and multisectoral strategy, closely integrating efforts in education, health, social welfare, and criminal justice. It seeks to enhance the capabilities of all stakeholders to safeguard children and to establish systems and processes that ensure substantial protection for all children in the long run. It seeks to emphasize preventive strategies from a comprehensive social welfare viewpoint that acknowledges the influence of poverty and social exclusion on the ability of families and communities to nurture their children. This systematic response aims to enhance coordination and optimize the utilization of financial and human resources (Save the Children, 2011; World Bank, 2016; Abdulai, et al., 2019).

Consequently, social protection is crucial for children due to their heightened vulnerability relative to adults, as well as the function it plays in securing proper nourishment and facilitating access to and utilization of social services. Child vulnerability differs among established and developing nations, as well as between rural and urban locales, and among affluent and impoverished homes (Moonga, 2015). This unpredictability results from the capacity to manage risk or the absence thereof. According to UNICEF (2014), a child born in sub-Saharan Africa was, on average, 14

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

times more likely to die before the age of five than a child born in the United States of America. This indicated that children are more susceptible and so require enhanced social protective measures.

The rights of children to social protection are explicitly articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC stipulates that children possess the right to social security, including insurance and an appropriate level of living, all facilitated by social protection (Sanfilippo et al., 2012). There are numerous justifications for concentrating social protection on children. Social protection, through its primary tasks of protection, promotion, and prevention, can disrupt the intergenerational transfer of poverty and foster economic growth (Dercon, 2011).

In order to address child poverty, it is necessary to focus not just on increasing family incomes or improving access to health and education services but also on the broader aspects of child poverty that are defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): equity, discrimination, participation, and protection (Save the Children, 2011). There is evidence to suggest that there are a number of complicated and interrelated factors that contribute to violations of child protection. These factors include, but are not limited to, poverty, a lack of access to quality education, rural-urban migration, displacement due to armed conflict or natural disasters, trafficking, child labor, harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and discrimination based on gender, political, ethnic, or religious affiliations (Preventing Child Maltreatment, 2006).

Current evidence unequivocally demonstrates that investing in children is economically pertinent, as the return on investment is typically substantial, benefiting both individuals and society at large (Asian Development Bank, 2001; Fajth, 2009;

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UNICEF, 2009; Roetten & Sabates-Wheeler, 2011). Social protection possesses a cross-sectoral character, and its initiatives can enhance fundamental aspects of child protection, particularly the preventive and protective roles, by tackling the root causes of violence or exploitation, thereby mutually reinforcing one another (Blank et al., 2010).

Yates et al. (2010, p.210) stated that child-sensitive social protection is concentrated on tackling the patterns of children's poverty and vulnerability while acknowledging the long-term developmental advantages of investing in children. Furthermore, Sabates-Wheeler et al. (2009) and Blank et al. (2010) demonstrate that the conventional protective-preventive-promotive elements of social protection effectively safeguard children in the short term, while in the long term, they underscore the significant function of the transformative aspect of social protection, aimed at tackling the "underlying structural causes of vulnerability." Jones (2011) asserted that social protection addresses offenses against children, including child trafficking, child labour, and domestic violence. Social protection addresses concerns by alleviating poverty and economic vulnerability, while also mitigating health shocks and chronic illnesses, socio-cultural attitudes and behaviours, and institutional deficiencies.

Social protection initiatives comprehensively include measures that can tackle the fundamental causes of child labour, particularly the poverty, disadvantage, and income instability that underpin this form of economic exploitation (ILO, 2021; ILO, 2013). Moreover, social protection programs are more effectively positioned to confront the structural disadvantages and persistent social dynamics that contribute to child labour (Hennessy, 2016). All of them indicate that social protection is vital for children.

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The obligation to execute social protection policies for children derives from several human rights, notably the right to social security and the right to an adequate standard of living, as articulated in the CRC and other significant international human rights documents (Save the Children, 2011). The CRC addresses the material, social, economic, civil, and political deprivations that contribute to poverty across various Articles, including the rights to non-discrimination, life, survival and development, social security, an adequate standard of living, education, family relations and parental guidance, birth registration, protection, and participation (World Bank, 2016).

2.3.2 Specific Social Protection Measures for Children

Social protection enhances resilience to shocks, offers genuine chances for children, and promotes equity (Gassmann & Timar, 2018). Such policies possess the capacity to mitigate prejudice and social exclusion, particularly in contexts where children are neither respected nor acknowledged (UNICEF, 2013). A diverse range of social protection measures exists that can uphold children's rights and promote their development. Cash transfers, encompassing social assistance and social insurance, are vital elements of robust social protection systems (Gassmann & Timar, 2018). Gassmann and Timar stated that near-cash, in-kind, nutrition, and health interventions can offer significant assistance to households with children. Social services and programs designed to facilitate access to services encompass, among others, early childhood development initiatives, social care services, social work services, child protection measures, and birth registration. Social protection measures, such as monetary benefits and accessible health, nutrition, childcare, education, and other services without difficulty, mutually reinforce positive child wellbeing outcomes (ILO

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& UNICEF, 2023). The following delineates certain unique social protection measures for children:

Cash benefits

A significant domain of programming is linking payment transfers to information, knowledge, and services. These programs serve as a vital conduit for system linkages that assist in tackling the diverse difficulties encountered by children and families (ILO & UNICEF, 2023). Cash-plus programs establish direct connections at the program level, whereas in other instances, complementarity is achieved through coordinated policies. Guaranteeing access to social protection cash benefits, in conjunction with universal access to health and other services without difficulty, is essential for optimizing and sustaining the effects of cash transfers, particularly across multiple sectors, and for addressing inequalities and promoting social inclusion, especially for children from marginalized families. These connections form the foundation for establishing a systems approach to social protection (UNICEF, 2019).

Enhancing cash transfers for families with children and ensuring a fundamental income level for consumption should be prioritized in the social protection strategy in the forthcoming years to ensure the well-being of this demographic (ECALC-UNICEF, 2020). This is accurate not just as a reaction to the emergency but also for recovery and development, aiming to enhance rather than hinder the full development of their capacities, while concurrently facilitating economic reactivation and its multiplier effects (ECLAC, 2019). In addition to emergency assistance, it is essential to establish more permanent and extensive cash transfers for children, considering the pervasive vulnerability experienced by households in poverty and extreme poverty, as well as those in the non-poor and lower-middle income brackets (ECLAC, 2020). This might

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be accomplished by a universal transfer for children, accessible to all families with minors and adolescents. The United Nations Secretary-General has indicated that, due to the increasing prevalence of child poverty, a universal child grant may be viewed as a preliminary measure towards establishing a permanent universal basic income policy, reflecting a new approach to the development model during the recovery phase (United Nations, 2020).

UNICEF has underscored the significance of advancing the universalization of social protection for children and adolescents, asserting that one mechanism that may facilitate this objective, under specific conditions, is a universal child grant (ILO-UNICEF, 2019; ODI/UNICEF, 2020), which entails a universal or quasi-universal cash transfer for all children and adolescents, disbursed regularly and unconditionally. Cash transfers to households with children diverge from this framework when they incorporate constraints and targeting criteria beyond age and legal residency or citizenship, or when disbursed as a one-time or sporadic payment. These transfers are suggested as components of a benefits package, potentially encompassing access to additional social services, in-kind benefits, tax deductions, or subsidies, aimed at assisting parents with child-rearing expenses and ensuring equitable developmental opportunities irrespective of the household conditions or circumstances at birth (ECALC-UNICEF, 2020).

Universal health coverage

Universal health care and universal social protection are intrinsically connected and mutually supportive (Bayarsaikhan, Tessier & Ron, 2022). Social health protection is a fundamental component of social protection systems, including safety nets, and serves as a crucial safeguard against poverty and vulnerability. Simultaneously, several

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components of social protection systems can affect the social determinants of health, which subsequently may influence the factors contributing to child poverty (ILO, 2020). In the absence of social health protection, illnesses, premature mortality, and childbirth can exert economic strain on households in two manners: by diminishing individuals' earning potential temporarily and by imposing unexpected health-related expenses on the household budget (ILO & UNICEF, 2023). Health-related expenses encompass not just healthcare expenditures but also transportation costs relevant to remote regions and nutritional costs associated with treatment compliance or specific dietary requirements. Nonetheless, social health protection coverage has not yet achieved universal implementation. Although more than 60 percent of the worldwide population is covered by a social health protection plan, this figure is merely 34 percent in middle-income countries and 16 percent in low-income countries, respectively (ILO 2021). Healthcare is a fundamental element of child-sensitive social protection systems and must be prioritized by all policymakers.

Gender-responsive social protection

Gender influences individuals' experiences of opportunities, vulnerabilities, and hazards (ILO & UNICEF, 2023). In lower-income contexts, teenage girls face an elevated risk of child marriage, which impedes their school enrolment and attendance, whereas adult women generally possess limited economic resources to manage crises, both at the home level and in wider situations. Substantial evidence indicates that social protection can mitigate specific life-cycle risks encountered by women and girls, through both contributory and non-contributory schemes that enhance women's labour participation, nutrition, savings, investment, healthcare service utilization, contraception, and girls' school enrolment and attendance (Social Protection Floor Advisory Group, 2011; Bastagli et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2016). Such initiatives can

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help mitigate unwanted births among young women, hazardous sexual conduct, and the transfer of sexually transmitted illnesses. Evidence indicates that social protection can mitigate gender-based violence and intimate relationship violence as well (UNICEF, Heart, & UKAID, 2022).

Additional dimensions of social protection, such as social health protection, are vital, as both non-contributory and contributory schemes enhance awareness and usage of sexual, reproductive, and maternal health care. Labour-market programs may enhance not only work engagement but also savings and asset ownership among women receiving benefits, as well as earning potential among young women (ILO & UNICEF, 2023). Social protection policies possess considerable potential to advance gender equality and uphold the rights of girls and women, provided they are intentionally crafted for this purpose (Bastagli et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2016), such as by tackling the gendered distribution of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities.

At present, global social protection coverage, adequacy, and comprehensiveness for young girls of working age significantly trail behind that of males (ILO & UNICEF, 2023). The absence of gender-disaggregated data on the effective coverage of social protection functions at the national level highlights the progress required to comprehend gender disparities in provision and their implications for the welfare of women, men, girls, and boys (Perera et al., 2022). It is evident that systemic hurdles challenge young girls from an early age, as they undertake the majority of unpaid care work (Muñoz Boudet et al., 2012); furthermore, demographic aging trends will only intensify the care load in several countries.

Addressing the pronounced gender gap necessitates not only the pursuit of equity in social protection but also the formulation of social protection systems that confront,

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rather than replicate, gender disparities in the labour market. Concurrently, it is essential to tackle gender inequalities in employment and caregiving to attain transformative results (ILO, 2021; UN-Women, 2018; UNDP, 2021). Only then can the objective of attaining equity in social protection be realized, alongside the eradication of structural gender inequality, ensuring that genuinely gender-responsive social protection has been initiated. In summary, social protection must significantly enhance its responsiveness to effectively tackle the structural disadvantages encountered by girls, thereby facilitating transformative change and guaranteeing equal access to sufficient protection and opportunities for full engagement in social and economic spheres.

Disability-based social protection

Approximately 15 percent of the global population resides with a disability (WHO & World Bank, 2011). UNICEF estimates that 240 million children, representing one in ten, are living with a handicap (UNICEF, 2021). In nations without cohesive mechanisms to assist individuals with impairments and their families, disability can adversely affect overall family welfare. Children with disabilities are 34% more likely to experience stunting, 49% more likely to have never attended school, 41% more likely to perceive discrimination, 51% more likely to regard themselves as unhappy, and 20% less likely to harbor expectations for an improved life (UNICEF 2021).

Families with impairments are more prone to experiencing poverty. As per ILO and UNICEF (2023), disability can impose financial burdens due to additional expenses (such as medical and rehabilitation interventions, caregiving, assistive technology, adaptive housing, and transportation) and the lost income of the individual with a disability or their caregiver. Social protection systems that provide minimal assistance to individuals with disabilities and their families never address the supplementary

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expenses associated with disability, exacerbating income losses and diminishing household well-being. Access to disability-inclusive social protection benefits, including specialized disability benefits and related services, is crucial not only for ensuring the social and economic inclusion of individuals with disabilities but also for their entire family (ILO & IDA, 2019; ILO, 2021).

Why Children Need Protection from Poverty and Hardships

Children see poverty distinctively compared to adults (DFID et al., 2009). For children, adequate living standards are inherent value and are essential for the realization of their rights to survival, development, education, health, and freedom from child labour. Children possess a constrained capacity to assert their rights, as their welfare is contingent upon their caregivers.

Children possess fundamental needs, and neglecting these undermines their growth and limits their potential (Sen, 1999). Childhood deprivation, especially during early years, inflicts irreversible harm on physical, emotional, and cognitive development (Fajth, 2009; Samson, Fajth & François, 2016). Children in poverty face numerous challenges, including starvation, inadequate housing, poor health, limited cognitive stimulation during early life, and subpar educational achievements (Ansalone, 2001; Bradshaw, 2002; Hirsch, 2006; Horgan, 2007). Poverty, stigma, and shame lead to a deficiency in social and cultural capital, resulting in social exclusion and marginalization (Hobcraft & Kiernan, 2001; Attree, 2006; Mayer, 2010). These factors interrelate, hindering social mobility and elevating the probability of intergenerational poverty transmission.

Moreover, child poverty incurs expenses for communities and societies at large. Poverty correlates with elevated fiscal expenditures and adverse externalities, including heightened crime rates, increased healthcare costs, and potential political instability

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(Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, 2012; Blanden et al., 2012). A society that fails to enable its children to reach their full potential does not fully leverage its human capital, ultimately leading to suboptimal labor production levels. Since productivity is a crucial factor in economic growth (Szirmai, 2015), the economy will ultimately operate beneath its capacity, hence constraining inclusive growth.

2.4 General Benefits of Social Protection Measures

The African Charter on the rights and the welfare of the Child (1999) fore grounds the social protection of children. The responsibility for child protection is placed on both the state and the family. In the Charter, child protection assumes two forms- rights of children and the welfare of children. According to the Charter 25 (1), any child deprived of family "shall be entitled to special protection and assistance". This covers alternative family care including foster placement and suitable institutional placement. The protection of children is categorized under 28 themes broadly categorized into rights of child, welfare of children and responsibility of children. These measures are meant to protect children.

Kakuru et al. (2019) assert that the advantages of social protection are substantial and varied within society. Social protection is regarded as a crucial element of poverty alleviation strategies and efforts to mitigate vulnerability to economic, social, and environmental shocks and pressures (Dercon, 2011). It serves as a basis for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development and is a crucial component of the policy measures necessary to address poverty, inequality, and economic recessions (Schildberg, 2015). Kaseke (2010) noted that a social protection plan incorporating social security, employment generation, and livelihoods will significantly enhance the prevention and elimination of poverty and inequality.

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Social protection helps to ensure that the benefits of economic growth reach the poorest and most marginalized; hence, fulfilling internationally accepted right to a decent standard of living (DFID et al., 2009). Social protection is necessary for promoting social justice and equity; providing protection against risk, ensuring and guaranteeing basic acceptable livelihood standards (Norton et al., 2001). Norton et al. opined further that social protection is also essential in facilitating investment in human capital, promoting social cohesion and social solidarity (social stability), and compensating for declining effectiveness of traditional and informal systems for enhancing livelihood security.

Globally, social protection has arisen as a policy instrument aimed at mitigating poverty and vulnerability in emerging nations (Fiszbein, Kanbur, & Yemtsov, 2014). A multitude of factors has propelled the emergence of social protection. The commitment of international development organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations, has significantly contributed to the advancement of social protection. In addition to these organizations, numerous governments in developing nations are implementing social protection policies inside their national development frameworks (Barrientos, 2011). Furthermore, globalization and swift economic transition have created a demand for social safety. Social protection is highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1.3, which mandates that nations establish contextually suitable social protection systems to mitigate and avert poverty, deprivation, social exclusion, and vulnerabilities for all (ILO, 2017).

Aurino and Giunti (2022) assert that social protection, through the provision of cash, food, or other transfers to households, can address demand-side impediments to child

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development by diminishing the opportunity costs of investments and mitigating the hazards of child labour, school dropout, and child marriage. Research from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) underscores the beneficial effects of social protection on children's education, health, and nutrition, with enduring impacts throughout their lifespan (Millán et al., 2019). It is believed that, if well directed, social protection can foster equal developmental results for the most vulnerable children.

Moreover, it has been observed that in developed nations, social protection primarily functions to maintain income and safeguard living standards for all, particularly for workers, whereas in developing countries, it extends beyond mere income maintenance for the impoverished to fulfill a developmental role (Barrientos, 2011). This mostly occurs through investment in human and other production assets, together with the enhancement of the livelihoods of the impoverished. Social protection targets acute and chronic poverty and vulnerability by tackling the underlying causes of impoverishment, thereby mitigating social isolation and promoting national cohesion (Moonga, 2015). Consistent with this assertion, Gentilini (2009) demonstrated that social protection can stimulate economic growth through four mechanisms: investing in and safeguarding human capital, mitigating risk, rectifying certain market failures, and diminishing inequality. All of these indicate that social protection offers substantial advantages.

2.5 Impact of Social Protection on the Lives of Children

According to UNICEF (2012), children are more vulnerable to abuse, diseases and malnutrition than adults. Arguments exist to the effect that Social Protection can address biological and physical needs; strategic needs that focus on child autonomy and independence on adults and Institutional invisibility and lack of voice in policy agenda (Roelen & Sabates-Wheeler, 2012). Poverty and economic disadvantage are a major

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cause of parental neglect towards their children as well as the quality of care provided. Following these claims, the impact of Social Protection on lives of children is discussed in terms of financial, education and health needs.

2.5.1 Impact on finances

Cash transfer social protection mechanisms aimed at households with children encompass various objectives and are delivered in multiple forms, constituting one of the most effective methods to alleviate child poverty while investing in their future (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006). This has been shown in other African nations. In South Africa, funds are allocated to the needy population, resulting in significant poverty reduction (Woolard et al., 2010; European Report on Development, 2010). These grants for children possess significant potential to alleviate child poverty when executed with an efficient targeting mechanism, adaptable to encompass an increasing number of children (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006; Barrientos & Niño-Zarazúa, 2011).

2.5.2 Impact on education

Social protection influences education by tackling the fundamental economic and social barriers that hinder school access, as well as enhancing the quality of services available to young children and their families (Sanfilippo et al., 2012). A variety of social protection mechanisms aim to enhance children's education. School feeding programs are among the most commonly implemented treatments, as they effectively fulfill numerous objectives simultaneously (Buttenheim et al., 2011). Nonetheless, its total efficacy is contingent upon other parameters, including the mode of delivery, the targeting, and the expenses (Bundy et al., 2009).

Governments that offer in-kind transfers contingent upon school enrollment and/or attendance reduce the net costs of education, hence enhancing its financial appeal for

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parents to enroll their children, which influences access and participation (Sanfilippo et al., 2012). Furthermore, feeding programs alleviate short-term hunger, perhaps enhancing children's concentration and cognitive functions, resulting in improved academic performance and increased learning capacity. Furthermore, social protection systems enhance children's long-term nutritional health and diminish malnutrition (Adato & Bassett, 2009).

Furthermore, obtaining a cash transfer enhances educational access. The receipt of a monetary transfer can enhance enrollment by assisting impoverished households in surmounting the financial obstacles to education (fees, uniforms, books, etc.) (Aguëro, Carter & Woolard, 2007). This effect is observable in transfers aimed at children as well as in those that are not particularly targeted (e.g., when pension beneficiaries allocate a portion of their income to the household). Comparable impacts are evident in public works, where the earnings of formerly unemployed individuals can be allocated to children's education (Sanfilippo et al., 2012).

Sanfilippo et al. (2012) indicate that in certain countries, especially in Central America, social protection programs are implemented to support children overlooked by conventional initiatives, utilizing conditional cash transfers to promote participation and facilitate access to education. Research indicates that social protection strategies, such as conditional cash transfer programs for education, effectively enhance school enrollment and attendance (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

2.5.3 Impact on health

Evidence indicates a definitive correlation between social protection and outcomes, including access to and utilization of health services, particularly for children (DFID, 2011). Sanfilippo et al. (2012) contend that the evidence regarding the role of social

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protection on children's health status is less direct and significant, as other factors may also affect these results. In other words, gathering information on the influence of social protection on health outcomes is more challenging due to the presence of other factors, which are sometimes harder to quantify, that presumably affect children's health condition.

Notwithstanding this, studies indicates that children's health may be influenced by social protective measures. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) initiative in India, which offers extra food and implements targeted health interventions including de-worming and vitamin A supplementation, has demonstrated efficacy in the Maharashtra region (Gragnolati et al., 2005). An assessment of the Mchinji unconditional social transfer programme in Malawi indicated that around 80 percent of children in beneficiary households experienced enhanced health and sought medical attention when ill (Miller et al., 2008). Miller et al. noted that children who got this care experienced a substantial reduction of 23.4 percent in reported sickness, with a significant difference of around 11 percent compared to non-participants. The enhancements were mostly attributable to the income benefit resulting from the transfer, enabling households to purchase medication for their children, access healthcare facilities when ill, and provide more consistent nutrition.

2.6 Social Protection in Ghana

The concept of social protection has received considerable critical attention in recent times, and all over the world, social protection systems are attracting a radical overall in their nature and how they operate. Particularly is the trend toward the expansion of social assistance benefits for the poorest citizens (Barrientos & Santibáñez, 2009; Lierse et al., 2015; Böger & Leisering, 2020). Brooks (2015) contends that such

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transformations have been greatly observed in developing nations. The ILO (2017) reports that some countries in Africa are observing a shift from employer-focused schemes to social insurance coverage (e.g. maternity benefits) in recent times.

In Ghana, several social protection measures have been adopted over the last few decades. The country's commitment towards social protection and to a larger extent the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goals and the second SDGs is further demonstrated by the creation of the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection as well as the implantation of the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS). Subsequently, following the cabinet approval in June 2014 the Ghana National Policy on Social Protection was developed to deliver 'social protection coherently, effectively and efficiently in a way that is holistic and properly targeted' (MoGCSP, 2015).

Palermo et al. (2019) asserted that over the past 15 years, the Government of Ghana has enacted two significant policy initiatives to tackle the nexus of poverty and health. In 2003, the government enacted the National Health Insurance Act (Act 650) and formed the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA). The NHIS was implemented in 2004. The NHIS seeks to eliminate financial obstacles to healthcare access and include outpatient and inpatient services, dental care, and maternal health services. The NHIA diligently pursues opportunities to enroll impoverished and vulnerable individuals in the scheme, as seen by its program objectives and focused outreach to include members under the 'indigent' exemption (Alhassan, Nketiah-Amponsah & Arhinful, 2016). Act 650 exempted the following categories from the NHIS premium: individuals deemed poor or impoverished, those over 70 years of age, children under 18 years, contributors to the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), and SSNIT pensioners.

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Subsequently, in 2012, the National Health Insurance Act (Act 852) supplanted Act 650 (2003) and broadened the categories eligible for waivers to encompass individuals requiring antenatal, delivery, and postnatal healthcare services; individuals with mental disorders; and individuals classified as disabled and assessed as needing social welfare assistance. It is estimated that more than 60% of current NHIS enrolees are exempt from premium payments, which constitute a minor fraction of the NHIA's total budget (about 3% of total revenue) (National Health Insurance Authority, 2013; Osei-Akoto & Adamba, 2017). These constitute some of the social protection initiatives in Ghana.

Overall, in Ghana, evidence exists that social protection supports the principle that every Ghanaian matters and is capable of contributing to national development. Social protection focuses on promoting the well-being of citizens through an integrated platform of effective social wellbeing and inclusivity in access to social services (World Bank, 2016; Abdulai, Abubakari & Martey, 2019).

2.6.1 Social Protection of Children in Ghana

Child protection in Ghana is based on child rights. Ghana was the inaugural nation to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) and has endorsed or ratified the majority of significant international instruments concerning child protection. Ghana has ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2005). The 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution delineates the rights of the child and offers a framework for the implementation of relevant laws to safeguard these rights. The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) delineates the rights of the child and addresses matters pertaining to parental obligations, maintenance, adoption, and foster care; it safeguards children against exploitative labor and child marriage, and prescribes duties for their care and protection. Child protection encompasses the laws, policies, regulations, and

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services required across all social sectors. This encompasses domains including social welfare, health, education, security, and justice (Shibuya & Taylor, 2013).

Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2007) define social protection as all public and private initiatives that deliver income or consumption transfers to the impoverished, safeguard the vulnerable from livelihood risks, and elevate the social status and rights of marginalized individuals, with the overarching aim of diminishing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable, and marginalized groups (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2007). The Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653) addresses children in dispute with the law. Additional national legislation pertaining to children comprises the Criminal and Other Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29); the Intestate Succession Act, 1985 (PNDCL 111); the Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694); and the Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732). Aside the laws made with the aim of promoting social protection of children, there have been some policies and plans of action which have focused on the wellbeing of children in Ghana.

Child-related policies and action plans encompass the National Plan of Action (NPA) on Child Labour and the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 2009-2015; the National Plan of Action (NPA) on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), 2010-2015; and the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, 2004. Additional documents encompass the National Domestic Violence Policy, the Plan of Action, and the Hazardous Child Labour Framework. Additionally, Gender and Children's Policy Standards have been established for certain child and family welfare services, including residential facilities for children.

Additionally, multiple social protection initiatives have been developed to address the challenges faced by children and families, including the National Health Insurance

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Scheme, the capitation grant for public schools, provision of free school uniforms, complimentary bus transportation for students, and the school-feeding program (Government of Ghana, 2015). The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program is the premier endeavor among these efforts. The primary formal entrance points for children and families to seek child and family welfare services are the police, namely the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), and social welfare officers. Cases of protection managed by law enforcement typically include children who have already suffered significant abuse, including criminal maltreatment. The police largely concentrate on investigating the culprit, while assistance services for young victims are significantly constrained.

Moreover, NGOs and CSOs function as gateways for the delivery of child and family services. In certain instances, they serve as the initial contact for child protection matters. In certain instances, formal agencies depend on NGOs/CSOs for support services for victims of abuse (Government of Ghana, 2015). The workload of social welfare officers is primarily comprised of child custody and maintenance conflicts, using the majority of their time. The DOVVSU caseload is predominantly comprised of child maintenance issues.

Moreover, familial and communal frameworks significantly contribute to establishing a kid's identity within the community, facilitating socialization, and resolving child protection issues in Ghana (Government of Ghana, 2015). Community structures, particularly in rural regions, can offer a support network for families. In many rural regions of Ghana, instances of child maltreatment are typically addressed within families, and if a resolution is not reached, the matter is escalated to Chiefs for

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mediation or reported to other informal or formal local entities. Social protection and family support are significantly interconnected with child protection.

In Ghana, local structures that safeguard children may include faith-based organizations, educators, health sector professionals, assembly members, District Assemblies, DOVVSU, and various specialized Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Community structures, such as family elders, chiefs, queen mothers, and local service providers (including community health workers and teachers), play crucial responsibilities in addressing child and family welfare concerns to ensure the social protection of children in Ghana.

From the forgoing, it is clear that Ghana has a comprehensive legislative framework addressing child protection issues, including the 1998 Children's Act and the 2002 Child Rights Regulations (World Bank, 2016; Abdulai, Abubakari & Martey, 2019). Besides anti-discrimination provisions, there is also considerable potential to tackle children's protection related vulnerabilities through synergies with social assistance programmes.

2.7 Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana

The Government of Ghana (2015) documented a "Child and Family Welfare Policy" which looks out for the protection of children. The key elements in the policy which are connected to the current study are itemised below:

(i) Child: This Policy defines a kid as an individual under the age of 18. In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1992 Fourth Republic Constitution of Ghana (Article 28), and the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560, Section 1). This policy considers the definition of a kid within the Ghanaian

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setting of family dynamics and the notion of childhood. A child is an individual who remains predominantly reliant on an adult for essential life needs.

(ii) Childhood: Childhood is a social construct. It is a period when a person is under the authority, control and care of some persons considered as adults in society. Childhood may include one or several of the following characteristics: the period before puberty rites or rites of passage; when a person is not married; a period in school, particularly if fees are being paid by an adult; a period of learning a trade; a period when decisions are made for a young person; a period when a young person is living under the same roof as their parents. The characteristics cited are not exhaustive; they present some considerations related to the concept of childhood. These are not stand-alone characteristics but should be considered as a combination of two or more.

(iii) Child and family welfare system: Child and Family Welfare System comprise of laws and policies, programmes, services, practices and structures designed to promote the wellbeing of children by ensuring safety and protection from harm; achieving permanency and strengthening families to care for their children successfully. This Policy understands that a child is an integral part of the family, as such, a child's welfare cannot be separated from that of the family. This Policy is concerned with both the 'formal' component of Child and Family Welfare system (i.e. those governed by laws, policies and regulations and delivered by state institutions) and the 'informal' (i.e. those that are based on community and traditional processes and resources).

(iv) Child protection: Child Protection seeks to guarantee the right of all children to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. The many actors

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engaged in child protection include children and youth, families, communities, government, civil society and private organisations.

(v) Child protection system strengthening: System strengthening occurs when efforts are made to improve the functioning of all elements in a coordinated and systematic manner. Effective child protection depends on the following elements: (i) appropriate policies, legislation and regulations; (ii) well-defined structures and functions, and adequate capacities; (iii) supportive social norms; (iv) effective promotion, prevention and response actions; (v) high quality evidence and data for decision-making; and (vi) efficient fiscal management and sufficient resource allocation.

(vi) Community structures: This Policy refers to family and social structures especially in rural settings that recognise traditional authorities such as family heads, chiefs, queen mothers, and elders. Rural community structures may also include committees, teams and networks with interest in child protection. In the urban settings, community structures include District Assemblies and other formal state institutions, to which children and families have recourse.

(vii) Harm: Harm arises from the exploitation, violence, abuse, and neglect of children, manifesting in various forms, including effects on their physical, emotional, and behavioral development, overall health, familial and social relationships, self-esteem, educational achievement, and aspirations.

(viii) Social protection: Social protection constitutes a national framework of policies and programs designed to avert, diminish, and alleviate vulnerability and chronic poverty. This system typically comprises social transfers, social insurance, and initiatives to enhance access to social services. Global investments in social protection have demonstrated enduring effects on poverty

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alleviation as impoverished individuals become productive. When effectively executed, social protection mitigates and addresses the protection hazards encountered by children and adolescents.

(ix) Welfare: The Policy delineates welfare as ensuring access to fundamental life essentials while reducing instances of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. The welfare of an individual is protected when certain human and financial resources, along with psychological and material conditions, are guaranteed to ensure a relatively comfortable, healthy, safe, and secure existence.

2.7.1 Meaning and Perceptions about Social Protection

Different individuals and stakeholders hold different views of what social protection means. This means that in different contexts, social protection could mean different things in different contexts.

Tulebayev (2021) examined the field of social work, taking into consideration the issue of social protection of children in Kazakh society. The study was a review of literature. After the study, the researcher highlighted that, social workers have a mandate to ensure the social protection of children. Social protection was viewed as comprising prevention of violence and social injustice and development of an adequate social policy focused on addressing the issues of socially vulnerable groups of the population.

Markaev, Aytboev and Khaydarova (2021) who examined the importance and characteristics of social protection in modernization of society and found the social policy of the state was aimed at maintaining social stability and increasing the standard of living of the population. Thus, social protection involved ensuring that the lives of children was better. This was in line with what was found in the current study.

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Mohajan (2014) investigated social protection issues of children in Bangladesh. Their study found that social protection of children involves ensuring that the rights of children are not violated. Mohajan added that the children have basic rights to education, balance diet, health and nutrition, protection, participation, recreation, safe water, sanitation, and hygiene.

The study of Mohajan (2014) in Bangladesh also revealed that the government had as part of its social protection schemes, the provision of education on child rights. According to Mohajan, this was because it was realized that child abuses are common matters and both children and parents were not aware about the child rights. In most cases, people were not aware of the laws regarding child abuse and took those violence issues as common matters.

In a similar vein, Sabates-Wheeler and Roelen (2011) found that social protection goes beyond enabling access to resources for meeting basic needs, but also promotes social justice in society by promoting and protecting the rights of children. Essentially, Sabates-Wheeler and Roelen noted that a social protection system is a system that is responsive to the needs of children, and provides multifaceted interventions to children in vulnerable and abusive situations. Abdulai et al. (2021) have also revealed that people did not know that social protection is a citizenship entitlement meaning that the rights of every individual had to be protected. Thus, in the study of Abdulai et al., the meaning of social protection was limited.

Frimpong-Manso (2014) drawing on a review of the literature, presented an examination of child welfare policies and practices in Ghana. The researcher traced the historical development of child welfare, from the colonial era of the Gold Coast to the present-day Ghana. In conducting the review, the researcher highlighted the nature of

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social protection and child welfare in Ghana. Frimpong-Manso (2014) described social protection as mainly involving parental care for children who need it. In the absence of parental care, the government and other non-governmental agencies use both residential and non-residential means to ensure that children are socially protected. Also, the researcher intimated that in the Ghanaian system, social protection from the state takes the form of community-based care for vulnerable children.

Frimpong-Manso (2014) further noted that there is a reform in social protection and child welfare based on a dynamic partnership between the formal systems and the existing community structures and traditions. Overall, Frimpong-Manso concluded that social protection of children in the Ghanaian context is perceived as taking care of children, particularly the vulnerable ones.

2.8 Social Protection Measures that are Available for Children

In this section, existing studies on social protection measures that are available for children are reviewed. UNICEF (2004) outlined a holistic approach to Child Protection in the handbook for Parliamentarians No.7. These tactics encompass implementing preventive measures, investigating and identifying instances, administering treatment, and guaranteeing legal enforcement within respective jurisdictions. Moonga (2015) investigated the social protection of at-risk children in Zambia. The objective was to ascertain the evolution and conceptualization of social protection, including its roles and categories, policies and programs, benefits and services, as well as the risks and vulnerabilities it mitigates. A descriptive study design employing qualitative approaches for data collection and analysis was utilized.

A sample of 24 participants from governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in social protection delivery, along with caregivers of children, was selected

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from the Central, Lusaka, and Southern Provinces of Zambia. A semi-structured interview framework was employed for data collection. The study indicated that social protection in Zambia is delivered as unconditional transfers, primarily in the form of social assistance, despite the absence of a dedicated legislative or regulatory framework for social protection. The Zambian government, along with various partners including CARE, Child Fund, World Vision, and the World Food Programme, was identified as participating in social protection; however, their initiatives were disjointed, and interventions for children were restricted, fragmented, and inadequately responsive to the prevailing risks and vulnerabilities faced by children.

Li, Zhou, Ran, and Wehrmeister (2021) investigated the correlation between social protection programs and child death rates. The researchers acquired child mortality data from 379 nationally representative surveys across 101 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The study encompassed five child mortality outcomes: neonatal mortality rate (NMR), post-neonatal mortality rate (PMR), childhood mortality rate (CMR), infant mortality rate (IMR), and under-5 mortality rate (U5MR). The researchers extracted data on social protection programs from several data sources, such as the Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity. The analysis indicated that the social assistance program was the sole subtype of social protection available and correlated with reduced mortality rates.

Kakuru, Rukooko, and Tusabe (2019) investigated social safety systems for street children in Uganda, namely in Kampala. The research employed qualitative methods, utilizing content analysis and in-depth interviews with key informants and street children. The research revealed that in-kind social protection services were available but hardly utilized. In several instances, these services were obtained via intermediaries.

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The government prohibited the provision of services to children on the streets as a deterrent, however this futile approach aimed to reduce their influx into Kampala city. Nonetheless, the in-kind social protection assistance for youngsters removed from the streets and undergoing rehabilitation was marked by significant government underfunding, reliance on donor contributions, and charitable initiatives rather than a human rights framework. The researchers advocated for a modification in national investment priorities to encompass social protection for street children, which might significantly improve the lives of these children and their communities.

Moonga and Green (2016) conducted a literature study on the hazards and vulnerabilities impacting children in Zambia. A qualitative technique was employed to gather practitioners' experiences on the topic. This was conducted using a descriptive design. Data were gathered from 24 individuals utilizing a semi-structured interview framework featuring open-ended inquiries. The findings indicated that social protection mitigates the majority of risks and vulnerabilities faced by children, hence fostering investment in human capital. It utilizes the majority of the resources and entitlements necessary for the comprehensive development of children, including healthcare and education. The design of social protection systems, particularly for the specified sub-group, must consider various approaches to vulnerability and the contextual elements that create and sustain these vulnerabilities. Moonga and Green asserted that a social protection system must be sensitive to children's needs, necessitating early, coordinated, and multidimensional interventions that consider the unique and specific character of children's requirements and challenges.

Gobary (2018) aimed to identify the realistic contribution that programmes of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make towards social protection for poor families.

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The selection sample was based on a social survey of non-governmental organizations working to fight poverty. In all, (5) NGOs were selected as part of the study. The study found that the main programmes or services had to do with meeting the financial needs of poor families. It was also found that education was used as a means to ensure that the lives of families have improved. Most of the NGOs educated families on how they can ensure that their children are well protected.

Camara (2022) evaluated Nigeria's social protection concerning the roles, policies, capacities, and difficulties of the government and NGOs within the comprehensive framework of social protection. Subsequent to the study, it was determined that the fundamental mechanisms of social protection are categorized into social assistance and social insurance; the former pertains to benefits provided in cash or kind, while the latter involves social security funded through contributions based on insurance principles. The Government of Nigeria has implemented various initiatives to combat poverty, unemployment, and inequality, including the National Poverty Alleviation Programme and the National Directorate of Employment, while the National Social Protection Policy and the National Social Safety Net Programme exemplify its current social protection strategies.

In Ghana, Palermo et al. (2019) aimed to examine the effect of combining a fee waiver for the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) with Ghana’s Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) 1000 cash transfer program on health insurance enrollment. The research was carried out in five districts participating in Ghana's LEAP 1000 program in the Northern and Upper East Regions. The researchers performed a mixed-methods impact evaluation employing a quasi-experimental approach and assessed intent-to-treat effects on health insurance enrollment for both

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children and adults. Longitudinal qualitative interviews were performed with a cohort of 20 women and analyzed through systematic thematic coding. The findings indicated that although the effects on NHIS enrollment were substantial, deficiencies persist in optimizing the potential of integrated programming. The researchers indicated that NHIS and LEAP may be optimized to guarantee that impoverished households completely benefit from both services, advancing integrated social protection.

Agyemang, Antwi and Abane (2014) revealed that the LEAP programme has been contributing fairly substantially to alleviating the plight of the vulnerable and the excluded. This is similar to the study of Palermo et al. (2019) earlier reported. Kofinti (2020) evaluated household poverty in Ghana and Kenya, analyzed the poverty-alleviating function of social protection in Ghana, and investigated rural-urban convergence in child poverty in Ghana. The findings indicated that consumer expenditure poverty in Ghana is responsive to disaggregation, and the prevalence of multidimensional poverty exceeds that of consumption expenditure poverty. Households participating in the National Health Insurance Scheme in Ghana experience a reduction in poverty levels compared to non-participants. The chances of child deprivation poverty for urban impoverished children in Ghana are at least 196% more than those of their rural impoverished counterparts. The researcher advised that the National Health Insurance Scheme prioritize coverage for impoverished and rural households in Ghana.

In the study of Ward and Seager (2010), social welfare services were provided by non-governmental organisations with the local and provincial government not being involved mostly because of lack of funds. Similarly, in the 2020 report by the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), social protection funding in African countries was mainly

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done by NGOs and that governments did not do much. Goldacre and Hood (2022) found social protection measures to be only rescuing from abusive situations. They added that social protection of children has shifted from prevention to intervention in children's social care. The indication is that the social protection measures were not very comprehensively provided. The studies reviewed give the indication that social protection measures for children existed in the form of health and poverty reduction measures. However, these measures were not available at a satisfactory level in most of the studies discussed.

2.9 Deployment of Social Protection Mechanisms in the Protection of Children

In this section, the researcher reviews studies on the deployment of social protection mechanisms in the protection of children. Rahman, Alam and Khanam (2022) explored the contributing factors that cause high infant and child mortality rates in 14 African countries using panel data for the period of 2000–2018. The panel corrected standard error (PCSE), the Feasible generalized least square (FGLS) models, and the pair-wise Granger causality test were applied as methodological approaches. The study found that effective socio-economic policy priority with due consideration of globalization help reduce infant and child mortality rates in the countries studied.

Porter and Dornan (2010) analysed the lives of children by scrutinizing data gathered about children, their households, and communities since 2001. Two cohorts of children across three nations were monitored from ages 1 to 8 years. In each country, three quantitative surveys and two rounds of qualitative research were conducted. The researchers specifically examined three significant social protection programs in Ethiopia, India, and Peru. The study first determined that the Public Works Scheme in India functioned as a buffer and potentially offered insurance-like benefits when

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drought adversely impacts household wellbeing. In Ethiopia, it was determined that some elements of the Productive Safety Net Programme enhanced educational outcomes. In Peru, evidence indicated that conditional cash transfers predominantly reached the targeted beneficiaries, offering a significant enhancement to the impoverished, thereby augmenting their ability to attend school and enhancing both attendance and performance of their educators.

Moreover, Verpoorten and Verschraegen (2008) examined the interaction between formal and informal social protection organizations and their role in determining the welfare mix of sub-Saharan African nations. The researchers analysed the diverse social protection mechanisms present in sub-Saharan nations, specifically formal social security systems, the provision of essential social goods, and informal community- and family-based protection strategies. In evaluating their strengths and shortcomings, the researchers examined how these various mechanisms can synergize and enhance the overall social protection of the population. Their findings indicated that, despite the shortcomings of each mechanism, they predominantly supplemented one another, thereby safeguarding the livelihoods of the majority of the population. In sub-Saharan Africa, social protection mechanisms were implemented to facilitate interaction among formal and informal systems, as well as many stakeholders, including the government, international organizations, NGOs, communities, and families.

Sanfilippo, Neubourg, and Martorano (2012) investigated the effects of social protection programs in developing nations and the factors that must be considered to comprehend how the advantages of social protection can be optimized, particularly concerning various aspects of children's well-being. This research constituted a systematic literature review. The findings indicated that child-focused social assistance

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programs exert the most significant influence on several aspects of child well-being. Moreover, direct financial transfers, frequently allocated towards nutrition, healthcare, and education, have had a significant effect on child welfare in these particular areas. In addition to augmenting household income via monetary transfers, conditional cash transfers significantly enhance children's human capital through conditionalities designed to promote access to education and health care.

Sanfilippo et al. (2012) discovered that programs integrating the goal of enhancing access to services with supply-side interventions significantly impact education by incentivizing school attendance and fostering an improved learning environment. The outcomes of programs not explicitly aimed at children were, nonetheless, varied. Such interventions may yield beneficial spillovers for children; however, they could also produce unintended adverse effects, particularly in productivity-oriented programs, as children might engage in household work activities, often at the expense of their education. Sanfilippo et al. concluded that social insurance mechanisms enabled families to mitigate the expenses associated with raising their children.

UNICEF (2009) analysed children's vulnerabilities and risks associated with a lack of protection from violence, abuse, and neglect, as well as the methods for more effectively incorporating measures to address these vulnerabilities and risks into social protection policy frameworks in the West and Central Africa region. The analysis was conducted through a desk review and conclusions from five comprehensive country case studies: Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. The research identified seven primary factors contributing to children's protection-related vulnerabilities. The primary catalyst for protection violations was economic distress and the occurrence of home and community-level shocks, which manifested as child

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labour, child trafficking, or commercial sexual exploitation, and in certain instances, an increased probability of domestic violence. Accelerated urbanization and economic globalization constituted a significant factor contributing to children's susceptibility to violence, abuse, or neglect. A third component pertained to discriminatory socio-cultural views toward age, frequently exacerbated by gender, indigenous or ethnic minority status, handicap, and sexuality.

UNICEF (2009) indicated that a fourth, associated factor was the prevalence of detrimental cultural or religious attitudes and practices, which are firmly ingrained in numerous regions of Africa. These encompass female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/FGC), the enslavement of minors in religious institutions, and child marriage. The fifth driver was armed conflict, a fundamental factor contributing to protection-related violations and their repercussions for children in the African region. Institutional deficiencies were recognized as the sixth factor, emphasizing the inability of state institutions to deliver adequate protection, ranging from restricted access to birth registration to inadequate child-specific protections within the court system, resulting in millions of children being orphaned in the African region.

The UNICEF report (2009) also identified five essential components of protection systems. This encompassed protective legislative frameworks concerning children's rights to live free from violence, abuse, and neglect, as well as governmental organizations tasked with upholding this right. Additional components encompassed preventive services and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at informing the general public, parents, authorities, and children about this right, as well as the associated legal frameworks and services; alongside responsive and reintegration-focused social services for victims of violence, abuse, and neglect. The final factor pertained to

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connections with non-governmental service providers. The UNICEF report underscores the disjointed nature of current services, the significant underfunding and lack of human resources, the substantial dependence on international agencies and NGOs to address service deficiencies, and the inadequate coordination among agencies. Furthermore, significant deficiencies in data gathering for monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge management exacerbate the pressing concerns that must be addressed.

Svensson et al. (2023) aimed to investigate the extent and manner in which social work education in South Africa and Sweden incorporates child engagement in child protection practices. The researchers analysed the curricula of social work programs at three South African and two Swedish universities. The results revealed overarching themes of comparable material in the curricula of both countries, highlighting deficiencies in comprehensive training in child protection, while children are minimally recognized as agents. Students were not specifically instructed to promote child engagement.

Atkins et al. (2022) did a scoping review to examine the implementation of social protection in addressing gender equality and external shocks in Africa, as well as considerations for the growth of these programs. The researchers examined five academic databases and grey literature pertaining to studies on social protection and gender equality, as well as external shocks such as climate events, natural disasters, pandemics, wars, conflicts, and displacement. They performed 12 interviews with 14 specialists from international organizations and analysed the material through thematic content analysis. They additionally examined 140 complete-text papers. Limited publications addressed both exogenous shocks and gender. Research indicates that

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social protection may positively impact the empowerment and wellness of women and girls, particularly amid external shocks.

The research by Atkins et al. (2022) demonstrated that social protection can effectively enhance household resilience and promote gender equality by addressing the needs of women and girls. Nevertheless, financial transfers alone are improbable to enhance gender equality or resilience; other services are necessary. A continuous emphasis on gender is essential in initiatives targeting gender equality. Mitigating external shocks and their effects on livelihoods and welfare necessitated long-term initiatives and the enhancement of existing programs. The researchers ultimately determined that the social protection sector is advancing in African nations; however, emphasis must be placed on data systems, the expansion of well-structured programs and policy designs, research capacity, advocacy, human resources, and the political will for further development. Initiatives to enhance social protection must be locally initiated, with careful consideration and assessment of the sociocultural and contextual elements influencing execution.

Checchi and Salvi (2017) examined how social protection measures influence the distribution of school attendance and educational attainment across African countries. The researchers utilized data from three African nations: Mauritania, Uganda, and Ghana. The findings indicated that social protection manifested as either conditional or unconditional monetary transfers. Checchi and Salvi (2017) discovered that education significantly contributes to the social protection of pupils. Enhanced education in the younger generation results in a less necessity for social assistance in adulthood: on average, they will secure superior work and experience reduced vulnerability to unemployment, so achieving dual benefits.

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Chingonikaya and Salehe (2019) aimed to investigate the role of law enforcement agencies in safeguarding the rights of street children in Tanzania. The research was carried out in the Temeke and Ilala municipalities of Dar es Salaam city. A cross-sectional study approach was utilized. A representative sample comprising 120 street youngsters was utilized. Data was acquired from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected via a questionnaire survey, focus group discussion, key informant interviews, and personal observation approaches. The findings indicated that certain rights of street children regarding protection were being infringed, and that a means to safeguard these youngsters was to investigate and prosecute their abusers.

Djanggih, Thalib, Baharuddin, Qamar, and Ahmar (2018) examined the efficacy of law enforcement in safeguarding juvenile victims of cybercrime in Indonesia. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The original data was derived from relevant institutions managing kid victims of cybercrime, while secondary data were obtained through questionnaires distributed to samples from four selected provinces. The findings indicated that the incidence of cybercrime affecting children as victims escalates significantly each year, while law enforcement remains inadequately responsive. The researchers determined that youngsters can be safeguarded by law enforcement initiatives.

Kakuru, Rukooko, and Tusabe (2019) aimed to investigate social protection strategies for children residing on the streets of Uganda, namely in Kampala. This qualitative study employed content analysis and in-depth interviews with key informants and youngsters residing on the streets. The study revealed that in-kind social protection services were available but hardly utilized. In several instances, these services were utilized via intermediaries. The government prohibited the provision of services to

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street children as a deterrent, however this futile approach aimed to reduce their influx into Kampala city. Nonetheless, the social protection assistance for youngsters removed from the streets and undergoing rehabilitation was marked by significant government underfunding, reliance on donor contributions, and charitable efforts rather than a foundation in human rights. The report asserts that altering national investment priorities to encompass social protection for street children can significantly improve the lives of these children and their communities.

Brenyah (2018) evaluated the effects of the Free Basic Education initiative in Africa, utilizing Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi as case studies. Thirty-seven (37) published documents were utilized for the study. The study observed that the Free Basic Education Policy has augmented primary school net enrolment rates in these nations, assuming all other variables remain constant. The study indicated that the implementation of the Free Basic Education Policy did not decrease educational expenditure as anticipated, as school officials continue to impose fees on students. The goal of eliminating budgetary obstacles was consequently not achieved, and the quality of instruction and learning in most schools has deteriorated due to a high pupil-teacher ratio and many operational issues. The study concluded that there is a necessity for continuous stakeholder engagement, efficient financial management, the creation of fiscal space, enhancement of educational infrastructure, recruitment of additional educators, implementation of measures to ensure the quality of teaching and learning, and effective monitoring of social protection intervention programs in Africa. The different studies examined have shown that social protection is deployed in several ways in different countries. In some situations, cash transfers were the common

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mechanisms while in other situations there were social policies and programmes targeting health and vulnerabilities of children.

2.10 Challenges to the Social Protection of Children

The literature shows there are limitations to Social Protection measures. According to Atkins et al. (2022), social protection is a human right and a key intervention in protecting against poverty and enabling sustainable growth. Fundamentally, it pertains to the mitigation of vulnerability and risk (UNICEF, 2009). There is a growing acknowledgment that social protection policy frameworks and programs should be guided by an awareness of the varied vulnerabilities and dangers, as well as their evolution over the lifecycle. Social protection programs are essential for combating poverty, ensuring food security, and facilitating access to education and healthcare (ILO-UNICEF, 2019). In this context, social protection has historically been advocated and implemented as a mechanism for industrialized nations to safeguard their most vulnerable populations. With the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the implementation and enhancement of nationally-appropriate social protection systems have been prioritized on the global agenda for both high-income and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) for the first time (World Bank Group, 2018).

While many nations, such Argentina, Brazil, and Mongolia, have attained or nearly attained universal social protection coverage, numerous low- and middle-income countries continue to grapple with restricted coverage, insufficient benefit levels, and inequitable distribution of benefits (ILO-UNICEF, 2019). In low-income nations, merely 20% of the most impoverished individuals are beneficiaries of any form of

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social security programs (e.g., cash transfers, in-kind assistance, social pensions, etc.) (World Bank Group, 2018).

It is evident that, despite its emergence, social protection remains unrealized for the majority of the global population (Economic and Social Council, 2018). Over fifty percent of the global population lacks coverage under any social protection plan, amounting to around 4 billion individuals (Kofinti, 2020). Moreover, social protection programs in developing countries exhibit a bias towards social assistance, thereby neglecting the other two components of social protection: social insurance and labour market regulation (Pearson et al., 2016; Pellerano et al., 2016; Ragno, Hague & Handa, 2016; van Ufford et al., 2016). Social protection has been criticized for exacerbating income inequality (Hall & Midgley, 2004).

Moreover, the global social security deficit resulted in 50 percent of children residing in poverty (Cichon, 2013); however, children represented the most significant vulnerable demographic in numerous nations, and their social protection was considerably less advanced than that of the elderly universally (Kamerman & Gatenio, 2006). This suggests that not all children benefit from social safety programs.

(i) Bromfield and Holzer (2006) outlined the following as key challenges facing the social protection of children:

(ii) Responding to the pressure of demand at the “front end” of child protection services.

(iii) Building prevention and early intervention services (especially for families in need).

(iv) Enhancing and monitoring practice consistency and quality.

(v) Reforming policy and practice frameworks and implementing reforms.

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(vi) Recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce (including reviewing organisational structures, operating models, job design, specialist roles and supporting staff).

(vii) Providing interventions to prevent the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in the child protection system and implementing and enhancing culturally appropriate responses for these families.

(viii) Providing a quality out-of-home care service, particularly given the context of increasing complexity of children coming into care and decreasing availability of foster carers.

(ix) Removing boundaries (between government departments, between government and non-government agencies and between individual practitioners).

(x) Supporting families with multiple complex problems (especially parental substance abuse, family violence, mental ill health and repeated reports to child protection services).

The challenges to the social protection of children can be diverse. Some of these challenges are shown in the studies reviewed. Olafsen, Rukooko, Iversen and Andreassen (2018) examined the extent to which children's homes' operations are consistent with the right to adequate food, nutritional health and wellbeing of children. The study was qualitative and sampled caretakers working in private children's homes, state actors working in government and its institutions, and non-state actors working in civil society organizations. Data were collected by face-to-face structured in-depth

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interviews, self-administered structured questionnaires, a structured observational guide, and a desk study of pertinent literature. The findings indicated that Uganda's attempts to uphold and fulfill its duties to children residing in children's homes are insufficient. Numerous capacity deficiencies were among the responsibility bearers, and the ideas of human rights and the best interests of the child were not adequately comprehended by them.

In the study of Porter and Dornan (2010) on the lives of children by examining data collected about children, their households and communities since 2001, some findings were connected to the challenges of social protection of children. After using mixed methods, to explore the situation in Ethiopia, India and Peru, the study had some revelations. Initially, it was demonstrated that although children in Peru were attending school, there were apprehensions that the heightened demands on educational institutions (due to larger class sizes) had not been sufficiently met with corresponding expenditure. In Peru, research indicated that program placement had generated certain tensions among the community. In Ethiopia and India, data suggests that public works initiatives elevate the labour demands on children, either directly or by having children replace adults in the household engaged in these programs. From the results, it was realized that the main challenges to the social protection of children included there was not a lot of investments to match the social protection measures put in place.

Skhosana, Schenck, and Botha (2014) performed a qualitative study to understand the social welfare services available to street children in Pretoria and to ascertain the factors that facilitate or hinder the provision of these services. The research clearly indicated that the finance required for the organizations' sustainability is insufficient, and that the human resources are unstable. The analysis revealed a paucity of available resources

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and a lack of focus on effective planning and coordination of services and resources. Moreover, there was redundancy and ineffective utilization of services and resources.

Skhosana et al. (2014) indicated a deficiency in collaboration between the government and NGOs, with the government serving as the head and the NGOs as the heart and hands of the service delivery system for street children. The absence of cooperation between the government and NGOs leads to the ineffective support of street children. Victor (2023) aimed to determine the impact of internal organizational capacity, engagement of diverse institutional and policy stakeholders, and public awareness on the execution of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Central Equatoria State, South Sudan. The study utilized a liberalism theoretical framework that highlights the significance of non-state players in international relations. It chose a descriptive research strategy and applied both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather, analyse, and present the data. The study indicated that the impediments to upholding children's rights stem not from ignorance among civil society and the public, but from the absence of a robust coordinating and monitoring body to guarantee the enforcement and observance of these rights standards. The respondents confirmed that parents, caregivers, civil society, the judiciary, the media, UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and others all have responsibilities to promote and safeguard children's rights.

Non-governmental organizations also played a crucial part in overseeing the status of child rights within a nation. The study advised that organizations focused on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Central Equatoria State, South Sudan, should cultivate a comprehensive understanding of their business strategies across their workforce. These institutions should prioritize consultations with community representatives and, when

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collaborating with groups, ascertain the existing networks and structures that facilitate community engagement. Furthermore, they should engage with leaders and facilitators within those groups to communicate their intentions and solicit feedback on their strategy. It is essential to analyse past successes and failures, foresee potential issues, and promote consultation processes and timetables to ensure that all stakeholders have the necessary information. Ultimately, this should be accomplished through established community newspapers, radio stations, websites, and social media platforms.

Awudu (2022) performed a generic qualitative study to investigate stakeholders' viewpoints on social intervention policies and programs. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were performed with nine stakeholders purposefully selected from the ministry, non-governmental organizations, and other agencies involved with street children. The results indicated that the social intervention programs were perceived favourably; however, they suffered from insufficient financial resources for implementation. Stakeholder consultation and collaboration were deemed ineffective, and the monitoring and evaluation of policy objectives were hindered by institutional bureaucracy and bottlenecks. Additionally, there was no singular budget allocation for the policy. The findings may attract the attention of government leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders to the necessity for increased funding for intervention programs. Results may also facilitate beneficial social change via scholars, policy think tanks, and civil society organizations concerning the impact of policy execution on the influx of street children.

Ayele (2021) analysed the obstacles that hinder the efficacy of the child rights system from the viewpoint of children. The author’s empirical data was collected through extensive qualitative fieldwork conducted in 2014 and 2015 with 24 children in Dilla,

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Gedeo, southern Ethiopia. The survey also included parents, legal experts, police officers, and social workers. The author employed colloquial dialogue, comprehensive interviews, and focus group discussions to gather empirical data. The study identified significant challenges to the enforcement of the child rights system, including the negative social constructs surrounding children, culturally ingrained decisions and practices, poverty and deprivation, deficiencies in legislative frameworks, and a lack of resources, coordination, and commitment among responsible stakeholders. Therefore, it is essential to implement a comprehensive approach to address the overarching structural and social obstacles that deprive children of their rightful entitlements in several ways.

Aurino and Giunti (2022) reviewed evidence of the impact of emergency cash, food, and other in-kind transfers implemented by governments or humanitarian actors on child development in different contexts. After a comprehensive review, the study found political or institutional challenges to be hindering the social protection of children. These challenges had to do with political interference in the duties of child protection agencies as well as the lack of political support. Also, the lack of resources for the institutions responsible for child protection were identified by the participants as institutional challenges hindering the social protection of children.

Handayani, Carraro, Villarroel, and Bongestabs (2018) evaluated the financial prerequisites for achieving social protection objectives in 16 developing member nations. The research assessed the supplementary governmental resources necessary to bridge the deficit in social protection-related Sustainable Development Goal targets, employing the social budgeting model. The results indicated that in Myanmar, public expenditure on social protection is little, and program coverage is exceedingly limited.

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The substantial resources needed to fund the social protection agenda of the SDGs will necessitate a progressive increase in both supply- and demand-side investments in Myanmar's social protection system.

Debalkie and Eriksen (2019) examined the challenges in implementing children's rights to protection from physical punishment within the framework of school discipline. The study, carried out in primary schools in a city in Southern Ethiopia, using qualitative methodologies such as interviews, observations, and open-ended questionnaires. The findings indicate that children experience various forms of physical correction inside educational settings. The problems mostly stem from traditional authoritarian parenting methods and a lack of awareness of children's rights among educators and parent-teacher representatives, even if senior leadership appears to be familiar with the discussion around physical punishment.

Jones, Ahadzie and Doh (2009) revealed that a key challenge facing child-sensitive social protection policies and programmes has to do with the strengthening of protection systems through integration within a broader package of social protection initiatives. The report of UNICEF (2018) also found that one key challenge of social protection of children is that governments do not always monitor child poverty, and poor children are not given the attention they deserve.

Okoye (2011) aimed to ascertain the awareness of Nsukka town inhabitants in Enugu State on the Child's Rights Act and their understanding of its provisions. A total of 294 persons from Nsukka town were selected for the study through systematic and easy random sampling methods. The findings indicated that approximately 32% of participants were cognizant of the Child's Rights Act, whereas 19% were informed about its provisions. The researchers concluded that general awareness about the

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protection of the rights of children was low in the communities. They recommended therefore that there was the need for more public enlightenment about the protection of the rights of children among the residents of Nsukka town. Essentially, social workers and other agencies can help in this sensitization of residents about children's rights.

Anne and Ong'ondo (2013) aimed to assess the awareness of children's rights among children in Kenya. The research was carried out at Eldoret Municipality. The survey method was employed. The target population consisted of youngsters aged 10 to 18 years in primary schools within Eldoret Municipality. The participants were chosen using stratified and simple random selection methods. Furthermore, key informants from organizations engaged with children were intentionally selected. Data were gathered by surveys, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, thereafter analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. It was disclosed that children lack enough awareness of their rights. The study indicated that to improve children's understanding of their rights, media such as television and radio should present societal issues in a fair manner, ensuring that important topics like children's rights are adequately covered.

Further, Trinity, Rene and Sone (2021) examined the challenges preventing the full implementation of children's right to education in Cameroon. Data were collected through a review of existing literatures, journals and articles, observation and examinational of text relating to the subject in question and analysed using thematic content approach. The results showed the existence of several challenges that prevents the full implementation of children's right in Cameroon ranging from social, cultural, political, and economic.

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Boadu (2017) evaluated the risks and effects of familial instability on children, as well as the programs and policies designed to foster healthy children and families in Ghana. The researcher utilized data from the 2008 and 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (GDHS). In 2008, the number of children involved was 14,491, and in 2014, it was 13,339. The response rate for each data set was 99 percent. Data were analysed in four stages (univariate, bivariate, trivariate, and multivariate analyses) for children aged 6 to 17 years, grouped by their school-going ages. The data indicated that in 2008 and 2014, children from households below the wealthiest category were more likely than their wealthiest counterparts to lack education or not attend the mandated level of education. A notable correlation was identified between household wealth status and children's achievement of the requisite educational level. The results indicate that poverty constituted a significant obstacle to social protection and the advancement of children.

Amekuedi (2016) analysed essential societal structures that facilitate the efficient functioning of the community and the survival of all individuals in the La-Nkwantanang Municipality. The research employed a mixed methods approach and utilized a snowball sampling methodology to choose participants. The survey indicated that economic adversity compelled the majority of children to engage in street employment to sustain themselves and their families. It was demonstrated that a prevailing norm emerged wherein children were anticipated to contribute to their families' economic support, leading to an increasing number of parents permitting their children to work on the streets without perceiving any issue with it. Notably, the majority of children turned to streetism due to the economic activities in which they participate. Despite

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these factors, the study discovered minimal involvement, particularly from the state, to mitigate kid streetism.

Dalinpuo and Nasse (2020) conducted a study on social protection and child vulnerability in the Jirapa and Wa Municipalities of Ghana's Upper West Region. The research employed a mixed-methods methodology. Data were collected utilizing a questionnaire and an interview guide. The results indicated a rise in vulnerability and orphanhood among youngsters in the region. Nonetheless, social protection shown enhancements in recipients' household food intake, income levels, savings, access to healthcare, and school attendance. The study additionally indicated that institutional obstacles impede the implementation of the social protection program. The researchers determined that despite Ghana's implementation of various social protection measures for the impoverished and vulnerable populations, these initiatives have had minimal impact on their circumstances. The fundamental obstacle was the absence of political will and commitment to providing social protection for disadvantaged children. This was evident in the government's inability to adequately equip the ministries and agencies legally tasked with addressing the intricate issue of social protection for the appropriate beneficiaries.

Kpalam (2023) examined the child protection ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba in relation to insights from biblical and practical perspectives on child protection. The findings point to insufficient child protection in the Church of Pentecost congregations in Winneba. Even though the study of Kpalam focused on a particular’s church’s child protection mechanisms, there is some resemblance to the current study. The majority of the studies reviewed under this section have shown clearly that the main challenge facing the social protection of children had to do with financial

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investments. There were also issues with political will of authorities to intervene in protecting children.

According to the handbook for parliamentarians on Child Protection (UNICEF, 2004), children subjected to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect are at risk of the following; shortened lives, poor physical and mental health, school drop outs, poor parenting skills in future, homelessness and displacement. The society also stands the chance of being at risk of raising children who may grow up without affection and sympathy for humanity.

2.11 Challenges facing the Social Protection of Children in Ghana

In the child welfare document prepared by the Government of Ghana (2015), some challenges were outlined as follows:

(i) Disconnect between law and practice: Though a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of the child has been established, there is a disconnection between law and practice and between the law and community approaches dealing with child welfare and protection issues.

(ii) Lack of a coordinated cohesive system: Coordination among MDAs remains a challenge, particularly as there is no overarching policy framework that outlines a coherent approach to child and family welfare.

(iii) Inadequate focus on prevention: Current services and programmes for child and family welfare tend to respond to children in crisis - after abuse has occurred - with limited focus on preventing child maltreatment although this would be more cost-effective.

(iv) Focus on the individual child rather than the family as a whole: The approach of current services and programmes is focused on the individual child-not on

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the family as a whole. As a result, underlying factors contributing to the problem within the family structure are not effectively addressed.

(v) Inadequate capacity and quality of services: The formal child and family welfare services do not have required capacity and reach to fulfil its mandate and expectations. Formal services are largely inaccessible, especially in rural areas.

(vi) Inadequate resources: With the serious financial constraints faced by child protection service providers, there is very limited support and care for children and families who experience difficulties and for those who have experienced forms of maltreatment.

(vii) Inadequate integration between informal processes and formal services: The preference is often to first seek to resolve cases of child protection at local levels through community structures. These informal processes have not been sufficiently recognised and integrated with formal services by state institutions.

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2.12 Factors that Enhance Social Protection of Children

Some existing studies have examined the factors that affect social protection of children. Some of these studies have been reviewed. Lee, Majer and Kim (2019) aimed to present a specific direction for the development of the social service system by empirically deriving and discussing the critical factors that can lead to sustainable success of the social service system in Seoul. The researchers critically analysed 12 factors in 3 areas through a questionnaire survey. The results showed that in ensuring social protection of people in society, the nature of service delivery is the most important.

The report of UNICEF (2009) already discussed in earlier sections gave the indication that there are some factors that can help make social protection more effective. The report indicated several significant potential entry points for establishing connections between child protection and broader social protection, including: (i) social transfer programs, particularly those incorporating conditionality; (ii) social health insurance; (iii) social welfare services; (iv) stakeholder engagement; and (v) the creation of a comprehensive evidence base and an accessible knowledge management system. This necessitates the formulation of a more cohesive strategy and the implementation of new, cost-effective methods to utilize current social protection systems in order to tackle the multifaceted economic and social vulnerabilities peculiar to children.

Mose (2015) examined the factors influencing implementation of cash transfer programme for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). This study was conducted in Kibera Laini Saba, Kenya, sampling 113 people from a total of 159 households benefiting from the programme. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. It was determined that all four criteria examined exhibited a favourable link with the execution

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of the cash transfer program for OVC. The research demonstrated a substantial beneficial correlation between funding and the execution of the cash transfer program for orphans and vulnerable children in the Kibera slums of Nairobi. A significant positive correlation existed between targeting and the execution of the cash transfer program for OVC in the Kibera slums of Nairobi, as well as between socio-cultural factors and the implementation of the cash transfer program for OVC. The study demonstrated a substantial positive correlation between the legislative framework and the execution of the cash transfer program for orphans and vulnerable children in the Kibera slums of Nairobi. The results indicated that the primary factors influencing the execution of the cash transfer program, a social protection mechanism, were financial resources, targeting, socio-cultural elements, and the legislative framework.

Additionally, in Ghana, Sumaila (2022) evaluated the effect of the LEAP social protection program on household food security in the Tolon District in the Northern Region. A multi-stage sampling method was utilized to randomly select 400 participants and non-participants within the district. The study indicated that the age of the household head, access to potable water, employment status of the household head, receipt of remittances, ownership of farmland, ownership of livestock (sheep/goat), proximity to markets, and access to electricity affect participation in the LEAP program.

Naser et al. (2020) examined social justice as a framework in universal programming through child rights education. The study used action research methodology to incorporate a social justice perspective not only in programme content but also in programme development. The results revealed that there was the need for education to

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impact people with knowledge on children's rights. This would help improve the protection of children's rights.

Česnuitytė and Okunevičiūtė-Neverauskienė (2009) reviewed the results of a children's rights study of children without parental care or at risk of losing parental in Lithuania. Data were collected through expert interviews and focus groups. The findings indicated that the primary challenges hindering institutions from properly enforcing the rights of children from target groups include: a shortage of skilled professionals, inadequately established infrastructure, and societal value judgments. To guarantee that children lacking parental care or at risk of losing it develop in a nurturing environment, the supply of information and social welfare to families in social distress must persist. Furthermore, the subsequent services ought to be established in the future: individual and group consultations for parents conducted by various specialists, parenting education, fostering mutual relationships, summer camps, and other socio-cultural services for children. The establishment of the following services is advisable: individual and group consultations for children conducted by various professionals, group and individual developmental activities for children, and programs in children's day care centres.

Altangerel (2020) that a major factor which enhances social protection of children is government monitoring of social protection measures in various communities. Also, according to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2015), to improve child protection system, there is the need for (i) appropriate policies, legislation and regulations; (ii) well-defined structures and functions, and adequate capacities; (iii) supportive social norms; (iv) effective promotion, prevention and response actions; (v) high quality evidence and data for decision-making; and (vi) efficient fiscal

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management and sufficient resource allocation. From the studies reviewed, the evidence is clear that several factors can affect the implementation of social protection mechanisms. Some of these factors are related to finances, stakeholder involvement and planning.

2.13 Conceptual Framework

In the conceptual framework in figure 1, there are various perceptions on the concept of Social protection from the point of view of various stakeholders. Some sees it in rights approach, needs approach, socio-economic approach, risk & vulnerability approach. Despite policies and programmes, the type of measure adopted by an actor, stakeholder or institution depends largely on how they perceive Social Protection to be, thus either Preventive measures, Promotive, Transformative or Protective. These measures form the basis for what needs to be deployed to protect vulnerable children. On the deployment of Social Protection Mechanisms, the practical implementation of measures identified in the literature includes the collaboration or coordination of the various actors, investigation and prosecution of perpetuators, public sensitization and mediation. From the framework, it can be observed that, Challenges to the social protection of children may arise from systemic issue (institutional), resource constraints, Ignorance/lack of awareness, capacity gaps, and socio-cultural factors. Factors that can enhance the Social Protection of children from the literature include increased community engagement, increase funding, logistics (resources), capacity building and collaboration of various actors, both formal and informal actors of child protection. The conceptual framework for the study is shown in Figure 1.

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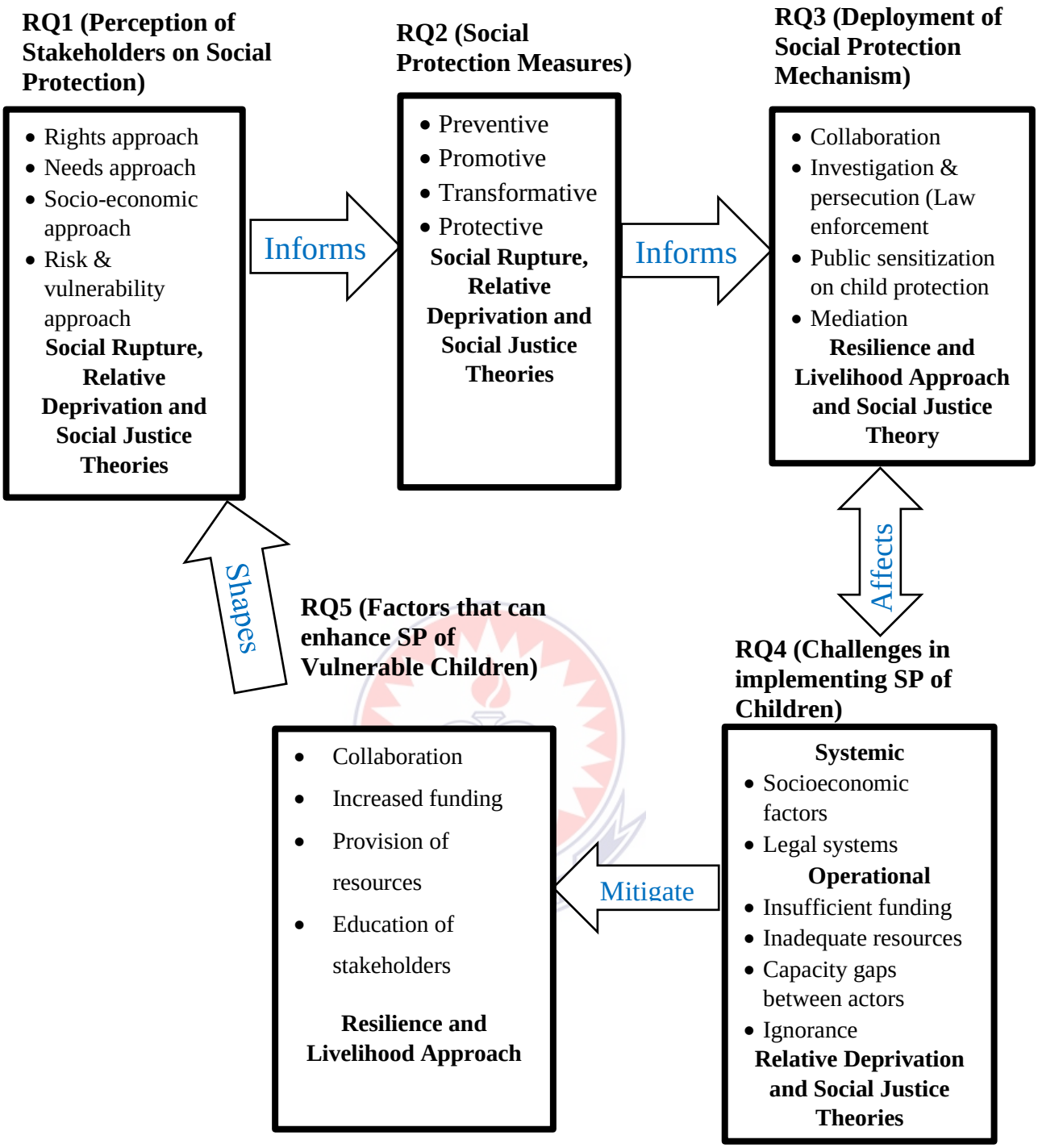


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher's Own Construct

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2.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the literature review of the study. In this chapter, four main theories were discussed, namely the Social Rupture Theory, the Relative Deprivation Theory, Resilience and Livelihood Approach and Social Justice Theory.

From the review, Social Protection of children in Ghana is grounded in human rights discourses. Ghana's assent to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child as well as the Ghana Children's Act (1998) provides the main basis for Social Protection of Children. Aside from these human rights instruments, Ghana's Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection provides the principal institutional framework for the Social Protection of children. The review shows that despite various efforts to protect children based on the National Social Protection Policy, the entire Social Programme in Ghana has not been subjected to thorough analysis and discussion from the review, several questions remain including;

(i) How do stakeholders perceive social protection of children?

(ii) What Social Protection mechanisms are available for vulnerable children in Winneba?

(iii) How are these mechanisms deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in Winneba?

(iv) What are the challenges to the Social Protection of vulnerable children?

(v) What are the factors that can enhance the Social Protection of vulnerable children in Winneba?

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These questions remain unanswered because there are a lot for researchers to uncover and explore in the field of Social Protection at community level. Some existing studies relating to the current study were reviewed. This formed the empirical section of the review. Through the review, it was realized that in most countries, social protection mechanisms were challenged or limited in how they were deployed for the welfare of children. In terms of the methodology, most of the studies used mixed approaches and quantitative approaches. In some situations, the studies were systematic and comprehensive review of literature. The current study adopts a qualitative approach to gain in-depth information on the situation of the social protection of children within the study locale.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology used for the conduct of the study. The specific areas covered include the research paradigm, research approach, research design, the study area, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection instrument, data collection procedure and method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The study was situated within the interpretivist framework. Interpretivists employ qualitative research methodologies that prioritize individuals' views, motivations, and reasoning rather than quantitative data to comprehend social interactions (Nickerson, 2023). Interpretivists claim that reality is accessed through social constructs, including language, consciousness, shared meanings, and tools (Myers, 2008). Interpretivists assert that persons possess consciousness. This indicates that they are not simply manipulated entities responding to social influences as positivists suggest. This results in individuals within a community being intricate and complex. Diverse individuals within a community perceive and interpret the same "objective" world variably, possessing distinct motivations for their behaviours (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Bhattacherjee, 2012).

Interpretive researchers assert that reality is comprised of individuals' subjective views of the external world; hence, they may embrace an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological perspective that reality is socially produced (Thomas, 2010). Willis (1995) posits that interpretivists are anti-foundationalists, asserting that there is no

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singular correct pathway or specific methodology to knowledge. They seek to formulate their constructions by a comprehensive analysis of the topic under investigation.

In this study, interpretivist paradigm was adopted because the focus of the researcher was to explore the social protection measures in place for vulnerable children in the Winneba Township by focusing on the meanings of those who have first-hand information on the issue. Also, since the study addressed issues related to the social protection of children, the interpretive paradigm which is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals was appropriate. This was a justification for choosing interpretivist paradigm for the study. It helped to explore the understanding of community social protection of children in the study setting.

Additionally, since the researcher was interested exploring the interpretations of community leaders and core actors of Child Protection in the Winneba Township regarding the social protection of children, the interpretivist paradigm was appropriate. This is because the interpretive approach aims to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social actions (Thomas, 2010). All the reasons cited above are justifications why the interpretivist paradigm was adopted for this study and equally taken into consideration the research question and the theories that supports the study.

Further, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) stipulate that interpretivists use critical paradigm which goes beyond merely understanding situations, individuals, groups and phenomenon. In essence, the purpose of this paradigm in the study was to allow data to be collected at both factual and meaningful levels through interviewing and focus group discussions. The data was subjected to analytical induction as the design involves speaking to people and contextualising their experiences in relation to social protection of children in the Winneba Township.

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3.2 Research Approach

The study adopted the qualitative approach. Following from the adoption of the interpretivist paradigm, the study employed the qualitative approach to probe issues that define the potency of child protection mechanisms (Cohen et al., 2018). According to Burns and Grove (2003), a qualitative approach is a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meaning. Thus, qualitative research enables a researcher to study meaning in people's lives, understand the views and perspectives of people who participate in a study and cover the context within which the participants find themselves (Yin, 2011). In this study, the researcher was interested in examining the views of community stakeholders regarding the social protection of children in the Winneba Township and exploring practical protection measures adopted in the study area. This made the qualitative approach suitable for the study. The research questions that guided the study were towed toward exploring the practices and establishing how social protection of children is undertaken in the community and the rationale behind them. In this sense, the adoption of qualitative approach was justified.

Research indicates that a qualitative method facilitates a comprehensive description of contextual issues, which is crucial for developing a thorough grasp of the subject and elucidating the meanings participants attribute to their perspectives (Leavy, 2017). Consequently, the utilization of the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to attain a comprehensive understanding of child safety issues in Winneba Township.

In addition, using the qualitative approach is justified because the researcher was not interested in numerical or statistical assessment of the issue at hand. This has been shown to be a major characteristic of qualitative approaches (Kothari, 2004).

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Additionally, qualitative research works rely on a detailed description of the phenomena being studied, based on participants' reports. In this sense, using interview data from participants helped obtain detailed description of issues related to social protection of children in the Winneba Township.

3.3 Research Design

The research employed a descriptive case study methodology. The descriptive case study was chosen as the research technique due to its open-ended nature, facilitating a comprehensive comprehension of the subject under investigation (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Descriptive case study design is a qualitative methodology aimed at comprehending a complicated subject and enhancing existing knowledge or experiences (Shen, 2009). In line with this argument, Yin (2009) espouses that the case study provides an opportunity for in-depth understanding of a case, its processes and interactional dynamics. According to Yin, a case study enables an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context may not be clearly evident. This resonates with the idea that child protection may be determined by contextual factors including religion, culture and type of community (rural, urban or peri-urban). Other researchers explained that case studies use multiple methods for data collection, and this allows for the exploration of the visible, hidden and marginal aspects of the research issue (Cohen et al., 2018).

The descriptive case study design was selected because it enables the research to examine multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013). A case study is employed when a comprehensive viewpoint is necessary, and the researcher must gather data from all facets of the subject (Feagin et al., 1991; Stake, 1995).

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Creswell (2013) asserts that descriptive case studies reveal themes and offer comprehensive descriptions of the subject under investigation. The objective of a descriptive case study is to meticulously record all particulars, thereby offering exact facts and frequently addressing many inquiries, particularly the issue of "how" (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013).

In this study, data evidence was obtained from interviews and focus group discussions as it is done in most case studies (Yin, 2013). This is important to ensure that there are multiple sources in order to guarantee that the reliability of the data is established. This is usually known as triangulation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). All of these make the adoption of descriptive case study design appropriate in the study.

3.4 Study Area

The study was carried out in the Winneba Township. Winneba, traditionally known as Simpa, is a historic fishing port in southern Ghana, lying on the south coast, 140 kilometres east of Cape Coast. Winneba serves as the capital of the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The Effutu Municipal is one of the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana and is included among the 22 MMDAs in the Central Region. The Municipality is located between latitudes 5°16’ and 20.18”N and longitudes 0°32’ and 48.32’’W in the eastern section of the Central region, encompassing an area of 82 square kilometres (163 square miles). According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the Municipality's population is 107,798, comprising 54,723 males and 53,075 females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

The Winneba township is noted for two main economic activities. These are farming and fishing. Winneba is low-lying with protruding granite rocks and isolated hills around its environments with two major rivers; Ayensu and Gyahadze drain and enter

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the sea at Warabeba and Opram, respectively (Abotsi & Kursah, 2023). It lies within the dry-equatorial climatic zone characterized by low rainfall and a long dry season of five months. The annual rainfall ranges from 400 - 500 mm. Important agricultural products in the coastal area include livestock and crops such as roots, grains, coconuts, and vegetables such as shallots. Crop production is an important activity in Winneba, especially in small settlements such as Gyangyenaze, Ateitu, Gyahadze, and Osubumpenyin.

Regarding fish farming, Winneba fishing community is a key stakeholder in fishing in Ghana. Winneba has at least eight landing sites that stretch from Akosua village to Woarawobeba, a small community close to Winneba. The sites are Oyibi, Penkye, Aboadze Mpoano, Kesiwokan Mpoano, Eyipe Mpoano, Penchem Mpoano, Akosua Village, and Woarawobeba Mpoano (Abotsi & Kursah, 2023). Fishing in Winneba is mainly marine, done by motorised canoes. It is normally done at night using light, and the fishermen usually harvest herrings but harvest other fishes like doctor fish, *"eban"* (sardinella aurita), *"opeku"*, *"safoa"*, and *"mpae"* during the day. The other sources are lagoons and rivers. There are over 450 registered canoes, out of which 245 have outboard motors (Abotsi & Kursah, 2023). The map of the Winneba Township is shown in Figure 2 below:

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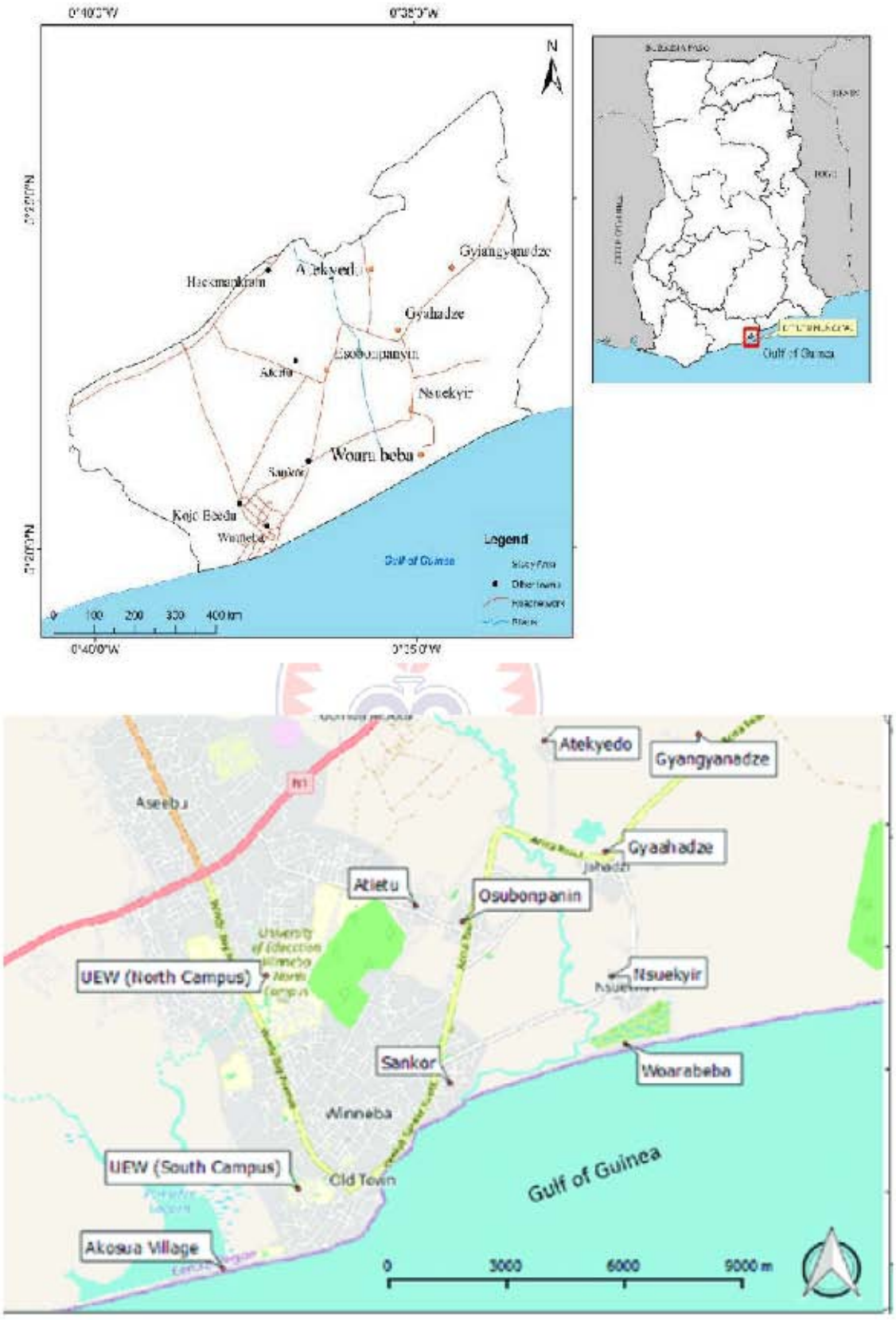


Figure 2: Maps of Winneba Township

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National Context

Winneba is situated on Ghana's southern coast, approximately midway between Accra (about 55 km to the east) and Cape Coast (approximately 140 km to the west), placing it in a strategic coastal belt facing the Gulf of Guinea.

Regional Context (Central Region)

The town serves as the capital of Effutu Municipal District, one of the 22 municipal and district assemblies within the Central Region of Ghana. The Central Region's administrative map highlights Effutu in the southeast, with Winneba unmistakably marked as the district capital.

District Context

Within the Effutu Municipal District, Winneba functions as the central administrative hub, with the district spanning coastal to inland zones and these administrative boundaries clearly centred around Winneba.

3.5 Population

Population is the group to which the study would like to make inferences (Polit & Beck, 2010). The population for this study comprised people from each stakeholder group including child protection officers in both government and non-governmental organisations, community leaders, presiding member of the assembly, gender officers at the education office and some selected parents. These stakeholders are critical in the social protection of children. As a result, it is appropriate that they are involved in the study.

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The presiding member was included because he is the leader of the assembly members and they represent the people in the community. The presiding member and the assembly members are also usually the first point of call when a child is abused in the community. Assembly members are also local government representatives and as such, they are at the forefront of implementing government's policies for communities and as such, in a study on social protection of children, they are critical to the study.

The gender officers at the education office were included in the study because they were mostly at the forefront of child right educational outreaches in schools. Also, the assembly members were involved in the study because they were those who were the first point of call in the township whenever the rights of children were abused. The selected parents were also included in the study because the primary responsibility of child care is with parents. This means that the social protection of children always starts with parents. In this sense, it was appropriate to involve parents in a study on social protection of children.

The government agencies involved in the study were DOVVSU, NCCE, CHRAJ, and Social Welfare Department. These agencies are responsible for carrying out the government's agenda as enshrined in the 1992 constitution of Ghana to protect human rights in general and child's rights in particular. As a result, involving them in this study on social protection of children is justified. The non-governmental agencies included in the study were Challenging Heights and Pearl House. These two agencies are at the forefront of child protection in Winneba. Their work revolved around rescuing them from abusive situations, providing safe haven for abused and vulnerable children because the government agencies do not have shelters for children who need protection. This made it appropriate for them to be included in the study.

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3.6 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample is the selected portion of the population for a study, crucial for ensuring adequate representation of relevant perspectives. This study employed a sample size of 30 participants, aligning with qualitative research standards that suggest an appropriate sample typically ranges from 6 to 30 individuals (Saumure & Given, 2008). The decision to set the upper limit of this range at 30 participants was intentional, influenced by various methodological and inclusion criteria considerations.

The study aimed to investigate the execution of social protection mechanisms from the perspectives of several stakeholders, including child protection officers, the presiding member of the district assembly, gender officers at the education office, and economically disadvantaged parents. Given the diversity of these sub-groups, a larger sample was required to ensure sufficient representation of each category. A diminished sample size may have impeded the fair representation of viewpoints from all stakeholder groups, hence limiting the depth and diversity of findings. Secondly, the concept of data saturation was beneficial in determining the sample size. Saturation in qualitative research signifies the point at which more data collecting yields no new insights or themes (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). In studies involving multiple sub-groups or complex social issues, reaching saturation generally requires a larger participant pool to thoroughly capture the variations across different categories. The inclusion of 30 individuals enhanced the probability of attaining saturation within and across these sub-groups.

Furthermore, pragmatic considerations including temporal constraints and logistical resources were taken into account. A sample size of 30 was considered feasible within the study's constraints, enabling thorough interviews, transcription, and thematic

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analysis, which are critical elements of qualitative research. The sample size ensured the study's credibility, transferability, and dependability, which are vital criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Sampling was conducted utilizing purposive and convenience sampling methods. Purposive sampling, as defined by Babbie (1990), involves selecting a sample based on the researcher's understanding of the population, its components, and the objectives of the study. Purposive sampling indicates that the population is selected non-randomly based on specific characteristics (Frey, Botan & Krepps, 2000). In purposive sampling, participants are selected on the basis of some specific criteria. Purposive sampling was used in this study because it helped to choose participants who possessed the characteristics and views needed in the study to understand the Child protection mechanisms in Winneba Township.

This study employed purposive and convenience sampling methods to select individuals possessing the necessary information and willing to share it with the researcher (Yin, 2009). According to Cohen et al. (2018), purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a crucial or representative sample of individuals who can furnish the most relevant data to fulfill the study's objectives. Purposive sampling was used in order to access knowledgeable people, those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issue by virtue of their professional role, expertise or experience. This is a justification for using purposive sampling in selecting the sample.

The study employed the maximal variety technique of purposive sampling. This facilitated comparisons and ensured a concentration on particular, distinct concerns or instances, while providing access to comprehensive knowledge regarding child protection. Maximum variety sampling, or heterogeneous sampling, is employed to

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encompass the broadest array of perspectives (Nikolopoulou, 2023). To achieve optimal variation, researchers incorporate both normal or average cases, organizations, or events and those that are more severe in character. This enables researchers to analyse a subject from multiple perspectives, discovering significant commonalities that persist across variants. This was important in obtaining views of the various stakeholders on child protection issues from their own perspectives.

The sample were all selected from the Winneba Township. Out of the 30 participants, 15 were child protection officers. These officers included DOVVSU (3), CHRAJ (3), Social Welfare Department (3), NCCE (2), Education Officers (2), Challenging Heights (1) and Pearl House (1). Six of the participants were children while three were parents. A presiding member and five assembly members were the remaining participants.

Specifically, the child protection officers, education officers and assembly members were selected purposively. Child protection officers selected purposively included the juvenile justice officer, community development officer, and an adoption officer from the department of Social Welfare. Also, the DOVVSU officers comprised of case investigator, a data entry clerk and community outreach officer. The case investigator mostly investigates cases reported on child abuse, neglect or exploit. The entry clerk officer helped trace some of the parents and children who have their cases being handled. The community outreach officer who offers community engagement through opinion leaders and community groups and serve as a link between DOVVSU and the Winneba community. Participants from CHRAJ included an investigating officer, district officer who oversees administrative justice at the community level and a clerical staff.

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Two education officers gave out the needed information. One of them was a girl child officer and the other was a Schools Improvement Support Officer (SISO) at the education office. They were selected purposively because they could provide information on children since they are the first point of call when a child is abused in school.

The study highlighted the key formal actors due to their crucial and varied roles in the planning, implementation, and supervision of child protection initiatives at the community level. This distribution is warranted by the concept of theoretical relevance, which instructs qualitative sampling to prioritise individuals with substantial understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Patton, 2015). These officers serve as both policy implementers and primary agents who interpret and adapt national policies to local contexts, making their insights essential for understanding institutional frameworks, inter-agency collaboration challenges, and service delivery shortcomings (Guest et al., 2006). Moreover, the diversity of agencies ensures that various mandates, such as legal enforcement (DOVVSU), rights advocacy (CHRAJ), social support (Social Welfare), and education and awareness (NCCE and Education Officers), are adequately represented, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings.

Gate keepers for vulnerable children such as guardians and care takers of vulnerable children by NGOs such as Pearl House and Challenging Heights were contacted by the researcher to identify some children who are vulnerable and have ever needed their assistance and have been placed in their shelters. These children were selected on purpose by their care takers because they were assumed to be of age and can talk about the experiences they have been through that have led them to the shelters provided by

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the NGO's. Most of such children have their parents been reported to DOVVSU, Social Welfare and CHRAJ.

The inclusion of children complies with child-centered research ethics and methods, emphasising the need of representing children's viewpoints in studies concerning their lives and rights (Christensen & James, 2008). Incorporating children allowed the study to examine the experiences of intended beneficiaries of social protection systems, emphasising the extent to which these interventions meet their needs, defend their rights, and empower them. The amount was limited to ensure ethical viability and data manageability, but also allowing for variability in experiences based on age, gender, or background among individuals from Winneba Township.

The parents were selected using convenience sampling. Creswell (2016) highlights that convenience sampling strategy enables the researcher to select participants based on ease of access, availability and their willingness to participate. In sampling the parents, the list of parents who have ever been reported to Social Welfare, DOVVSU and CHRAJ was provided for the researcher by the agencies and follow-up calls were made to them individually out of which three were available, accessible and were willing to participate in the interview session. This was appropriate because it allowed quick, efficient and easy access to participants. This method is practical when exploring phenomenon in-depth (Creswell, 2016), on this note the use of the convenience sampling technique is justified.

Parents profoundly affect children's access to social safety services, and their perspectives offer critical contextual understanding of challenges such as stigma, ignorance, or bureaucratic complexities. Although numerically constrained, the inclusion of parents aligns with the principle of data triangulation, so augmenting a

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thorough understanding of the topic (Denzin, 1978). The diminished figure is further corroborated by the study's focus on institutional factors rather than familial dynamics.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

A research instrument is a research tool for collecting suitable and appropriate data for a given study (Pallant, 2007). There is no one unique instrument for a particular study. Pallant indicated further that in determining which instrument to use for data collection, the type and design of the study along with the objectives and mode of data analyses should be given the necessary consideration. In this study, data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide and a focus group discussion guide.

Semi-structured interview guide

Semi-structured interview guide was used in collecting the data for the study. According to Willig (2012), the interview guide is an adaptable data-gathering instrument that makes use of various modalities, including but not limited to verbal and nonverbal modes. The interviewer may be in charge while still allowing for some element of the interviewee's natural spontaneity, and they may probe for answers that touch on profound and difficult topics. Participants are interrogated to obtain more comprehensive information, and a robust rapport with the participant is essential for ensuring complete engagement and dependable responses (Willig, 2012). The adaptability of the semi-structured interview guide provided the possibility to acquire comprehensive information. The semi-structured interview guide was selected for this study for this reason.

Further, interviews are seen as strategies employed by researchers to investigate into participants' idea, values, experiences and attitudes. Therefore, according to Seidman (2006), the aim of in-depth interviews must not be limited to the act of soliciting for

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questions and answers from participants but should be aimed at gaining insight into the lives of others and the meanings they make of their experiences. This also provided a justification for the use of interviews since the study focuses on the social protection of children in the Winneba Township.

Also, the use of interviews is justified because it gives the participants the freedom, they need to freely express themselves. As Leavy (2017) explains, in-depth interviews are useful because they are inductive, open-ended and iterative, where participants are able to use their own language, provide long and detailed responses if they choose. This allows the exploration of issues beyond the surface, allowing new insights to be developed. Importantly, interviews allow for the inclusion of those who may not have benefitted from formal education.

The semi structured interview guide has six sections. Section one catered for the demographic information of the participants. Section two covered the perceptions of the participants about social protection. Section three addressed social protection measures available for children in the Winneba Township while the fourth section covered the social protection mechanisms deployed in the protection of children in the Winneba Township. The fifth section covered the challenges to the social protection of children in the Winneba Township while the final section focused on the factors, which enhance the social protection of children in the Winneba Township.

The interview questions focused on social protection of children in general, with much more emphasis on vulnerable children who may have suffered some forms of abuse. In this regard, most of the responses of the participants centred on vulnerable children.

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Focus Group Discussion Guide

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) entails assembling individuals with comparable backgrounds or experiences to deliberate on a particular issue of interest (Creswell, 2018; 2012). This is a qualitative research method that involves inquiring about individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, views, or ideas. It often entails group interviews including a small cohort of 6 to 12 individuals, usually facilitated by a moderator (Creswell, 2018). In this study, the researcher used focus group discussion to gather data on the deployment of social protection measures for children in Winneba township. FGD was used because it ensured that the respondents provided information which were interwoven into each other, and which provided adequate information rather than individual discussion. Again, FGD gave the researcher the opportunity to obtain extra information since some explanations to some answers in the interviews were not in detail. Thus, the researcher used the FGD to support and enrich the data. Again, the FGD was relevant because some of the information provided during the focus group discussion could not be obtained from any book as more information were collected during these discussions. Again, FGD is efficient and an effective way to gain insights into social process (Basnet, 2018).

Following Creswell's (2013) methodology for executing focus group discussions in qualitative research, a focus group discussion (FGD) was convened specifically for the children in the study to obtain profound insights into their lived experiences about social protection in Winneba Township. The purpose of the study was briefly explained to the children. A group discussion guide using open-ended questions was created to promote interactive debate and accommodate developing themes. Participants for the focus group discussion were intentionally chosen based on their vulnerability status,

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specifically children whose parents have been reported to the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit and the Social Welfare Department, and who reside in shelters pertinent to the study objectives. These children were purposefully selected due to their age and ability to provide valuable insights to the researcher. They were also inhabitants of Winneba. Ethical protocols were rigorously followed; informed consent was acquired from guardians, and assent was solicited from the youngsters. The session occurred in a secure and child-appropriate setting that fostered transparency and ease. The researcher moderated the discussion, ensuring equitable participation and eliciting comments as needed while staying focused on the topic while an assistant documented notes and operated the audio recording equipment. The dialogue was transcribed and thematically examined to discern patterns in the children's experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.8 Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies, validity and reliability have different connotations. In this sense, validity and reliability are not carried out in the same way in qualitative studies as is done in quantitative studies. Creswell (2013) asserts that trustworthiness of data in qualitative studies rely on four main criteria. Morse (2015) also agrees on the same criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is considered the core criterion in ensuring trustworthiness of qualitative data (Creswell, 2013). It involves being certain that data obtained is actually a reflection of the situation of the participants (Morse, 2015). Concerns about the credibility of the results can be allayed if the necessary data is recorded accurately for analysis. To demonstrate data reliability, the researcher employed source triangulation. This is the

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method of gathering data from several sources. In this study, the researcher gathered data from several individuals across diverse situations to ensure that the perspectives of different participants remain untainted and uninfluenced. This contributed to the validation of the collected data.

Aside triangulation, member checking and peer debriefing were also used in establishing credibility. Member checking is validating the preliminary findings with study participants to enhance their credibility (Kriukow, 2020). As a way of controlling the influence of the researcher's knowledge and assumptions on the emerging interpretations, if the researcher is not clear about something a participant had said, member checking was relevant. I asked some of the participants to verify either what they meant or the interpretation made based on what they said during the interviews.

Peer debriefing is a technique whereby a researcher meets with a disinterested person, who can be a colleague or a lecturer so that this disinterested person can question the researcher's methods, emerging conclusions and biases (Williams & Kimmons, 2018). In this study, I met and discussed the outcomes of the study with some colleagues and lecturers in the Department of Social Studies. This helped establish the credibility of the findings.

Transferability

Transferability is a measure of how well qualitative research results can be applied in a different setting (Silverman, 2004). Having the ability to transfer findings from one study to another can allow for a more thorough examination of the issue (Willig, 2012). Since qualitative studies are difficult to generalise, the concept of transferability highlights the criterion of the appropriateness of the data by demonstrating that the

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findings might be used to various environments and situations based on the level of similarity between the original conditions to which it was moved (Creswell, 2013).

Cobbold (2010) contends that researchers aiming for generalization must assess the extent of similarity between the study setting and the target context. Generalization is, nonetheless, constrained in qualitative research owing to the limited size of the sample. The utilization of purposive sampling is consistently recommended to ensure transferability. Purposive sampling enhances transferability by optimizing specific information relevant to the study's context. Consequently, data from a specific demographic can be utilized in analogous situations rather than relying on broad generalizations typical of quantitative research.

Further, in ensuring transferability in the study, I provided a thick description of the location of the study, context, interview participants, scope and the transparency of the data collected and analysed. Because of this, any reader will be able to ascertain the entirety of the research and by this transferability was ensured.

Dependability

Trustworthiness of the study further includes establishing dependability. Qualitative researchers are urged to offer more in-depth analysis as part of the validation process. They should read more widely, think more broadly, and then write about what they have learned (Baker, 2014). Dependability confirms the need of taking variation into consideration. That is why it is crucial for the researcher to keep track of the variations they notice and how those variations affect the study's findings. Dependability ensures that the findings will be steady if the study is repeated (Babbie, 2010).

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The auditing of the study process, the documentation of the collected data, and the assessment of the data analysis methodology all facilitated compliance with this criteria. Typically, the auditing process involves an independent researcher, distinct from the primary investigator, evaluating the data collection methods, data processing, and presentation of findings (Olivia, 2018). This aims to ensure that the collected data and study findings are consistent. This indicates that the conclusions are derived not from the researcher's personal reflections but from empirical evidence. Consequently, this study meticulously documented the methods from inception to conclusion to ensure the reliability of the research.

Confirmability

The confirmability of a study's findings reveals how easily they can be confirmed (Bryman, 2004). In ensuring confirmability, the researcher carried out an audit to look at how the data was gathered and analysed. The accuracy of studies can also be checked by conducting audits (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, for the purpose of documenting the entirety of the research procedure, beginning with its conception and ending with its conclusion, an exhaustive audit trail of design information, data, and researcher notes were kept (Bryman, 2006). This was done by the researcher to ensure that everyone can confirm the findings.

Furthermore, the interviewed participants were provided with the transcripts to confirm that the recorded content accurately reflected their statements. This is sometimes referred to as member checking. Member checking is validating the preliminary findings with study participants to enhance their credibility (Kriukow, 2020). This entailed consistent communication with participants during the data collection and analysis phases, as well as validating specific interpretations and themes derived from

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the data analysis (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). To mitigate the impact of the researcher's knowledge and assumptions on the evolving interpretations, the researcher may solicit clarification from a participant regarding any ambiguous statements, seeking to confirm either the intended meaning or the interpretation derived from those statements. Secondly, a follow-up "validation interview" is frequently conducted as a means to corroborate findings and ascertain their applicability to individual participants (Buchbinder, 2011), thereby identifying outlier or negative cases and reassessing the comprehension of a specific concept.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

For the study, I acquired an introductory letter from the Head of the Department of Social Studies Education at the University of Education, Winneba. The objective of the opening letter was to request collaboration and establish rapport between myself and the participants.

While gathering the data, I introduced myself to the responders and established dates for the interviews. On the specified date, I documented the interviews to guarantee precise transcription. Data collection occurred over a span of three working weeks. I personally conducted all the interviews. The interviews were conducted in the language preferred by the participants (English and Fante).

The interviews were conducted at places that the participants deemed comfortable. For most of the participants, the interviews were carried out in their various offices. However, for parents and community leaders, the interviews took place in their homes. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour.

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3.10 Ethical Considerations

This study addressed ethical concerns like permission, anonymity, confidentiality, and autonomy. The respondents' consent was obtained prior to the commencement of the study. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) assert that involvement in studies by individuals must be entirely voluntary. Informed consent requires that participants are given the option to engage or abstain from a study after being fully apprised of the potential risks and benefits by the researcher (Burns & Grove, 2003). Consequently, participants were apprised of the study's rationale and nature, and were afforded the option to either participate or decline. The participants were informed that their consent to participate allowed them the choice to withdraw from the study at any point.

I reaffirmed the confidentiality of the respondents' identities. Pseudonyms were employed to denote the identity of participants during the reporting of the collected data. This aimed to guarantee that no individual could associate a particular response with a specific participant. This resulted in participant anonymity.

In addition to anonymity, the confidentiality of the participants' data was also guaranteed. Confidentiality signifies the ethical duty of researchers to maintain the privacy of participants' identities and answers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). I guaranteed that the data collected from respondents remained secret for academic purposes exclusively and was not disclosed to third parties without the participant's consent.

In ensuring autonomy of the participants, they were given the freedom to choose whether to participate in the study or not. This means that essentially, the participants were not forced to be a part of the study. In ensuring ethical appropriateness, since the

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children are minors, inform consent was sort from their guardians before engaging them.

3.11 Data Analysis Methods

The transcribed data were handled, using Microsoft Word for editing and analysis. The data were checked to be sure there were no spelling errors or any other mistakes which might affect the meanings of the information collected. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis procedure. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke argue that thematic analysis is a flexible type of analysis which accommodates opinions and is suitable for a large range of theoretical frameworks and perspectives.

Thematic analysis conducted within this framework focuses on theorising socio-cultural contexts that gave room for an individual's account, rather than exploring individual psychologies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Employing this approach provided an opportunity to build upon existing knowledge about the social protection of children, as well as potentially discover unanticipated and under-researched concepts. In doing the thematic analysis, the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. These are:

i. Becoming familiar with the data: The first step in any qualitative analysis is reading, and re-reading the transcripts. In this study, after the transcription, I read through the transcripts over several times in order to become familiar with the data.
ii. Generating initial codes (Deductive coding): In this phase, I started to organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way. Coding reduces a lot of data into small chunks of meaning. Deductive coding was done. Deductive coding is a top-down

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approach where I started by developing a codebook with my initial set of codes. This was based on my research questions hinged on the theories. Specifically, what I did in the study was to generate some codes from the data. In doing this, keywords that stood out in the responses for each research question was highlighted and put down as a code. These were done manually for all the five research questions of the study.

iii. Searching for themes: A theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. At this stage, I searched for patterns in the data. These patterns served as the themes under each research question.

iv. Reviewing themes: During this phase the researcher reviews, modifies and develops the preliminary themes that were identified in the previous step. At this point it was useful to gather together all the data that is relevant to each theme. In this stage, what I did was to review all the themes already identified. Some of the themes were combined and others modified. This helped to prevent clashes in identical themes.

v. Defining themes: This is the final refinement of the themes and the aim is to 'identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about.' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). In this stage, I went through all the themes to make sure it was clear what every theme said. Also, I ensured that all the themes under each research question tied in to the research question. This helped to avoid themes being placed under unrelated research questions.

vi. Writing the report: Data was interpreted descriptively using text rather than numbers since it is a qualitative study (Calzon, 2022). After interpretation, the data was compared with relevant existing literature. This formed the entire chapters four and five.

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CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of the study was designed to explore the social protection measures in place for children in the Winneba Township. This chapter presents the results of the study. The background information of the participants is first presented.

4.1 Background Information

The background information of the participants is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Background Data of Respondents

Sex	**F**	**%**
Gender		
Male	13	43.3
Female	17	56.7
Total	**30**	**100.0**
Category of Respondent		
Child Protection Officers	15	50.0
Children	6	20.0
Presiding Member	1	3.3
Poor parents	3	10.0
Assembly Members	5	16.7
Total	**30**	**100.0**
Years of work experience (Only Officers)		
Above 10 years	9	60.0
5-10	4	26.7
1-5	2	13.3
Total	**15**	**100.0**

Source: Field Data 2023

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Table 1 reports two categories of demographic characteristics of participants. It shows that 17 (56.7%) of the participants were females while 13 (43.3%) were males. This means that there were more females in the study than males. In terms of the category of the participants, it is shown in Table 1 that 15(50%) of the participants were child protection officers. These officers included DOVVSU (3), CHRAJ (3), Social Welfare Department (3), NCCE (2), Education Officers (2), Challenging Heights (1) and Pearl House (1). Six of the participants were children while three were parents. A presiding member and five assembly members were the remaining participants.

Finally, it is shown in Table 1 that majority of the officers (60%) had over 10 years of work experience. This implies that a lot of the participants who were officers in child protection agencies had a good amount of work experience to provide rich data needed in the study. The background information of the participants is of relevance in the study because it gives a fair idea about who the participants are, how resourceful they were to the study and thus gives credibility to the data obtained. Table 2 presents the pseudonyms names for the various participants.

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Table 2: Pseudonyms of Participants

ID	Designation	Pseudonym
Participant 1	Challenging Heights	Mark
Participant 2	Social Welfare Department	Mary
Participant 3	Social Welfare Department	Doreen
Participant 4	Social Welfare Department	Deborah
Participant 5	DOVVSU	Sandra
Participant 6	DOVVSU	Esther
Participant 7	DOVVSU	Prince
Participant 8	CHRAJ	Felix
Participant 9	CHRAJ	Maxwell
Participant 10	CHRAJ	Cosmos
Participant 11	NCCE	Stephen
Participant 12	NCCE	Anita
Participant 13	Pearl House	Benedicta
Participant 14	Education Officer	Thomas
Participant 15	Education Officer	Mabel
Participant 16	Parent	Priscilla
Participant 17	Parent	Evelyn
Participant 18	Parent	Philomena
Participant 19	Presiding Member	Paul
Participant 20	Assembly Member	Michael
Participant 21	Assembly Member	Emmanuel
Participant 22	Assembly Member	Hannah
Participant 23	Assembly Member	Dora
Participant 24	Assembly Member	Winnifred
Participant 25	Child	Philip
Participant 26	Child	Edward
Participant 27	Child	Emilia
Participant 28	Child	Gifty
Participant 29	Child	Kingsley
Participant 30	Child	Charlotte

Source: Field Data 2023

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From Table 2, it can be seen that the participants were from government agencies such as DOVVSU, Social Welfare Department, CHRAJ, NCCE and Municipal Education Office. In addition, there were some participants from NGOs including Challenging Heights and Pearl House. Some of the participants were also Assembly Members and parents. All of these participants were considered to be relevant to the current study.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

The results of the study are presented in this section. The results are presented according to the research questions of the study.

4.2.1 Perception of Social Protection of Children

The first objective of the study was to ascertain how stakeholders perceived social protection of children. The researcher thus asked the participants what Social Protection of children meant to them, several views were expressed. The main themes identified from these views are; identifying and intervening in child abuse and protecting the rights of children.

EDUCATION FOR SERVICE

4.2.1.1 Identifying and intervening in child abuse

One theme emerging from the interviews was that social protection of children means identifying and intervening in child abuse situations. To the participants who held this view, if one is able to identify children who are being abused and intervene, then you will be protecting children. This implies that social protection of children involved two main activities, namely identifying children who are being abused and intervening to end their abuse. These formed the basis of actions taken by some of the stakeholders involved in the study. For example, a participant from Challenging Heights, for instance, commented that "*Social protection usually deals with identifying child abuse*

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situations and coming out with intervention to address the abuse." Another participant from DOVVSU also commented saying, "*For me, I think social protection of children involves finding out those who are abused and rescuing them or intervening in their situations*." A similar view was expressed by a participant from the Department of Social Welfare, she said, "*When you identify children during abuse and intervene in their situation then I think there is social protection of children*."

In another instance, there were participants who noted that children were not socially protected if they suffer abuse. This was a way to confirm the view that identifying and helping children who were abused constituted the social protection of children. A participant from DOVVSU said,

> In my view, children who go through abuse are not socially protected. Therefore, I think social protection is when children are rescued from abuse. Social protection of children is when children are rescued from abusive situations (Participant #5).

Literature indicates that the dominant perception of social safety for children is limited and reactive. It largely underscores interventional and curative strategies, concentrating on remedial actions following the occurrence of harm, such as abuse or exploitation. This perspective frequently neglects the preventive aspect of social protection, encompassing proactive measures to mitigate risks and vulnerabilities prior to their emergence as harm (Martorano & Sanfilippo, 2012). Programme designed to prevent child abuse, maintain school attendance, or guarantee access to health and nutrition are frequently overlooked in such definitions, despite being vital elements of a holistic social safety system.

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The restricted understanding of social protection was similarly evident in the views of certain participants in the present study. Several child protection officers and community stakeholders characterised social protection as rapid interventions, such as rescuing children from exploitative employment or offering support following instances of abuse, thereby emphasising a curative and interventional approach. Their emphasis was predominantly on addressing incidents rather than averting them. This corresponds with the complaints in the literature: that the prevailing conception of social protection is biassed towards reactive programming, frequently to the detriment of long-term, preventive strategies.

Nonetheless, other respondents, especially those in educational and healthcare positions, articulated more expansive perspectives. They highlighted the significance of school nutrition programmes, access to fundamental healthcare, and community awareness as components of social protection. These viewpoints correspond more closely with the conceptualisation by Martorano and Sanfilippo (2012), which acknowledges social protection as comprising strategies to mitigate poverty and vulnerability prior to children experiencing a crisis. Respondents claim that reducing school dropouts, maintaining food security, and educating parents and children about rights and responsibilities are vital for sustainable child protection.

The differing viewpoints among respondents illustrate the wider conceptual conflict in the literature and highlight the necessity of redefining social protection beyond mere emergency measures. It underscores the necessity for a more cohesive strategy that harmonises both preventive and therapeutic measures to guarantee that all children, not solely those already vulnerable, receive protection and support within the social protection system.

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4.2.1.2 Protecting the Rights of Children

Some of the participants noted that the social protection of children meant protecting the rights of children. Those who held this view indicated that children, like any other person, had rights that needed to be protected. In essence, the social protection of children involves protecting the rights of children. A participant from CHRAJ made the comment below:

> Human rights are the rights everyone needs to enjoy in life, and as an institution we need to protect children because they are part of the vulnerable people we consider in society. This is what social protection means to us. As an institution (CHRAJ) we do not take lightly violations against children, we even go as far as making sure that all the agencies involved in trying that particular case we reported, we do that assessment and evaluation and make sure the child has gotten that protection. So, in our space, we see social protection in totality of human needs, not only the physical, but everything (social, emotional, personal traits) (Participant #8).

One of the participants from DOVVSU made a similar comment below about social protection of children, in noting that

> The rights of children have to be protected. The law says that when you bring a child to the world, you have to give him or her shelter, food, clothing and education, so when a parent refuses to do what is expected of him or her, then we have to allow the law to take its course. As I said, a child has to be sent to school, given a place to sleep, and also provided with clothing and food (Participant #6).

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The participant from Pearl House commented that protecting the rights of children is not for a specific group of people but for every individual in the society. She said:

> I think social protection is when children's rights are protected by everyone. Mostly, people think that child protection is only for the police, I mean the force workers. … For me, child protection starts from our various homes, how we stand up for our children, and children in general in our communities. You know the law also states that, in everything, the welfare of the child is paramount, it should not be that, they are my children and that's why I should stand up for them, but there are other children in the community too that we need to take care of (Participant #13).

This second view of Social Protection takes a right-based view. It views Social Protection as programmes and legal regimes established to ensure that children can enjoy their rights. This is a much broader envelop that goes beyond the interventionist view. Touching on rights implies that Social Protection has several dimensions ranging from Education, through Health to Security (Boger & Leisering, 2020; Osei-Akoto & Adamba, 2017; ILO, 2017).

However, this second view of Social Protection precludes the understanding of Social Protection as transformative (Brooks, 2015). It views Social Protection as a matter of rights without recognizing the emancipatory potential and the benefits that society can derive from creating conditions necessary to nurture the potential of children. Social Protection should extend beyond rights to enhancing opportunities for children to access the best of resources and spaces towards achieving their full potential. This is the view taken by the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the child.

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From the comments Social Protection of children is viewed by the participants as involving identification and intervention in child abuse and protection of children's rights. These were demonstrated in the views of the participants. However, the discussions show that, Social Protection has a welfare dimension that appears lost on the participants. This presents a risk.

The major risk is that the approach to Social Protection of children will be limited to fulfilling rights in line with the states responsibility to protect and prevent the abuse of children in line with the convention on the Rights of the Child and the Ghana Children's Act. This limited approach does not include enhancing life chances for children in terms of adopting a child welfare approach. An inclusion of a child welfare approach that supports the holistic development of children as envisaged in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is preferred. Therefore, thinking about Social Protection of Children should encompass three dimensions- securing rights for all children, intervention to rescue children being abused and programmes to promote the welfare of children. This broader view will enhance life chances for children.

4.2.2 Social Protection Measures Available for Children

The second objective of the study was to explore the social protection measures available for children. The stakeholders who were interviewed were all asked to indicate which social protection measures are available for children in the Winneba Township. From the responses, four main themes were identified, including: 'rescue and recovery', 'child maintenance and parental support', 'education on child rights', 'arrest and prosecution'. These were seen as the social protection measures available for children in Winneba Township.

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4.2.2.1 Rescue and Recovery

Rescue refers to the action of removing children from situations and circumstances where they are mistreated and harmed and cater for them by providing safety and support services to ensure their well-being and safety. The recovery process meant that such children were sheltered and after some period, the children are re-integrated into their communities.

One common theme identified through the interviews was 'rescue and recovery'. The comments from the participants indicated social protection measures available for children in the study area was 'rescue and recovery'. This theme relates to the participants views about children who were abused and maltreated who were rescued and were made to go through recovery. The participant from Challenging Heights made the comment below:

> At Challenging Height, we have our rescue recovery process, so we rescue children who are not in school and were being mistreated and then we shelter them in our safe house. In our safe house, we provide the children with medical care, basic literacy care and also therapeutic care to change their attitude. We also feed and accommodate them for a minimum of three months to six months periods, then we re-integrate them into their communities and support them for a longer period of time" (Participant #1).

In probing further, the participant added that their target is vulnerable children and they usually focused on children who spent all their time at the beaches. He noted, "*The Challenging Height shelter is outside Effutu Municipality, at Achiase near Swedru area. We have rescued more than 100 children and taken them through recovery. These children were mostly rescued from the beaches around*."

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The comments showed that the Challenging Heights, in particular, seeks to focus on rescuing children from abusive situations. The rescue and recovery strands in the comments show that children who are re-claimed from abusive situations and given psycho-social support leading to restoration. Restoration in this context refers to the efforts made to re-integrate children into families, the efforts to heal them from psychological trauma; and the efforts to provide them shelter and care away from further abuse. This appears to be a challenging task as identified by Atkins et al (2022) and ILO-UNICEF (2019). It also emphasizes the curative and interventionist approach to Social Protection as discussed in the literature by Rahman et al (2022). This approach requires safety nests that can guarantee support to both the rescue and recovery efforts. The comment regarding this approach was evident in the views of other participants.

Another participant from DOVVSU made a comment to support the claim that rescue and recovery was a social protection measure they had adopted in the Winneba Township. She said:

> One thing that we do is that we rescue children who are vulnerable and going through a lot of struggles. When we identify a child who is abused by the parents or any other person, what we do is that we investigate, after getting the culprit arrested, we rescue the child and put him or her into settlements where they would be cared for if the child does not have any other relatives (Participant #7).

A participant from CHRAJ made a similar comment below:

> At CHRAJ, we work with the Department of Social Welfare to rescue and recover children. The Department of Social welfare has the mandate to put children in the community shelters. So, some children are rescued and kept in shelters until later time when they are integrated back into society (Participant #5).

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The comment from the participant of CHRAJ was very consistent with the findings from the focus group discussion session with the children. The comments from the participants during the FGD indicated that social protection measures available for children in the study area was 'rescue and recovery'. The discussions show that the children are rescued from poverty and abuse. However, the responses from the children revealed that these children are rescued and later recovered from such hardship situations and abuses. This revelation was consistent with findings from the interview sessions with DOVVSU and participant of the Social Welfare Department about children who were abused and maltreated who were rescued and were made to go through recovery. Responses from the Focus Group Discussion with the children further inform the kind of social protection measures available for children in the Winneba township. It is evident from the FGD that children in Winneba township face numerous social issues that impact their wellbeing and development. According to one participant, 'I have experience poverty and hunger, sometimes I go to school without breakfast' (Child 1, FGD 1). Another child explained that:

> I didn't have school uniform to go to school so I stopped because my friends were always laughing at me so I stopped going to school and started going to the beach to collect fish from my mother's friend to go and sell so that I can get money to buy my things but it was not easy for me, until I came here so they have helped me paaa ::: hahaaaa (Child 3, FGD).

Another child explained that:

> My father and mother don't have money to send me to school so I and my friends go to fish and that is where we go every day and so I was not a student until one day when some people came to us and said they will take care of us and send us to school so that is how I became a student here (Child 4, FGD).

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Another participant nodded in agreement that:

> Yes eerrmmm …, what my friend is saying is true. I was also not going to school because my father and my mother have travelled to Wassa and that is where they are farming so I am here with my auntie and she too she said she doesn't have money so I stopped going to school and one day my friend told me that she is now coming to school so I asked her who will pay her school fees and she told me that some people came to look for her and they said they will take care of her so I also followed her to them and they also sent me to school (Child 6, FGD).

Another participant confirmed this by saying that:

> Madam … me too I was at the beach and they came there to tell us not to come there but we should go to school and I told them I don't have school uniform, shoes, bags and I don't have money to go to school so they sent me home and gave my parents money and they brought money for me and on the Monday they came and took me to school so what my friend is saying is true (Child 2, FGD).

The responses from the children show that the social protection measures in Winneba township are consistent with Kakuru et al. (2019). Undoubtedly, the benefits of social protection are immense and diverse in Winneba township. From the discussion, it is revealed that social protection is seen as an important component of poverty reduction strategy and effort to reduce vulnerability to economic, social, and abuse (Dercon, 2011). It is also a foundation for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development and an important element of the policy responses required for combating poverty, inequality and economic downturns (Schildberg, 2015).

Again, it became evident that these children were rescued from abuse. As the children discuss their 'experiences of being rescued from abusive situation', one child explained that:

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> I was staying with my stepmother and she was beating me every day so I was always sad but I didn't have anybody to go to because my mom is dead and my father too didn't care because when I tell him about what my stepmother is doing to me, he will also be insulting me. So, one day she slapped me and that is why you see my eye this way (Child 4)

As participants 4 shared his experience, another child sobbed and lamented that:

> Mom … I was beaten at home by my stepfather. Nothing made him stop so at a point I was running away from home all the time. The beating did not stop until one day a woman came for me and brought me to this place. If I was not taken away from my father, I am sure he would have kept beating me. I got this mark on my body because he spanked me with his belt one evening because he was drunk (Child 3, FGD).

The discussion from the children reinforces the rescue mission of some of the agencies. For example, in an interview with the Social Welfare Department, one participant indicated that:

> One thing that we do is that we rescue children who are vulnerable and going through a lot of struggles. When we identify a child is who is abused by the parents or any other person, what we do is that we investigate, after getting the culprit arrested, we rescue the child and put him or her into settlements where they would be cared for if the child does not have any other relatives (Participant #2).

It is evident from the findings that the children are rescued from poverty and abuse as the discussions revealed. These findings offer corroborating evidence to support claims made by Aurino and Giunti (2022), who are of the view that communities should provide social protection support like providing cash, food, or other transfers to households in order to tackle demand-side barriers to child development by lowering the opportunity costs of investments and by reducing the risks of child abuse, school drop-out, and child stress.

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Similar to the findings from the FGD, it was revealed that all the children who were later interviewed on social protection measures available for them mentioned rescue and recovery from abuse and poverty. The children made it clear that they were all suffering from abusive situations and they were put into recovery. Some of their specific comments are quoted below:

> I was beaten at home by my father. Nothing made him stop so at a point I was running away from home all the time. The beating did not stop until one day a woman came for me and brought me to this place. We have some other children here just like me. If I was not taken away from my father, I am sure he would have kept beating me. I got this mark on my body because he spanked me with his belt one evening because he was drunk (Child 2, FGD).

Another child described his situation stating:

> I lived with my two siblings and grandmother. We were always at home and our grandmother too was always at church so most of the time, we would not get anything to eat until she returned. Sometimes too we have to go there to get money to come and get something to eat. Several times, we would not have food to eat. So, there was this woman who realised the situation was bad for me and then brought me here (Child 3, FGD).

Another child added that not only were they rescued but they have been given a good life since their rescue. This is shown in the comment below:

They give us accommodation, food and also if you fall sick, they will send you to the hospital. They also provide us with items for school, so whatever you need, once you inform them, they will provide it.

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One assembly member, who had been an assembly member for over 5 years made a comment to support the claim that there was rescue and recovery. The comment is shown below:

> I know that there is a system where anytime there is a report of a child who is being abused, we carry out a rescue. I have personally worked with DOVVSU to rescue about three children from abusive homes since I became assembly member (Participant #6).

Rescue and recovery have been demonstrated by the results presented as one of the social protection measures for children in Winneba. This measure is carried out by some of the stakeholders in the study.

The comments show that the state institution responsible for this Social Protection effort is the Department of Social Welfare. Thus, rescue and recovery appear to be a major focus of Ghana's Social Protection Programmes overseen by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. The measure focuses on vulnerable children who are undergoing abuse and maltreatment. According to Ghana's Children's Act of 1998 Section 24 clause three, which states that "A child who is received into a shelter or a recovery home under this section shall not be kept there for a period exceeding three months except where the child is a witness in criminal trial or party to any proceedings in a court in which case the child may be kept in a shelter for recovery home for such period as maybe necessary for the purposes of the trial or proceedings. Despite this clause from the Act, some children do stay in the shelters for more than three months because they refuse to integrate due to the trauma they have been through.

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It is both reactive and proactive approach. As the comments of Winnifred, the Assembly member noted, it is done as a follow up to reports. From the comments, it appears that the DOVVSU is fundamental to the rescue efforts. This shows the fundamental role of the police and by extension, other security services in the Social Protection process. In other words, rescue and recovery has some elements of risk and requires the use of force. However, the recovery part falls within the border domain of other institutions such as the NGO's including the Challenging Heights.

4.2.2.2 Child Maintenance and Support to Parents

Another theme which was identified in the views of the participants was 'child maintenance and support to parents. The participants mentioned that one social protection measure available for children in the study area was 'child maintenance and support. This view was expressed by several of the participants.

Some typical comments highlighting the theme were that:

> We seek to protect children whose parents do not take care of them. So, you can call that maintenance as he or she is not well maintained. OK, so some of the measures are child maintenance. So, what we do is to invite their parents and we talk to them and then see how best to get them to be responsible or maintain their children. At CHRAJ, we protect children from a lot of violations, we use investigation, we use mediation, we use advocacy, and we also counsel at times. We do all of these to protect children from abuse (Participant #10).

The comments speak of the Preventive Social Protection Approach. It speaks of how Social Protection is focused on helping parents to fulfil their responsibilities to their children. The points made by one respondent further highlights how Social Protection officials support parents in various ways. The use of advocacy and counselling meant that the Social Protection focus here is to educate parents on the need to be responsible.

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It also highlights the support in terms of providing parents with the skills they need to protect their children from abuse. At the same time, counselling helps parents who visits their matrimonial and economic frustrations on children to manage anger. However, the support appears to go beyond counselling to the provision of physical and economic support. This was stated in the comments by one respondent.

A participant from DOVVSU made a similar comment to support the claim that there was protection of children from abuse.

> I know that there is some form of assistance they give to children when they are not taken care of at home. One time, there was a child who the parents were not really taking care of, so people in the neighbourhood spoke to DOVVSU and investigations commenced after which the boy was rescued (Participant #5).

This comment speaks of other supports. The support took various forms including providing stipends to the child to go to school. The parents were counselled on how to take care of the child. The child was also educated on how to be respectful and support the parents.

4.2.2.2 Arrest and Prosecution

Another theme worth mentioning is that of arrest and prosecution of perpetuators. This theme emerged from the analysis of comments from some participants. Typical comments from DOVVSU show this theme more pointedly.

> When a child is abused, like in terms of verbal assault, physical assault, sexual or indecent assault, defilement and rape, we get the culprits arrested. We arrange the culprits and we prosecute them, which also serve as a deterrent to others (Participant #7).

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The participant from DOVVSU further noted that:

> Sometimes we help children who are always abused by the parents or children who are not sent to school by their parents. Sometimes it is the neighbours who report them to us and at other times, we have informants who come here to report cases to us. After reporting, we carry out the arrest and prosecution (Participant #8).

A participant form the Department of Social Welfare bemoaned the duration for which trial cases for culprits are held.

> Prosecution takes a lot of time, from investigation till final verdicts are passed. These processes can take even up to a year before final verdicts can be given on cases depending on the case at hand. Sometimes we go for hearings at circuit courts. This is a worry to Child Protection Actors (Participant #4).

Another social protection measure that resonated in the discussions with the children was arrest and prosecution as they discuss how they were rescued and who came to their rescue. Child 3 began the discussion by indicating that:

> For me, it was the police who came and arrested the man who did that bad thing to me … hmmm I mean the man who raped me. So, he was arrested and went to court and he was jailed (Child 3, FGD).

Another child also nodded in agreement and said that:

> It was the Social Welfare people who came and arrested my father and later we went to court and the court asked my father to pay my school fees … yeah so it was after this that my father started giving me money every month (Child 5, FGD).

These discussions from the children confirm what some participants from DOVVSU indicated with regard to arrest and prosecution as key social protection measure at their outfit. For example, one participant who was interviewed at DOVVSU revealed that

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when a child is abused, like in terms of verbal assault, physical assault, sexual or indecent assault, defilement and rape, the culprits are arrested and prosecuted to serve as a deterrent to others.

From the comments, this Social Protection measure primarily focuses on punishment of those who abuse children. These include those who assault children sexually, in the form of rape and defilement. They are arrested and prosecuted as a deterrent measure that ultimately has a preventive aspect. As more people are arrested, prosecuted and jailed, others become more conscious of the need to respect and protect the rights of the children. The prosecution and arrest of those who abuse children have a hidden that helps with rescuing children. This is because the action against one serves as a warning to other potential abusers whiles stopping the abuse of the present victim.

4.4.2.2.3 Education on Child Rights

Through the interviews, another theme that was identified as a social protection measure for children was 'education on child rights. This was expressed by a lot of the participants in the study. The following are some of the comments:

> With Challenging Height, we do a lot of child right training and we also embark on training children on their rights by using the Children's Act and the United Nations Conventional Rights of the Child (Participant #1).

> One social protection measure we employ is education. We work with the Department of Social Welfare so when parents come here and we realise they need education, we educate them, and sometimes too we refer them to social welfare Department, sometimes too we go to radio stations to educate people. Some schools also invite us and we sensitise them on children's rights. So, we do education on the rights of children (Participant #3).

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> Last year like this, we visited couple of basic schools and we educated them on their rights, we even have integrity club, which is set up in schools to educate them more on their rights. So public education on the rights of children is one measure of social protection available for children. This is a proactive measure since we do not wait for incidents to happen (Participant #2).

The participant comment shows that sensitization and education on child rights was a mechanism in place to ensure the Social Protection of children. The NCCE also engages in education on child rights as one of their social protection measures. This is reflected in the following comment of the participant from NCCE.

> We have some flagship programmes. With flagship I mean programmes or projects that are very important or of high value. One has to do with the formation of Civic Education clubs. In Winneba, we have this in about thirty basic schools and our main objective is to educate them to know their civic rights. We also educate families on their rights and responsibilities and the role they are expected to play in taking care of their children very well (Participant #12).

One of the education officers also noted that, as part of their duties and mandate, they carry out education on the rights of children. This is shown in the comment below:

> As part of our mandate of ensuring smooth running of education in the Municipality, we ensure the social protection of children. One measure for the social protection of children is through education on child rights (Participant #15).

From the above discussion of responses regarding research question 2, it can be seen that ‘rescue and recovery’, ‘child maintenance and protection from abuse’, ‘arrest and prosecution’, ‘education on child rights’, and were the social protection measures available for children in the study area. A careful analysis of the views expressed on

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mechanisms show a direct relationship between the participants conception of Social Protection. As they did not appreciate the Social Welfare dimension of Social Protection, their views of the measures included same. My argument is that, an understanding of Social Protection of children which directly or indirectly excludes child welfare and the creation of conditions that enhance life chances for children is limited. Child Social Protection should extend to reach programmes and policies that promote maternal safety, reducing child morbidity and mortality rates. It should include efforts to remove barriers to education; addressing vulnerabilities and promoting social inclusion, equity and access to resources necessary for child growth and development. Child Social Protection should include the equalization of opportunities for all children to reach their full potential. It should include the incorporation of mechanism that ensure that some children do not suffer disadvantage. So, programmes such as Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), free Senior High School (SHS), free maternal care and the establishment of DOVVSU should count for Child Social Protection.

4.2.3 Deployment of Social Protection Mechanisms

The third objective of the study was to explore the ways in which social protection measures are deployed in the study area. The participants expressed several views to indicate how social protection measures were carried out or deployed in Winneba Township. From the views of the participants, the common themes identified were: 'investigation and mediation', 'collaboration' and 'public sensitization'. These themes are explained below:

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4.2.3.1 Investigation and mediation

The participants indicated that one way of deploying social protection measures for children was through investigation and mediation. The participants made it known that to ensure that children are protected and their needs taken care of, investigations had to be done in some cases and mediation in other cases. One participant from CHRAJ made the comment below:

> What we do is that in deploying the protection of children from abuse, sometimes, we try to investigate cases on our own and it works a lot. Apart from this, we also do mediation. When we mediate, we meet the parents of the child being abused and we try to sort out any differences which may have led to the abuse. There are occasions where the mediation provides the results we are looking for (Participant #9).

In a similar vein, a participant from Department of Social Welfare made the comment below:

> There are times when some children have issues with their families which create a lot of fight and troubles or misunderstanding in the home. When it is reported to us, we mostly try to mediate in these issues to ensure that the children are not maltreated and there is peace in the home (Participant #3).

One other participant from Social Welfare Department made the comment below to indicate how they deployed the available social protection measure:

> In deploying the child protection mechanism, we make sure that those who are involved directly, mostly their parents, are bought here (office of the Social Welfare Department) because they are not playing their role as parents. So, what we do is to invite them and compel them to become responsible. How do we do that? We sit in a hearing. We talk about it; we agree on an amount that will be paid to assist the child's maintenance and the money is paid in our office. Receipt is issued to the

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> person or the respondent, so the one who made complaint is complainant, the person that the complaint is made against is the respondent. The person will come and pay the money monthly. If the person refuses to go by the agreed arrangements or act in accordance with the agreement, then we will be compelled to issue a referral to the court. The court has the authority to arrest. Thus, the Family Tribunal court (Participant #3).

From the views of the participants, it has been shown clearly that social protection measures for children are carried out through the conduct of investigations and mediation. This revelation was very consistent with the findings from the FGD with the children as they (children) emphasised the conduct of investigation and mediation as one key means of deploying social protection measures for children in Winneba township. As the children discuss how they were rescued, one of the children explained that:

> I was rescued from my abusive father by my teacher who reported the case to the Social Welfare department (Child 3, FGD).

Another child added to what child 3 indicated and explained that:

> I told one of my church members how my stepmother was treating me and he came home and spoke to my mother (Child 4, FGD).

Another child nodded to what child 4 said and added that:

> I also informed my Sunday school madam and she came home to speak to my father and later my madam introduced me to this organization so that is how I came here, if not my madam, I don't know where I would have been (Child 1, FGD).

One other child added that:

> For me, at first, I told one of my friend's mother who also told my mother's pastor so my mother stopped beating me (Child 2).

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On the part of rescue from poverty and hardships, one child indicated that:

> It was my teacher who told me to go to the police station to report my case and when I came, the policeman said I should go to the Social Welfare and report the matter too so when I came the policeman also took me to DOVVSU and they went home to do their investigations … so that is how come I came out of my problem (Child 6, FGD).

Another child explained that:

> In my case, it was our assemblyman who came to the beach to find out why we are always there so he took us to our parents and found out that what we were saying was true so he gave us some money and introduced us to one woman who brought us here (Child 5, FGD).

From the discussion it is clear that social protection mechanisms in Winneba Township are deployed to the children through investigations and mediations.

4.2.3.2 Collaboration

The participants mentioned collaboration as one of the ways for deploying social protection measures for children. They indicated that the stakeholders responsible for the social protection of children collaborated a lot on the social protection measures. The stakeholders were officers from DOVVSU, Social Welfare Department, CHRAJ, NCCE, Assembly Members, Challenging Heights and Pearl House.

The collaboration happened in the sense that there were situations where assembly members would notice that a child is abused in the community and would liaise with agencies like Social Welfare Department to rescue such a child. This is an example of collaboration between stakeholders. Also, institutions like Challenging Heights sometimes relate with DOVVSU and Social Welfare whenever children who have been abuse are brought to them. They ensure that DOVVSU and Social Welfare take up the

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legal parts of the issues so that they can protect and take care of the abused children without any issues. This helped ensure that the social protection measures were effectively deployed.

One participant from DOVVSU made the following comment, indicating how collaboration is used to deploy of social protection measures for children;

> We collaborate a lot. With traditional leaders and politicians among others. There are certain suburbs, when you are handling a case and you are in need of a vehicle, some of the chiefs even come in to support. At my former station for instance when in need of a car, we get support. Let's say for instance, you have been able to rescue children or you get information that some children are going to be trafficked at maybe some fishing communities or they have already been taken there, and we want to go and rescue them, we partner, at times with Social Welfare Department and we involve Challenging Heights (Participant #6).

In giving further details of how collaboration is done in the deployment of social protection measures, the participant from DOVVSU made the comment below:

> We even collaborate with officials of the hospitals, they are our stakeholders, because if you are able to rescue children, you will need to provide medical care. For example, you meet a child sleeping under harsh conditions and you pick the child. He or she says he is not feeling well, you have to take the child to the hospital to be assessed, so we collaborate with the hospitals a lot. Another example is that maybe a child has been raped by multiple men or something, it is the doctors that will give treatment to the child to protect him or her from getting any sexually transmitted diseases by providing appropriate medication. So, we do not do the work alone (Participant #6).

Collaboration as a way to deploy social protection measures was also confirmed by one of the participants from Social Welfare Department. The participant stressed that the

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collaboration covered even the communities within which they worked. This is reflected in the comment below:

> In our field, we have integrated services. Whatever the kind of assistance that we are rendering to the people that we reach out to, cannot be done by us alone and so we reach out to other stakeholders like Ghana Health Service, DOVVSU and sometimes CHRAJ. We liaise with them for their assistance because for certain problems that we may encounter we may not have authority over the problem and technical knowhow. Thus, we fall on these stakeholders for assistance. Also, in the community too we work with assembly members, opinion leaders and the traditional authorities. In some of the communities we have child protection committees that we work with. They are there overseeing all the child protection issues that occurs within the community (Participant #2).

A participant from NCCE expressed a view which was similar to the view of the participant from the Social Welfare Department, indicated earlier. He noted that most of their collaboration is done within the communities. The specific comment is seen below:

> We work together with a lot of groups like Social Welfare, Assembly Members and then Unit Committee. All of these have as part of their mandate to make sure that children are being protected, so when there is a problem, we fall on them. For example, I go to Gyingyinase, I don't know the problem there. I remember when we went to one of the communities for this parent duties, some were saying some of the children are with their parents, some have been sent, some are working at the farm, so we have to fall on the assembly members and unit committee members to identify some of these problems (Participant #12).

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To further support the idea of collaboration in the community as a way of deploying social protection measures, the participant from Challenging Heights made the comment below:

> We work with community structures and sometimes through our radio, Nice FM. I mean sensitization on nice FM every Friday so we get a call in or they send it directly to us. So, the community members work along with us a lot. We then send our men on the grounds to check. To collect data and do assessment and then we have to go and free that child if the abuse is very severe and if we do that, we have to send him or her to public house and then we provide medical care, education support and social therapy. We have to make sure we do all this to help the child recover from that situation. So, when the traumatic experience is gone, we re-integrate that child back to school or apprenticeship to support that child for a period of time (Participant #1).

One of the education officers in the study indicated that they have collaborations with other agencies in deploying social protection measures. This is reflected in the comment below:

> We do a lot of collaboration with CHRAJ, DOVVSU and Social Welfare. They sometimes come to us and inform us that they want to visit the various schools for education of the children. We assist them throughout the process since we are the official body responsible for education in the entire municipality (Participant #14).

The presiding member who was interviewed also made comments to suggest clearly that he as the head of the assembly members was mostly involved in collaborations when it came to the protection of children. His comment is shown below:

> I do a lot of collaborations. Sometimes I get reports from some of my assembly members about abuse situations in the town. When this happens, I usually speak to DOVVSU or Social Welfare Department and we discuss ways of rescuing the abused child in order to assist the

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> child. Sometimes, I collaborate with private places like Pearl House so that children who need proper home support and care can be taken care of in a place where they are safe (Participant #19).

It is important to mention that the theme of collaboration run through the submissions of the children during the FGD. This shows that collaboration was one of the major ways through which social protection measures were deployed to the children. The discussions on 'what were the processes involved in your rescue' revealed that there were a number of collaborative efforts in the rescue mission of these children. One child indicated:

> I went to the police station to tell them what I was going through and they also brought me here so that is the process that I went through to get out of the problem (Child 1, FGD).

Another child in agreement said that:

> Yes, that is true. I also informed my friend and he also told his mother, then his mother asked me to inform my teacher so when I told my teacher, my teacher also said he knows an NGO that caters for children and he brought me here and when I came here, they took me to the police station to also report the person who raped me (Child 4, FGD)

As Child 4 was about ending his submission child 6 interrupted and lamented that:

> Hmmm … me I informed my uncle and he told one of his friends who is a policewoman and the policewoman intervened and took me to DOVVSU'. While CHILD 4 was making his submission, child 2 kept nodding and suddenly interrupted by adding that 'In my case, it was our assemblyman who took the matter to the police station, and the police also sent me to DOVVSU (Child 6).

It is clear from the data presented that social protection measures for children are deployed in the study area through collaboration. Collaboration is done with all the major stakeholders of social protection as well as the communities within which the children need help.

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4.2.3.3 Public sensitization on child abuse

The participants in the study indicated that public sensitisation on child abuse was a way of deploying social protection measures for children in Winneba. This view was expressed by some of the participants and some of the comments are shown below:

> At Challenging Heights, we do sensitization which we call empowerment session. During this session, we let the people know where they can report most cases of abuse to. Also, at the empowerment sessions, we give the community members advice, contact numbers of our office and our field men also talk to them about the benefit they can get if they contact us in case of abuse (Participant #1).

In a similar way, a participant from CHRAJ made the comment below:

> We do a lot of public sensitizations. It is one of the ways we deploy social protection for children. We try as much as possible to sensitise parents on the rights of their children particular in terms of education. For instance, last two months we resolved an issue here and we sensitised the parents that they ought to understand that every child has duties and obligations and at the same time they also have a responsibility as parents towards their children (Participant #8).

One of the participants from DOVVSU also indicated that sensitisation was a way to deploy social protection for children. This is reflected in the comment below:

> Sometimes, we sensitise students at school. We teach them a lot about what they should do when someone attempts abusing them. For example, 'if someone inserts his hand in your vagina or pull your manhood, you should report them to your parents for them to report to us'. This sensitisation is a way to ensure the protection of children from abuse (Participant #6).

The participant from NCCE also commented that they deploy some of the social protection measures through public sensitisation. The actual comment is shown below:

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> One way to deploy social protection has to do with sensitisation, I told you we have civic education clubs in the schools, not all the schools but we are able to cover at least 30 of them. And also with churches, we have designed a programme, we use Sunday schools to address the children and their responsibility towards themselves. I remember last week or two, I was at Akosua Village and Nkwantanan, we met them and educated them about their responsibility as children. I was also at a PTA meeting to educate them (Participant #11).

Another participant from Social Welfare Department also supported the view that public sensitisation is used as a way to deploy social protection measures. This is reflected in the comment below:

> We deploy some of the social protection measures through awareness creation or public education. There is an integral part of our community care programme which has to do with that public sensitization or awareness creation. We use the sensitisation to reach out to people in the community like children, parents and teachers. We talk to them about child protection issues and how to report cases. During the sensitisation period, if a child is going through some difficulties we engage parents, we engage other stakeholders within the community so that we can help them know the right channel or the right path to take for the child (Participant #3).

One parent confirmed the result that there is public sensitization on child abuse and that this is a way of deploying social protection measures for children. The view of the parent is shown in the comment below:

> As a parent, there are times when I have seen some gatherings in the community and people from Social Welfare Department and DOVVSU come around to talk to us about child abuse. It does not happen all the time but the times that it happens, I notice that it does a lot of good for the parents. I hear some parents mention that the public information given by DOVVSU really helps them (Participant #17).

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It appears evident that public sensitisation is used in most of the institutions studied as a way to deploy social protection measures for children. This was confirmed by most of the respondents. Overall, the results for the third research question show that social protection measures are deployed in Winneba through 'investigation and mediation', 'collaboration' and 'public sensitisation'. Through these means, social protection measures are brought to the doorsteps of children and the community as a whole.

4.2.4 Challenges of Social Protection of Children

The fourth objective of the study was to find out the challenges of social protection of children in Winneba. This was intended to find out what challenges hindered the social protection of children in Winneba.

The researcher during the interviews asked the participants if there were any challenges that they faced during their work and whether these challenges hindered the social protection of children in the study area. A variety of views were shared by the participants. From the views of the participants, some common themes were derived. These were: financial challenges, traditional or cultural challenges, political or institutional challenges and ignorance or lack of awareness. These themes are discussed below:

4.2.4.1 Financial challenges

The participants who were interviewed made comments that suggested that there were financial challenges which hindered the social protection of children in Winneba. In the views of the participants, it was realized that the financial challenges were two folds. Firstly, some of the participants argued that some parents in Winneba Township are financially challenged and such are unable to fully provide good conditions for their

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children. This exposed such children to several difficulties. The second had to do with the participants indicating that they do not get the needed financial support to carry out their mandate of ensuring the social protection of children.

Concerning the first form of financial challenge, the participant from Challenging Heights stressed that the financial situation of most individuals in Winneba makes them subject children to several harsh treatments. The specific comment of the participant is shown below:

> In Winneba here, the town does not have a booming commercial sector to employ vulnerable people especially the youth. You realise that it is mostly government work and maybe private schools in the area. Others also do a lot of fishing and farming. This does not yield much so children are exploited a lot in the fishing and farming activities. Most of those who do fishing and farming use children. Some parents do the same thing and they would tell you that is the only way they can take care of their children. So, I would say the financial challenge is a major thing affecting social protection of children (Participant #1).

In a similar light, one participant from DOVVSU made it known that the financial difficulties in the study area makes parents put children through some bad treatments. A quote from the participant is shown below:

> There is lack of financial support because there are no jobs here, at times some of the parents find it difficult to cater for the children, so some even go to the extent of handing over their children to other people to work with them and they will be receiving money (Participant #6).

One of the interviewed parents also confirmed that they struggled taking care of their children because they were financially challenged. The comment is shown below:

> I know that I have not done well protecting my children and providing what they need. But…hmm...madam… it's not easy o. I am not working

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> and I try to get money but it is difficult. Sometimes, I sleep without eating. I know it's wrong that I left my children like that but I have been struggling financially and I had no option (Participant #17).

With regard to the second form of financial challenge, one of the interviewed participants from Social Welfare Department noted that their work is derailed because of financial challenges. The comment is shown below:

> For us who try to ensure social protection of children in the communities, one major challenge we face is finances. Sometimes the money we need to do some outreaches and even to help some children would delay so much and if you are not strong you would give up (Participant #2).

As part of their mandate and their method of deploying social protection measures, staff of Social Welfare Department are supposed to engage in outreaches and public sensitisations. However, as noted in the comment above, this was sometimes derailed because of financial challenges. A comment on financial challenge was also made by the participant from Pearl House which is a private entity and an NGO. This is shown below:

> Funding is the main challenge. Now everybody wants money and that is the reality even the child protection agencies before you really get the help you need you have to pay money; there are instances where the DOVVSU people will tell you if you do not give them money they cannot help (Participant #13).

It is clear from the data presented that the financial challenges encountered by the stakeholders hindered the social protection of children in Winneba. This implies that the social protection of children is affected because some parents are poor and are unable to provide for their children. Also, some of the agencies responsible for social protection of children struggled with their funding for social protection programmes. It

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was clearly shown that some of the agencies did not receive enough funding from the government.

4.2.4.2 Cultural or traditional challenges

The participants mentioned among the challenges hindering the social protection of children that cultural or traditional issues derailed their work. These challenges had to do with the nature of life within the community. The participants noted that there are lifestyles and things, which are considered acceptable among the people in the Winneba Township but some of these, may amount to maltreatment or abuse of children.

The cultural or traditional challenges hinder social protection of children because some of the cultural and traditional practices make children vulnerable to abusive situations. For instance, one of the participants from DOVVSU, spoke of the festival in the area and how some of the activities could be a violation of the protection of children. The comment of the participant is shown below:

> There is this Aboakyere and the fancy dress, especially the fancy dress, the children are always involved for this their drumming and other stuff but there is some form exploitation. The children should be rewarded; there should be some form of protection for the children. Some people take advantage of the children financially or sexually so I can say they are being exploited. But since we do not have facts to that, we can't simply say that, it's happening. Sometimes, I'm even scared that, they may fall and die, but it is their way of new year celebrations (Participant #5).

In like manner, the participant from NCCE commented on the festival and how some children are treated badly from it. The comment is quoted below:

> It has to do with this Aboakyire festival, when it's time you will see most of the children, the way they dress, the way the people use them,

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> some of them use the children for money. They will give the children some susu box to go for money. I remember I took part last year and I saw a boy he was like "Daa, I'm hungry" just like that. I didn't give him the money but I bought some biscuits and a small drink for him. The children are taken advantage of a lot during those periods (Participant #12).

From their views, the participants did not claim that the festivals and cultural practices were abusive but rather the festivals and cultural practices put children in situations where they become vulnerable to abuse from elderly people.

The participant from Pearl House described the situation in some homes when children are maltreated. She made the comment below:

> Yes, in our various homes, other homes might be different but what we truly believe is children are only seen not heard so when you are a child and you are being maltreated you have to be quiet, even if it happens, they will tell you it is a family business (Participant #13).

Some of the parents and community leaders made comments that supported the idea that some cultural or traditional issues presented challenges for the social protection of children. For instance, some parents believed that if they made their children to work so as to get some money, it was not wrong. This is shown in some of the comments below:

> I hear that a lot that you cannot make children work but I do not agree. They are my children and if I want them to go and sell or come with me to the seaside for fishing activities, what is wrong? I do not understand why they say some of these things are child abuse. There are some things you have to do definitely as a parent (Participant #16).

> Sometimes we do things that appear to be abusing the children but they are our children so sometimes we have to let them do things to support

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> the home. That is normal for us here. Children have to help their parents at home and sometimes we have to engage them. If my child goes to the sea side because of fishing activities so as to make some little money, I think it is normal. Or? (Participant #16).

A comment from one of the assembly members confirmed that cultural and traditional issues can be challenging for the social protection of children. The comment is quoted below:

> You know in our culture; children are not supposed to speak up when adults or their parents do anything. Even if the child is suffering, he cannot speak and he cannot disrespect the adult. Our culture does not value the rights of the child. This is a challenge since most adults in our community still hold this view (Participant #21).

The indication from the data is that some cultural or traditional aspects of our society can pose significant challenges to the social protection of children. Specifically, it is clear that some habits that are ingrained in our culture could put children in situations where their rights are infringed on and their social protection hindered. This implies that the social protection of children cannot be done in isolation ignoring the society or community. Also, the data gives an indication that social protection of children may take some time before it becomes well-grounded since culture and traditions are difficult to change.

4.2.4.3 Political and institutional challenges

The participants who were interviewed further added that there are some political and institutional challenges which hinder the social protection of children in Winneba. These challenges ranged from political interference to lacking institutional resources and backing.

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One of the participants from Challenging Heights stressed that they faced several political issues particularly in terms of getting support for their child protection activities. The comment can be seen below:

> There are challenges we face o. The MCE and the assembly are in charge of government budget in the municipality and that is where the politics comes in. It is about the will if they do not see any importance in child protection or if they do not prioritize child protection activities, they will not give money for such activities. Sometimes if you take a memo to the finance office at the assembly, they would tell you they are looking at Zoom Lion issues. In those cases, you know you will not get the support you need (Participant #1).

The participant from Challenging Heights made other claims relating to Social Welfare Department. This is reflected in the comment below:

> Another issue is with the department in charge of children issues, if you go to Social Welfare office now, they will tell you everything, they don't have enough equipment and no logistics. They are even in a 'colonial building'. I went there recently and if you look at the door and the net, I was like this one they should try and clean it. The staff number is small; they do not have a car to go out and their computers are few. All these things burden them and it affects our work too because we usually collaborate with them (Participant #1).

One participant from Social Welfare Department made a comment which was in line with the earlier comment made by the participant from Challenging Heights. The comment is shown below:

> Challenges? Yes, in our Case let me make mention of resources. Inadequate resources is a major challenge. You can look at the state of our office. You are witness to the bad state of the office. It is really in a bad state and has not seen any form of renovation. You know it becomes difficult for us to work in providing the right services (Participant #4).

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One participant from DOVVSU also spoke of how there were institutional challenges and gave an example with Social Welfare Department. This is shown in the comment below:

> It is the duty of Social Welfare Department to make sure every child is sheltered and given hope. However, they usually complain about shelter and transportation. Even for us, the challenges are numerous, it is not our fault, at times we have to use our own resources to do the work that government is supposed to do (Participant #5).

The participant from NCCE explained how some institutions are challenged in the discharge of their duties towards the social protection of children. This is reflected in the comment below:

> We have some challenges at our end her ooo…hmm… because as the staff of NCCE, we are not many, social welfare same, as for DOVVSU they do not go out, they will sit at the office and wait. But I always say we should not wait for the problem to come before we have to reach out to the community to sensitize them. So, I will say we are not doing enough and social welfare is also not doing enough too (Participant #12).

During the interview with the participant from Pearl House, she made several comments on the institutional challenges which hinders the social protection of children. In one breath she narrated that as a private entity they sometimes do not get the support of the government. This is shown in the comment below:

> Some of the challenges we have here is that we see a child in need you see severe cases but because the government is not actually in support of the institution, we do not know how to come together to solve the problem. If we got the support of government things would be relatively easy at this place (Participant #13).

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The participant from Pearl House added another institutional problem which had to do managing and evaluation.

> The one problem at the public sector is managing and evaluation. People are not being monitored for the kind of work they are doing. But I know that our is system is corrupt and when there is an urgent situation and is not treated with that kind of urgency something bad may happen (Participant #13).

Aside the above, the issue of political interference was highlighted by the participant from Pearl House. This is shown below:

> We have political challenges. I'm handling a case outside where the women's coordinator of the community who is supposed to stand up for the child is using her political platform to shut up the child. Sometimes when the case is coming from someone who has a political background instead of them to say that what you did is wrong, they rather use their powers to cancel it or just to trash the case or to say ooh let go and beg for me (Participant #13).

Some of the assembly members did not want to admit that there are political challenges hindering the social protection of children. They however acknowledged that things could be better. The following comments capture their sentiments:

> I think that the government does its best to support social protection of children. I know there are challenges because of small budget, but I am sure it will be better. However, it is a difficult situation for us because you can plan a lot of social protection programmes and activities and all of these would depend on budget (Participant #23).

> Sometimes I think a lot of people think the government is responsible for a lot of things. But if the institutions work, then things will be okay. I am not saying there are no challenges from the government side, there

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> are issues. Sometimes too it is the politicians that make issues worse. For example, if there is a case at DOVVSU and a politician tries to make sure the case is cancelled, it is not the government, it is the politician (Participant #20).

From the data presented, it appears clearly that political and institutional challenges hindered the social protection of children in Winneba. A lot more collaboration and support of institutions may therefore be needed in the social protection of children.

4.2.4.4 Ignorance and lack of awareness

The final theme realized from the data on the challenges hindering social protection of children was lack of awareness or ignorance about the rights of children. The participants mentioned that the public generally lacked awareness and knowledge on the protection of children and the need to protect their rights. Aside this, some participants even claimed that staff of some of the child protection agencies lacked knowledge on the protection of children. One of the participants made the comment below:

> There is a challenge with some of those who are supposed to ensure that children are protected. How many of them have the children's act, how many of them even have the by-laws and know that this is what the by-laws entail? If you do not these things, it will be challenge in ensuring the social protection of children (Participant #5).

The participant from Pearl House indicated during the interview that some people are uneducated about what is important for children and this affects the protection of children. This is shown in the comment below:

> The major challenge is the people are not well educated enough they still have a primitive mind. We still have cases where mothers think that

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> they have to use all the money to buy funeral cloth to go to the funeral and then give nothing to the child to go to school (Participant #13).

In line with the view above, one of the participants from DOVVSU made the comment below:

> A lot of the public do not know about child protection oo…There are situations where a mother will subject a child to a lot of maltreatment and hard labour and when you confront her, she will say it is not abuse but just training her child. It makes our work difficult because the level of awareness of child rights is low (Participant #7).

The issue of low level of awareness of child protection issues in the community has also been confirmed by some of the assembly members and community leaders. The following are some comments from them.

> I have had interactions with some parents in the community and mostly through the interactions, you realise that a lot of them do not have awareness of children's rights. I think this is a challenge for the social protection of children (Participant #22).

> Most of our people in the community are ignorant of a lot of child protection issues. Some do not even know that children have rights that need to be protected. Sometimes even the educated people have this same challenge. Because of this, protecting children in the community becomes a challenge (Participant #24).

Regarding the lack of awareness among community members, the participant from NCCE indicated that despite efforts from agencies to educate the public, community members mostly are resistant. The comment can be seen below:

> Usually, you will go to the community and when you call them, they will not come. Sometimes, the entire place, only few community members will participate. But you see in the communities, there are issues of child abuse. For instance, at my former station, there was a

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> national service person who was posted from Tema to a school at Denkyira and within 6 months, he impregnated 3 girls, because he is handsome. So it was on this programme that after a girl called that she wants to discuss something with me that was when she told me everything. So even though there is a problem there, but their level of awareness and knowledge is low because of their own activities (Participant #11).

In answering the fourth research question, the results showed that the main challenges hindering the social protection of children were financial challenges, traditional or cultural challenges, political or institutional challenges and ignorance or lack of awareness. These were the challenges commonly indicated by the participants who were interviewed.

4.2.5 Factors that can Enhance Social Protection of Children

The final objective of the study was to find out the factors that can enhance social protection of children in Winneba. Through the interview data, some thematic areas were identified. These were: community awareness and sensitization, collaboration, funding and provision of resources, and education of stakeholders.

4.2.5.1 Community awareness and sensitisation

The participants mentioned that if social protection of children can be improved, there was the need for increase in awareness and sensitisation in the community. The participants noted that by creating awareness and sensitizing community members on the rights of children, social protection of children can be enhanced. The actual comments of some of the interviewed participants are quoted. For instance, one participant from DOVVSU made the comment below:

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> We have to sensitize the neighbourhood and education in schools must be improved to help the children more because some are ignorant. When some of them are called by a man into their rooms to buy them something, they do not know that it can be a trap. So, like I said, the sensitization should be there. In Accra, we had some NGOs who helped us to go out to sensitize the communities. We would ask the chiefs to organize their people, and then we meet at a certain place and after that we give the children something, but these days the NGOs do not help us again. There has not been something like that in Winneba here since I came, previously we used to go to radio stations, but all these things they come with cost, but those days when I came in 2015, I witnessed it about 3 times, we went to Nyce Fm to give talks. Those things were very helpful (Participant #5).

The participant from Challenging Heights also made the comment below:

> I think there is the need to educate the public a lot about the rights of children. The focus will be to help people know more about the rights of children. Most people do not know when they are abusing or maltreating a child. By sensitizing the public, it will help improve social protection of children (Participant #1).

Regarding the nature of the sensitisation, the participant stressed on how important educating parents is to improving social protection of children. This is reflected in the comment below:

> One way too is to talk to most of the parents to be vigilant and be responsible for their children because we all have a role to play. I think there should be more responsibility on the parents. They should know that if the children are starved and they go out and they are received with care, they can be taken advantage of. Sometimes, they just buy them indomie and they get them to sleep with them. Most of the defilement cases we have handled, the children become victims because they

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> bought indomie for them, so if the child got the best care at home, they would not have fallen victims (Participant #17).

Some of the parents in the study noted that they would appreciate a lot of awareness creation in the community. Some of the comments are shown below:

> I think awareness creation will be good for the community. Most of the adults who do not know about protecting the rights of children would get to know. In the long run, the social protection of children will improve (Participant #16).

> To me, I believe that there should be more awareness creation, so that everyone will become aware of some of the things they should not do to children. This will be good for the community (Participant #18).

Data from the various participants have all confirmed that awareness creation and sensitization is something that can help enhance the social protection of children in Winneba.

4.2.5.2 Collaboration

The interviewed participants also noted that to enhance the social protection of children, collaboration among key stakeholders was important. The participants believed that collaboration can enhance social protection of children. Some of the views of the participants are quoted. The participant from NCCE mentioned that collaborations can help ensure that children are protected in the society. This is shown in the comment below:

> We should strengthen the relationship between the NCCE and Social Welfare, the NCCE and the community itself, NCCE and the assembly members plus Unit committee members. There should be collaborations, you see, when it comes to funding, we are limited but if the assemblymen are able to organize a durbar on this particular child-

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> related issue, we could go there to educate them. But since they are not performing, the concept is very good but it does not work, even the social welfare, their staff is limited, so it is the assembly that has to organize and contact either the Social Welfare Department or DOVVSU to come in. What I will suggest is that there should be enough collaboration between NCCE, Social Welfare, and DOVVSU (Participant #12).

Some of the education officers supported the idea that collaboration can enhance the social protection of children in Winneba. For instance, one education officer made the comment below:

> Collaboration is important here. Schools, community leaders, churches and the child protection agencies can all come together to push the agenda of protecting children in the area. In this case, the burden will not be on only one group (Participant #15).

Another officer mentioned that collaborating with different groups can help ensure that child protection is done effectively. The comment can be seen below: "*I think social protection of children can be more effective if it is done in a collaborative manner. Thus, every stakeholder will play their part effectively*."

The results have shown that in the views of the participants, collaboration is one of the factors that can enhance the social protection of children. When different stakeholders work together, they are more likely to succeed.

4.2.5.3 Funding and provision of resources

The participants indicated among the factors which can enhance social protection of children, the issue of funding and provision of resources. Adequate funding and resources were shown to be factors which can enhance the social protection of children

University of Education,Winneba http://ir.uew.edu.gh

in Winneba. One of the participants from Social Welfare Department made the comment below:

> You know, if the government provided us with a vehicle. It will be very ideal for us, you know, and also about other logistics like A4 papers, printers and computers and so on. That would be a very good way of facilitating the working process. Also, when it comes to a point that we have to place children in alternative care, we temporarily, have to provide shelter for them. We cannot because sometimes we go to the two main residential homes and if the place is full then we cannot house the children. Even the two homes, none of them is for the government (Participant #4).

In a similar view, one participant from DOVVSU made the comment below:

> We really need a lot of funding to help improve our work. Sometimes, there are things we really want to do but we realise that we do not have the resources and the funding is not enough. I believe having a lot of resources and funding can help enhance social protection of children (Participant #8).

When probed further on the things they would like to do but are unable, the participant from DOVVSU made the comment below: "*I remember there was this time when we wanted to organize some educational tours across all the schools in the area but we could not achieve our target because of the budget that was required*."

Additionally, a participant from Social Welfare Department indicated that success in their work is very dependent on financial resources. This is reflected in the comment below:

> I believe a lot of success can be achieved when there are enough financial resources. Sometimes, there are children who are genuinely lacking help because the families do not have the means. Ideally, we

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> would provide some help, but without the needed resources, we are not able to do so (Participant #4).

The two participants from the two main NGOs in the study both mentioned how funding could significantly improve their work. Their comments are shown below:

> I believe that getting the right funding and resources is the main factor which can enhance our work in the social protection of children. Sometimes, we are not able to help all the children who need our help because of money issues. Funding is therefore very needed in our work (Participant #1).

> Money is very much needed for our work as an NGO interested in the welfare of children. When children without help are brought here, we need money to take care of them. If we do not have money, we cannot take care of a lot of the children that come to our facility (Participant #13).

Some of the children expressed their views about how resources were essential in their social protection. They were of the view that they had to leave their homes and suffer because of the lack of funds and resources. However, agencies which had resources and funds came to their rescue.

> Where I was, I was sexually abused. I was living in a ghetto and I was trading in drugs, so some of the guys took advantage of me and raped so, when we reported, social welfare came to our aid and then they decided to bring me here. There was nothing at home that was why I left and was staying at the ghetto. There was no money and sometimes I could go the whole day without eating. Even a place to sleep was difficult. My family did not even know I was at the ghetto (Child 4).

> Because of my body stature, I was being harassed in my community and this thing started with my own uncle and also his friends because they felt that, I was possessed and had some charm on men. Out of these

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> abuses four men have been jailed. My grandmother too was not doing anything about it since whenever I had money from men, she took some. There was no money or resources so I kept doing it until I was rescued and brought here. I realized my grandmother was taking advantage of me and exploiting me (Chid 2).

Some of the children indicated how their own parents were the perpetrators of the abusive situations they went through. Some of the comments are below:

> I was abused all the time before been brought here. My own father was abusing me and getting me injured. But I had no resources or any place to go to so I had to stay home until I got some help to be brought to this home (child 3).

> My parents thought I was not mentally stable so I was left on the street and everybody thought I was mad and therefore they neglected me. I was not getting food to eat, neither was I attending school, so social welfare identified me and they brought me here. It was because I cannot hear that's why they all thought I had hearing impairment (Child 2).

The importance of funding and provision of resources has been established in the data obtained from the participants. Thus, in order to enhance the provision of social protection for children, funding and provision of resources can be a very useful factor.

4.2.5.4 Education of stakeholders

Some of the participants noted that stakeholders responsible for children's issues should be well educated on child protection in policy and in practice. They believed that this can help enhance the social protection of children in the society. The participant from Pearl House made the comment below:

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> I wish that all stakeholders who are involved in child protection issues should be well informed and well educated. I know the police is one of these stakeholders but when you take the police as a whole only a few officers are well informed about child protection issues. Therefore, if you are not fortunate and you do not come across these people who understand these issues then you will struggle. I think all stakeholders should be well educated (Participant #13).

Other participants also confirmed that consistently updating the knowledge of stakeholders can help enhance the social protection of children. Some of the comments are below:

> All those who are supposed to be enforcing and protecting children should be well educated and updated in terms of their knowledge. This can help them in discharging their duties with efficiency. I think the agencies responsible for children should constantly be upgrading their knowledge. They can organize regular in-service training so that their knowledge on the field can be improved (Participant #5).

From the results above, it is confirmed that education of stakeholders is a factor that can enhance social protection of children. Overall, in answer to the final research question, the study revealed that community awareness and sensitization, collaboration, funding and provision of resources, and education of stakeholders are factors which can enhance the social protection of children in Winneba. These factors were all indicated by the participants in the study.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 Perception of Stakeholders about Social Protection of Children

The first objective of the study was to find out the perception of stakeholders about social protection of children. From the results, it is clear that social protection of

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children is viewed by all the participants as involving the identification and intervention in child abuse and protection of children's rights.

The first meaning of social protection of children identified was the identification and intervention in child abuse situations. Children are not to be abused and as such when abuse situations are identified, there is the need to intervene in those situations. This indicates that intervening in abuse situations of children means the child is being protected practically.

Aside intervention in abuse situations, the participants noted that social protection of children involved protecting the rights of children. Children like all humans have rights and these rights have to be protected. Some of these rights are rights to safety, right to education, and right to be taken care of by parents. The rights of children are enshrined in the United Nations Conventions on the rights of the child (UNCRC) of which Ghana ratified in the year 1990. Notwithstanding, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana has fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in Chapter Five with Article Twelve to thirty-three pin pointing to these rights. When these rights are protected, it can be said that there is social protection of children.

The perception of social protection of children as indicated by the participants in this current study is in line with the view of Atkins et al. (2022) that social protection is a respect of the human rights of individuals and a key intervention in protecting against any disadvantage. At the core of social protection, is a concern for addressing vulnerability and risk (UNICEF, 2009). This implies that the views expressed by the participants were accurate.

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Additionally, the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (2018) proposed that social protection should be understood as both an investment and an obligation to meet children's rights. This was confirmed in the current study as expressed by the participants. Thus, essentially, social protection seeks to protect the rights of children within the society.

It is increasingly understood that social protection policy frameworks and programmes must be informed by a recognition of the diversity of vulnerabilities and risks, and the way in which these evolve across the lifecycle. Social protection programmes play a crucial role in addressing poverty, food security, and access to education and health (ILO-UNICEF, 2019). In this regard, social protection has long been proposed and used as a means for industrialized countries to protect their most vulnerable citizens. As the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) era came into sight in 2015, implementing and expanding nationally-appropriate social protection systems has been, for the first time, prioritized in the global agenda for both high-income and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (World Bank Group, 2018).

Empirically, the results of the current study support the results of Moonga and Green (2016) who examined the risks and vulnerabilities that affect children in Zambia and revealed that social protection addresses most of the risks and vulnerabilities of children and in so doing enhances investment in human capital. Moonga and Green added that social protection addressed children who were in abusive situations and were the most vulnerable.

In a similar vein, the results of the current study are consistent with the results of Sabates-Wheeler and Roelen (2011) who found that social protection goes beyond enabling access to resources for meeting basic needs, but also promotes social justice

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in society by promoting and protecting the rights of children. Essentially, Sabates-Wheeler and Roelen noted that a social protection system is a system that is responsive to the needs of children, and provides multifaceted interventions to children in vulnerable and abusive situations.

Additionally, the results obtained in the current study are in line with those of Markaev, Aytboev and Khaydarova (2021) who examined the importance and characteristics of social protection in modernization of society and found the social policy of the state was aimed at maintaining social stability and increasing the standard of living of the population. Thus, social protection involved ensuring that the lives of children was better. This was in line with what was found in the current study.

Additionally, the results that social protection involves protecting the rights of children confirm what was found by Mohajan (2014) that social protection of children involves ensuring that the rights of children are not violated. Mohajan added that the children have basic rights to education, balance diet, health and nutrition, protection, participation, recreation, safe water, sanitation, and hygiene.

From the results of the current study, it was shown that social protection of children was as involving the identification and intervention in child abuse and protection of children's rights. Even though this was supported in the literature, it was more comprehensive than what was demonstrated in some studies. For instance, Abdulai et al. (2021) revealed that people did not know that social protection is a citizenship entitlement meaning that the rights of every individual had to be protected. In the current study, the meaning of social protection as given by the participants comprehensively covered the protection of rights.

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In relation to the theories in the study, the Social Rupture Theory speaks of the fact that changes in the social environment of an individual can affect the social protection of the individual (Chirwa, 2002). This implies that social protection of children involves rescuing and protecting children who are exposed to unpleasant and abusive social environments.

From the results of the current study, it is clear that social protection is seen as involving the protection of rights of children and intervention or rescue of children going through abuse. This was confirmed in the study as well as in the several studies mentioned in the forgoing discussion. The researcher's view is that based on the existing literature, it can be said that the participants in the current study were knowledgeable about the meaning of social protection of children at the community level, which involved practical protection measures. However, it was observed that participants were less knowledgeable on the policies of child protection and the holistic approaches require for protecting children.

The study's findings regarding stakeholders' perspectives of children's social protection in Winneba Township highlight significant issues pertinent to Social Justice Theory. Stakeholders saw social protection as an essential mechanism for safeguarding children's well-being, although emphasised considerable disparities in access, inadequate institutional support, and the marginalisation of vulnerable groups, especially children from impoverished and fishing areas. From the standpoint of Social Justice Theory, these findings highlight a deficiency in distributive justice, wherein resources and safeguards are inequitably distributed to those most in need (Rawls, 1971). The stakeholders' need for enhanced community engagement, education, and

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cultural transformation corresponds with the theory's focus on acknowledgement and participatory justice (Fraser, 2008). The findings confirm the necessity of a child protection system that addresses immediate needs while also confronting structural disparities and enabling all children to realise their full rights and potential.

4.3.2 Social Protection Measures that are Available for vulnerable Children

The second objective of the study was to explore the social protection measures available for children in the study area. The participants were all asked to indicate which social protection measures are available for children in Winneba. The results showed that the social protection measures available were 'rescue and recovery', 'child maintenance and protection from abuse' and 'education on child rights. These were identified by the participants in the current study as the social protection measures available for children in Winneba Township. These can be classified into protective and transformative Social Protection. Where 'rescue and recovery' and 'child maintenance' can be classified under Protective Social Protection, 'education on child rights' can equally be placed under Transformative Social Protection.

The study showed that children who were in vulnerable situations were rescued and put through recovery. This was one of the social protection measures mentioned by the participants. Some of the government agencies and NGOs (Challenging Heights) had rescue and recovery as part of their main mandates or programme of activities. In the recovery, the children were mostly kept in residences away from their abused settings and after some time, they are reintegrated into society.

The results on rescue and recovery as a social protection measure confirm the results of Kakuru, Rukooko and Tusabe (2019) who examined social protection mechanisms for children living on the streets of Uganda, a case study of Kampala and found that in-

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kind social protection services existed even though they were hardly accessed. Kakuru et al. (2019) added that in-kind services were mostly to secure the vulnerable children and get them place to reside out of the street.

The results of the current study are also consistent with the results of Bromfield and Holzer (2006), that social protection of children could be in the form of providing a quality out-of-home care service, particularly given the context of increasing complexity of children coming into care and decreasing availability of foster carers, and supporting families with multiple complex problems like parental substance abuse, family violence and mental ill health.

The other social protection measure, child maintenance and protection from abuse, was noted by most of the stakeholders in the study as a fundamental part of their mandate. Participants from DOVVSU, Social Welfare and CHRAJ all indicated that they had responsibility protecting children from abuse while at the same time providing maintenance systems for children. For example, some parents could be provided with funds to support the maintenance of their children. This to a large extent would help ensure the social protection of children.

The results on child maintenance and protection from abuse are in line with the results of Moonga (2015) who examined the social protection of vulnerable children in Zambia and revealed that social protection in Zambia is provided as unconditional transfers, mainly as social assistance to support families. In a similar vein, Li, Zhou, Ran and Wehrmeister (2021) examined the association between social protection programmes and child mortality and found that social assistance programme was the only subtype of social protection available for families.

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The results on the provision of child maintenance in the current study is similar to what was found by Palermo et al. (2019) that Ghana's Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) 1000 cash transfer programme on health insurance enrolment was a social protection scheme to aid vulnerable families. In like manner, Kofinti (2020) assessed household poverty in Ghana and Kenya, examined the poverty-reducing role of social protection in Ghana and examined rural-urban catch-up in child poverty in Ghana and found that in Ghana, there was the National Health Insurance Scheme which eased financial difficulties and vulnerabilities in families.

The findings of the current study also support the findings of Porter and Dornan (2010) who examined social protection measures in different countries. Porter and Dornan found that the Public Works Scheme in India acted as a cushion, and possibly provided insurance affects such as benefits when drought hits the welfare of households. In Peru, Porter and Dornan found that conditional cash transfers were instituted to provide a boost to those who were poor and vulnerable to ensure the maintenance of children. Additionally, the results of the current study confirm the results of Moonga and Green (2016) who found that in Zambia, social protection measures usually address vulnerable children to protect them from any form of abuse.

Additionally, the results of the current study are consistent with those of Sanfilippo, Neubourg and Martorano (2012) that social protection mechanisms included social insurance instruments which allowed families to take care of some of the costs of bringing up their children. Sanfilippo et al. revealed that pure monetary transfers can be used as a means of maintenance in terms of taking care of food, health and education of vulnerable children.

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The results of the current study are also in agreement with those of Gobary (2018) who found that the main social protection services provided by NGOs had to do with meeting the financial needs of poor families. In the same vein, Camara (2022) assessed Nigeria's social protection with respect to the role, policies, capacity, and challenges of government and NGOs and found that, social protection core response mechanisms fall into social assistance and social insurance with the former about benefits in cash or in kind, and the latter about social security financed contributions based on the principles of insurance.

The results are also consistent with those of Checchi and Salvi (2017) who examined how social protection measures influence the distribution of school attendance and educational attainment across African countries. Checchi and Salvi found that social protection took the form of conditional or unconditional cash transfers. From the varied results compared, it is clear that a key social protection measure is to provide financial assistance for maintenance of families and children. In this regard, the results obtained in this study are not in isolation.

The final social protection measure identified in the study was education on child rights. This result is in agreement with the results of Gobary (2018) who revealed that education was used as a means to ensure that the lives of families have improved. Most of the NGOs educated families on how they can ensure that their children are well protected. Further, the results on education on children's rights a social protection measure confirm what was found by Mohajan (2014). The study of Mohajan in Bangladesh revealed that the government had as part of its social protection schemes, the provision of education on child rights. According to Mohajan, this was because it

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was realized that child abuses are common matters and both children and parents were not aware about the child rights. In most cases, people were not aware of the laws regarding child abuse and took those violence issues as common matters.

In the same light, Checchi and Salvi (2017) found that one social protection measures for children was education. Checchi and Salvi argued that education makes a difference in ensuring that there is social protection of students. Additional education in the young generation translates into less need for social protection when they are adults: on average, they will be better employed and less exposed to the risk of unemployment, thus killing two birds with one stone. Moreover, Moonga and Green (2016) examined the risks and vulnerabilities that affect children in Zambia and revealed that education on the rights of children is one of the measures for social protection. When people within societies are educated on the rights of children, it is more likely that children would not be abused and would be protected in all their activities.

The results obtained in the current study however did not support some existing studies. For instance, in this study, it was realised that social protection measures were carried out by stakeholders both government and non-governmental. However, in the study of Ward and Seager (2010), social welfare services were provided by non-governmental organisations with the local and provincial government not being involved mostly because of lack of funds. This gives the indication that probably, the government in Ghana paid some attention to social protection of children compared to other countries.

Additionally, in the current study, LEAP was not mentioned as some of social protection measures available. This contrasted other Ghanaian studies like Agyemang, Antwi and Abane (2014) who revealed that the LEAP programme has been contributing fairly substantially to alleviating the plight of the vulnerable and the excluded. This

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sends the signal that either LEAP is not effectively implemented in all areas of the country. As a result, some vulnerable people do not benefit. This calls for more effective implementation of the LEAP measure particularly in areas where children are vulnerable and excluded.

Moreover, unlike the current study where education on rights of children was found to be a social protection measure, some existing studies like that of Goldacre and Hood (2022) found social protection measures to be only rescuing from abusive situations. The indication is that the social protection measures in the current study are far comprehensive for the child than in some other settings.

In connection to the theories in the study, the relative deprivation theory can be said to have been confirmed. The results showed that the social protection measures available were 'rescue and recovery', 'child maintenance and protection from abuse' and 'education on child rights. Relative deprivation theory speaks of how deprivation of necessary resources can affect social protection (Liddell, 2021). Therefore, providing maintenance resources for children and ensuring their recovery are key part of the relative deprivation theory.

Depriving children of their childhood rights clearly spelt out in the children's act of 1998 (Act 560) whilst others freely enjoy such right; maintenance and necessary resources can affect their self-esteem and form the bases for future rebelliousness against authority. The discussion above has shown clearly that the social protection measures available for children were 'rescue and recovery', 'child maintenance and protection from abuse' and 'education on child rights. In seeking to ensure that children

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are protected in Winneba, these social protection measures are put in place by child protection stakeholders.

The study's findings indicated that although certain social protection measures, including the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme, school feeding initiatives, and child and family welfare services, exist to assist vulnerable children, their execution is frequently insufficient, disjointed, and inadequately coordinated. This indicates a divergence from the norms of justice and equity according to Social Justice Theory. The theory posits that social systems should be organised to prioritise the needs of the most disadvantaged (Rawls, 1971). The restricted scope and efficacy of these measures indicate that at-risk children are not obtaining their equitable allocation of public resources and safeguards. Moreover, Social Justice Theory underscores the necessity of both redistribution and recognition (Fraser, 2008), indicating that, in addition to offering material assistance, systems must also confront cultural and structural obstacles that marginalise children. The existing deficiencies in social protection delivery in Winneba can be viewed as a social injustice, wherein children's rights to development, participation, and protection are undermined by structural inequities.

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4.3.3 Deployment of Social Protection Mechanisms in the Protection of Vulnerable Children

The third objective of the study was to find out how social protection mechanisms are deployed in the protection of children in Winneba. The results showed that social protection measures are deployed in Winneba through 'investigation and mediation', 'collaboration' and 'public sensitisation'. The participants indicated that through these means, social protection mechanisms are brought to the doorsteps of children and the community as a whole.

Concerning investigation and mediation, the participants noted that mostly in providing intervention for children, they carry out investigations and then mediate the situation. The results support the results of Chingonikaya and Salehe (2019) who examined the contribution of law enforcement institutions in protecting street children's rights in Tanzania and found that some of the street children's rights for protection were being violated and that one way to ensure that children are protected was to investigate and prosecute those who abuse children. Chingonikaya and Salehe emphasized that social protection of children could be carried out through investigating and prosecuting those who abuse children.

In a similar vein, the results of the current study are in line with the results of Djanggih, Thalib, Baharuddin, Qamar and Ahmar (2018) that the form of cybercrime experienced by the child as a victim dramatically increases every year and still seems to be weak in law enforcement. The researchers concluded that children can be protected through the efforts of law enforcement. The meaning is that children going through abusive situations need to be assisted and mediation carried out on behalf of the children.

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Further, Kakuru, Rukooko and Tusabe (2019) sought to examine social protection mechanisms for children living on the streets of Uganda, a case study of Kampala and found that there was in-kind social protection support for children in the form of mediating in their vulnerable situations. This was confirmed in the current study. Specifically, Kakuru et al. revealed that children suffering several human right abuse situations had to be rescued after investigations and mediation in the situations.

The study found that the other means of deploying social protection measures was through collaboration. This finding was consistent with those of Verpoorten and Verschraegen (2008) that in sub-Saharan Africa, social protection mechanisms were deployed in such a way that there was an interplay between formal and informal mechanisms as well as between different actors such as the government, international organizations, NGOs, communities, and families. In a similar manner, the results of the current study are in line with those of Brenyah (2018) who assessed the outcome of the implementation of Free Basic Education in Africa, using Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi as a test case and found that there was the need for constant stakeholder interaction and collaboration in order to fully implement social protection measures.

The final means of deploying social protection measures identified in the current study was public sensitization. This is consistent with what was reported by UNICEF (2009) that awareness-raising activities to ensure that the general public, parents, authorities and children are aware of children's rights was a means of deploying social protection measures. In a similar vein, Mose (2015) revealed that there is urgent need for government to sensitize people on policies and laws governing OVC. This was confirmed in the current study. Also, the findings of the current study are consistent

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with those of Olafsen et al. (2018) that social protection can be carried out through public sensitization.

The outcomes of the current study that, child protection agencies go through investigating abusive situations and mediating to find solutions for the children, collaborated with each other as well as the community members in ensuring that children are protected and engaged in public sensitisation as a means of ensuring social protection for children contrasted some existing literature. For instance, Goldacre and Hood (2022) indicated that social protection of children has shifted from prevention to intervention in children's social care. In the current study, public sensitisation is a means of preventing any form of abuse from happening and as such it can be said that prevention was part of the means of deploying social protection. This was different from what was indicated by Goldacre and Hood (2022).

Additionally, the outcomes of the current study showed that collaboration was a means of deploying social protection measures. However, in the 2020 report by the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), social protection funding in African countries was mainly done by NGOs and that governments did not do much. Thus, in the current study, government and non-governmental agencies collaborated but the same could not be said of ACPF report. The Social Rupture Theory speaks of the fact changes in the social environment of an individual can affect the social protection of the individual (Chirwa, 2002). Therefore, in deploying social protection measures, mediating and investigating in the social environment of the child can be a means of ensuring the social protection of the child. For instance, if the child lives in an environment where he is abused, investigations can be carried out and mediation done so that the child is moved to a safer environment where they are protected.

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Additionally, there can be a rupture in society when children who are seen to be the next generation are not well protected. So, in deploying social protection mechanism all actors such as government agencies, NGO's, religious bodies, educational institutions, community- leaders and parents need to collaborate and to be sensitive to ensure smooth deployment of social protection mechanisms.

Generally, the results of the current study as well as the results of the other studies discussed have all consistently shown that social protection can be deployed in different means. These include 'investigation and mediation', 'collaboration' and 'public sensitisation'. In the study area, child protection agencies go through investigating abusive situations and mediating to find solutions for the children. Also, the child protection agencies collaborated with each other as well as the community members in ensuring that children are protected. Finally, it was shown that child protection agencies engaged in public sensitisation as a means of ensuring social protection for children.

The study's conclusions align with Social Justice Theory by emphasising how systemic disparities and institutional constraints obstruct equitable protection for vulnerable children. The study indicated that despite the existence of social protection programmes, their execution is hindered by insufficient budget, poor inter-agency cooperation, and restricted access for marginalised children. This illustrates a deficiency in distributive and procedural justice from a Social Justice standpoint, as the advantages of protective measures are inequitably distributed, and impacted groups are not substantively engaged in decision-making processes (Rawls, 1971; Fraser, 2008). The theory asserts that for justice to be realised, institutions must prioritise the needs of the most disadvantaged, guarantee equitable access to services, and foster participation and acknowledgement. The study's findings highlight the necessity for a more

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equitable, inclusive, and rights-based implementation of child protection measures in accordance with social justice principles.

4.3.4 Challenges to the Social Protection of Vulnerable Children

The study had the objective of finding out the challenges to the social protection of children. The results showed that the main challenges hindering the social protection of children were financial challenges, traditional or cultural challenges, political or institutional challenges and ignorance or lack of awareness. With regard to financial challenges, the participants mentioned that the stakeholders responsible for the social protection of children (DOVVSU, Department of Social Welfare, CHRAJ etc.) sometimes lacked the financial resources to carry out some of their social protection projects. This was a challenge to their success. Aside that challenge, the participants also mentioned that because of poverty in the study area, most parents and adults 'used' children to engage in works which children should not be doing like fishing activities. This was considered to be a challenge in the study area.

The results on financial challenges are consistent with the results of Porter and Dornan (2010) that the main challenges to the social protection of children was that there was not a lot of investments to match the social protection measures put in place. This is because of the lack of finances. In a similar vein, Skhosana, Schenck and Botha (2014) found that the funding required for ensuring the sustainability of social protection is insufficient and as such there was scarcity of resources. In this regard, it is reported that in low-income countries, only 1 in 5 of the poorest are covered by any type of social protection programmes (eg, cash, in-kind transfers, social pensions, etc.) (World Bank Group, 2018).

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Additionally, the findings on financial challenges confirm the results of Amekuedi (2016) that economic hardship led most children to the street to work to support themselves and their families. Amekuedi added that there was a growing norm where children were expected to contribute to the economic sustenance of their families, thus, resulting in more and more parents sending their children to work in the streets seeing nothing wrong with it.

The results of the current study also give support to the results of Boadu (2017) that poverty was a major challenge in social protection and promotion of children. Also, the results of the current study are consistent with the outcomes of the study of Handayani, Carraro, Villarroel and Bongestabs (2018) who assessed the fiscal requirements for meeting these social protection-related targets in 16 developing member countries and found that in Myanmar, there is little public spending on social protection and programme coverage is extremely low. The huge resources required to finance the social protection agenda of the SDGs will require a progressive expansion of the social protection supply- and demand-side investments in Myanmar.

Aside the financial challenges, the results showed the existence of traditional or cultural challenges. The participants noted that these are the lifestyles or cultural characteristics of people in the community which go against the rights of children. For example, engaging children in a lot of hard work like fishing. The results support that of Amekuedi (2016) that parents did not see anything wrong with engaging children in street work because that was the lifestyle of the communities.

The results of the current study are also consistent with the results of UNICEF's (2009) report which showed that harmful traditional or religious attitudes and practices, which

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remain deeply entrenched in many parts of Africa are mostly hindrances to social protection of children. These traditional practices make adults treat children as people who do not have any rights and therefore cannot speak up when mistreated.

The results on the political or institutional challenges also confirmed several existing studies in the literature. For instance, Aurino and Giunti (2022) reviewed evidence of the impact of emergency cash, food, and other in-kind transfers implemented by governments or humanitarian actors on child development in different contexts. After a comprehensive review, the study found political or institutional challenges to be hindering the social protection of children. These challenges had to do with political interference in the duties of child protection agencies as well as the lack of political support. Also, the lack of resources for the institutions responsible for child protection were identified by the participants as institutional challenges hindering the social protection of children.

The results are in agreement with those of Dalinpuo and Nasse (2020) that there were institutional challenges that affect the implementation of the social protection programmes. Dalinpuo and Nasse also mentioned that the very basic challenge was the lack of political will and commitment to addressing the issue of social protection for vulnerable children. This was reflected in government failure to resource the departments and agencies which are mandated by law to provide the rather complex issue of social protection for the right target.

Additionally, the results of the current study are consistent with the results of UNICEF's (2009) report which showed that the failure of state institutions to provide adequate services for children was a challenge for social protection of children. Also,

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the study of Moonga (2015) focused on the social protection of vulnerable children in Zambia and revealed that in order for social protection for vulnerable children in Zambia to be effective, political will is needed in the provision of social protection for vulnerable groups, especially children, through legislative and policy frameworks. The final challenge identified in the study had to do with ignorance or lack of awareness. The participants noted that social protection of children is hindered because there is a general lack of awareness about the rights of children. Without adequate knowledge on child's rights, people would not know if they are violating the rights of children.

The results on ignorance or lack of awareness give support to the findings of Debalkie and Eriksen (2019) who examined the challenges facing the implementation of children's rights to protection and revealed that most people generally lacked awareness of the rights of children. In the same vein, Okoye (2011) sought to find out if residents of Nsukka town in Enugu state were aware of the Child's Rights Acts and concluded that general awareness about the protection of the rights of children was low in the communities. This was found to be a challenge to social protection of children in the current study. Moreover, the results of in relation to lack of awareness are also in agreement with those of Anne and Ong'ondo (2013) that people are not sufficiently aware about the rights of children. This presented significant challenge to ensuring the social protection of children within the society.

Overall, the current study has shown that financial, traditional or cultural, political or institutional and ignorance or lack of awareness were the main challenges hindering the social protection of children. Some existing studies reported all these challenges to be present in their study settings. For instance, the study of Awudu (2022) showed that social intervention programmes were seen positively but lacked adequate financial

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resources in its implementation, stakeholders' consultation and collaboration were seen as ineffective, monitoring and evaluation of the policy objectives were seen as ineffective due to institutional bureaucracy and bottlenecks, and there was no single budget allocation for the policy.

Similarly, Olafsen, Rukooko, Iversen and Andreassen (2018) noted that the state of Uganda's efforts to respect and realize its obligations towards children living in children's homes was inadequate and there were gaps in the effectiveness of social protection of children. The results of the current study are also in agreement with those of Ayele (2021) also revealed that negative social construct of children, culturally embedded decisions and practices, poverty and deprivation, gaps in legislative frameworks, lack of resources, coordination, and commitment among responsible actors are identified as major challenges that impede the enforcement of child rights system.

Further, the outcomes of the current study which showed that financial, traditional or cultural, political or institutional and ignorance or lack of awareness were the main challenges hindering the social protection of children are consistent with those of Trinity, Rene and Sone (2021). Trinity et al. examined the challenges preventing the full implementation of children's right to education in Cameroon and found that the existence of several challenges that prevents the full implementation of children's right in Cameroon ranged from social, cultural, political, and economic.

The results of the current study however contradict the results of Jones, Ahadzie and Doh (2009) that a key challenge facing child-sensitive social protection policies and programmes has to do with the strengthening of protection systems through integration

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within a broader package of social protection initiatives. The report of UNICEF (2018) also found that one key challenge of social protection of children is that governments do not always monitor child poverty, and poor children are not given the attention they deserve. The issues of monitoring and integration were not found as part of the challenges in the current study. The contradictions identified could give the indication that in the study setting, monitoring was not a challenge as the government agencies were already doing monitoring.

In several countries, social protection of children has been inefficient. For instance, although some countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Mongolia, have achieved or almost achieved universal coverage of social protection, a number of social protection measures are still struggling with limited coverage, inadequate benefit levels, and disproportionate distribution of the benefits (ILO-UNICEF, 2019). From the forgoing, it is clear that despite its emergence, social protection has not been a reality for the majority of the world's population (Economic and Social Council, 2018).

Further, in the current study, it was shown that the shelters where children were taken to, were mostly belonging to the NGOs and as a result the children could not stay there for the duration stipulated in the child protection policy in Ghana. According to the child protection policy in Ghana, children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect are supposed to be placed in temporary care, such as shelters or foster care, for a maximum period of 6 months (Ghana Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2018). However, in the current study, some of the NGOs could not keep the rescued children at their shelters that long because their shelters were not enough and they did not have enough funds to take care of the children that long. From the results of the current study and the other studies discussed, it is clear that there are

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different challenges hindering the social protection of children. These challenges have been discussed in the context of the current study.

The findings underscore systemic disparities and institutional deficiencies that hinder children from receiving equitable protection and care. The study identified problems including insufficient financing, inadequate coordination among child protection agencies, restricted access to assistance for children in marginalised areas, and the continuation of detrimental cultural practices. From a social justice standpoint, these problems constitute infringements of distributive and procedural justice, since they deprive marginalised children of equitable access to resources and significant involvement in choices impacting their welfare (Rawls, 1971; Fraser, 2008). The disproportionate distribution of protective services and the neglect of status-based discrimination, including cultural stigmas and exclusion, highlight the necessity for a justice-oriented framework in social protection that not only reallocates resources but also acknowledges and empowers marginalised communities. The issues revealed in the study underscore the significance of Social Justice Theory in promoting institutional reforms that ensure fairness, equity, and the rights of children.

4.3.5 Factors that Enhance Social Protection of Vulnerable Children

The final objective of the study was to find out the factors that enhance social protection of children. The study revealed that community awareness and sensitization, collaboration, funding and provision of resources, and education of stakeholders are factors which can enhance the social protection of children in Winneba and provide them with resilience against any form of abuse and vulnerability.

Awareness and sensitization were identified by the participants as factors enhancing social protection of children because individuals, particularly, adults would know what

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to do in order to ensure that children's rights are not abused. There are some adults who would mistreat children because they do not know they are acting wrongly. Essentially, awareness is significant in enhancing the social protection of children. The results of the current study are in line with those of Naser et al. (2020) that there was the need for education to impact people with knowledge on children's rights. This would help improve the protection of children's rights. Kpalam (2023) examined the child protection ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba in relation to insights from biblical and practical perspectives on child protection and found that there was the need for direct practical actions such as public sensitization on child protection issues. This implies that in order to enhance the social protection of children, public awareness and sensitization is relevant.

Another factor that was identified by the participants to enhance social protection of children is collaboration. The participants in the study were of the view that agencies and institutions responsible for child protection need to come together to be able to improve the social protection of children in Winneba. The partnership and collaboration can help the agencies effectively play their respective roles in the protecting the rights of the children. The results of the current study are in agreement with the results of Nurani and Wike (2020) that there was still a lack of collaborative synergic among stakeholders and that there was the need for collaboration among stakeholders to improve social protection. Similarly, Skhosana et al. (2014) revealed that there was the need for collaboration between the government and the NGOs to ensure effectiveness in services delivered to street children. The results are also consistent with those of Victor (2023) that a strong coordination was needed among stakeholders like parents,

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civil society, government agencies, and local and international NGOs to promote and protect the rights of the child.

Additionally, funding and provision of resources was identified by the participants as a factor which could improve the social protection of children. The participants stressed that without money or funds, it would be difficult to carry out some of the activities or programmes which can help enhance the social protection of children. This implies that funding is very important for children to be protected in the society.

The results on funding confirm the results of Mose (2015) that there exists a significant positive relationship between financing and the implementation of the cash transfer programme for OVC in Kibera slums, Nairobi. In a similar vein, Česnuitytė and Okunevičiūtė-Neverauskienė (2009) reviewed the results of a children's rights study of children without parental care or at risk of losing parental in Lithuania and found that in ensuring that children protected in society, there was the need for the provision of resources needed by child protection agencies. Moreover, Moonga (2015) revealed that there is a need for sustainable resource mobilization to support the agenda of social protection of children.

The final factor identified in the study to help enhance the social protection of children is education of stakeholders. The participants were of the view that agencies responsible for child protection, both government and non-governmental, needed to constantly update their knowledge on children's rights. This was important because according to the participants, without constantly updating their knowledge, the stakeholders and the agencies responsible for child protection cannot fully play their roles.

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The results of the current study support the results of Olafsen et al. (2018) found that there was the need for capacity development at all levels in the Ugandan state and the international society to delimit capacity gaps in order to realize these human rights' obligations. Olafsen et al. added that stakeholders of human rights protection have to constantly improve their level of knowledge about the rights of children and how to protect the rights.

In a similar vein, the results on education of stakeholders are in agreement with those of Okoye (2011) in Nigeria that there was the need for more public enlightenment about the protection of the rights of children among the residents of Nsukka town. Also, social workers and other agencies should improve their level of knowledge so that they can help in the sensitization of residents about children's rights. Also, Anne and Ong'ondo (2013) revealed that in Kenya, to enhance awareness of children's rights, the media like TV and Radio should raise awareness of societal concerns in a balanced way so that pertinent aspects like children's rights are not left unaddressed.

The results of the current study however contradict the outcomes of Altangerel (2020) that a major factor which enhances social protection of children is government monitoring of social protection measures in various communities. Government monitoring was not identified as one of the factors which enhance social protection of children in the current study. The contradiction gives the indication that, probably, the other factors mentioned in the current study were deemed by the participants to be more significant than government monitoring.

Also, according to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2015), to improve child protection system, there is the need for (i) appropriate policies,

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legislation and regulations; (ii) well-defined structures and functions, and adequate capacities; (iii) supportive social norms; (iv) effective promotion, prevention and response actions; (v) high quality evidence and data for decision-making; and (vi) efficient fiscal management and sufficient resource allocation. In the current study, some of the factors were confirmed in the study but others were not confirmed. For instance, the current study did not find appropriate policies, legislation and regulations to be one of the factors. It could be due to the participants not having adequate knowledge about social protection policies, legislations and regulations.

In relation to the theories in the study, the theory of resilience and livelihood approach describes how individuals (vulnerable groups) are placed in safety nets and support from the society in order to prevent them from vulnerability and ensure their survival in the society. The theory explores child protection in terms of livelihood strategies that serve as enhancement despite the roll out of policies to support practically. As a means of resilience some NGO's and government institutions or actors of social protection of children come in to provide collaboration, funds, resources and even shelter to absorb risk.

The Relative Deprivation theory speaks of ensuring that children are not denied of the required resources. Thus, funding and provision of resources can help enhance the social protection of children. Overall, it has been established through the discussion that community awareness and sensitization, collaboration, funding and provision of resources, and education of stakeholders were factors which can enhance the social protection of children in Winneba. All these factors have been shown in some existing studies. For instance, Mose (2015) revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between the legal framework and the implementation of the cash transfer

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programme for OVC in Kibera slums, Nairobi. From the results, it was concluded that the main factors affecting the implementation of cash transfer programme (a social protection mechanism) were finances, targeting, socio-cultural factors and the legal framework.

From the research stance, factors that can enhance Social Protection of children stated above from the findings is viewed from the perspective of transforming vulnerable children from neglect, abuse and poverty. Therefore, providing funding and resources, education stakeholders fostering collaboration among actors and creating community awareness and sensitisation can create an umbrella of resilience which is termed as transformative social protection to transform their current state and provide a safety net for them.

4.4 Summary

This chapter focused on the results and discussion of the study with five research questions being answered in the study. The study revealed that the participants perceived social protection measures in ways that were in line with the literature. They viewed social protection of children as involving identification of children who are abused, providing intervention in case of abuse of their rights as well as protecting their rights in general. This means that the participants viewed social protection of children from the angle of Human Rights.

Also, it was revealed that practical social protection measures in Winneba included rescue and recovery, child maintenance and protection from abuse, and education on child rights. The social protection measures are deployed through investigation and mediation, collaboration and public sensitization. Additionally, the study found that social protection of children was hindered by a variety of challenges such as financial,

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traditional or cultural, political, institutional and ignorance or lack of awareness. Finally, it was found that the factors to enhance social protection of children included public awareness, collaboration, provision of funds and education of stakeholders.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introductions

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. Suggestions for further research and contributions to knowledge are also presented in this chapter.

5.1 Summary

This study aimed to explore the social protection measures in place for children in Winneba township.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Ascertain the perception of stakeholders on social protection of children in the Winneba Township;
2. Explore the social protection measures that are available for children in the Winneba Township;
3. Analyse how social protection mechanisms are deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township;
4. Explore the challenges faced by implementation of social protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township.
5. Examine the factors that enhance social protection of children in the Winneba Township.

The literature reviewed covered both theoretical and empirical studies. The main theories which were reviewed are the Social Rupture theory, the Relative Deprivation Theory and Resilience Theory. Existing studies relating to the study were also reviewed. The research paradigm was the interpretivist. The research approach was the

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qualitative approach while the descriptive case study design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in the Winneba township in the Effutu Municipality. The study sampled 30 participants using purposive and convenience sampling procedures. Data were collected using semi-structured interview guide and focus group discussion guide. Interviews and discussions were recorded and transcribed later. The data collected were analysed thematically.

5.2 Major Findings

The major findings of the study are as follows:

5.2.1 Perception of Stakeholders on Social Protection of children

The perception of actors on social protection of children in the study area influenced by the mandate of the organisation or agent involved. The results showed that social protection of children was perceived by actors as involving identifying, intervening to end abuse of children and protection of children's rights. Thus, social protection of children was viewed as reactive and preventive measure that sought to secure child welfare and child rights. This perception of social protection framed the work of institutions working to protect children. For instance, as DOVVSU focuses on rescue, CHRAJ focuses on protections of their rights.

5.2.2 Social Protection Measures available for Vulnerable Children

The results showed that, generally, the social protection measures available in Winneba are rescuing abused children and putting them in recovery; providing child maintenance and supporting their parents; and educating the children on their rights. Children who were in vulnerable situations were rescued and put through recovery. Other children at risk were provided with 'maintenance' including the financial aid and counselling. As a preventive measure there is general community and public education for all parents

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on child rights and welfare. Finally, some adults who abuse or violate children are arrested and prosecuted as a deterrent measure.

5.2.3 Deployment of Social Protection Mechanism

The study showed that social protection mechanisms deployed in protecting children in Winneba included 'investigation and mediation', 'collaboration' and 'public sensitisation'. It was revealed that through these means, social protection measures are brought to the doorsteps of children and the community as a whole.

5.2.4 Challenges Faced in Implementing Social Protection of Vulnerable Children

The study revealed that the main challenges hindering the social protection of children were financial, traditional or cultural, institutional and political and limited knowledge on child rights. In terms of finance, the stakeholders responsible for the protection of children (DOVVSU, Department of Social Welfare Department, CHRAJ etc.) do not have the significant finances and resources (logistics) to carry out their operations. At the same time, tradition and cultural practices of the indigenous community tended to limit child protection efforts. The cultural characteristics of people in the community which go against the rights of some children include child labour, mostly seen among fishermen and other fish mongers. Limited knowledge on the rights of children hindered the social protection of children. The challenge is that some parents and community members take issues with child social protection efforts. Finally, political appropriateness has led to situations where some child protection efforts have been stifled.

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5.2.5 Factors that can enhance Social Protection of vulnerable children

In enhancing social protection of vulnerable children, the study revealed that community awareness and sensitization, collaboration, funding and provision of resources, and education of stakeholders are factors which can enhance the social protection of children in Winneba. Awareness and sensitization can help because people in the society would know what to do in order to ensure that children's rights are not curtailed. The actors were also of the view that agencies and institutions responsible for child protection need to come together to be able to improve the situation of vulnerable children in Winneba. Also, funding and provision of resources was important because without funds, it would be difficult to carry out some of the activities or programmes which can help enhance the protection of the children.

5.2 Conclusions

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn.

Social protection of children was perceived as involving identifying, intervening to end abuse of children and protection of children's rights. These perceptions are influenced by the actor's mandate and the kind of work they do. None of the actors demonstrated a holistic approach to the social protection of children i.e. rights, needs, socio-economic and risk and vulnerability approaches to social protection of children which is seen in literature. However, the rights and vulnerability approaches were the dominant perception.

The main social protection measures available for children and employed by the actors had to do with rescuing them from abusive environments, providing financial aid and providing education as their rights. Thus, actors like Social Welfare Department, DOVVSU, CHRAJ, and NGOs like Challenging Heights and Pearl House carried out

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these protection measures in the Winneba Township. On this basis, the promotive and preventive measure of child protection was absent at the study area, however, transformative and protective measures were adopted by the actors. This implies that these measures are likely to reduce illiteracy on child protection and forms of abuses.

The mechanisms deployed in protecting them are investigating of abuse cases, mediation, agencies collaborating and creation of public awareness. These mechanisms have the tendency to protect children. However, a better synchronization of activities will help avoid duplication of roles of the actors and ensure equal access to proactive mechanisms.

The social protection of children is hindered by several challenges. The challenges mainly revolved around not having adequate funding and resources for operations, political interference and institutional challenges. Other challenges include traditional or cultural issues within the community and inadequate knowledge on the rights of children in the Winneba township. On this basis, the implementation challenges highlighted in the study can be categorised under the systemic and operational approaches. Therefore, a holistic view is needed to eradicate these challenges to ensure a smooth execution of duties by the actors within the study locale.

Protection of children in the Winneba township can be enhanced through providing adequate funding and resources, collaborating and partnering, creating awareness and sensitization, and building up the knowledge of stakeholders. In ensuring that social protection of children is improved, these factors would have to be put in place. To sum up, the enhancement factors have the potential to create awareness on the need to protect children and mitigate all forms of abuse.

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5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the findings of the study:

Schools in the study area should incorporate child protection elements in their regular school activities and the formation of clubs to provide children with adequate knowledge on their rights and responsibilities. This includes the monitoring of civic education clubs by NCCE and social studies teachers in the locale. This would help create early awareness in children about their rights and the means of ensuring that their rights are protected. The Effutu Municipal Assembly should organise periodic education in a form of workshops, seminars and conferences for all their stakeholders. This can help improve the knowledge of those who work in the field of child protection in Winneba.

The District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) and the District Coordinating officer should strengthen and supervise the work of their various staff under their auspices at the community level to ensure innovation and practical child protection success at the community level. Establishment of more family tribunals with the required personnel to fast track the arrest and prosecution of perpetuators of child abuse in the study locale is also recommended.

Furthermore, government agencies such as DOVVSU, Social Welfare Department, NCCE, CHRAJ etc. should maintain collaboration with non-governmental institutions in the social protection of children in Winneba. Activities and programmes relating to social protection of children should be carried out together to ensure that child protection is at the optimum. There should be efficient collaboration and synchronization of activities of child protection actors to prevent some duplication of roles.

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There should be an improved budgetary allocation from government for agencies responsible for child protection like the Social Welfare Department and DOVVSU. Other corporate organizations within the study locale can equally contribute as part of their social responsibility to support these agencies in carrying out their mandate. This can help them get the funding and resources needed to aid their work.

Agencies such as Social Welfare Department and Community Development, CHRAJ and NCCE should liaise with assembly members and community leaders to organize public sensitization on the rights of children across the entire community. This can help improve knowledge and awareness that community members have concerning the rights of children and the protection of the rights.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes greatly to knowledge in varied ways. Firstly, the study highlighted the fact that stakeholders responsible for children protection had limited understanding of what the concept of social protection entailed. This meant that the policy and practice of child social protection need to be synchronised to ensure a proper integration of all form of protection of children. Without this integration, child social protection will not be grounded in child wellbeing.

This study contributes to the practical understanding of the roles of the major actors of child social protection. The understanding of child social protection significantly contributes to the practical knowledge particularly in relation to the work approach of the institutions. Practically, major actors of child social protection will perform their individual roles better in order to strengthen community-based support systems to foster the social protection of children. The study highlighted that government and non-

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governmental agencies collaborated in the provision of social protection of children. The non-governmental agencies provided shelters for abused and vulnerable children while the government agencies monitored and ensured that the right things were done. In some of the existing literature, monitoring of social protection measures for children was a challenge, and therefore overlooked but in the current study, because of the collaboration, this was not an issue. The contribution made to knowledge is that governmental and non-governmental agencies know the respective roles they have to play in a collaborative manner in ensuring the social protection of children.

This study also contributes to the understanding of resilience, social rupture and relative deprivation theories. The study has shown that these theories are valid in studying social protection of children. Studying social protection of children from the resilience theoretical perspective reflects the ability of children and actors in Winneba to demonstrate remarkable strength in the face of adversity, leveraging social support networks to navigate challenges. Again, the understanding of the social rupture theory justifies the need to pay attention to family breakdowns and economic instability which spearhead child vulnerability which may lead to societal deviation from norms and values. The relative deprivation theory also highlights the need to roll out effective mechanisms and provide adequate funding. Thus, the study has contributed to the existing theories in social protection of children by providing new insights into the implications of the resilience, rupture and relative deprivation theories. The study has shown that in order to ensure an effective social protection of children, stakeholders should apply three theories to ensure work efficiency.

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5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The following suggestions are made for future research:

(i) Future researchers can adopt a mixed methods approach to obtain large number of responses along with depth of information. This is because the current study lacked data from a large number of respondents because of the purely qualitative approach and as a result, the application or generalization of the results may be limited.

(ii) Future researchers can examine social protection from a policy standpoint, by focusing on government officials and the policies aimed at protecting children. This can help examine the effectiveness of child protection policies from the point of view of policy makers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Department of Social Studies Education
University of Education, Winneba
Winneba

Dear Sir/Madam,

Application for clearance to proceed with fieldwork

I am a PhD student at the Department of Social Studies Education. University of Education. Winneba. My research is designed to examine the challenges to the social protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township and explore how child protection mechanisms are deployed. The research seeks to answer five key questions:

1. How do stakeholders in Winneba Township perceive social protection of vulnerable children?
2. What social protection measures are available for vulnerable children in Winneba Township?
3. How arc social protection mechanisms deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in Winneba Township?
4. What arc the challenges to the social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba Township?
5. What are the factors which can enhance the social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba Township?

The research is designed as a qualitative study involving interviews and discussions of everyday issues surrounding the protection of vulnerable Children in Winneba. I intend to focus, particularly on the protection mechanisms, how the mechanisms are deployed, the factors affecting the effectiveness of child protection and challenges to the social protection of children and factors that can enhance the Social Protection of Children in the Winneba Township. It is hoped that the research will contribute to people's understanding of how Ghana's child protection policies are being implemented in the Winneba Township.

I wish to ask for permission to proceed with the fieldwork. You may revert to my supervisors: Dr I. J. Obeng (0249870323) and Dr. G. Y. Dake (0244076855) in case of doubts.

I count on your kind consideration.
Yours sincerely.

Beatrice Benewaa
PhD Candidate Tel: 0241297796

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHILD PROTECTION AGENCIES

Date of interview	
Sex	
Name of Agency	

Verbal informed consent information

I am a PhD student at the Department of Social Studies, University of Education, Winneba and I am conducting a study on social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba Township. I need you to talk to me about your experiences as a child protection officer. The rule of my university requires me to commit to confidentiality, anonymity and other ethical considerations. I am obliged to observe data protection protocols and to grant your right to feedback and withdrawals from the research at any point in time.

During the research period, you may contact me on 0241297796 to give me any new information if you wish to do so. You are free to avoid answering any particular question you do not want to. I will be glad to listen to any concerns you may have at this any other time. You are also free to ask me any questions you may have concerning my research and your participation. I will ask you only five major questions. 1 will need your verbal consent that you arc willingly accepting to participate in the research. Do 1 have your permission to start our discussion?

Introductory discussion

1. Please, tell me something about yourself
2. Please what is your rank and duty in this institution?

Research Question 1: How do you understand social protection of vulnerable children?

Research Question 2: What social protection measures are available for vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

a. What social protection measures are currently available in the Winneba Township?
b. Are there specific social protection measures designed for children in the

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Winneba Township?

c. How are the social protection mechanisms communicated to children and their families in the Winneba Township?
d. Are there any gaps in the social protection measures for children in the Winneba Township?
e. Arc there any partnerships or collaborations between the Winneba Township community and other organizations to support social protection measures for children in the Municipality?

Research Question 3: How are social protection mechanisms deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

a. How are the social protection mechanisms used to protect children in the Winneba Township?
b. I low arc children in need of Social Protection identified in the Winneba Township?
c. What challenges are encountered in deploying social protection mechanisms for children in the Winneba Township?
d. What recommendations will you make to improve the social protection mechanisms/strategies of children in the Winneba Township?

Research Question 5: What are the challenges to Social Protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

a. What are the major challenges to the social protection of children in Winneba Township?
b. I low do these challenges affect the provision of social protection measures for children in the Winneba Township?
c. Are there any challenges related to the identification of children in need of social protection in the Winneba Township?
d. Arc there any challenges related to the implementation and sustainability of social protection measures in the Winneba Township?
e. What are the community's perceptions and attitudes towards the challenges of social protection of children?
f. Do you think the social protection measures for children are working well in the Winneba Township?

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Research Question 4: what are the factors which can enhance the social protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

a. What are the socio- economic factors affecting the social protection of children in the Winneba Township?
b. What are the cultural or traditional factors affecting the social protection of children in Winneba Township?
c. What institutional barriers affect the social protection of children in the Winneba Township?
d. what other factors affect the social protection of children?

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APPENDIX C

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Verbal informed consent information

Hello, I am a PhD student at the Department of Social Studies, University of Education. Winneba and I am conducting a study on social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba Township. I need you to talk to me about your experiences as a child and some of the challenges you have been through. If you can also share some interventions (help), you have received from any person, institution or organization. The rule of my university requires me to commit to confidentiality, anonymity and other ethical considerations. I am obliged to observe data protection protocols and to grant your right to feedback and withdrawals from the research at any point in time.

You are free to avoid answering any particular question you do not want to. I will be glad to listen to any concerns you may have at this and any other time. You arc also free to ask me any questions you may have concerning my research and your participation. 1 will need your verbal consent that you are willingly accepting to participate in the research. Do I have your permission to start our discussion?

Research Question 3: How are social protection mechanisms deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in Winneba?

a. What are some of the abusive situations you have experienced?
b. Can we discuss as a group: what are some ways in which we have been protected from harm in the past?
c. Can you share stories of how you were rescued from an abusive situation? What did the rescue process look like?
d. As a group, can we identify the different types of individuals or organizations that often provide rescue or support? What roles did they play?
e. Aside the team that came to your rescue, do you know of any institution that rescues children like you?
f. Let's discuss: what are the things that would make us feel most protected and supported in our daily lives?

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APPENDIX d

Interview Guide for Children

Date of interview	
Sex	
Age	

Verbal informed consent information

Hello, I am a PhD student at the Department of Social Studies, University of Education. Winneba and I am conducting a study on social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba Township. I need you to talk to me about your experiences as a child and some of the challenges you have been through. If you can also share some interventions (help), you have received from any person, institution or organization. The rule of my university requires me to commit to confidentiality, anonymity and other ethical considerations. I am obliged to observe data protection protocols and to grant your right to feedback and withdrawals from the research at any point in time.

During the research period, you may contact me on 0241297796 to give me any new information if you wish to do so. You are free to avoid answering any particular question you do not want to. I will be glad to listen to any concerns you may have at this and any other time. You arc also free to ask me any questions you may have concerning my research and your participation. 1 will need your verbal consent that you are willingly accepting to participate in the research. Do I have your permission to start our discussion?

Research Question 3: How are social protection mechanisms deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in Winneba?

g. Do you stay in Winneba?
h. Whom do you stay with?
i. Do you go to school?
j. How old are you?
k. Have you been rescued from any abusive situation before?
l. Have you been protected from any form of harm before?
m. How were you rescued?

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n. What were the processes involved?
o. Who came to your rescue?
p. Aside the team that came to your rescue, do you know of any institution that rescues children like you?
q. Do you know of any child protection mechanisms in place for you?
r. Do you know of your rights as a child?
s. How do you want to be protected?
t. What are some of the things you want to be done for you to feel safe at home or school?

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APPENDIX E

Interview Guide for Parents

Date of interview	
Sex	

Verbal informed consent information

I am a PhD student at the Department of Social Studies, University of Education, Winneba and I am conducting a study on social protection of vulnerable children in Winneba Township. I need you to talk to me about your experiences as a child protection officer. The rule of my university requires me to commit to confidentiality, anonymity and other ethical considerations. I am obliged to observe data protection protocols and to grant your right to feedback and withdrawals from the research at any point in time.

During the research period, you may contact me on 0241297796 to give me any new information if you wish to do so. You are free to avoid answering any particular question you do not want to. I will be glad to listen to any concerns you may have at this any other time. You are also free to ask me any questions you may have concerning my research and your participation. I will ask you only five major questions. 1 will need your verbal consent that you arc willingly accepting to participate in the research. Do 1 have your permission to start our discussion?

Introductory discussion

3. Please, tell me something about yourself
4. Please, how long have you stayed in this township?

What social protection measures are available for vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

f. What social protection measures are currently available in the Winneba Township?
g. Are there specific social protection measures designed for children in the Winneba Township?
h. How are the social protection mechanisms communicated to children and their families in the Winneba Township?
i. Are there any gaps in the social protection measures for children in the Winneba Township?

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How are social protection mechanisms deployed in the protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

e. How are the social protection mechanisms used to protect children in the Winneba Township?

f. What challenges are encountered in deploying social protection mechanisms for children in the Winneba Township?

What are the challenges to Social Protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

g. What are the major challenges to the social protection of children in Winneba Township?

h. Are there any challenges related to the identification of children in need of social protection in the Winneba Township?

i. What are the community's perceptions and attitudes towards the challenges of social protection of children?

j. Do you think the social protection measures for children are working well in the Winneba Township?

What are the factors which can enhance the social protection of vulnerable children in the Winneba Township?

e. What are the socio- economic factors affecting the social protection of children in the Winneba Township?

f. What are the cultural or traditional factors affecting the social protection of children in Winneba Township?

g. What institutional barriers affect the social protection of children in the Winneba Township?

h. What other factors affect the social protection of children?

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APPENDIX E

Letter of Introduction



27th July, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MS. BEATRICE BENEWAA

We write to introduce Ms. Beatrice Benewaa to your outfit. She is a Ph. D. Social Studies student with registration number 202114059 from the above-named Department.

She is undertaking research on the topic "***Ghana's Social Protection Programme: A Study of Child Protection in Effutu***".

We would be grateful if she could be offered any assistance she may need to enable her work on her thesis.

We count on your usual co-operation.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Cletus Ngaaso
For: Ag. Head of Department