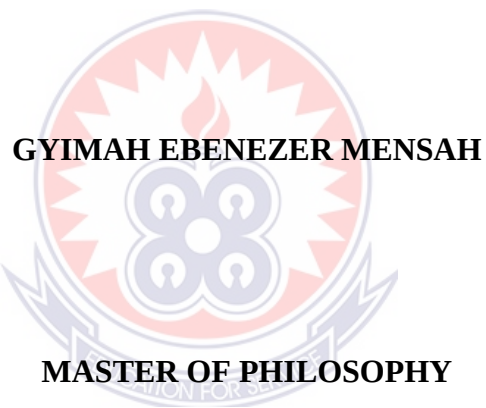


UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**Ghanaian children understanding and realization of their rights: a
phenomenological perspective of students at Juaboso senior high school**



2024

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**GHANAIAN CHILDREN UNDERSTANDING AND REALIZATION OF
THEIR RIGHTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF
STUDENTS AT JUABOSO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

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**A thesis in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Center for Human Rights,
Conflict and Peace Studies, submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Human Rights, Conflict and Peace Studies)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

MARCH 2024

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Gyimah Ebenezer Mensah, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in public works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Professor Harrison Kwame Golo, (Principal Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my profound appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Professor Harrison Kwame Golo for his thorough evaluation of this work. I had the courage to complete the milestones for this piece because of his insistence on quality and timely completion of this research.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family.



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ABSTRACT

International human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), have continuously aspired to advance child rights and project children into active roles and subjects of human rights. However, implementation gaps still exist, particularly in developing countries where traditional perceptions and realities often contradict the ideals of these human rights mechanisms. In Ghana, these barriers persist despite the country's record as the first country to ratify and subsequently harmonize the UNCRC into its national laws. To enhance the realization of child rights, there is therefore the need to investigate children's knowledge and understanding of their rights. Consequently, this study explored Juaboso Senior High School students' knowledge and experience of child rights. Guided by the qualitative research approach and phenomenological design, data were collected via semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. As per the study's findings, most students perceived child rights as inherent freedoms, however, there was confusion about the understanding of rights and responsibilities. Again, the primary sources of information on child rights were highlighted as schools, the media and religious institutions. Nonetheless, there was a noticeable gap in understanding participation rights and specific legislative instruments like the UNCRC and the Children's Act of Ghana. Moreover, it was evident that when children were aware of their rights, it led to mutual respect, empowerment to report abuses and advocacy, fostering positive community change. Also, numerous socio-cultural, religious and economic barriers, impeded the realization of child rights. The study highlights the importance of media campaigns integrating insights from children and utilizing local languages to enhance knowledge and understanding about child rights. Also, leveraging platforms presented by religious groups and schools in sensitization on child rights were mentioned. The findings highlight the need for enhanced education, media-based awareness creation, reinforcement of legislative frameworks and multi-sectoral collaborations to improve children's understanding and knowledge about their rights. These findings contribute valuable insights to the child rights discourse and propose practical strategies to enhance their realization and protection.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The existing agreement on human rights acknowledged by the international community has been shaped by the worldwide endorsement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) in 1948, following World War II (Donnelly, 2013). The UNDHR mandates that everyone, regardless of their sex, age, tribe, country of origin, social status, or economic standing, is entitled to dignity, respect and the human rights they inherently possess from birth (Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013). Consequently, the concept of universality and indivisibility of certain fundamental rights symbolizes the beginning of widespread global respect for human rights. It is widely believed that human rights are inherent and universal, representing fundamental entitlements or standards that ensure individuals, including children, live with dignity (Ame, 2012). This suggests that human rights are intrinsic, applicable everywhere and cannot be revoked by anyone. It also implies that human rights are grounded on the principles of justice and equality, unaffected by social status, religious beliefs, race or geographical boundaries (Donnelly, 2013; Shestack, 2017).

In understanding childhood, there is a prevailing notion that children are the future of every society (Darbyshire, 2019). However, there is still a prevalent view that children lack agency and rights (Karugu, 2013). Moreover, many people, particularly in developing countries, perceive children as possessions of families, dependent on adults and deserving only of charity, therefore denying them any form of human rights (Søgaard, 2019). This perspective on childhood makes children more susceptible to human rights abuses and violations, particularly in developing economies with high poverty rates (ILO, 2012; Krauss, 2013). For instance, according to the International

Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) report (2017 cited in Golo et al., 2018 p.3), Africa has the highest number of children engaged in child labour (72.1 million), followed by Asia and the Pacific (62.1 million), the Americas (10.7 million), the Arab States (1.2 million), and Europe and Central Asia (5.5 million).

Ghanaian homes, families, schools and communities, human rights violations such as physical abuse, sexual assault, emotional abuse, neglect and deprivation are perpetrated by parents, guardians, family members, teachers, neighbours and strangers against children (Ghana Statistical Service & MoGCSP, 2016). These abuses could lead not only to the death of children but also inflict harm, suffering, humiliation and increase their vulnerability. (WHO, 2024).

The susceptibility of children to such abuses, has led to the development a framework that promotes their well-being and inclusivity (Manful & Manful, 2014). This framework also aimed to enhance children's capacity to reach their full potential.

The recognition and understanding that children have distinct rights and responsibilities based on their developmental stage as members of families and communities, gave rise to children's rights. Children have their specific rights that should not be infringed upon in any way. Consequently, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly as a human rights instrument solely focused on protecting children (Hutchison, 2013; Apt et al., 2011).

The UNCRC emphasizes that children should have a minimum standard of living, which encompasses basic human rights concepts (UNCRC, 2006). Similarly, Appiah (2018) states that the UNCRC was developed on the fundamental premise that children constitute a distinct social group with a set of universal rights and fundamental protections. These include the right to provision (such as education, adequate nutrition,

economic well-being, and healthcare), the right to protection (from neglect, abuse, exploitation, and violence), and the right to participation (the need for children to be involved in decision-making, especially regarding matters that affect them). The UNCRC refers to these categorizations as its "3Ps." State parties that have ratified the UNCRC are obligated to uphold and safeguard these rights (Ame, 2012; Ame, 2011). Ratification of the UNCRC also imposes a duty on state parties to educate both children and adults about the rights outlined in the UNCRC, as stated in Article 42, through appropriate and active means. The UNCRC recognizes that adults as well as children (through active and meaningful involvement), are key actors to the realization of children's rights (Kamau, 2013).

In 1990, Ghana became the first country to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child without any reservations (Hutchison, 2013; Twum-Danso, 2012; Agbenyega, 2012). Ghana also made a similar commitment by signing the 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (also known as the "Banjul Charter") and incorporated the relevant provisions from these international agreements into its national laws. Consequently, provisions in the UNCRC and the Banjul Charter could be found in Chapter 5 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution, the Child and Family Welfare Policy (2014), the Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694), the Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653) and Ghana's Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) and its amendment. Despite the prompt ratifications and legal provisions in the Ghanaian local laws, the daily realities of numerous Ghanaian children contradict what is stated in these laws (particularly in the context of the UNCRC and the Children's Act of Ghana) (Twum-Danso, 2012). Furthermore, it remains largely unknown how much Ghana has done to fulfil its obligations under Article 42, especially concerning children. Therefore, this research aimed at investigating whether children in a typical rural cocoa farming setting

of Juaboso Community, understood their rights as per the “3Ps” of the UNCRC. Additionally, the study sought to explore ways of enhancing children's understanding of their rights in the study area.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Despite this unique role, children experience an elevated risk of marginalization and human rights violations (Golo, Odumah & Dzaka, 2017). Consequently, children remain in a state of vulnerability and require significant care and protection. Globally, alarming statistics reveal that six out of every ten children experience physical abuse in their homes, 215 million children under the age of seventeen are engaged in child labour and between 22 to 50 percent of children worldwide are affected by child trafficking (UNICEF, 2014). Moreover, at the sub-regional and national levels, there are limited investments in child-right protection and promotion programmes (Inguanzo, 2017; UNICEF Ghana, 2020). Evidently, in Ghana, efforts to advance children's rights and well-being are being hampered due to inadequate budget and funding of relevant child rights programmes (Twum-Danso, 2012; UNICEF Ghana, 2020). Hence, Ghana like other less-developed countries, attributes the lack of realization and implementation of children's rights to a general lack of financial and human resources (Appiah, 2018). Moreover, there is a lack of coordination among the numerous stakeholders involved in child rights protection initiatives, leading to overlapping responsibilities and fragmented efforts (UNICEF Ghana, 2020; Mbise, 2013). At the community level, inconsistencies between customary practices and state legislation regarding children's rights further complicate the situation. Therefore, within local Ghanaian communities, there are challenging and contentious understanding of children's rights (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018). Most parents and guardians believe that the concept of children's rights is foreign to traditional Ghanaian customs, leading to frustration about the current state of

advocacy and progress in advancing children's rights (Mbise, 2013). Physical abuse, verbal and emotional abuse, sexual violence, denial of the right to education and silencing of children's voices are daily realities for many children in Ghana (Appiah, 2018; Mhaka-Mutepfa, Maree & Chiganga, 2014). Besides, child labour abounds, especially in most rural farming settings (Golo et al., 2018). Furthermore, Article 12 of the UNCRC stipulates that children who are capable of expressing their thoughts should be consulted in decisions about their well-being (right to participation). However, society's general perception contradicts this provision, considering children as incompetent and immature to make meaningful judgments (Mhaka-Mutepfa et al., 2014). Preliminary investigations conducted through observation at the study area revealed that children are rarely consulted on matters affecting them, even when they have the capacity (in terms of mental growth and maturity) to contribute meaningfully to decisions. These circumstances deny many children the opportunity to experience a proper childhood and it further impinges on the attainment of their full potential (Mhaka-Mutepfa et al., 2014). Again, per Article 42 of the UNCRC, it is required that “States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known to adults and children alike by appropriate and active means.” Kiprotich and Ong'ondo's (2013) argue that children's rights cannot be realized and practiced without children (the right holders) understanding what their rights are. Children's lack of understanding about their rights is a major hindrance to the realization of these rights (Twum-Danso, 2012). Meanwhile, in Juaboso, it is uncertain whether children have an understanding about their rights as prescribed in the UNCRC. Perhaps, children at Juaboso are exposed to these same vulnerabilities due to right holders' and duty bearers' ignorance and/or misinformed perspectives on children's rights. This study was

therefore motivated by the belief that children's understanding of their rights is crucial for the successful implementation and realization of same.

1.3 Research Purpose

To ascertain whether students at Juaboso Senior High School understand child rights.

1.4 Research Objectives

- To investigate the perspectives on knowledge and understanding of child rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School.
- To explore the barriers to the realization of children's rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School.
- To ascertain how students of Juaboso Senior High School can benefit from understanding their rights.
- To explore how knowledge and understanding on child rights can be enhanced among students of Juaboso Senior High School.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are Juaboso Senior High School students' perspectives on knowledge and understanding about child rights?
- What barriers do students at Juaboso Senior High School face in realizing their rights?
- In what ways can students at Juaboso Senior High School benefit from understanding their rights?
- How can the knowledge and understanding on child rights among students at Juaboso Senior High School be improved?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study holds significance for social work practice, research and policy.

- **Social Work Practice:** According to IFSW (2012), social justice and human rights are fundamental principles in the field of social work. Therefore, social workers could utilize the study's findings and recommendations to develop appropriate advocacy materials and tools aimed at promoting the realization of children's rights in Ghanaian communities. Additionally, this study aims to positively impact the daily practices and experiences of social workers by suggesting mechanisms to overcome barriers and enhance the implementation of children's rights in Ghana.
- **Research:** The findings of the study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on children's rights in Ghana. This research addresses the gap in limited research conducted in rural Ghana regarding the realization and implementation of children's rights. The recommendations proposed by this study could serve as a reference for further research in the field of children's rights.
- **Policy:** The conclusions and recommendations of the study offer valuable data for decision-makers and stakeholders concerned with children's issues, including the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, UNICEF, and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This information could inform the formulation and implementation of relevant policies on children's rights. Additionally, the outcomes and recommendations of this research may prompt significant amendments and revisions to existing policies and laws pertaining to children's rights in Ghana and the wider sub-region.

1.7 Delimitations

The study focuses specifically on Juaboso Senior High School, which is located in Juaboso community. Juaboso Senior High School has all the academic departments of a Senior High School under the auspices of the Ghana Education Service. Furthermore,

Juaboso Senior High School admits both boarding and day students. Moreover, Juaboso Senior High School has a well-established administrative structure, having been in existence for over three decades. Furthermore, the researcher's prior contextual experiences, in respect of enhancing child rights at the study area as a social worker motivated the conduct of the study at Juaboso Senior High School.

1.9 Overview of the Study

The study comprises six chapters. Chapter one encompasses the background, problem statement, research purpose, research objectives, research questions, significance, delimitations and definitions of key terms and overview of the study. Chapter two reviews relevant literature, develops a theoretical framework and identifies relevant gaps in existing studies which requires addressing or bridging. The research methodology is discussed in chapter three, covering the research paradigm, approach, design, pilot study, study area, target population, study population, inclusion and exclusion criteria, sampling technique, sample size, data collection, data handling, data analysis, ethical considerations and ensuring rigour/trustworthiness. Chapter four presents the findings. Chapter five presents the discussion, whilst chapter six encompasses conclusions, recommendations, implications of the findings for future research, and their relevance.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The dialogue surrounding child rights gained momentum following the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. This suggests that the UNCRC's adoption ignited a motivation concerning children's rights. This in turn sparked a growing drive in scholarly work focused on the subject of children's rights. This chapter contains a review of relevant literature on children's rights and theoretical frameworks appropriate for understanding the child rights' phenomenon. The literature review was of paramount importance as it helped pinpoint the areas of need, as well as highlight significant areas of consensus and contention in both contemporary and historical studies on children's rights. The review covered literature from five different themes related to child rights namely: international and national legislative instruments on child rights, children's knowledge and understanding of their rights, barriers to the realization of child rights, benefits children could derive from knowing about their rights, and ways to enhance child rights knowledge.

2.1. International Legislative Instruments

A range of international legislative instruments exists globally to promote and protect the rights of children. These instruments provide a framework of rights and safeguards for children, guiding states in recognizing, securing, and realizing these rights. Notable international legislative instruments related to children's rights include the 1924 Geneva Declaration, the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

Child (UNCRC). These instruments aim to ensure the rights and well-being of children worldwide. The acceptance of these international instruments has prompted the development of significant national laws and policies dedicated to protecting and promoting children's rights.

2.1.1 The Geneva Declaration

The 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, considered the first international charter addressing children's rights, emerged in response to the harsh conditions faced by children after World War I (Ame, 2012; Hutchison, 2013). It aimed to establish standards for protecting and improving children's well-being by recognizing their fundamental rights, the need for special care and support, and the importance of education, healthcare, and opportunities for play and leisure. The declaration emphasized providing for and safeguarding children, including mandates for feeding the hungry, nursing the sick, assisting those in need, rehabilitating juvenile delinquents, and supporting orphans. It also acknowledged the child's right to be protected from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. According to Appiah (2018), the declaration emphasized that children should be the first to receive aid during difficult times and should be raised with the understanding that their talents should serve humanity. Although the Geneva Declaration was a significant milestone in advancing children's rights, it lacked enforceability. Critics argue that the Geneva Declaration failed to recognize children as rights holders and did not provide a mechanism for holding states or duty-bearers accountable for fulfilling these rights (Appiah, 2018). In contrast, the UNCRC 1989, a legally binding international treaty, has been widely ratified and provides a comprehensive framework for safeguarding and promoting children's rights, significantly strengthening the protection of children's rights (UN, 1989).

2.1.2 Declaration of the Right of a Child

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1959, was the first international measure to establish a distinct set of rights for children. This declaration paved the way for the more comprehensive United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 (UN,1989). The declaration outlined ten principles focused on protecting and promoting children's welfare, including the right to education, protection from abuse and exploitation, and access to healthcare. It emphasized the importance of providing a secure and nurturing environment for children to reach their full potential. The declaration recognized the vital role of parents and families in advancing children's welfare, urging governments and society to support them in this endeavour. A crucial principle of the declaration is non-discrimination, affirming that all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or social status, have equal rights and protections. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and local authorities were tasked with advocating for these rights. The recognition of children as rights-holders and governments' responsibility to enforce it through legislation is a significant achievement of the declaration (Ame, 2012).

The principle of non-discrimination is also echoed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, playing a pivotal role in global initiatives to promote children's rights. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child marked a crucial milestone in the history of children's rights, emphasizing the need for a nurturing environment for children and highlighting the role of parents and families in promoting their well-being (UN,1989).

2.1.3 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a globally recognized legal tool for protecting children's rights (Covell & Howe 1999; Hutchison, 2013; UNICEF, 2014). Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, the UNCRC encompasses a wide range of rights for children in areas such as education, healthcare, protection from abuse, and freedom of expression. Optional Protocols provide additional protections in areas like child trafficking and child participation in armed conflict. The UNCRC is a legally binding agreement monitored by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which assesses countries' implementation and provides guidance (Covell & Howe 1999; Ame, 2012).

Four core principles underlie the UNCRC: non-discrimination, the child's best interests, survival and development, and the child's right to express views (Covell & Howe 1999; Ame, 2012). The UNCRC emphasizes the child's best interests as the primary consideration in decision-making processes. It also highlights children's participation in decisions affecting them. The UNCRC guarantees three fundamental rights for children: provision, protection, and participation. States ratifying the UNCRC commit to providing and protecting these rights (Ame, 2012; Apt et al., 2011). The UNCRC recognizes children as rights holders and outlines the responsibilities of parents, caregivers, and states as duty-bearers (Covell & Howe 1999). It emphasizes the rights necessary for children to grow and reach their full potential. The UNCRC signifies a global consensus on the importance of childhood and the commitment of signatory states to enact policies and laws aligned with its provisions (Covell & Howe 1999).

2.1.4 African Charter on Human and People's Rights

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, also known as the Banjul Charter, is a human rights mechanism established by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1981 (Apt et al., 2011). This legally binding document outlines a comprehensive range of rights across civil, political, economic, social, and cultural domains for individuals and groups in Africa.

The Charter emphasizes the protection and enhancement of children's rights, acknowledging their right to education, healthcare, and protection against exploitation (Apt et al., 2011). It recognizes the family as the fundamental societal unit and highlights the responsibility of parents and caregivers in ensuring children's well-being. The Charter also addresses the rights of children in conflict with the law, emphasizing their rehabilitation and reintegration (Apt et al., 2011). The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Banjul Charter and addressing complaints of human rights violations (Apt et al., 2011). This commission plays a crucial role in promoting and safeguarding human rights in Africa.

In summary, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights serves as an essential international legal instrument for safeguarding and enhancing human rights in Africa, including children's rights. Its provisions emphasize the importance of respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights of children, reinforcing the commitment to children's well-being (Apt et al., 2011).

2.1.5 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) 1990

Adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1990, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) is an international agreement that

provides a comprehensive structure for protecting and promoting children's rights in Africa. The ACRWC was conceived because many African nations believed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) did not sufficiently cater to the specific needs of African children (Adu-Gyamfi & Keating, 2013).

The ACRWC acknowledges the unique status of children as human beings and outlines various essential rights for their well-being and growth, including the right to education, healthcare, protection from abuse and exploitation and participation in decisions that influence their lives. Certain issues specific to Africa, such as the disadvantages faced by African female children, the understanding of community obligations and duties in the African context, and the condition of African children under apartheid needed attention. Moreover, there was a noticeable absence of African representation in the creation of the UNCRC. This led the OAU, presently known as the African Union (AU), to adopt the ACRWC in July 1990, which was enforced in November 1999. The aim was to safeguard the distinctive situation of African children (Adu-Gyamfi & Keating, 2013; Hutchison, 2013).

The ACRWC is divided into two main sections. The initial section comprises 31 articles detailing the rights, freedoms, and duties of a child. The subsequent section specifies the responsibilities of states to enact laws to enforce the provisions of the ACRWC. Unlike the UNCRC, which does not reference the duties and responsibilities of a child, the ACRWC explicitly lays out these duties for African children. It stipulates that African children have responsibilities toward their families and communities, such as respecting their parents, elders, and superiors, and preserving and reinforcing African values (Article 31).

The ACRWC is among the most progressive treaties on children's rights and serves as a robust instrument for enhancing the lives of African children. It includes specific

provisions to protect children in situations of armed conflict, prohibiting the recruitment of children into armed forces or groups and advocating measures to safeguard children from the impacts of armed conflict. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child monitors the legally binding ACRWC (AU,1990). **This committee receives reports from states on their implementation of the ACRWC and provides guidance and suggestions on how to bolster the protection and promotion of children's rights** (AU,1990). The ACRWC is therefore a significant international legislative instrument for the protection and promotion of children's rights in Africa. Its provisions underscore the importance of safeguarding and advancing children's rights, reminding society to fully respect, protect, and fulfil children's rights in Africa. However, some critics argue that the ACRWC restricts a child's freedom of association (AU,1990).

2.1.2 National Legislative Instruments

In Ghana, a range of legislative instruments have been enacted to safeguard and advocate for children's rights. These legislative mechanisms set up a framework of rights and protections for children, providing direction for the government and other involved parties to ensure the respect, protection, and fulfilment of children's rights. Some of these legislative instruments include the Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29), the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560), the Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653) and the Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694).

2.1.2.1 Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29)

The Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29) is a fundamental legal document in Ghana that outlines various criminal offences and their associated penalties. It includes clauses that safeguard the rights of children and works to prevent child abuse, exploitation, or neglect. Essentially, the Criminal Code 1960 was formulated to consolidate and update

laws related to criminal offences. It distinguishes juvenile or young offenders from adults in legal proceedings. The Criminal Code is sectioned into five parts. The first part pertains to the general provisions of the Act, while the second discusses offences against individuals. The third part concerns offences against property rights. The fourth part addresses offences against public order, health, and morality, while the fifth part deals with consequential aspects such as repeals, the commencement, and operation of the Code.

The Criminal Code classifies child abuse as a criminal offense, describing it as causing physical or emotional damage to a child, neglecting them, or failing to provide for their basic needs. The Code also details punishments for those who subject children to sexual abuse or exploitation. It has clauses for the protection of children from harmful cultural practices like female genital mutilation and child marriage. Such practices are criminal offenses according to the Code, leading to legal prosecution of those who practice them. The Code criminalizes female genital mutilation in Ghana, Section 69A of Part I, Chapter three outlining that anyone performing such mutilation faces conviction and a minimum imprisonment of three years. Moreover, the Code includes provisions protecting children in conflict with the law, setting up special procedures for treating accused children, and stressing the need for their rehabilitation and reintegration. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the Criminal Code in safeguarding children's rights in Ghana has been questioned. Critics argue that the penalties for child abuse and exploitation are too light, and there's a lack of efficient implementation of the Code's provisions (Adjei, 2020). The prevalence of child labour in Ghana, despite the Code's provisions, is also a concern. Thus, while the Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29) is a crucial legal tool for protecting children's rights in Ghana, continuous efforts are

required to ensure its full implementation and that children's rights in Ghana are thoroughly protected and promoted.

2.1.2.2 1992 Constitution of Ghana

The 1992 **Constitution of Ghana** was ratified through a national referendum on April 28, 1992 (Boafo-Arthur, 2007 cited in Appiah 2018 p.7). It serves as the ultimate law of the country. It establishes a blueprint for safeguarding and advocating for the rights of all Ghanaians, including children. The Constitution does not only lay out the political tenets and governmental structures, but more significantly, it outlines the fundamental human rights and freedoms for all citizens, inclusive of children. The Constitution acknowledges the significance of safeguarding children's rights and welfare and features multiple provisions explicitly designed to protect and promote children's rights in Ghana.

Chapter 5, which focuses on Basic Human Rights and Freedoms, outlines various rights such as the right to life, personal freedom, safeguarding from slavery and forced labour, economic rights, and cultural rights. Article 28, under the same chapter of the Constitution, guarantees children specific rights, such as the right to be cared for by parents and protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It enforces the right to education and medical care for all children, regardless of their parents' or guardians' socio-economic status and religious beliefs. Article 39 recognizes each child's right to have a name and nationality, underlining the necessity to ensure that every Ghanaian child has a legal identity. The Constitution also underscores the importance of protecting children from abuse and exploitation. Article 13 guarantees the right to personal liberty and security and forbids torture, cruel, inhuman, or

degrading treatment or punishment, protecting children from physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and other mistreatments.

Furthermore, Article 15 establishes the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), tasked with investigating complaints about human rights violations, including those concerning children. The CHRAJ plays a crucial role in advocating for and safeguarding children's rights in Ghana, providing a mechanism for ensuring the complete respect and protection of children's rights. Hence, the Constitution of Ghana is a vital legal tool for safeguarding and promoting children's rights in Ghana. Its provisions emphasize the importance of education, legal identity, personal liberty, and protection from abuse and exploitation, providing a framework that ensures children's rights in Ghana are thoroughly respected, protected, and fulfilled

2.1.2.3 Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560)

The Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560) in Ghana is a comprehensive legal document that establishes a framework for safeguarding and advocating the rights of children within the country. This Act was created to implement the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other international and regional instruments dedicated to children's rights.

Ghana was the first country to ratify the UNCRC, hence, felt obligated to initiate reviews of its local laws and policies, leading to the enactment of the Children's Act in 1998, which came into effect in 1999 (Twum-Danso, 2012). Ghana's Children's Act consolidated all child-related laws into one, child-centric legislation for easier accessibility, promotion, and enforcement (Twum-Danso, 2012).

Ghana's Children's Act delineates the rights and protections of children in Ghana, such as the right to education, healthcare, protection from abuse and exploitation, and the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. It acknowledges the unique status

of children as human beings and emphasizes the need to provide a safe and nurturing environment that fosters their maximum potential. Ghana's Children's Act is composed of one hundred and twenty-six (126) sections divided into six parts. The Act is formulated on four core tenets: prioritizing the child's best interest (Article 2), avoiding discrimination (Article 3), ensuring the right to life, growth, and survival (Article 5), and allowing children to be involved in decisions that concern them (Article 11). Under the Act, a child is considered to be anyone younger than eighteen years old (Article 1). Nonetheless, the Act's likeness to the UNCRC has been criticized, resulting in it being referred to as the local version of the UNCRC in Ghana (Twum-Danso, 2012). However, it is unique and important that it considers the specific local circumstances under which it functions. For instance, it requires the creation of a family tribunal that includes a panel of esteemed community members to handle all matters involving children. In addition, the Act distinguishes between child labour and minor chores, recognizing the traditional practice in Ghana where children are expected to assist their families from a young age. It also offers definitions for various entities and individuals, as well as the procedures for enacting its clauses for the improvement of children's lives in Ghana. The Act also incorporates provisions for the protection of children in conflict with the law, emphasizing the importance of rehabilitating and reintegrating children who infringe the law of the state. Additionally, it criminalizes harmful cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. The Act establishes the Department of Children, tasked with promoting and protecting the rights of children in Ghana. This department is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the provisions of the Children's Act and providing support to children who have fallen victim to abuse or exploitation.

2.1.2.4 Juvenile Justice Act of 2003 (Act 653)

Ghana's Juvenile Justice Act of 2003 (Act 653) was assented by the president of the Republic on October 28, 2003, as a national legislative instrument that establishes a framework for addressing cases involving children in conflict with the law. The Act comprises three sections. The first section provides definitions, such as the term 'juvenile', and outlines the specific procedures for handling cases involving children in conflict with the law and the treatment of juvenile offenders (Sampong, n.d).

According to section one of the first part of the Act, a 'juvenile' is defined as an individual under eighteen years old who conflicts with the law. The Act also stipulates that the best interest of the juvenile should be paramount in any matter concerning them. The second part of the Act emphasizes the swift and efficient handling of cases involving juveniles within the court system. The Act also restructures the system of punishment to reflect the understanding that children can learn vocational skills outside of institutional settings and that institutional detention for correctional purposes should be viewed as a last resort (Sampong, n.d).

The Act underscores the significance of rehabilitating and reintegrating children who have had conflicts with the law and sets forth measures to ensure that the rights of children are preserved throughout the justice process. The Juvenile Justice Act acknowledges that children in conflict with the law require special consideration and protection. It prescribes procedures for handling cases involving children accused of crimes, which include provisions for alternatives to detention and a focus on restorative justice. While children accused of crimes are entitled to the same rights and protections as adults, such as the right to legal representation and a fair trial, the Act also emphasizes the necessity of considering the unique needs and situations of children at all stages of the justice process. Furthermore, the Juvenile Justice Act stresses the need for rehabilitating and reintegrating children who have been in conflict with the law.

The Act mandates the establishment of a Juvenile Correctional Centre responsible for the rehabilitation and education of children who have come into conflict with the law. The Juvenile Justice Act also highlights the necessity of preserving the privacy and dignity of children who are in conflict with the law. It prohibits the publication of identities of children accused of crimes and accentuates the need to treat children with respect and sensitivity throughout the justice process.

2.1.2.5 Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694)

Ghana's Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694) is a national law that criminalizes human trafficking and establishes a framework for safeguarding victims of such trafficking, including children. The Act is divided into three primary sections: prevention of human trafficking, protection of trafficked persons and prosecution of individuals involved in human trafficking activities. Inspired by the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol), this Act was designed to combat and prevent the trafficking of individuals, particularly women and children, while ensuring the rights of trafficking victims are fully protected and respected (Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011).

The Human Trafficking Act acknowledges the particular susceptibility of children to human trafficking and underscores the need to shield children from all forms of exploitation and abuse. The Act defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transport, transfer, or sheltering of persons, including children, for exploitation purposes. Trafficking of children is a criminal act under the Human Trafficking Act. The Act outlines penalties for those involved in child trafficking and emphasizes the criticality of providing protection and support to child victims of trafficking. Furthermore, the Act acknowledges the importance of human trafficking prevention and stresses the requirement for education and awareness campaigns to prevent the trafficking of

children and other vulnerable populations. It also includes provisions for training law enforcement officers and other stakeholders in preventing and detecting human trafficking. The Human Trafficking Act also calls for the creation of a National Human Trafficking Fund. This fund is tasked with assisting human trafficking victims, including children, by offering financial aid for medical care, housing, and other essential needs. However, while the Act has been successful in implementing its prevention strategies, it has been slow in prosecuting both domestic and international human trafficking cases (Sertich & Heemskerk, 2011). Moreover, the Act is yet to be successful in achieving its objective of providing adequate protective support for survivors of trafficking.

2.2 Children's knowledge and understanding of their rights

Article 42 of the UNCRC specifically stresses the necessity of enhancing children's understanding of their rights and mandates governments to take steps to ensure children's awareness of these rights. Understanding their rights is essential for children as it allows them to advocate for their rights and take part in decisions that have a direct impact on their lives (Appiah, 2018). Children who are aware of their rights could effectively safeguard themselves against abuse, exploitation and neglect, and lobby for their needs and interests. Moreover, when children are knowledgeable about their rights, they are more likely to uphold the rights of others, leading to societal and cultural improvements. This could foster a more equitable and just society.

There are varying perspectives relative to children's awareness of their rights. Some scholars are of the opinion that many children possess sufficient knowledge about their right (Munongi & Pillay, 2018; Karugu, 2013; Kamau, 2013; Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014). Even among these authors there appear different viewpoints on children's awareness of their rights. Karugu (2013) found that children in Kenya are made aware

of their rights as early as standard two (around 8 years of age) through the Social Studies syllabus. However, the author noted that the meaning of rights presented to children by various publishers at different educational stages may be too technical, generalized, or vague, making it challenging for children to fully comprehend the concept. Similarly, Sperl and Ferdinandsson (2014) reported that over 80% of students at Aburi and Pokro had heard of children's rights at some point, but the awareness about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was lower. The authors also found that sixth graders generally had a better understanding of their rights compared to ninth graders, and awareness varied across different schools. Also, Munongi and Pillay (2018) discovered in South African, children were conscious of their rights and recognized their importance for their well-being, although there were some few instances of misconceptions about rights. Moreover, Appiah's (2018) research in Akropong-Akuapem showed that children were well-informed about their rights, as they were capable of defining what rights are and giving examples. The children identified these rights as liberties, benefits, or entitlements, mentioning education, life, and healthcare as some instances. This student further revealed that the children provision and participation than those concerning protection. The research also disclosed that participants' understanding of legislative instruments that safeguards children's rights, such as the UNCRC and Ghana's Children's Act (Act 560) was limited.

In Kamau's (2013) study among secondary school students of Gatundu North District, Kiambu County, Kenya, there was a general knowledge of children's rights, but the level of awareness varied among different stakeholder groups. Rights observed in school included the right to quality education and ensuring transparency in school activities. Generally, these studies suggest that children in these contexts have some

level of awareness of their rights, although there may be variations in comprehension, depth of knowledge and awareness of specific legal frameworks such as the UNCRC. The findings highlight the importance of effective education on children's rights and the need for ongoing efforts to enhance awareness and understanding among children and different stakeholders.

On the contrary, authors including Opeyemi Yayi, Lasbat Badamas and Okafor (2021), Kwarteng (2012) and Kiprotich and Ong'ondo (2013) argue that children at Osogbo metropolis, lack adequate awareness about their rights. Opeyemi Yayi et al. (2021) found that in-school adolescents Apam had a low awareness of child rights, with 65.1% of respondents demonstrating low awareness. The study also highlighted that females had a relatively higher awareness of child rights compared to males. Similarly, Kiprotich and Ong'ondo (2013) found that children lacked understanding of their rights due to limited access to communication media. This lack of awareness contributed to the lack of involvement of children in decision-making processes. The study also noted that adults' ill-perception of children, considering the granting of children's rights as a privilege rather than a fundamental entitlement, contributed to children's lack of awareness about their rights. Kwarteng (2012) observed similar outcomes in Kumasi, Ghana, attributing the lack of awareness of children's rights to infrequent discussions on children's rights in the Ghanaian context. Overall, the studies indicate that there are varying levels of awareness among children regarding their rights.

Opeyemi Yayi et al. (2021) study focused on in-school adolescents and reported low awareness overall, they also acknowledged a percentage of respondents with high awareness. Kiprotich and Ong'ondo (2013) identified limited access to communication media and adults' perception of children's rights as factors contributing to the lack of

awareness among children. Kwarteng (2012) also pointed out that the lack of public discourse on children's rights could be blamed for the lack of awareness.

These findings suggest the importance of enhancing children's access to information and promoting a rights-based perspective among adults to improve children's awareness and understanding of their rights. The studies also revealed that children prioritize certain rights over others (Appiah, 2018). For instance, children in Ghana prioritized access to basic needs and necessities while participation rights were not considered a top priority. Notably, children's knowledge of their rights did not necessarily extend to an understanding of legislative frameworks such as the UNCRC. In conclusion, diverse perspectives exist regarding children's awareness of their rights. While some studies indicate sufficient knowledge, others reveal gaps in awareness, particularly concerning legislative frameworks. These research works emphasize the importance of consistent education on children's rights and the need to situate discussions within national and international legal contexts.

2.3 Barriers to the Realization of Child Rights

Many factors hinder the realization of child rights. Socio-cultural, economic religious and political factors have been identified to prevent children from exercising or realizing their rights (UNICEF, 2004). In terms of socio-cultural factors, the conceptualization of childhood poses as a barrier to the realization of child rights. There is an intricate nexus between socialization and knowledge of children's rights. Childhood is not a universal or natural category but rather a temporary concept that varies significantly across historical and sociocultural contexts. In most societies, childhood has been defined by factors such as sexual and physical development, citizenship or age (Adu-Gyamfi & Keating, 2013). Different eras and cultures

categorize childhood differently, and this categorization is not based only on biology or development but rather on cultural ideals. While there may be disagreements, it is generally agreed that the history of childhood reflects progress, with a shift from emotional disengagement and parental apathy to a world characterized by love, deep family ties, and recognition of children's rights. In Ghana, children are considered highly important and families go to great lengths to have children.

Karugu (2013) supports the prevailing conceptualization of childhood in sub-Saharan Africa which emphasizes characteristics such as submissiveness, timidity, non-assertiveness, fearfulness and a lack of legal rights, particularly concerning guardians, parents, or other adults responsible for the children's care. This perspective about childhood may not be significantly different in the study area being investigated. Sogaard's (2019) report highlights that in Ghana, many cultures do not view children as deserving respect due to their perceived limited contribution to community affairs. Despite being seen as assets to the family for economic gains, this perspective often results in children engaging in child labor. These conceptualizations of childhood can have implications for child rights dynamics in the study area, proposing that societal beliefs and practices may impact the realization of children's rights. Additionally, Appiah (2018) asserts that child-rearing practices within lineage systems, whether matrilineal or patrilineal, play a significant role in the socialization processes related to children's rights. These practices decide the household a child spends most of their childhood and also influences the arrangements of inheritance and other rights that benefit the child. According to Kwarteng (2012), socialization processes in Ghana instill in children the values of responsibility, respect and reciprocity (3Rs). These values are reflected in adult-child relationships and establish interdependencies within the family, but they also have the potential to result in rights abuses. Children in Ghana

are socialized to integrate work, play and school, assuming a responsible role in their daily activities. It is also expected of children to respect, obey and heed to the advice of parents, guardians and other adults. Those who fail to comply are labelled as disrespectful or disobedient. Consequently, children may find it challenging to assert certain rights due to the fear of being victimized or labelled as deviant and disrespectful. Furthermore, it is common in Ghana for children to provide services to their parents and guardians, who reciprocate by providing for their maintenance needs. There is a traditional belief that children have a responsibility to provide for their parents when the parents are unable to do so, highlighting the value of reciprocity (Twum-Danso, 2012). This implies that children are expected to pay for their maintenance through their service to adults. In interactions with teachers and parents/guardians, children in Kenya rarely assert their rights or express complaints or defenses (Karugu, 2013), indicating that violations of children's rights are a common occurrence. The research by Gillett-Swan & Sargeant (2018) supports the notion that negative societal perceptions of childhood hinder children's participation and communication rights, pointing out that these negative constructions of childhood have a detrimental impact on children's ability to communicate and participate. Overall, children are portrayed as vulnerable beings who require protection and nurturing, while also being expected to fulfill certain social functions and relationships (Appiah, 2018).

Abdullah, Cudjoe and Frederico (2018) also reported that intimidation, parental influence, communication problem and lack of confidentiality impinged on children's capacity to participate meaningfully to decisions. The authors further identified the influence of culture on children's participation in discussions towards their protection. This suggests that socio-cultural factors impinge on the realization of children's right. Similarly, the Ghanaian cultural settings, insufficient understanding of the provisions

of the legal regime relative to the realization of children's right, coupled with inadequacy of resources marred the implementation of children's right (Manful & Manful, 2014).

The lack of awareness about children's rights makes it very difficult for the realization of same among these right holders. Lack of awareness, has been attributed to the lack of political will, highlighting the inadequacy of resources for the effective implementation of children's rights in Ghana (Twum-Danso, 2012). Implying that there is the necessity of taking a more radical stance when addressing children's rights and the necessity of enforcing a culture of respect for children's rights in schools and families. Adu-Gyamfi (2014) also affirms the role of historical and sociocultural settings in the violation of children's rights in Ghana. Violations of educational rights was identified to be impinged by gender roles, with cases such as teenage pregnancy mentioned as a precursor to lack of education for females which plunge them into lack of employment and perpetual poverty (Søgaard, 2019). According to Søgaard, within the educational sectors similar factors such as high student-teacher ratio, predominantly in rural and northern part of the Ghana, sexual abuse (especially against female students) and emotional abuse occur. Children remain vulnerable to abuse, they also lack knowledge about detecting when their rights are to be violated and avenues to seek redress (Kiprotich & Ong'Ondo, 2013).

Economic barriers have also been identified to impinge upon the realization of child rights. Economic challenges emanating from poverty and unemployment, is a major factor that hinders the realization of children's rights in Ghana (Appiah, 2018). Similarly, poverty has been identified as a major cause of child rights abuse, relative to child labour (Golo et al., 2018). The authors mentioned that many children who have their rights abused come from poor families, resulting in the lack of access to some

basic necessities such as food and healthcare. Children therefore engage in harmful and strenuous activities, which have a greater likelihood of negative impinging on their education, health and development as right holders.

Moreover, traditional and religious practices including child betrothals, the trokosi system and female genital mutilations, together with poverty have also been cited as inimical to the realization of children's rights in Ghana (Apt et al, 2012).

Barriers posed by existing weak policies and their implementation have also been identified to impinge on realization of children's rights. For instance, Badoe (2017) emphasized that child protection is in jeopardy due to the lack of a management regime for child abuse cases in emergency care provision facilities. The management of child abuse cases could only be driven by empirical data on the socio-economic impact of child abuse. Also, Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) in their study reveal that the implementation of children's communication and participatory rights is frequently constrained by numerous obstacles in terms of adult knowledge and attitudes, organizational structure, pedagogical tradition and technological advancement that deepen the existing violations of children's communication rights, especially children with additional speech and communication needs. Children's communication and participatory rights are impeded by the lack/unavailability of human and material resources. This implies that children's participation and communication rights have been ignored, due to adults' and policymakers' actions and inactions, which presupposes children's limited capacity.

It is evident that socio-cultural, economic, religious and policy barriers hinder the realization of children's rights in Ghana. This implies that resources and advocacy on children's rights must be intensified in order to enhance the realization of the rights of these right holders.

2.4 Benefits children derive from knowing their rights

Children stand the benefit normally when they have knowledge of their rights. When children are aware of their rights, may be empowered to assert their rights and speak up for themselves and others (Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018). They could also recognize when their rights are being violated and take steps to seek redress to the situation. This can lead to increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of agency. Moreover, awareness of rights can lead to better relationships with others (Appiah, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2018). When children are aware of their rights, they are more likely to respect the rights of others and to communicate effectively. This could improve their relationships with family members, friends and teachers.

Further, awareness of rights could help children to recognize situations where their rights may be violated and to take action to protect themselves (Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013; Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014; Munongi & Pillay, 2018). Implying that children could enjoy better protection from abuse, exploitation and neglect. Also, when children are aware of their rights, they are more likely to take their education seriously and value their schooling (Søgaard, 2019). This could lead to better academic performance (Asiimwe, 2011), higher attendance rates and increased opportunities for future success. Awareness of rights can help children to understand social justice and the importance of respecting diversity (Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018). This could lead to increased empathy, tolerance and acceptance of others who are different from them.

More importantly, when children are aware of their rights, they are more likely to become active and engaged members of society (Appiah, 2018). Children may be more

likely to participate in community activities, volunteer, and contribute positively to their communities.

In summary, the benefits of children's awareness of their rights are diverse and numerous. Awareness of rights can empower children, improve relationships, protect them from harm, provide better access to education, increase social awareness, and contribute to a positive impact on society. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that children are informed about their rights and have the necessary support to exercise them.

2.5 Ways to enhance child rights knowledge

Holistic strategies meant to enhance awareness about children's rights are key to ensuring the effective realization and implementation of these rights. These strategies include education, identifies as one of the most effective ways to enhance knowledge about children's rights (Opeyemi et al., 2021; Karugu, 2013; Appiah, 2018; Kamau, 2013; Inganzo, 2017). This can be done through formal school curriculums, awareness campaigns, and workshops for children, parents and teachers. Through workshops and seminars knowledge about children's rights could be disseminated to children and adults alike. Moreover, community involvement could help to raise awareness about children's rights (Søgaard, 2019; Kamau, 2013; Inganzo, 2017). This could be achieved through sensitization about children's rights at community meetings, public events and awareness campaigns in public spaces.

Also, the media can be a powerful tool for raising awareness about children's rights (Appiah, 2018). Television and radio programmes, newspapers, social media, and other online platforms could be adopted to disseminate information aimed at enhancing knowledge about children's rights. More importantly, children's participation in knowledge-sharing processes could help to raise awareness about their rights, through

lectures, watching films, exercises, games, theatrical performances and quizzes on children's rights (Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014; Abdullah, Cudjoe & Frederico, 2018; Kamau, 2013; Adu-Gyamfi, 2014; Søgaaard, 2019; Inguanzo, 2017). This could be done through children's parliaments, youth groups and other forms where children can voice their opinions and concerns.

Furthermore, capacity-building programmes could also help to enhance knowledge about children's rights among stakeholders such as teachers, social workers, health workers, and government officials (Opeyemi Yayi et al., 2021; Søgaaard, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2018; Manful & Manful, 2014; Kamau, 2013; Inguanzo, 2017; Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013).

Again, advocacy could help raise awareness about children's rights and push for the implementation of policies that protect and promote these rights (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018; Kamau, 2013; Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013). This can be done through lobbying, networking and engagement with policymakers among other avenues. Parents play a crucial role in promoting children's rights. Parental involvement in children's social, cultural and academic development could help raise awareness about children's rights and ensure that these rights are respected and protected (Munongi & Pillay, 2018; Søgaaard, 2019; Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013).

In summary, enhancing knowledge about children's rights requires a multifaceted approach that involves education, community involvement, media campaigns, child participation, capacity building, advocacy, and parental involvement. It is crucial to ensure that children and adults are informed about children's rights and have the necessary support to exercise them.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 *Interest theory*

The interest theory was propounded by Bentham in 1987. The theory regards rights as a vehicle for development of right holders' interests (Wall, 2008). The interest theory could be employed in enhancing right holders' interest. The author pointed out that rights encompass the components of growing up into a useful and healthy adult. The theory further prioritizes certain needs as being fundamental for human good. Bentham classified these needs as the foundation for human rights, outlining them to range from being alive and possessing the capacity to develop, knowledge acquisition as an end in itself, recreation through playing, cordiality, companionship, capacity for intelligence, reasonable thought processes, religious conviction or the capacity for spiritual experience (Appiah, 2018). The Interest theory corroborates with the objectives of the UNCRC and is therefore appropriate for this study. This is so because it outlines the fundamental and most appropriate conditions to be provided for the holistic development of every child around the globe. Moreover, to protect the basic interest of children, the interest theory creates essential explanations as to what rights can be classified under, for example, the rights to life, survival and development, rights to protection and the rights to participation. The Interest theory identifies social rudiments or conditions needed for all children to lead a minimally good life (Appiah, 2018).

In furtherance, the theory seeks to point out that the universality of human rights is based on what is considered as basic, indispensable attributes of human well-being, which are deemed necessary for all, including children. The Interest theory states that rights are supposed to protect the basic human interest. The theory brings to fore the duty of every right-holder to respect the rights of other persons, explaining that unless

others acknowledge, recognize and respect the interests of a person, the protection of the person's fundamental interest cannot be achieved. Thus, children's rights are justifiable because they secure the necessary conditions for the well-being of all children (Appiah, 2018).

In the context of this study, it could be understood that children have fundamental interests that are essential to leading fulfilling lives and human rights and should be safeguarded. Again, children have unique needs and interests that differ from those of adults, and these must be taken into account when designing and implementing human rights policies and programmes. Children's interests may include the right to education, the right to play, the right to family life, the right to freedom from violence and exploitation, and the right to health care. Federle (1994) claims that children are vulnerable members of society, hence they need to be protected. Implying that, the interest theory of human rights emphasizes the importance of protecting the most vulnerable members of society, includes children who depend on adults for their care and protection. children's rights are thus, grounded in their interests, and protecting them is essential to ensure that they have the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives and reach their full potential. Children's rights therefore set the tone for the protection of their interest. Consequently, the interest theory defines children's rights for the reason of their incapacities (Federle, 1994).

One of the strengths of the interest theory of human rights relative to children's rights is that it emphasizes the importance of tailoring human rights to the specific needs and circumstances of children. This means that children's rights must be sensitive to the unique developmental needs of children and should take into account the social, cultural, and economic context in which they are applied (Daiute, 2008). However, critics of the interest theory of human rights argue that it may not provide a strong

enough moral basis for protecting children's rights. They argue that the theory does not sufficiently address the moral claims that children's rights make on individuals and society and that it may be insufficient to provide the moral foundation necessary to defend children's rights in the face of competing interests and values (Daiute, 2008). Also, the theory is criticized for the lack of universality about the conditions needed for a minimally good life. (Woodhead, 2005). Critics believe that this challenge makes it impractical for children everywhere to claim the same rights due to cultural and societal differences. Though there exist diversities in societal culture and traditions, it is also essential to observe that the universality of children's rights is required to provide for the minimum rights that should be accorded to all children regardless of where they find themselves (UN, 1989). Moreover, stakeholders have the opportunity and freedom to ensure that the universality of children's rights is adapted and legitimized or contextualized within various cultures and localities (UN, 1989). Generally, the interest theory of human rights can be applied to children's rights, emphasizing the importance of protecting the fundamental interests of children. While this theory provides a framework for understanding the importance of children's rights, it is not sufficient to address the full interest of children hence, the need for additional moral and ethical considerations to ensure that children's rights are adequately protected. Notwithstanding, the Interest theory of rights is very appropriate for this study, inspite of its limitation.

2.6.2 Socio-Ecological Model

The Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) was developed in the Bronfenbrenner (1970) by Urie Bronfenbrenner, an American psychologist, as a theoretical framework for understanding human development and behaviour. Bronfenbrenner argued that human behaviour is shaped by the interaction between individual characteristics and the social

and environmental context in which they live (Kamenopoulou, 2018). Bronfenbrenner's model was influenced by systems theory, which suggests that human behaviour and development are best understood in the context of the systems in which they occur. In the case of the SEM, these systems include the individual, family.

Interestingly, community, and society, and the interactions between them (Moove et al, 2013). The SEM was then modified by Bronfenbrenner (1992) to include the idea of "development-in-context" and make it more applicable to the development of children's rights.

Bronfenbrenner believed that understanding the multiple levels of influence that shape human behaviour and development is crucial to promoting positive outcomes and preventing negative ones. He argued that interventions aimed at improving individual outcomes would be most effective if they also address the broader social and environmental factors that affect individual behaviour and development. Since its development. The SEM has been widely used in various fields such as public health, education, and social work to guide interventions aimed at improving outcomes for individuals and communities. The model has been adapted to address specific issues, such as violence prevention, environmental health, child development and community development. At the individual level, children's development and well-being are influenced by their genetics, personal characteristics and behaviours. At the interpersonal level, children's relationships with family members, peers, and caregivers play a crucial role in their development and well-being. At the community level, children's access to resources and opportunities, such as education, healthcare and recreation, can affect their development and well-being. At the societal level, laws, policies and cultural norms can either promote or hinder children's rights and well-being. By applying the Socio-Ecological Model to children's rights, it becomes clear

that ensuring that children's rights are protected and promoted requires a multi-level approach (Townsend & Foster, 2013). This means that interventions must target the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels to address the complex and interrelated factors that influence children's rights. At the individual level, interventions may include education on children's rights, providing resources to support children's physical and mental health, and addressing individual factors that may put children at risk of abuse, exploitation, or neglect. At the interpersonal level, interventions may include strengthening family relationships, providing parenting education and support, and promoting positive peer relationships. At the community level, interventions may include improving access to education, healthcare and other essential services, providing safe and supportive recreational activities. At the societal level, interventions may include advocating for laws and policies that protect and promote children's rights, addressing cultural norms that may contribute to discrimination and exclusion, and promoting a broader societal understanding of the importance of children's rights.

Among the strengths of the SEM, is its multi-level approach to analyzing a phenomenon. The SEM recognizes that children's rights are influenced by factors at multiple levels, including individual, interpersonal, community, and societal factors. This allows for a comprehensive approach to promoting and protecting children's rights. Moreover, the SEM emphasizes the importance of understanding the context in which children's rights are exercised, including social and environmental factors. This is crucial for developing effective interventions that address the root causes of violations of children's rights. Also, the flexible nature of the SEM renders it more user-friendly. The SEM can be adapted to address specific issues related to children's rights, such as access to education, child labour, and child abuse.

Notwithstanding these strengths, there are also some weaknesses with the SEM. Firstly, the structural complexity has been mentioned. Moreover, there appears to be a lack of clear guidance. The SEM provides a framework for understanding the multiple levels of influence on children's rights, but it may not provide clear guidance on how to prioritize interventions or allocate resources (Moove et al, 2013).. Also, there appears to be a lack of focus on individual rights. The SEM's focus on multiple levels of influence may overshadow the importance of protecting individual rights. This could lead to a situation where children's rights are violated in the name of promoting community or societal well-being.

In summary, the SEM is a useful framework for understanding the complex factors that influence children's rights. It provides a multi-level approach and emphasizes the importance of understanding context, but it may be complex to apply in practice and lacks clear guidance on prioritizing interventions. Besides, its focus on multiple levels of influence may sometimes overshadow the importance of protecting individual rights.

2.7 Gaps Identified in Literature

In the context of understanding children's rights, the literature reveals several gaps, specifically about understanding these rights from the perspectives of children residing in rural communities. Previous studies predominantly centred on urban and peri-urban contexts with limited perspectives of children from rural areas (Kwarteng, 2012; Appiah, 2018). This contextual gap is addressed by the current study, which aims at investigating children's understanding of their rights at Juaboso, a rural cocoa farming community in the Western North region of Ghana. Again, in exploring the understanding of children's rights, most studies have either relied on secondary data (Karugu, 2013; Badoe, 2017) or gathered information from adult populations (duty bearers), such as parents, social workers, teachers and health workers (Abdullah et al.,

2018; Manful & Manful, 2014). Those studies which have prioritized the voices of the right holders (children), focused on children in primary (Karugu, 2013; Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014) and junior high school (Appiah, 2018), with limited attention to teenagers in Senior High Schools (SHS). To address this inclusion gap, the voices of children in Juaboso Senior High Schools (SHS) were solicited during the data collection processes. Furthermore, previous research largely highlighted specific categories of children's rights in isolation. For instance, most studies have concentrated on children's participation rights (such as the right to freedom of opinion and expression) (Abdullah et al., 2018; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018), protection rights (such as freedom from physical and sexual abuse) (Badoe, 2017; Karugu, 2013) and provision rights (education and health) (Søgaard, 2019). A comprehensive understanding of children's rights (inclusive of participation, provision and protection rights) is yet to be extensively explored. To address this information/knowledge gap, this study specifically aims to broaden the understanding on the scope of rights, through exploring rights relative to the 3Ps (Provision, Protection, and Participation) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in a rural farming community in Ghana. Additionally, in contrast to the quantitative methodologies frequently used in previous research in understanding children's rights (Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014; Yayi et al., 2021), this study employed a qualitative research approach. The adopted qualitative approach does not only address the methodological gap in literature, it also aimed at capturing in-depth experiences of participants, providing a deeper understanding of children's perspectives on their rights. The originality of this study is vested in its capacity to bridge the above mentioned contextual, inclusion, information and methodological gaps identified in the existing literature. In conclusion, this original research has the potential to contribute to the extant body of knowledge by providing a

more comprehensive understanding of children's rights, particularly in the context of rural communities, thereby facilitating more inclusive and effective policy development and implementation.

2.8 Summary of Chapter

Literature was reviewed on six thematic areas namely: the conception of socialization and children's rights, international and national instruments on children's rights, children's knowledge about their rights, factors hindering the realization of children's rights, benefits children could derive from knowing about their rights and ways to enhance children's rights awareness. A comprehensive understanding of socialization that emphasizes the complex interplay between children, parents, and the broader social context was outlined. Also, international and national legislative instruments on children's rights were explored. The elements that influenced children's knowledge about their rights were also examined in this chapter together with factors hindering the realization of children's rights. Moreover, the benefits children could derive from knowing about their rights were also assessed together with the ways to enhance children's rights awareness. The interest theory of human rights was applied to understand children's rights, emphasizing the importance of protecting the fundamental interests of children. Subsequently, the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner served as another theoretical lens for understanding children's rights. The Socio-Ecological Model provides a useful framework for understanding the multiple levels of influence that affect children's rights and well-being. By targeting interventions at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels, it is possible to create a more comprehensive approach to promoting and protecting children's rights. Finally, the gaps this current study sought to address were outlined.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, themes including research paradigm, research approach, research design, study area, target population, sampling technique, sample size, summary of participants' demographic characteristics, data collection procedure, data handling and analysis, ethical considerations and ensuring rigor/trustworthiness are discussed relative to understanding children's rights.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is the perspective researchers adopt to grasp their subject, including their convictions, limitations and presuppositions (Wilson, 2014). Numerous academics highlight different research paradigms, including but not limited to positivism and interpretivism. This investigation employs the interpretivist paradigm, seeking to explore the varied viewpoints and experiences related to children's right. The qualitative approach together with the phenomenological design aligns with this paradigm, focusing on the genuine experiences of participants and the social framework that shapes children's rights (Treweek et al., 2019).

3.2 Research Approach

Creswell (2016) emphasizes that researchers must explicitly outline their research approach to set the lens through which they understand reality. Following the interpretivism paradigm, this study employs a qualitative approach to explore the understanding on children's rights in the study area. The aim is to capture varied insights from participants on knowledge about children's right. Patton (2014) contends that a qualitative approach allows for an intimate exploration, yielding in-depth observations both externally and internally within a given context. The opportunity to

obtain in-depth data from participants and key informants through their narratives and statements, relative to children's rights, within their natural environments informed the researcher's choice of the qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach ensured that participants and key informants were at ease to provide rich data for the study because of the congenial atmosphere created.

3.3 Research Design

The research employed a phenomenological design. Phenomenology entails studying 'towards the things themselves' or a phenomenon (Van Manen, 2016). Phenomenology seeks to understand phenomena as they are experienced and interpreted by individuals, emphasizing the lived experiences and meanings attributed to them. It is a discipline that centres on 'people's lived experience,' 'people's views of the world in which they live and what it means to them' (Langdridge, 2017). Langdridge (2017) reiterated that phenomenology is a qualitative research design, that focuses on the human experience as a topic or theme within its own right. Hence, phenomenology is concerned with meaning and the way in which meaning arises in experience. This suggests that phenomenology is an approach that focuses on the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals. Consequently, phenomenology in this study provides a framework for exploring participants' and key informants' subjective experiences and perspectives about children's rights. It seeks to understand how children and key informants experience and make sense of children's rights within their unique contexts, considering their perspectives, emotions and perceptions. Phenomenology assisted the researcher in exploring how children and key informants understand and interpret children's rights, how they (children and key informants) perceive the fulfilment or violation of those rights, and how these interpretations shape their lived experiences. Phenomenology could uncover the nuances and variations in the understanding and

experiences of children's rights. Also, phenomenology could shed light on the lived realities of children and key informants concerning children's rights, including the challenges and barriers children face in exercising and realizing their rights. In order to uncover the social, cultural, and structural factors that impinge children's rights and identify the lived experiences relative to inequality, discrimination or marginalization, phenomenology could be employed. Phenomenological studies on children's right could contribute to policy and practice by providing insights into the experiences and perspectives regarding children's rights for policy makers and practitioners. Findings from phenomenological studies on children's rights could inform the development of child-centered policies, programmes and interventions that are more responsive to children's needs, aspirations, and lived realities. Again, phenomenology could amplify children's voices and promote their active participation in matters concerning their rights.

Phenomenological studies on children's right could recognize children as active agents and provide a platform for them to share their experiences, challenges and recommendations for improving the realization of their rights.

3.4 Study Area

3.4.1 Profile of Study Area`

Location and Size

Juaboso is one of the nine districts of the Western North region of Ghana. Juaboso District lies between Latitude 60 65 'N and 60 22' N, and Longitude 30 22'W and 20, 66'W. The district is bordered by Bia West and Asunafo North Municipal to the north, Asunafo South and Sefwi Wiawso Municipal to the East, Bodi District to the south, and La Cote D'voire to the west(GSS,2010). Covering an area of 1,370 square kilometers, the district acts as a gateway between Ghana and La Cote d'Ivoire. Juaboso, the District

capital is 69.4km east of the regional capital, Sefwi Wiawso, and 225 km from Kumasi, the Ashanti Region's capital. The district is relatively distant from major regional capitals and commercial centres (GSS,2010).

Juaboso District is divided into four sub-structures: Boinzan, Proso Kofikrom, Benchema Nkatieo, and Asempaneye-Breman Area Councils. The District is governed locally by 23 Assembly members: 16 elected, 7 appointed, a Member of Parliament, and a District Chief Executive. As per the 2021 population and housing census, the population of Juaboso District stood at 88,814 with 45,722 males and 43,092 females, with a population density is 42.7, which is lower than the regional density of 99.3, indicating a sparse population. The population mainly consists of Sefwis, but there is also a mix of individuals from other tribes in Ghana. At Juaboso Senior High School, the student population stood at 1,415 (GSS,2021).

Juaboso District predominantly relies on an informal economy, with agriculture as its backbone, employing over half the workforce (GSS,2021). As per the 2021 PHC, 76.2% of people work in skilled agricultural roles, and farming, especially cocoa production, is a significant activity for most residents. Residents also cultivate various crops, but livestock and poultry production are limited. The district hosts four major market centers namely Juaboso, Prosu, Boinzan and Bonsu Nkwanta that attract traders from nearby regions. The District's Road network extends to 241 km, but the roads' condition hampers efficient transportation (GSS,2021). In terms of education, the district has 289 schools made up of 109 kindergartens consisting of 69 public and 40 private institutions; 110 primary schools, also made up of 70 public and 40 private institutions; 66 Junior high schools made up of 40 public and 26 private institutions and; 5 Senior high schools made up of 1 public, 1 community initiated and 3 private institutions (GSS,2021). The District Assembly 2021 reports of a recent increase in

enrollment, especially among girls. However, challenges remain in terms of teacher quality and accessibility to schools. (GSS,2021). In the healthcare sector, the district provides several health facilities spread across four demarcated sub-districts. There are twenty reporting health facilities comprising of one Public Hospital, one Public Health Centre, two Mission Clinics, seven Private Maternity Homes and thirty-five CHPS compounds (GSS,2021).



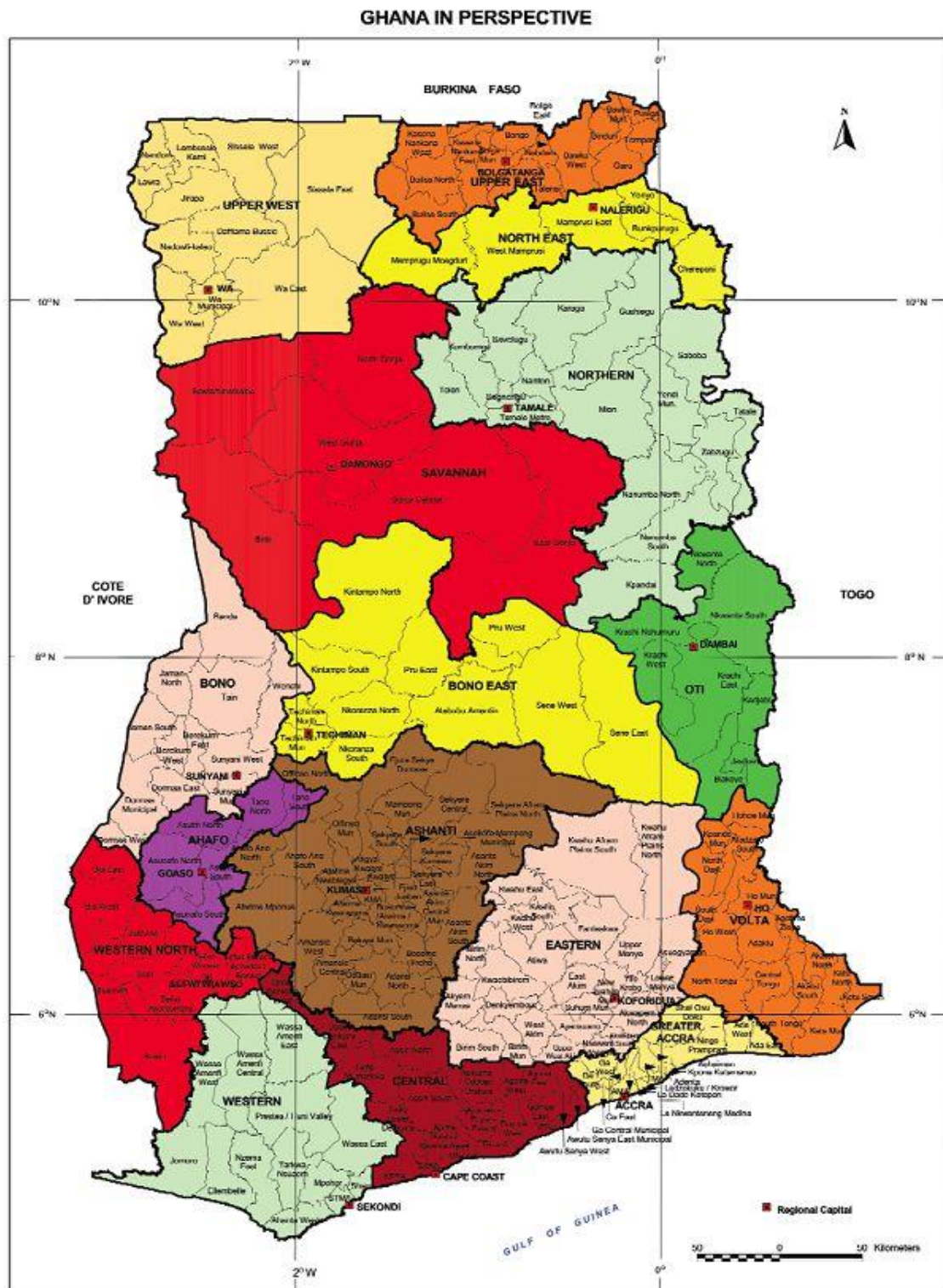


Figure 3.1: Map of Ghana

Source: Ghana Statistical Service (2021)

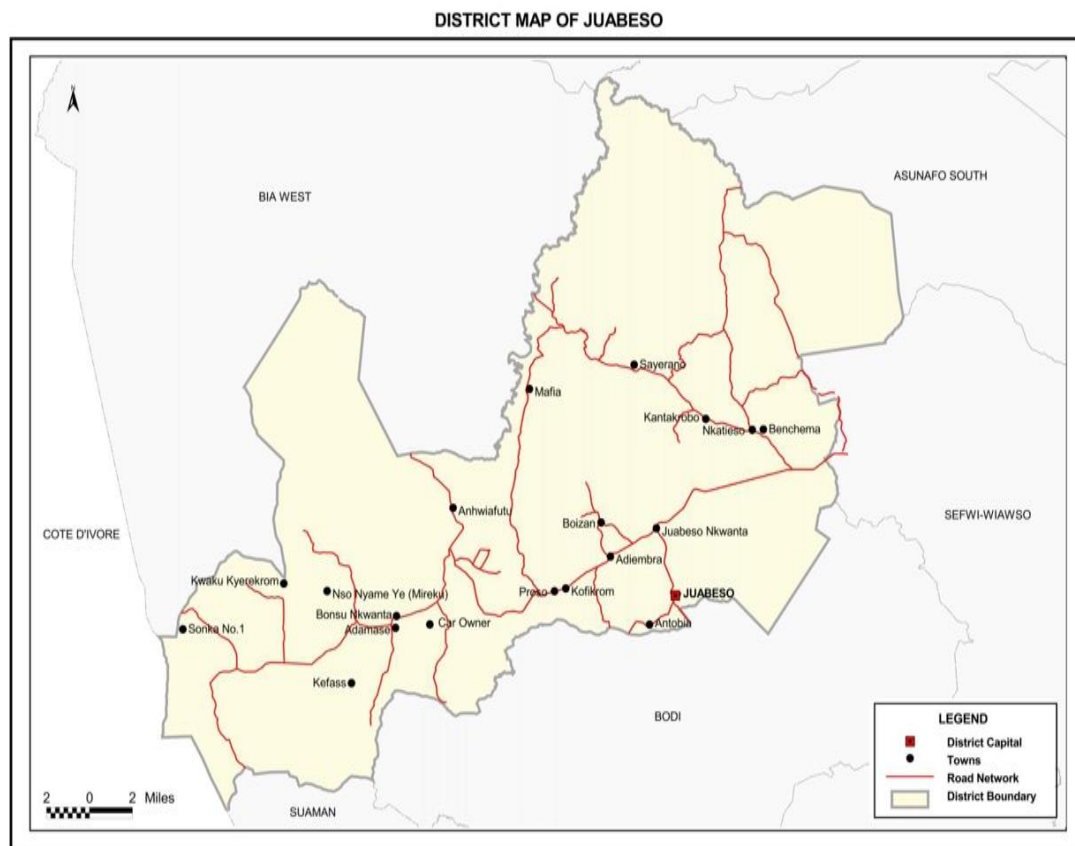


Figure 3.1: Map of Juaboso
Source: Ghana Statistical Service (2021)

3.5 Target/Study Population

All Senior High School (SHS) Students, Teachers, Assembly Members, officials of National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) and executives of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of Juaboso SHS formed the target/study population for this study.

Moser and Korstjens (2018) assert that in a phenomenological study, the selection of participants should adhere to predetermined criteria. One crucial aspect of this criterion is the participants' direct involvement with the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher seeks individuals who share a common experience but possess unique personal traits and perspectives. Following the principles of phenomenology, it becomes essential to carefully select participants who have encountered or undergone

the phenomenon in a manner that qualifies them and motivates their willingness to provide insights into it (van Manen, 2016). Therefore, in this study, participants were primarily chosen based on their firsthand encounter with the phenomenon, which enables them to speak about it with competence. Additionally, specific characteristics were deemed relevant for including or excluding participants from the study. These participant characteristics were determined using the following criteria:

Inclusion Criteria for Children

- Participants should be 16 to 17-year-old student at Juaboso Senior High School (this social unit has proven to possess agency and is unlikely to be subjective to adults' coercive directives - Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013).
- Participant should be fluent in either English language, Sefwi or Twi dialect.

Exclusion Criteria for Children

- Students at Juaboso Senior High School who were between 16 to 17 years old and fluent in either English language, Sefwi or Twi dialect, however, not offering programmes within the humanities (E.g. Government, History, Christian/Islamic Religious Studies, etc) were excluded.
- Students at Juaboso Senior High School who were between 16 to 17 years old and fluent in either English language, Sefwi or Twi dialect, however were in the first year were excluded.

Inclusion Criteria for Key Informants

- Participants should be Civic Educators (NCCE officers), PTA Executive, Assemblymember and teachers who operate within/within the jurisdiction of Juaboso Senior High School
- Participant should be fluent in either English language, Sefwi or Twi dialect.

Exclusion Criteria for Key Informants

- Civic Educators (NCCE officers), PTA Executives, Assembly members and teachers who operated with/within the jurisdiction of Juaboso Senior High School but had less than two years' experience were excluded.

3.6 Sampling Technique

On the basis of these inclusion and exclusion criteria, the researcher employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants for the study (Creswell, 2009). Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because, this non-probability sampling technique is regularly adopted in qualitative studies, where the researcher intentionally selects individuals or organizations with knowledge or experience relevant to the phenomenon of interest (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The selection process involved identifying individuals who possessed the ability to articulate and reflect upon events and opinions, and had a solid understanding and experience related to the phenomenon (i.e. Children's right) (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979). This sampling technique allowed for a focused exploration of the research questions and the phenomenon under investigation.

Purposive sampling does not aim to represent the entire population but rather focuses on selecting individuals who can provide rich and meaningful insights, which is a strength in qualitative research (Suri, 2011). In the context of this study, the use of purposive sampling was particularly suitable as it aligned with the phenomenological design and qualitative approach, which emphasizes selecting participants based on their personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. This allowed for the inclusion of children and key informants who could offer contextually rich data regarding children's rights.

3.7 Sample Size

In qualitative studies, sample size is only acceptable when it is neither too small to achieve data saturation nor too large to make it difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis (Boddy, 2016). More importantly, to achieve diverse perspectives, participants were sampled based on gender/sex, age group, religious affiliation, marital status and educational qualification. As per table 3.1 - 3.5 below, the sample size for this study comprised twenty-five (25) students of Juaboso SHS and five (5) key informants namely two (2) teachers, one (1) local legislator/Assembly member, a (1) Civic Educator and one (1) executive of the Parent Teacher Association of Juaboso Senior High School. On the basis of the principle of “information power,” 25 participants and 5 key informants with diverse characteristics (see Tables 3.1-3.5), were sampled and interviewed (Malterud et al., 2016). The “information power” principle informed the study’s sample size on the basis of the study’s objectives, sample specificity, application of established theories, dialogues’ quality, and strategy for data analysis (Malterud et al., 2016). The sample size further aligned with Alase's (2017) sample size recommendation of 2 to 25 participants for qualitative studies, in order to achieve a detailed understanding of a phenomenon.

3.8 Summary of Participants’ Demographic Characteristics

Selected demographic characteristics of the sampled population (i.e., students of Juaboso Senior High School and key informants), are presented below from Table 3.1 to Table 3.5. Notably, most of the students interviewed were sixteen years old, while the key informants were predominantly aged between 36 and 59 years. Furthermore, the study sample was largely female, with 20 out of 30 participants belonging to this sex. Relative to the educational qualifications all students had a Junior High School

qualification. Among key informants, all teachers held tertiary educational qualifications, with the Assembly member and the PTA executive being a SHS and primary school graduates, respectively. Most of the study participants were Christians. The relevance of participants' demographics relative to students understanding and realization of child rights has been elaborated and discussed in the next chapter.



Table 3.1: Demographics of Students at Juaboso Senior High School Interviewed

Age (Years)	Age (Years)		Sex		Highest Educational Qualification	Religious Affiliation		
	16	17	Male	Female	Primary/JHS/SHS/Tertiary	Christianity	Islam	Traditional
Frequency	15	10	7	18	JHS	16	8	1
Percentage (%)	50.0	33.3	40.0	60.0		53.3	26.7	3.3

Source: Field data (2023)

Table 3.2: Demography of Teachers at Juaboso Senior High School Interviewed

TEACHERS									
Age (Years)	Age (Years)		Sex		Highest Educational Qualification	Marital Status	Religious Affiliation		
	25-35	36-59	Male	Female	Primary/JHS/SHS/Tertiary	(Single, Married & Divorced)	Christianity	Islam	Traditional
Frequency	1	1	1	1	Tertiary	Married	1	1	-
Percentage (%)	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3			3.3	3.3	-

Source: Field data (2023)

Table 3.3: Demography of Civic Educator/NCCE Officer at Juaboso Interviewed

CIVIC EDUCATOR/NCCE OFFICER									
Age (Years)	Age (Years)		Sex		Highest Educational	Marital Status	Religious Affiliation		
	25-35	36-59	Male	Female	Primary/JHS/SHS/Tertiary	(Single, Married & Divorced)	Christianity	Islam	Traditional
Frequency	-	1	1	-	Tertiary	Married	1	-	-
Percentage (%)	-	3.3	3.3	-			3.3	-	-

Source: Field data (2023)

Table 3.4: Demography of Assemblymember at Juaboso Interviewed

ASSEMBLY MEMBER									
Age (Years)	Age (Years)		Sex		Highest Educational	Marital Status	Religious Affiliation		
	25-35	36-59	Male	Female	Primary/JHS/SHS/Tertiary	(Single, Married & Divorced)	Christianity	Islam	Traditional
Frequency	1	-	1	-	SHS	Married	1	-	-
Percentage (%)	3.3	-	3.3	-			3.3	-	-

Source: Field data (2023)

Table 3.5: Demography of Parent Teacher Association Executive at Juaboso Interviewed

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE									
Age (Years)	Age (Years)		Sex		Highest Educational Qualification	Marital Status	Religious Affiliation		
	25-35	36-59	Male	Female			Christianity	Islam	Traditional
Frequency	-	1	-	1	Primary/ JHS/SHS/ Tertiary	(Single, Married & Divorced)	-	1	-
Percentage (%)	-	3.3	-	3.3	Primary	Married	-	3.3	-

Source: Field data (2023)

3.9 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, data were primarily collected using a semi-structured interview guide and documentary study.

3.9.1 Semi-structured Interview Guide

Semi-structured interview guide was employed to capture participants' experiences and perspectives on children's right. The semi-structured interview guide allowed for probing questions for clarity (Yeboah, 2014).

3.9.2 Documentary Study

The documentary study involved reviewing existing literature to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon of children's rights by establishing profound insight into the core themes within the phenomenon and appropriately creating significant linkages (Azungah, 2018). Generally, documentary studies' data collection comprised of reviewing pertinent literature from sources like scholarly articles, and then cross-referencing this data with the interview findings. Documentary studies proved invaluable when direct questioning was not feasible.

3.10 Data Collection Procedures

To clarify the purpose of the research and the methods used in the data collection, meetings were conducted with the appropriate authorities at Juaboso SHS and subsequently with the study participants. Information was passed to participants relative to their freedom to opt out of the study whenever they desired. Additionally, participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential. Meanwhile, participants' identities were protected by employing pseudonyms. Written informed consent for participation in the interviews

was acquired from key informants (i.e., two (2) teachers, 1 Assemblymember, 1 Civic Educator and 1 executive of the Parent Teacher Association), the participating children's parents or their legal guardians. Further, the students participating in the study also gave their assents. The research primarily relied on data gathered from semi-structured interviews with the students and key informants. These interviews were captured using a digital audio recording device. Participants had the choice to communicate in either Sefwi, Twi or English languages. However, the majority (more than 95%) of the interviews were carried out in the Twi language, with a small number in English language. Open-ended questions were utilized to solicit participants' responses. The students' and teachers' interviews were conducted on the school's compound while those of the Assemblymember, Civic Educator and executive of the Parent-Teacher Association were held at their respective homes and/or offices. Each interview session typically lasted around thirty-five to forty-five minutes. The field data collection exercise extended for three weeks. Subsequently, at a sample size of twenty-five (25) students of Juaboso SHS and five (5) key informants, data saturation was attained.

3.11 Data Handling and Analysis

The interview recordings were stored securely in password-protected files on the researcher's personal computer, and a backup was kept on an external drive. Data were then analyzed following Creswell's (2009) thematic data analysis process, which consists of six steps: transcribing the data, familiarizing oneself with the data through multiple readings, creating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining these themes, and analyzing the final themes. As part of the transcription process, interviews carried out in Twi, were translated into English by the researcher. There were instances where direct

translation was difficult, and in these cases, the researcher chose the closest English words or phrases that communicated the intended meaning. Rigorous precautions were in place to secure the transcribed data and prevent unauthorized access. The researcher carefully read the transcribed data several times to get a complete understanding of it, making a note of any intriguing points. NVivo Pro 11, a data organization software, was used to aid in data management, coding and identification of themes and quotes. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to all individuals, ensuring their identities remained anonymous throughout the research.

3.12 Ensuring Rigor/Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies, attaining trustworthiness is important. The trustworthiness of qualitative research data hinges on its credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Connelly, 2016).

3.12.1 Credibility

Credibility is assured when participants provide reliable responses. Credibility in this research was reinforced by having participants verify the transcribed data (Anney, 2014). Member checking or participant validation is a technique that involves sharing the data or results with participants to check for resonance and consistency of the data with their experiences shared (Bert et al., 2016). Suggesting that, the researcher shared the transcribed data with participants, to afford them the opportunity to confirm whether the data gathered truly represented their responses. This approach was meant to boost the data's credibility. Also, the credibility of the current research was deepened by enhancing triangulation, which compared the data from varied sources (Mishra & Rasundram, 2017). Further, the necessary data security measures were implemented to safeguard data integrity.

3..12.2 Dependability

Stable findings over time indicate dependability. Techniques like audit trails and methodology replication were employed in this study to bolster dependability of this research (Connelly, 2016). An audit trail and feedback from experts on the methodologies further solidified the dependability.

3..12.3 Confirmability

This is achieved when other researchers can confirm the findings. In this study, the researcher utilized peer debriefing, as recommended by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers (2002) to enhance confirmability. Peer debriefing involves a group of expert peers or colleagues reevaluating the collected data and research procedures (Rolfe, 2016). Suggesting that, the researcher's colleagues were invited to scrutinize the research procedures and outcomes to meet this particular trustworthiness criteria. The researcher's supervisor rigorously examined the research processes and results for validation. The research further enhanced confirmability by maintaining neutrality in data analysis and adopting reflexive journaling (Cope, 2014). Through the adoption of reflexive journaling, the researcher kept a diary or journal about his/her thoughts, feelings and reflections related to the research processes. It helped in understanding and documenting biases, influences and decisions throughout the study. This self-awareness ensured that the research remained as objective and credible as possible.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that the study adhered to ethical principles, honouring the rights and dignity of every participant, regardless of their age. Before the data collection, permission was sought from the school authorities with an official correspondence from

the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies. The students were asked to give their assent, while informed consent was obtained from key informants and guardians of the students (Pillay, 2014). The study's objective was clearly explained to all participants before the collection of data. It was emphasized that involvement in the study was completely voluntary, with no coercion or undue pressure put on anyone to participate. Participants were informed that they could choose to discontinue participation in the study at any time they so wished. In order to maintain confidentiality, all participants were given pseudonyms to safeguard their anonymity. The researcher stressed the significance of academic integrity, crediting all information sources to avoid any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The study explored Juaboso Senior High School students' perspectives on knowledge and understanding about child rights, factors that hinder the realization of these rights, benefits from understanding child rights and the strategies for enhancing knowledge and understanding of child rights among this population. Data were gathered from 30 participants, including 25 students of Juaboso Senior High School and 5 key informants, using semi-structured interviews. Employing a thematic data analysis, the study identified four primary themes and a number of sub-themes that highlighted Juaboso Senior High School students' knowledge and understanding of child rights.

4.1 Influence of study's demographics on students understanding and realization of Child rights

Students' understanding and realization of child rights are intrinsically shaped by their demographic characteristics. Students aged 16 to 17 years occupy a critical stage of cognitive and moral development, wherein they are beginning to engage with more abstract constructs, including rights, freedoms, and responsibilities. At this developmental phase, their ability to comprehend and apply such concepts becomes increasingly sophisticated. As reflected in the data, students' perspectives demonstrate an emerging understanding of child rights, particularly in relation to the domains of protection, provision, and participation, though some misconceptions persist. Specifically, the conflation of rights with domestic responsibilities, as evidenced in students' responses, highlights the continued evolution of their cognitive frameworks regarding the precise nature of child

rights. The gender composition of sampled students, with 15 of them being female, appears to have had a notable impact on the specific rights emphasized by students. Female students exhibited a pronounced awareness of issues related to protection from abuse and access to education, which may reflect their heightened sensitivity to concerns of safety, dignity, and gender equity—topics that are frequently foregrounded in discussions of child rights within this demographic. The prominence of these concerns in female students’ responses suggests that gender-specific experiences significantly shape their engagement with child rights discourse, particularly in areas concerning physical and emotional protection. Students’ educational background (i.e., all of them having completed Junior High School), also plays a pivotal role in shaping their understanding and realization of child rights. Completion of JHS typically entails exposure to civic education, which likely informed students’ basic awareness of their legal entitlements. This foundational knowledge is reflected in students’ ability to reference some legal instruments and their understanding of rights related to protection and provision. However, the demographic characteristics also reveal gaps in students’ familiarity with specific legislative frameworks that safeguard child rights, indicating a need for more comprehensive education on child rights at the Senior High School level. Religious affiliation also emerged as another key demographic factor, with majority of students identifying as Christian. This religious context significantly influences students’ conceptualization of child rights, as religious teachings often emphasize moral values such as respect for others and the responsibility to care for family members. The findings indicate that sermons and religious lessons have reinforced students’ understanding of their rights, particularly in relation to their protection and dignity. The Christian-majority context of the school community may further explain the

emphasis on certain moral dimensions of rights, which align with the ethical teachings prevalent in Christianity.

Moreover, teachers' demographic features were identified as critical in shaping students' knowledge and realization of child rights. The equal representation of male and female teachers, coupled with their tertiary-level education and structured classroom environments, suggests a balanced and inclusive approach to rights education. Teachers' age and marital status further indicate a level of maturity and experience, which likely enhances their ability to impart nuanced understandings of rights, particularly in the domains of provision and protection, such as the right to education and protection from harm.

Moreover, the contributions of key community figures, including the Civic Educator, Assembly Member, and PTA Executive, add another layer of influence on students' understanding and realization of child rights. These key informants, characterized by their advanced education and civic involvement, serve as important role models and sources of information. Their Christian affiliations and leadership roles further embed moral and ethical considerations into students' perceptions of rights, emphasizing both the legal and moral dimensions of these entitlements. Their active engagement in promoting civic responsibility and awareness of legislative instruments play a crucial role in shaping how students perceive their rights and obligations within the broader societal context.

In conclusion, the demographic characteristics of the participants provide a multifaceted and contextually rich framework for understanding how child rights are conceptualized and internalized. Students' age and educational attainment enable them to grasp foundational aspects of child rights, while gender and religious affiliation shape their focus on specific

rights, such as protection and education. The presence of experienced and educated teachers and community stakeholders further reinforces these understandings. Nonetheless, the findings reveal notable gaps in students' knowledge, particularly concerning legislative protections and participatory rights, which reflect the broader socio-cultural and educational context of the study.

4.2 Knowledge and understanding about child rights: What are Juaboso Senior High School students' perspectives?

Child rights are universally acknowledged, and designed to enhance respect, protection and realization of children's needs throughout their developmental stages (Lansdown et al., 2014). The scope of child rights includes but is not limited to, access to healthcare services, education, secure shelter and safeguards against abuse and exploitation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by the United Nations in 1989, serves as the pivotal international framework delineating these rights. The UNCRC highlights the imperative of treating all children with dignity and equity, while also recognizing their agency as active right holders in their respective journeys towards maturity.

In the context of this study, child rights are conceptualized with respect to UNCRCs "3Ps" (Protection, Provision and Participation) as well as other entitlements mentioned in other relevant instruments, safeguarding children's rights. Consequently, Juaboso Senior High School students' knowledge and understanding of child rights encompass awareness and comprehension of the extensive legal, social and ethical entitlements inherent to every child, premised on children's unique age-related characteristics and inherent vulnerability (Ame, 2011; Donnelly, 2013; Shestack, 2017).

Students of Juaboso Senior High School exhibited diverse perspectives on knowledge and understanding about child rights. Participants' diverse knowledge and understandings of child rights were demonstrated through their grasp of varied definitions (i.e., the nature and content), distinctive sources of knowledge on child rights and comprehension of the different categorization of child rights. Additionally, the dynamics in terms of the relevant legislative instruments and mechanisms for seeking redress to child rights abuses revealed participants' knowledge and understanding of child rights.

4.2.1 Definitions of child rights

In line with the contextual understanding of child rights (indicated above), most student participants of Juaboso Senior High School described child rights as entitlements, freedoms, or privileges that should be accessible by all children. According to participants, these entitlements, freedoms or privileges were captured in legal instruments and were enjoyed by all persons below the age of eighteen years. For example, Minta, a 16-year-old female participant, highlighted that child rights consist of freedoms allowing children to engage in activities without any external control or interference. Similarly, Kintoh, a 17-year-old male, defined "child rights as

entitlements that empower children to receive the necessary support and care.” Again, an elaborate description of child rights was provided by Fuachie. He stated that:

In my understanding, child rights refer to the privileges and entitlements that every child has to enjoy. These privileges are safeguarded and guaranteed by legal provisions (Fuachie, Female 16yrs).

Collectively, most students’ perspectives on the definition of child rights points to a common recognition of a multifaceted fundamental freedoms and legal safeguards. Similarly, key informants also described child rights as inherent entitlements, freedoms and privileges that children possess. For example, a key informant remarked during an interview session:

“Child rights are freedoms and privileges that children are naturally permitted to enjoy by virtue of their age” (Mrs. Adu, Female Teacher).

The finding obviously suggests that child rights are privileges mentioned in legislative frameworks.

However, a few students interviewed displayed a limited knowledge and understanding of child rights. These students demonstrated a misunderstanding between child rights and responsibilities in their descriptions of what child rights entailed. For example, Bie, a 16-year-old female student stated that “when I rise in the morning, I go and collect water from the stand pipe, sweep the yard and make breakfast as my right, before I head off to school for my studies.” Similarly, other students interpreted their knowledge and understanding of child rights through the lens of personal and societal responsibilities. For instance, in Paul’s opinion, child rights were integrally linked to a child’s ability to contribute to his/her family's welfare as well as maintaining respectful relationships with elders in his community, which in turn supports the child’s own well-being. On

the other hand, Munira interpreted her rights as being closely connected to her responsibilities as a student, emphasizing “preparedness and diligence in her academic duties.” These perspectives from students highlight their limited knowledge and understanding of child rights.

4.2.2 Sources of knowledge and understanding on child rights

As children imbibe values of respect, responsibility and reciprocity (3Rs) through diverse processes and agents of socialization, so do they learn about child rights (Kwarteng, 2012). This suggest that there are several sources for acquiring knowledge and understanding on child rights.

In the current study, participants identified varied sources of knowledge and understanding on child rights in their responses. According to the findings students acquired their knowledge and understanding about child rights from diverse sources including; homes, media, religious institutions as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Significantly, the critical role of schools as primary sources of knowledge and understanding about child rights was also commonly shared by most participants.

During the interview, a participant mentioned that her knowledge and understanding of child right was sourced from her parents in the house (Emefa, Female 16-year-old). Most students further articulated that, the home as a primary institution for socialization played a pivotal role in instilling in them knowledge and understanding on child rights. For instance, Gregory a 16-year-old boy stated that, “the environment created in the home fosters early appreciation of rights which are foundational to understanding the rights of a child.”

Besides, participants identified the media, particularly television, radio, and community information centers, as significant platforms for learning about child rights. Nkuah, a

16-year-old male, mentioned that the media does not only “inform him of specific incidents of child rights violations” but also “educates him about his right to be protected from physical harm, his right to education, and his right to free speech.” Similarly, Otto emphasized the significance of “the adoption of local radio stations by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to raise awareness about child rights” (Otto, Male 16 yrs). Furthermore, Dora, a 17-year-old female, pointed out how her awareness of child rights was enhanced through the print media, specifically mentioning how an article in the “Junior Graphic” discussed the denial of educational rights to children in “witch camps in Northern Ghana.” Collectively, these accounts highlight the instrumental role of the media in enhancing knowledge and understanding about child rights for students of Juaboso Senior High School.

The study further revealed that religious bodies, particularly orthodox churches such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church of Ghana, and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, played significant roles in educating participants about child rights. participants reported that their knowledge and understanding of child rights was enhanced through “sermons” and “specifically tailored services for children.” For instance, Otto remarked, “..in my church, the Presbyterian Church, the reverend minister delivered a sermon emphasizing that children should not be aggravated but should be protected. He also mentioned the God-given right to life that extends to children” (Otto, Male 16yrs). Comparably, Maame Badu, a parent and a key informant, noted that children's services at these orthodox churches served as platforms for imparting knowledge about child rights to children. These findings suggest that religious institutions are pivotal in raising awareness and understanding about child rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School.

Furthermore, participants identified both non-governmental bodies and governmental organizations as important sources of their knowledge and understanding of child rights. According to student, participant, notable organizations such as Child Rights International, Ghana, Right to Play International, Global Communities, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and the Department of Social Welfare played pivotal roles in educating them on child rights. The students remarked that their knowledge and understanding of child rights were improved through seminars organized by both non-governmental bodies and governmental organizations. For example, a student remarked “I was educated about child rights at programmes facilitated by CHRAJ and the Department of Social Welfare and some NGOs including Rainforest Alliance, Global Communities, Child Rights International, Ghana and Right to Play International” (Collins, Male 17yrs). This perspective was supported by Simon, an assemblyman from Juaboso, who affirmed that such child right sensitization opportunities arose when the community organized seminars in collaboration with CSOs and government institutions, thus exposing the children to critical matters concerning child rights. These accounts highlight the important roles played by both non-governmental bodies and governmental organizations as sources of knowledge and understanding about child rights.

More importantly, almost all the student participants interviewed mentioned that schools were their primary source of knowledge and understanding about child rights where they first learnt about their rights as minors. For example, Freda, a 17-year-old female student, primarily became aware of her rights to appropriate shelter and adequate nutrition during her first history lesson, emphasizing the role of schools in facilitating knowledge and understanding about child rights. Similarly, Mavis, also aged 17, mentioned that at her “government classes,” she gained her initial exposure to

child rights, such as the right to life, education and healthcare. These participants' experiences and knowledge on child rights in formal educational settings describes the crucial role schools play as sources of knowledge and understanding of child rights. Besides, Mr. Atsu, a key informant and teacher, corroborated schools' integral role in enlightening students about child rights in his remark, "subjects like History and Christian Religious Studies have a lot of topics on child rights."

4.2.3 Categorization of child rights

The current study sought participants' understanding and knowledge about categorizations of child rights in the context of UNCRCs "3Ps" (Protection, Provision and Participation) (Appiah, 2018; Ame, 2011). In alignment with UNCRC's "3Ps" (i.e., Provision, Protection, and Participation), students demonstrated a comprehensive understanding and knowledge on child rights to "Provision" and "Protection." Evidently, participants such as Nancy a female 16year old girl, articulates children's rights to specific "provisions" such as the "right to education, healthcare, adequate and quality nutrition and suitable housing." Nancy further mentioned children's right to 'protections' including "rights of protections from physical and emotional abuse." Similarly, Appiah's assertion of his rights to "proper shelter or housing, protection from physical harm, healthcare, and adequate and nutritious food" during the interview demonstrated his knowledge and understanding of child rights to "Provision" and "Protection." Additionally, Oparebea and Leticia echoed this sentiment, emphasizing children's rights to "quality healthcare, proper education," and protection "from sexual abuse perpetrated by uncultured older men." Mr. Atsu's anecdote further supports students' familiarity with their "provision and protective rights," recalling a moment in class when a student protested against corporal punishment, citing it as a violation of

her right to be protected from physical abuse. The comment shared by the key informant included:

In one of my classes, I stood in awe when a student told me that teachers' duty towards students was to teach every subject to the understanding of all learners and not whip students because it was against their right to be protected from physical abuse (Mr. Atsu, Male Teacher).

Contrarily, the findings indicate a notable gap in students' knowledge and understanding of their "Participatory" rights. Only a minority (n=3) of students at interviewed, demonstrated an awareness of their "Participatory" rights. Among these few students, Baba, a 16-year-old male learner expressed his awareness of his right to "freely associate," allowing him to choose his "friends" and to "freely practice a religion of his choice." This limited comprehension of "Participatory" rights highlight a gap in Juaboso Senior High School students' overall knowledge and understanding of the categorization of child rights.

4.2.4 Knowledge about legislative instruments safeguarding child rights

A legislative instrument constitutes a form of statutory or regulatory enactment promulgated by a legal entity or an authorized body within the jurisdiction of the legislative body and required to assist in outlining the specifics and regulations necessary for the practical implementation and enforcement of pre-existing statutes (Seidman & Seidman, 2011). Suggesting that, a legislative instrument is enacted by legislative bodies to operationalize statutes or laws. Consequently, in this study, legislative instrument is conceptualized as a mechanism or framework employed to safeguard the rights of children.

Participants interviewed exhibited a limited knowledge and understanding about the legislative instruments pertaining to child rights. While some students were aware of the existence of Ghana's 1992 Constitution, there was a general lack of knowledge and

understanding of its specifics, such as the date of its adoption or its substantive provisions. Additionally, most students showed limited familiarity and understanding of the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, a 16-year-old Nkuah, acknowledged hearing about the 1992 Constitution of Ghana but admitted to a lack of knowledge regarding its details. Similarly, Mavis, a 17-year-old female student, expressed unfamiliarity with both the UNCRC and the Children's Act. In support of Juaboso Senior High School students' limited knowledge and understanding of legislative frameworks, key informants also highlighted educational gaps in their respective roles contributing to this limitation in knowledge. A teacher mentioned that "in the syllabus, we are just expected to address rights and responsibilities of children, therefore, I only mention Ghana's 1992 Constitution during lessons" (Mrs Adu, Female Teacher). Damtse, a civic educator, also confirmed that their sensitization efforts focused predominantly on the civic rights and responsibilities outlined in the 1992 Constitution, with limited and occasional references to the UNCRC or the Children's Act.

4.2.5 Places to seek redress on child rights abuse cases

Decisions regarding where to report cases of child rights abuse are primarily influenced by the victims' location and the severity of the abuse (Appiah, 2018). According to students abuse occurring within homes or the community was predominantly reported to persons in positions of trust and respect, such as caregivers or elders at the Chief's palace who were knowledgeable about child rights. For instance, Kaya, a 16-year-old female participant, noted, "I would likely report incidences of abuse to my parents/guardians or a trusted, influential figure in my community like a respected elder(s) at the Chief's palace within the community, with understanding about matters on child rights." On the other hand, when abuse took place at school, participants

preferred to report to educational authorities such as trusted teachers, housemasters/mistresses, assistant headmasters, headmasters, or directly to the district education office (Efe, Female, 16 yrs).

Furthermore, the participants identified formal institutions such as the Ghana Police Service, the Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Unit, the Department of Social Welfare, and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice as critical resources for addressing more severe cases. For example, Addai, a 17-year-old male participant, sought redress from abuse by employing several formal stakeholders mandated to deal with child rights abuse cases:

After our church leaders and some respectable elders had talked to my dad to take care of my needs but to no avail, I reported my dad to the Department of Social Welfare but he declined their invitation. The social welfare officer gave me a note to report the case at the Juaboso Police Station. After writing my statement, I was given another note to Asawinso Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Unit (DOVVSU). He responded to DOVVSU invitation and has since give me three hundred cedis every month to cater for my needs at the boarding house (Addai, 17-year-old male).

Key informants reinforced these observations by advising students to “utilize both informal and formal child abuse reporting mechanisms” depending on the context. A teacher, Mr. Atsu emphasized the importance of reporting to trusted figures within educational settings and mentioned the role of respected religious leaders and formal authorities like DOVVSU and the Department of Social Welfare in handling such cases.

4.3 Barriers to realization of child rights: What are the opinions of Juaboso Senior High School students?

A range of systemic, social and economic factors can pose as barriers to the realization of child rights. This suggests that barriers to the realization of child rights represent impediments including, social, cultural, economic, traditional and religious factors that

hinder the realization of child rights to education, health and physical abuse among others.

In the current study, participants' responses revealed significant barriers rooted in socio-cultural, religious and economic contexts that hinder the realization of child rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School in the study area.

4.3.1 Socio-cultural barriers

The study identified a range of socio-cultural factors that acted as impediments to the realization of rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School. These socio-cultural factors included; lack of knowledge among caregivers, broken homes emanating from parental death and divorce/separation, informal kinship or fosterage, loss of livelihood, polygamy, having a lot of children, delinquent behaviours from children and the age of children.

4.3.1.1 Lack of knowledge among caregivers

Generally, lack of knowledge refers to ignorance or gaps in knowledge. Participants' responses revealed a significant gap in the knowledge and understanding about child rights among caregivers, which poses a critical barrier to the realization of these rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School. Most students interviewed highlighted a widespread lack of awareness about child rights among caregivers which directly impeded children's well-being and safety. For instance, Ottu, a 16-year-old male, vividly illustrated this issue with a personal account:

"Most of our parents are ignorant about child rights. They regard children as their property and believe they can treat them any how.

At my house, there is a tenant who beats up his daughter mercilessly with copper wires whenever he sees her with the opposite sex. He has no clue that she is infringing upon his daughter's right to protection from physical abuse."

Similarly, Damtse, a civic educator, corroborated this lack of awareness of child rights among caregivers, stating,

"..the majority of parents are completely oblivious to knowledge on child rights. They are more likely to defend traditional child-rearing methods than learn about child rights."

This statement suggests that some traditional practices and norms often overshadow the principles of child rights, hindering progressive changes towards child rights realization.

4.3.1.2 Broken homes

Typically, broken homes refer to a family environment where the parents are divorced, separated, or in frequent conflict, often resulting in a lack of stability for the children. In the context of this study, broken homes denote family environments emanating from, parental death or separation/divorce. It emerged as critical barriers to the realization of child rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School. Participants revealed the stark neglect in the realization of child rights for children hailing from broken homes, directly impacting their welfare and well-being. For instance, Collins, a 17-year-old male, shared that following the death of his parents, he assumed the burden of providing for his younger siblings and himself. According to Collins, this responsibility included engaging in daily labour and farming to secure food, which often conflicted with his educational commitments, causing him to sometimes miss lessons. Collins further mentions how his experiences were negatively affecting his health to the extent of becoming reliant on painkillers. Similarly, Gregory, a 16-year-old male, recounted the "complete withdrawal of support" from his "divorced parents," compelling him to

“fend for himself.” Gregory reiterates that the lack of parental support had strained his academic and social life, suggesting that his educational performance could be improved with adequate support for necessities such as food and educational materials. These experiences shared by students highlight the profound impact that broken homes can have on the realization of child rights such as education and health.

4.3.1.3 Informal kinship or fosterage

Generally, informal kinship or fosterage describes the non-legal, culturally acknowledged practices where children are raised by persons other than biological parents, usually family friends or relatives. These engagements often arise on the basis of mutual agreements rather than formal statutory processes. Typical motivations for informal kinship or fostering include enhancing social ties among families, establishing better educational opportunities for children, or providing care in cases where biological parents are unable to do so due to health, economic or other reasons. Informal kinship or fosterage is widely practiced in various cultures in Ghana (including the study area) and across the world, with a goal of strengthening familial and community bonds (Badasu, 2020).

Students responses revealed that informal kinship or fosterage arrangements can significantly impede the realization of child rights. Participants indicated that children living within such arrangements often face neglect and abuse that violate their fundamental rights. During the interview with students, a salient point emerged from a participant's reflection on a local adage, "obi nhwe obi ba," which literally translates to "nobody cares for somebody else's child." This expression encapsulates the observed tendency of non-nuclear family members to neglect the basic needs and rights of children in their care. For instance, Armah, a 17-year-old male, shared his personal experiences, noting that children like him who live with extended family members are

frequently subjected to abuse and exploited as “domestic help”. Armah considered himself fortunate to be attending school, unlike some peers who were deprived of educational opportunities, and adequate clothing and were also compelled to work excessively for longer hours. These conditions starkly infringe upon children’s rights to education, health, and socialization, highlighting a critical area of concern within informal fosterage systems.

4.3.1.4 Loss of Livelihoods

Livelihood commonly refers to securing the necessities of life, or surviving and the ability to maintain or build long-term well-being (Chambers & Conway 1991). Implying that people live and survive via earnings from their livelihood. Consequently, when caregivers experience loss of livelihoods, they and their dependents experience survival challenges.

The findings from the current study highlight the profound impact that caregivers' loss of livelihoods can have on the realization of child rights. Most students, including 16-year-old Kaya, articulated how the recent destruction of cocoa farms was detrimental to her education experiences. According to Kaya, before the current cocoa crisis, her parents were able to afford not only the school fees but also supplementary classes and additional allowances. However, the resultant economic strain has now precluded even the most basic educational expenditures such as school fees, let alone discretionary spending on pocket money and provisions. Supporting this observation, a key informant, Maame Badu, remarked:

Unexpected situations can happen. Parents could lose their jobs like the destruction of cocoa farms experienced since about 5 years ago, more so, a father can become severely ill and incapable of working. In the end, the children will suffer because

there will be no one to pay for educational and health expenses (Maame Badu, Parent, Juaboso).

4.3.1.5 Polygamous Marriages

In a polygamous marriage, a person is married to more than one spouse simultaneously. In this study polygamy is understood as a man marrying more than one woman. The dynamics of polygamy are rooted in varying legal, cultural, religious and social norms. Participants' responses highlight the complex difficulties experienced by children in polygamous marriages, particularly, challenges in realization of their rights. Students such as Ruth, a 16-year-old girl, indicated that in such polygamous marriage settings, the primary breadwinners—often the fathers—tend to be more focused on appeasing their multiple wives rather than ensuring the well-being of the children. Ruth poignantly illustrated this concern by sharing her personal experience in her polygamous household:

My father places a higher priority on securing assets, such as cocoa farms for his wives, rather than fulfilling basic needs like food, health, and education for all his children.

This diversion of attention and resources by caregivers, particularly, father, in polygamous marriages hampers the realization of child rights, relegating them to the background.

3.3.1.6 Having a lot of children

In typical Ghanaian cocoa farming settings, parents decide to give birth to more children than the average household. This decision is typically influenced by the requirement of extra farm hands or labour on these farms. Although these families with many children may experience vibrant and dynamic interactions, children may also face challenges related to adequate resources availability and personalized care.

The current study revealed that having a large number of children significantly strains caregivers' resources, thereby hindering the realization of child rights within families. Students articulated that the economic limitations faced by families with many children often lead to compromised basic rights for the children. According to participants, this is so because resources become insufficient to meet the needs of all the children in such families. For instance, Amos, a 16-year-old male participant, noted:

"If a family's income can only sustain two children but there are ten children in the family, some children's rights will inevitably be compromised for the family's survival."

Similarly, Ninson, another 16-year-old male, shared a personal anecdote, stating:

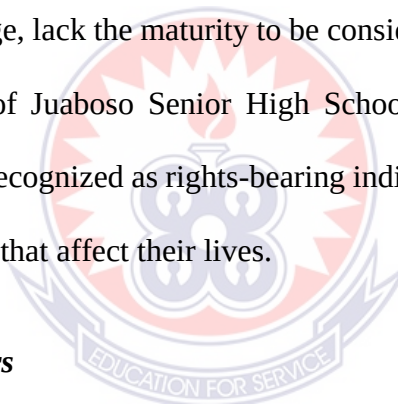
"There are sixteen children in our home... my father could only afford to pay the school fees for one of my brothers, hence the younger had to learn a trade... I consider myself lucky because of the government's free SHS policy; otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to continue my education."

These accounts by students of Juaboso Senior High School underscore the direct impact of huge numbers of children in families on the accessibility of child rights. The disparity in resource allocation within large families often forces some children to forfeit their educational rights to meet the basic survival needs of the household. This highlights the significant barrier to the realization of child rights as stipulated by local and international mandates.

4.3.1.7 Age of Children

In the African and Ghanaian contexts, age is an important determinant of childhood (Adu-Gyamfi, 2013). Young age within these contexts is associated with negative connotations such as non-assertiveness and lack of agency (Karugu, 2013). Suggesting that, typically children growing in Ghana could be regarded to possess no rights.

The current study revealed that the age of children significantly impedes their ability to realize their rights, particularly in decision-making processes. Cultural norms and perceptions regarding the mental maturity of children contribute to this barrier, often leading adults to dismiss the capabilities and opinions of younger individuals. Students vividly described experiences where their voices were disregarded due to their age. For example, Baba, a 16-year-old male, highlighted a personal incident where his preference for attending a specific school was overridden by his father based on a prejudiced belief in his lack of maturity and an assumption based on his older brother's performance. Similarly, Kaya, also 16, noted a pervasive cultural and institutional bias that automatically favours adults in disputes, reflecting a broader societal view that children, due to their age, lack the maturity to be considered reliable or credible. These accounts by students of Juaboso Senior High School highlight the challenges that children face in being recognized as rights-bearing individuals, capable of contributing thoughtfully to matters that affect their lives.



4.3.2 Religious Barriers

In this study religious barriers refer to religious beliefs and practices that pose as impediments to realizing child rights. As per the findings student pointed out that due to some religious beliefs, children may be denied their right to quality healthcare and education.

4.3.2.1 Denial of children's right to quality healthcare

The study uncovered a critical barrier to child rights to quality healthcare linked to the influence of religious beliefs. Specifically, some religious beliefs led to a reluctance or even a refusal to engage in conventional or orthodox medical treatments during illness. This reluctance significantly compromises the right of children to receive appropriate

and effective medical healthcare. An illustrative example was provided by a participant who stated:

"Our religious beliefs forbid us from utilizing conventional/orthodox medical treatments, even during severe illnesses and pregnancies. We prefer using traditional medicines" (Gregory, a 16-year-old male).

"Sadly, this has resulted in the loss of many loved ones, including my sister who was just 17 years old. She died after a prolonged sickness and was denied accessing the health centre" (Gyamfi, Female, 17yrs).

This testimony highlights the potentially life-threatening implications of such religious practices on healthcare accessibility for children. Additionally, key informants' experiences revealed how religious beliefs can interfere with critical health decisions. Maame Badu recounted a distressing event where a family's religious affiliations led to a fatal outcome for their daughter. She reported:

"I remember a family lost their teenage girl child who needed a blood transfusion urgently after a prolonged sickness. Because of the religious sect of the parents, the child was left to die because, according to the parents, their beliefs did not allow them to sanction blood transfusion."

4.3.2.2 Denial of children's educational rights

The study identified instances where religious beliefs significantly impeded children's access to education. Specifically, it was found that certain religious doctrines discouraged the pursuit of higher education. For instance, Obed, a 17-year-old male student, highlighted that his church discourages its members from pursuing advanced educational opportunities, believing that such pursuits detract from their spiritual commitments. Obed expressed a personal conflict, stating, "Although I aspire to attain the highest educational level possible, our church does not encourage its members to

pursue higher education. Our church believes that further studies are not essential because it drains the zeal to work for the Lord instead."

These experiences shared by participants highlight the complex ways in which religious beliefs can restrict the educational and healthcare rights among children.

4.3.2 Economic Barriers

In this study, economic barriers refer to poverty or financial difficulties that impede the realization of child rights among students of Juaboso Senior High School. The research found poverty or financial difficulties, significantly obstructed the realization of child rights.

Poverty or Financial difficulties

Poverty or financial difficulties in this context refer to a situation where persons or families have insufficient financial resources to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, education, clothing, and healthcare. In this study, participants consistently identified poverty or financial difficulties as a critical factor that prevents children from realizing their basic needs and rights. This finding is substantiated by participants' observations that financial insufficiency in households leads to challenges in enrolling children in school, providing adequate nutrition, addressing healthcare needs, and meeting other fundamental necessities. For example, Mavis, a 17-year-old female articulately expressed that lack of financial resources directly influenced engagement in immoral and strenuous activities for survival. She highlighted the severe consequences of such financial deprivation, including vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections and severe bodily pains. Similarly, Bukre, a 17-year-old male participant, noted that poverty can lead to family abandonment, thereby depriving children of a normal family environment and the basic provisions of clothing, food, and education. Abigail, aged 16, further emphasized this point by describing a family that

struggles to provide even one complete meal a day, highlighting the severe limitations imposed by financial hardship. These accounts collectively underline the critical role that financial barriers may play in depriving children, from realizing of their rights.

4.4 Merits for understanding child rights: What are insights from Juaboso Senior High School students?

When child rights are understood by children, they tend to demonstrate certain values and also enjoy certain benefits such as respecting others' rights, demonstrating self-confidence, developing responsibility, advocating against rights abuses, and educating others on the importance of protecting children's rights.

4.4.1 Respect others' rights

The findings indicate that participants perceive a strong link between understanding one's own rights and the responsibility to respect the rights of others. According to them this awareness not only informs children of their own rights but also instills a sense of duty to uphold the rights of others. For instance, Nancy, a 16-year-old female participant, articulated that knowing her rights helps her appreciate the need to respect others' rights, particularly emphasizing that asserting one's rights should not infringe upon the rights of others. She noted, "Knowing your rights helps you appreciate the necessity to respect others' rights. You learn that your rights end where another's begin." She further explained her own practice of this understanding by stating that while she has the right to express her views, she consciously avoids verbally abusing her peers, recognizing that such behavior would violate their rights. Similarly, George, a 16-year-old student expressed that an understanding of rights is crucial for recognizing the importance of mutual respect. He remarked:

"Once you will not be happy that your rights are not respected, it tells you not to also abuse or disrespect the rights of others."

George believes that understanding what rights entail is fundamental to respecting others' rights, which in turn ensures that one's own rights are respected.

The suggestion is that a comprehensive understanding of rights not only empowers children as rights holders but also fosters a communal respect for rights.

4.4.2 Display Self-Confidence

The study reveals that children's awareness of their rights significantly enhances their self-confidence. This assertion is supported by firsthand accounts from. Nkuah, a 16-year-old male who expressed that understanding his legal entitlements has empowered him to speak out against abuses without fear or intimidation. He specifically mentioned his rights to quality education and protection from physical abuse as areas where his increased knowledge has given him the courage to voice his concerns, regardless of how those responsible for providing these services might react. Similarly, Pat, a 16-year-old female, reported that her awareness of her rights has boosted her confidence in academic settings, enabling her to express her thoughts freely. She attributes her confidence to her understanding that her right to participate and express herself is intrinsic and protected. This indicates that an increased awareness of child rights not only supports children in challenging situations but also enhances their general participation and assertiveness in everyday interactions.

I have learned to be confident in class because I can express my thoughts without fear of being wrong or right, or being wrongly punished. I understand that my right to participate and express myself is God-given (Pat, Female 16yrs Juaboso).

4.4.3 Cultivate a sense of responsibility

The study revealed a significant link between children's awareness of their rights and their sense of responsibility. The participants noted that understanding child rights does

not only clarify the rights of children but also highlights the corresponding responsibilities. For example, a 16-year-old female, Efe mentioned:

"Knowing your rights helps you understand that each right has its corresponding responsibilities. Therefore, I'm motivated to fulfil the duties expected of me even as I assert my rights."

She in further she elaborated that being granted the right to education compels her to study diligently and respect her teachers and seniors. Similarly, a civic educator from Juaboso, Damtse, emphasized the importance of children respecting and fulfilling their responsibilities, noting that it "reinforces caregivers' motivation in providing an enabling environment for them to enjoy their rights." These insights underscore the reciprocal relationship between rights and responsibilities, suggesting that education on child rights can foster a balanced approach to both claiming rights and fulfilling obligations.

4.4.4 Voice out or protest against abuse of child rights

Responses from students' highlight a notable trend: children with an understanding of their rights exhibit a significant sense of empowerment, particularly when confronted with situations of abuse. This empowerment manifests not only in their confidence to defend their rights but also in their ability to identify and utilize appropriate channels for reporting abuses and seeking justice. For instance, Ruth, a 16-year-old female student, expressed a resolute awareness of her educational rights, stating:

"Since I know I have a right to education, no one can take that right away from me. I will report to the Department of Social Welfare if that right is not respected.

Similarly, Freda, a 17-year-old female student, demonstrated her understanding of the legal protections against sexual abuse by affirming

"If I'm a victim of sexual abuse, I will report to the police for the perpetrator to be held accountable. I know it is my entitlement to get justice."

These responses highlight the critical role that knowledge of child rights plays in enabling young individuals to advocate for themselves and navigate the legal and social mechanisms available to them.

4.4.5 Education on child rights

The findings reveal that children's knowledge of their rights not only fosters self-awareness but also activates a ripple effect within their social networks. Students' of Juaboso Senior High School demonstrated that an understanding of child rights empowers them to disseminate this knowledge to others, thereby amplifying the impact of these rights. For instance, Osei, a 16-year-old male student, articulated his understanding of the right to protection from physical harm and actively communicated the consequences of its violation to his parents. Similarly, Doe, a 16-year-old female from the same locality, shared how she advised her peers to opt for dialogue over violence in addressing issues related to their welfare. These actions have reportedly led to improvements in living conditions, showcasing how informed advocacy among peers can lead to tangible enhancements in their environments. This cascade of knowledge and empowerment underscores the critical role of education in child rights, not only for individual protection but also for community betterment.

4.5 Strategies to enhance knowledge and understanding of child rights: What are the viewpoints of students' of Juaboso Senior High School?

The strategies for enhancing knowledge and understanding about child rights were gathered based on students' responses. The findings revealed that the adoption of media campaigns as well as employing advocacy via the platforms established by religious organizations and schools could be leveraged to enhance knowledge and understanding about child rights.

4.5.1 Media Campaigns

Campaigns on child rights utilizing platforms such as traditional and contemporary media was identified by participants as a strategy for enhancing knowledge and understanding of child rights. participants mentioned that the traditional media channels, including television, radio, newspapers, and community information centres, as well as social media platforms like “Facebook” and “WhatsApp,” were crucial avenues to disseminate information on child rights promotion and protection. The students noted that these platforms were integral in the contemporary media landscape and offered significant potential for engaging a wide audience on child rights. Participants further added that in deploying the media in sensitization on child rights, local languages, such as Twi and Sefwi could be adopted. Most Participants believed that using local languages could ensure that information on child rights would be accessible to all persons who are not proficient in the English language, thus broadening the reach and impact of child rights education. Furthermore, Participants called for the involvement of children in these advocacy programmes showcased on the media. They believed that when children are allowed to participate in such advocacy programmes, there are lasting insights into child rights for both the participating children and adults. For instance, Ninson, a 16-year-old male student, stressed the “effectiveness of television in broadcasting adverts and short documentaries on child rights,” suggesting that “incorporating children in these presentations could make the message more relatable and impactful.” Key informants in support of these assertions emphasized the role of community information centres in dedicating time to public education on child rights. Damtse, a civic educator, advocated for the involvement of children in these community information centres sensitization efforts to deepen the public’s understanding of the rights pertinent to these young stakeholders.

4.5.2 School

Participants emphasized that the school environment provided a unique opportunity to enhance knowledge and understanding about child rights as captured in excerpts of subjects such as history and government taught in schools. For instance, Osei, a 16-year-old male student, emphasized that “certain subjects taught in school such as government, enhances understanding of child rights among students.” Similarly, Emefa, a 16-year-old female student, noted that discussions during history lessons contributed significantly to his understanding of child rights. These statements from participants indicate that schools’ academic curricula could be leveraged to enhance knowledge and understanding about child rights among students.

Participants further echoed the role of schools’ extra-curricular activities in enhancing knowledge and understanding about child rights. Therefore, expressed that their knowledge and understanding of child rights had considerably improved upon engagement with experts during participation in extracurricular activities in school. For instance:

“..during a debaters' club meeting, an expert from the National Commission for Civic Education provided valuable insights into child rights to my understanding” (Oparebea, Female 16 years).

Similarly, Ninson, a 16-year-old male student, reported that he had gained a profound knowledge and understanding of child rights after listening to a resource person invited to the school’s civic club meeting. He suggested that such extracurricular activities presented a potent platform for disseminating information on child rights not only to students but also to teachers. Furthermore, Akosua, a 16-year-old female participant, shared her learning experience about child rights during a school speech and prize-giving day. She pointed out that:

“the drama presentations by English literature students, which incorporated themes around child rights, exemplify how extracurricular school programmes could educate broader audiences on these important topics.”

Moreover, Participants consistently emphasized the opportunities created by schools’ “Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)” in enhancing knowledge and understanding of child rights. Such educational initiatives were seen as vital for enhanced knowledge and awareness creation about child rights among students and parents. For instance, Attaa, a 17-year-old student, suggested that "experts could be invited to educate both our caregivers and teachers about child rights" during PTA meetings, believing this approach would lead to more informed decision-making regarding students’ welfare. Similarly, Maame Badu, a parent, pointed out that during PTA meetings, caregivers and teachers were actively engaged on matters of child rights. She argued that such engagements had potentially transformed the attitudes of parents and students towards rights-based approaches in their interactions with children.

4.5.3 Religious organizations

The significance of platforms created by religious organizations in enhancing knowledge and understanding about child rights was highlighted by participants. They indicated that during “special services” held for children by religious bodies, stakeholders sensitize both children and their parents on child rights issues. For instance, Nkuah, a 16-year-old male student highlighted that “annual services held by various churches which are usually dedicated to children, provide opportunities for stakeholders to educate both the young and adults on child rights.” Participants also emphasized the need for duty bearers to take advantage of these religious events to enhance understanding and knowledge on child rights among children and parents. A student stated that,

“....in our mosque during certain occasions, the Imam allows NCCE people to teach our parents and ourselves about our rights and responsibilities as children in the nation.” (Otto, Male 16yrs)

Similarly, Simon, an assembly member, suggested that religious leaders can be pivotal in enhancing knowledge and understanding on child rights, leveraging the “trust and respect they commanded.”

These insights collectively highlight the shared conviction among Participants about strategies adopted to enhance the students and adult knowledge and understanding about child rights within domestic, educational and religious environments.



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The study aimed at investigating the perspectives of students at Juaboso Senior High School regarding their knowledge and understanding of child rights barriers confronting students in the realization of their rights, exploring how an understanding of child rights can benefit the students as well as the strategies to enhance students' knowledge and understanding about child rights.

This chapter delves into the implications, relevance and impact of the research findings in the context of the research questions and the existing body of knowledge.

5.2 Demographic Characteristics

The findings demonstrate that the demographic characteristics of Juaboso Senior High School students significantly shape their knowledge and understanding of child rights. Participants, aged 16-17, are within the legal definition of a child as outlined in various legislative instruments, such as the UNCRC (Part I, Article 1), Ghana's 1992 Constitution (Chapter 5, Article 28 (5)), and Ghana's Children's Act of 1998, Act 560 (Part I, Section 1). This alignment with national and international legislative frameworks warrant that the selected participants represent the appropriate child demographic for this study, which is crucial for exploring their understanding of child rights within a legally relevant context.

At this developmental stage (ie., 16-17 years), students begin to engage with abstract concepts such as rights, freedoms, and responsibilities, aligning with developmental theories of cognitive growth. The Interest Theory, as outlined by Bentham (1987), supports the notion that child rights are essential for safeguarding children's

developmental interests. Students' increasing capacity for abstract reasoning enables them to understand their rights as integral to personal development, especially concerning protection and provision. However, the study highlights persistent misconceptions, such as the conflation of rights with household responsibilities. This may reflect sociocultural norms, where children's roles in domestic chores are deeply embedded. Gender composition, with 15% of the participants being female, also plays a pivotal role in shaping the discourse around child rights. Female students, according to the findings, exhibit heightened awareness of issues such as protection from abuse and access to education, which mirrors studies highlighting how gender impacts the understanding of rights. Sperl & Ferdinandsson (2014) emphasize that girls, especially in patriarchal societies, prioritize rights related to safety and education due to the higher risks of gender-based violence and societal devaluation of their education. This aligns with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 2001), which acknowledges the unique challenges faced by African female children. Addressing gender-specific barriers, as the literature suggests, is crucial for advancing understanding and realization of child rights in these contexts. Students' educational qualification in the context of the current study, (i.e., completion of Junior High School), provided them with a foundational understanding of child rights, particularly in areas of protection and provision. This is consistent with Appiah's (2018) assertion that child's rights education is vital for safeguarding children's well-being. Nonetheless, the demographic finding on students' educational background reveals gaps in students' awareness of specific legislative frameworks, such as the UNCRC and Ghana's Children's Act (1998), a challenge also discussed by Kamau (2013). This emphasizes the limited depth of legislative understanding among students, pointing to the necessity for targeted education on these legal instruments, particularly at the Senior High School

level. Religious affiliation, with the majority of students identifying as Christian, significantly shapes their conceptualization of rights, particularly in moral terms. The findings align with Appiah's (2018) exploration of how religious teachings frame children's understanding of rights within broader ethical values. Interest Theory also supports this by positing that child rights are intertwined with moral obligations to others. The emphasis on familial and communal responsibilities within Christian teachings may contribute to students viewing rights not only as legal entitlements but also as moral imperatives. This broader cultural context, where rights are intertwined with duties and reciprocity, reflects the need for educational interventions that differentiate between legal rights and societal expectations.

The role of teachers, particularly the gender balance and their tertiary education, is critical in shaping students' understanding of child rights. Munongi and Pillay (2018) stress the importance of well-informed teachers in effectively imparting knowledge about child rights. However, gaps in teachers' understanding of child rights, as highlighted by Manful & Manful (2014), may limit their capacity to fully address the complexities of rights education. Thus, further training and resources for teachers are necessary to enhance their ability to foster a more comprehensive understanding of child rights among students.

The contributions of community leaders, such as the Civic Educator, Assembly Member, and PTA Executive, further shape students' understanding and realization of child rights. The finding emphasizes the role of community leaders in child rights advocacy, as noted by Sogaard (2019), who highlights the importance of addressing cultural barriers. The Christian affiliations of these leaders reinforce the moral dimensions of child rights, but Apt et al. (2012) also highlight the tensions between traditional practices and modern conceptions of rights. This suggests that community

leaders should carefully navigate these tensions to promote a rights-based framework that respects both cultural norms and modern legal standards.

In conclusion, the study's findings align with existing literature that highlights the significance of demographic factors—age, gender, education, and religion—in shaping students' understanding of child rights. The socio-cultural and educational contexts provide a framework within which rights are internalized, but the gaps identified, particularly in terms of legislative instruments' knowledge and participatory rights, highlight the need for a multi-faceted approach. The Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1992) offers a useful framework for addressing these gaps by advocating for interventions at individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels to ensure the comprehensive realization of child rights within the broader socio-cultural and legal context.

5.3 Knowledge and understanding about child rights

Understanding the dynamics of child rights is indispensably seen as a comprehensive perspective that insightfully unveils the multifaceted nature of child rights awareness, its varied sources and the deeply entrenched societal beliefs. Intriguingly, the understanding that childhood is not universally homogenous but varies remarkably across cultures is evident (Adu-Gyamfi, 2013). The societal conceptualization of childhood in Ghana predominantly echoes notions of submissiveness, timidity and non-assertiveness. In tandem with this view, Karugu (2013) and Søgaaard (2019) poignantly assert that in several African contexts, children are often primarily perceived as economic assets rather than as individuals with intrinsic rights. This predominant perception critically impacts the way child rights are internalized by children and actioned upon by duty bearers.

The current study at Juaboso Senior High School reveals that the majority of students perceive child rights as inherent freedoms, emphasizing liberties that should be available to children. This knowledge and understanding resonates with broader research findings that emphasize the importance of children understanding their rights to advocate effectively for themselves and engage in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Appiah, 2018).

Although many participants in the findings demonstrated an understanding and knowledge of their rights, there existed a conspicuous gap in the profundity of such knowledge and understanding, a sentiment highlighted by Munongi and Pillay (2018) and Kamau (2013). This “superficial knowledge and understanding” is exemplified by the common confusion between rights and responsibilities, notably in domestic settings. Emphasizing the need for clearer education and communication strategies that distinctly define rights versus responsibilities to avoid such confusion.

Schools emerge as a cardinal sources of understanding child rights, a revelation substantiated by Appiah (2018) and Karugu (2013). In support of this finding, both authors mentioned that children often receive education on their rights through formal education. However, the effectiveness of these educational efforts may be limited if the content delivered is too technical, generalized or vague (Karugu, 2013). This implies that students could have a superficial understanding of child rights rather than an in-depth knowledge and understanding when educational efforts are not worthwhile. This may explain why some students missed the difference in definitions between rights and responsibilities. Similarly, most Participants exhibited stark inconsistency in grasping the legislative instruments, such as the UNCRC and Ghana’s Children’s Act, underpinning child rights could be cited as consequences of weaker educational structures.

More importantly, these above-mentioned knowledge gaps may not be merely academic flaws, but, also hold implications for active assertion and protection of child rights. Highlighting the necessity of addressing these potential gaps in the educational curriculum or its methodological delivery.

The findings that students were well-versed in "provision" and "protection" rights but had limited knowledge about "participation" rights are mirrored in the existing literature. Patterns of this current study's findings is observed in previous studies where children demonstrated better awareness of rights related to provision and protection rather than participation (Appiah, 2018; Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014). This could indicate a need to enhance the curriculum to include comprehensive discussions on participation rights, which are crucial for fostering a sense of agency and involvement among children in societal and cultural affairs.

Additionally, while the awareness of reporting mechanisms such as the Social Welfare, Ghana Police Service and DOVVSU among others, exists (Appiah 2018), there is a need to ensure these institutions are responsive and adequately equipped. Also, the effectiveness of these reports could be enhanced if students have a deeper understanding of the specific legislative frameworks designed to protect them, highlighting an area for improvement in education and advocacy. These findings highlight the necessity for ongoing efforts to enhance knowledge and understanding about child rights among students and other stakeholders. Incorporating discussions about child rights within the school curriculum and community dialogues can play a significant role in elevating stakeholders' level of awareness and understanding (Karugu, 2013; Kwarteng, 2012). Moreover, ensuring that educational content is age-appropriate, context-specific, and not overly technical can assist in making child rights

information more accessible and comprehensible to students at various educational stages.

In conclusion, while students at Juaboso Senior High School displayed a foundational knowledge and understanding of child rights, there are evident gaps, particularly in their comprehension of participation rights and specific legal instruments. The study's findings align with broader research that calls for enhanced educational initiatives and community engagement to improve children's comprehensive knowledge and understanding of their rights within the framework of national and international legislation (Appiah, 2018; Munongi & Pillay, 2018).

5.4 Barriers to the realization of child rights

In the scholarly discourse surrounding barriers to the realization of child rights, multiple dimensions emerge as critical areas of concern. Economic barriers, most notably poverty, served as a significant impediment in both the current study's findings and the overarching academic literature (Appiah, 2018; Golo et al., 2018). The implications of this finding highlight the critical need for interventions, specifically highlighting the potential of social protection programmes. Similarly, socio-cultural barriers manifested through challenges such as broken homes, informal kinship and larger family sizes are accentuated in the findings from the current study as well as extant literature (Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2018). The combination of these socio-cultural challenges with economic barriers intricately complicates the realization of child rights among students at Juaboso Senior High School. Religious and traditional practices, as emphasized in the current study's findings, pinpoint particular beliefs hindering children's access to quality healthcare and education, both fundamental human rights. In a broader spectrum, authors such as Sogaard (2019) and Apt et al. (2012) illuminate traditional practices that are deleterious to child rights, suggesting a need for

interventions that simultaneously uphold cultural values and champion the rights of children.

The gaps in knowledge and understanding about child rights, as echoed in the current study's findings, resonate harmoniously with insights from Munongi and Pillay (2018) and Kiprotich and Ong'Ondo (2013). As per the study's findings, there is a limited knowledge and understanding of child rights among both students Participants and the duty bearers, flagging it as a cross-generational issue that warrants an entire population sensitization on child rights, as prescribed by the UNCRC's Article 42. From a structural and policy lens, the current study's findings emphasize the need for better access to quality healthcare and education for children, as espoused by Badoe (2017) and Søgaaard (2019). This suggests a deeper systemic overhaul to address these shortfalls effectively. Again, Twum-Danso (2012) highlights the need for political will, a sentiment indirectly reflected in the current study's findings, to raise awareness and promote economic empowerment. The necessity of effective resource mobilization for enhanced sensitization on child rights is evident in this discourse.

5.5 Imperatives of knowing and understanding child rights

Undoubtedly, the transformative power of children knowing and understanding their rights is profound. Such knowledge and understanding crucially shapes their personal development and concurrently carry broader societal implications. As per the findings, when children grasp the understanding of their rights, it automatically fosters a sense of co-responsibility. This not only encompasses understanding their own rights but also diligently recognizing and respecting the rights of others—a principle notably mentioned by Appiah (2018) and Kiprotich & Ong'ondo (2013). Simultaneously, there emerges an intrinsic sense of empowerment when children gain knowledge and understanding of their rights. Remarkably, this empowerment is not merely

introspective but translates into tangible actions. Such children, as emphasized in both the current and extant literature (Appiah, 2018; Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013), become not just vocal against rights violations but also metamorphose into potent advocates, enlightening their circles about child rights nuances. Suggesting that, beyond personal empowerment, the implications of rights-aware children expand to educational and societal spheres. Children do not just esteem their educational entitlements but also fervently advocate for elevated standards, enriching their learning experiences. Echoing the current study's findings collaborate Appiah's (2018) insights corroborate that when these children are groomed on child rights, they often transition into proactive community members, catalyzing comprehensive societal advancement. Yet, the lack of this vital understanding can formidably hinder the realization of child rights. Therefore, while it is vital to laud the merits, addressing this gap becomes imperative. In conclusion, understanding child rights from the perspectives of right holders (i.e. students at Juaboso Senior High School) stands as not just advantageous but fundamentally essential. Narratives in both the current study findings and extant literature enrich this dialogue, highlighting the urgency for a unified thrust towards bolstering knowledge and understanding about child rights.

5.6 Strategies to enhance knowledge and understanding of child rights

Participants identified the media campaign as an important strategy to enhance knowledge and understanding about child rights. This perspective supported Appiah's (2018), assertion who recognizes the importance of television, radio, newspapers, and social media in raising awareness of child rights. Furthermore, the students' recommendation to use local languages reflects a culturally relevant approach that enhances the accessibility of media campaigns, thereby increasing their reach and impact (Appiah, 2018; Adu-Gyamfi, 2014). The finding of the current study reveals the

role of schools in enhancing knowledge and understanding on child rights among students through academic curricula (including subjects like history and government). In agreement, Opeyemi Yayi et al. (2021) and Inguanzo (2017) highlighted that formal education is a key channel for imparting knowledge on the rights of children. Moreover, Juaboso Senior High School students' experiences of gathering information on child rights through extracurricular activities (i.e., debates and club meetings with expert participation), exemplified the role educational settings play in promoting knowledge and understanding of child rights (Kamau, 2013; Sperl & Ferdinandsson, 2014). Also, the engagement of caregivers through school platforms such as PTAs enhances cooperation between families and educational institutions, fostering a supportive environment for child rights education and advocacy. The role of caregivers in promoting and protecting child rights is critical, as reflected in the findings and literature (Munongi & Pillay, 2018; Kiprotich & Ong'ondo, 2013).

Moreover, Participants reported that religious services and activities provided valuable platforms for sensitization efforts on child rights. The effectiveness of this strategy in enhancing child rights is buttresses that of Abdullah et al. (2018). Again, religious leaders, given their trust and authority in communities, can amplify child right sensitization initiatives (Kamau, 2013).

More importantly, these findings highlight the need for capacity building among stakeholders, such as educators, healthcare professionals, and religious leaders, to enable them to effectively advocate on child rights. Manful and Manful (2014) and Opeyemi Yayi et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of equipping stakeholders with the necessary skills and knowledge to assist in child right campaigns. Moreover, advocacy, as emphasized by Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018), is crucial for policy

development and enforcement, a sentiment echoed by the students' recognition of the impact of informed advocacy on child right policy outcomes.

The strategies proposed by Participants were in line with existing research. They emphasize the importance of media, education and religious participation in developing a comprehensive approach to child rights education and advocacy. Together, these elements contribute to a multifaceted framework for promoting and safeguarding child rights across various social settings.

5.7 Understanding findings under the lens of the theoretical frameworks

The majority of the participants conceptualize child rights primarily as inherent freedoms, highlighting the liberties that children should possess. This aligns well with the Interest Theory, as outlined by Bentham (1987). As per the Interest Theory, child rights are vehicles for the development of the right-holders' interests, emphasizing growing up into a healthy and useful adult (Wall, 2008; Appiah, 2018). The confusion among some participants, who conflate rights with responsibilities in the findings, highlights a nuanced misunderstanding that could be clarified through educational interventions. This finding aligns with the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM), which advocates for interventions at multiple levels, from individual education to broader societal change (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Moore, de Silva-Sanigorski & Moore, 2013). The findings present schools, media and religious institutions as primary sources of child rights information. The Interest Theory's emphasis on education as a fundamental right and a critical component of child development is worth mentioning (Appiah, 2018). Moreover, the SEM also supports this finding by emphasizing the role of community and societal structures in influencing children's well-being, meaning that

schools, media, and religious institutions are pivotal in shaping the social environment that supports or hinders child rights (Townsend & Foster, 2013).

The study further identifies significant socio-cultural, religious, and economic barriers that impede the realization of child rights. These identified barriers are reflected in the SEM, which suggests that children's well-being is influenced by interactions across multiple ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Economic constraints like poverty directly affect children's access to education and healthcare, aligning with the Interest Theory's emphasis on fundamental human needs as rights (Appiah, 2018). Additionally, the SEM's focus on community and societal factors highlights how cultural and religious beliefs can form significant barriers to the realization of child rights (Moore, de Silva-Sanigorski & Moore, 2013).

Children's knowledge and understanding of their rights not only enhances respect for others' rights but also fosters self-confidence and a sense of responsibility. This empowerment enables them to advocate for themselves and others, effectively utilizing their knowledge to challenge and change their circumstances. This outcome strongly supports the Interest Theory, which posits that rights empower individuals to assert their needs and interests, thereby fulfilling their potential (Federle, 1994; Appiah, 2018). Furthermore, the SEM supports this finding by showing how individual empowerment can lead to broader community and societal impacts (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

The recommendation to utilize campaigns in the media using local languages to disseminate knowledge and understanding about child rights aligns with the SEM, which emphasizes interventions across multiple levels, including societal and community influences (Townsend & Foster, 2013). The proposal to involve children in

advocacy roles supports the Interest Theory's perspective that empowering individuals as rights-holders facilitates their development and well-being (Appiah, 2018).

In conclusion, insights from students of Juaboso Senior High School provide a comprehensive understanding of how child rights are perceived, the barriers to their realization, and the potential strategies for enhancing their understanding and implementation. Both the Interest Theory and the SEM provide robust frameworks for analyzing these findings, advocating for a multi-level approach to addressing the challenges and leveraging the opportunities within the context of child rights in Ghana. This discussion highlights the necessity of targeted educational interventions and broader societal engagement to foster an environment where child rights are understood, respected, and actively promoted.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings and conclusion of the study. Further, recommendations were made based on the findings of the study. The chapter ends by presenting what served as limitations to the study.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

- The study found that the majority of students understood child rights as inherent freedoms, with examples stressing the liberties children should have. However, some confused rights with responsibilities, linking them to tasks such as household chores. Schools, particularly humanities subjects, were the primary source of information on children's rights, followed by media and religious institutions. Students were well-versed in provision and protection rights but had limited understanding of participation rights. While many were aware of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, they lacked knowledge of its specifics and other key legislative instruments like the Children's Act, of 1998 and the 1989 UNCRC. For rights violations, students would report to school officials, the Ghana Police Service or the Department of Social Welfare.
- Understanding children's rights are impeded by a combination of socio-cultural, religious and economic barriers. Socio-culturally, many caregivers view children as their property due to unawareness of children's rights, and situations like broken homes, informal kinship, loss of livelihoods, polygamous marriages, large families, and age-based norms result in neglect, abuse, and limited access to education. From a religious perspective, certain beliefs prevent children from receiving quality healthcare and higher education. Economically, poverty restricts children's access

to education, nutrition, and health. These multifaceted obstacles compromise the realization of children's rights at Juaboso.

- The study revealed that children's understanding of their rights resulted in various benefits. Children who were aware of their rights displayed increased respect for the rights of others, showcasing a newfound self-confidence and a cultivated sense of responsibility. This awareness also empowered them to speak out against rights abuses, even guiding them on where to report such violations. Moreover, informed children became advocates, educating their peers, families and communities about children's rights. For instance, children cautioned adults against physical punishment that could result in harm and promoted peaceful dialogue over violent demonstrations, driving positive changes in their environments.
- The findings outline a multifaceted strategy utilizing media platforms, schools, and religious organizations to enhance knowledge and understanding about child rights. At Juaboso Senior High School, students identified the critical role of both traditional and contemporary media in disseminating information about child rights. They recommended using local languages for broader accessibility and involving children in media advocacy to enhance relatability. Schools were highlighted as unique venues for promoting child rights through academic and extracurricular activities. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings were also noted as valuable opportunities to educate parents and teachers, promoting informed decision-making regarding students' welfare. Religious institutions were recognized for their potential to enhance knowledge and understanding of child rights.

6.2.1 Reflections on key findings

Knowledge and understanding of child rights: The study illuminates a fundamental discrepancy in how child rights are perceived. Notably, the conflation of rights with responsibilities is emblematic of potential cultural or educational oversights. The predominance of school-taught-humanities-related subjects as primary informers on children's rights underscores the pivotal role of education in shaping perceptions. However, the limited grasp on participation rights and specific legislative instruments, despite the general awareness of the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution, exposes gaps in the current educational content and method. The reliance on formal institutions like schools (i.e., headmasters, housemasters and mistresses) and police for reporting rights abuses highlights the perceived trust in and the importance of these institutions in children's lives and in enhancing children's rights.

Barriers to child rights: The triad of sociocultural, religious and economic barriers offers a layered perspective on the impediments faced by children in enjoying their rights at the study area. The socio-cultural conception of children as 'property' vividly captures the deep-rooted, traditional challenges. Such a view, coupled with practical challenges like broken homes and economic hardships, paints a complex tapestry of adversities. From a religious standpoint, the research underscores potential conflicts between faith-based beliefs and the practical realization of children's rights.

Empowerment through awareness: Arguably one of the most uplifting findings, the transformative power of understanding children's rights, as showcased by children's newfound confidence, responsibility and advocacy roles, is profound. Their proactive involvement in community discussions and their role as catalysts of change underscores the ripple effect of education and awareness, potentially impacting not just individual lives but the broader community.

Strategies for enhanced knowledge and understanding: The findings present a comprehensive approach to enhancing knowledge and understanding about child rights through the strategic use of media, schools, and religious organizations. At Juaboso Senior High School, students highlighted the importance of leveraging both traditional and contemporary media platforms to spread information about child rights. Participants suggested using local languages to ensure broader accessibility and involving children in media advocacy to make the messages more relatable. Schools were identified as crucial venues for promoting child rights awareness and integrating relevant information into academic subjects and extracurricular activities. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings were also highlighted as key opportunities to educate both parents and teachers, fostering informed decision-making about student welfare. Religious institutions were acknowledged for their significant potential to enhance knowledge and understanding of child rights, leveraging the trusted positions of religious leaders and special services dedicated to children to effectively educate both children and their parents. This multifaceted strategy, involving diverse community resources, aims to create a well-rounded and accessible approach to child rights education.

6.3 Conclusions

This comprehensive research offers an insightful exploration into the perceptions, challenges, and transformative power of understanding child rights in the specific context of Juaboso Senior High School. At its core, the study delineates the nuanced intersections of culture, education, economics and religion in shaping and sometimes distorting perceptions of child rights. The study brings to light the contrasting realities: while educational settings play a pivotal role in shaping rights awareness, gaps in

curricular content and the conflation of rights with responsibilities point towards a need for a more refined and comprehensive educational approach. Socio-cultural, religious, and economic barriers present a multifaceted challenge, with traditional views of children as 'property' juxtaposed against their empowerment through rights awareness. The transformative potential of understanding child rights is evident, with informed children not only championing their own rights but also effecting broader community change. The suggestions for enhancing knowledge and understanding about child rights, particularly through media, school and religious initiatives highlight the importance of tailoring interventions to the cultural and societal nuances of the various relevant contexts. In conclusion, championing child rights at the study area requires a holistic approach that addresses both systemic barriers and empowers children, families, and communities with knowledge and advocacy tools as informed by the interest theory and socio-ecological model. The study serves as a testament to the profound impact of informed rights advocacy and the complexities of its realization in specific socio-cultural contexts.

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the study's key findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Revision of Curriculum:** The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) of Ghana and the Ghana Education Service (GES) should review the Ghanaian educational curriculums to include more comprehensive content on children's rights, emphasizing the difference between rights and responsibilities. The reviews must ensure coverage of participation rights and detailed content on key legislative instruments like the Children's Act, 1998 and the 1989 UNCRC.

- **Training for Educators:** The Ghana Education Service (GES) should equip educators with the necessary resources and training to effectively teach children about their rights, with an emphasis on participation rights.
- **Community Engagement:** Governmental institutions (such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the National Commission for Civic Education and the Department of Social Welfare) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (such as Care Ghana, UNICEF, etc.) should actively engage caregivers, educating them about child rights to challenge deleterious socio-cultural norms. This can be done through community workshops and meetings.
- **Economic Interventions:** The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection through the Department of Social Welfare should implement social and economic support systems for families, such as vocational training for parents or micro-financing schemes, to combat the economic barriers restricting children's access to basic rights.
- **Understanding Barriers:** The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection through the Department of Social Welfare should undertake more granular research to understand the socio-cultural, religious, and economic barriers in specific communities to tailor interventions effectively.
- **Case Studies:** The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should document and analyze cases where children, having understood their rights, have successfully advocated for change within their communities. This will provide valuable insights into the methods and strategies that are most impactful.
- **Feedback Systems:** The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should implement feedback systems within schools and community programmes to

continually gauge children's knowledge and understanding of their rights, allowing for real-time adjustments to education methods.

In conclusion, promoting a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of child rights necessitates a concerted effort in the development of relevant policies, improving practice and enhancing research on diverse perspectives of child rights. Collaboration among educators, policymakers and the broader community will be pivotal to ensuring children in the study area are both aware of and can exercise their rights.

6.5 Implications

Based on the findings, the following implications can be drawn for policy, practice, and research development:

- **Curriculum Review:** Policymakers should consider revising school curricula to ensure that the education about child rights is comprehensive, covering not only provision and protection rights but also participation rights.
- **Legislative Awareness:** There is a need for policy initiatives that promote the broader understanding of specific legislative tools like the Children's Act, of 1998 and the 1989 UNCRC, perhaps through their integration in school curricula or public awareness campaigns.
- **Educational Initiatives:** Schools should prioritize the holistic teaching of child rights. They can harness events like PTA meetings to enlighten parents, driving a joint effort towards rights understanding and protection.
- **Community Sensitization:** Grassroots initiatives targeting caregivers should be launched, aiming to challenge and reshape socio-cultural and religious perceptions that impede the realization of child rights.

- **Media Engagement:** Media, both traditional and digital, can play an instrumental role in widespread advocacy. Campaigns in local dialects should be promoted to ensure that the message reaches and resonates with the broadest audience possible.
- **Religious Institutions' Role:** Engaging religious leaders and institutions can bridge the gap between faith-based beliefs and the realization of child rights. Their influence can be pivotal in reshaping perceptions and advocating for children's access to quality healthcare and education.
- **Economic Initiatives:** Efforts to alleviate poverty at the grassroots level can indirectly promote child rights by ensuring their access to basic needs such as education, nutrition, and health.
- **Deeper Dive into Perceptions:** Given the confusion between rights and responsibilities among some students, further research is needed to understand the root causes of this misunderstanding. Is it purely educational, or are there deeper cultural contexts at play?
- **Barriers to Rights Realization:** A more comprehensive exploration of the socio-cultural, religious, and economic barriers, possibly involving case studies or ethnographic research, could provide more in-depth insights into the challenges faced by children.
- **Effectiveness of Advocacy Methods:** Research can be conducted on the efficacy of different advocacy campaigns, especially those in local languages or conducted through religious institutions. Which methods yield the most substantial positive shifts in perception and understanding?
- **Follow-Up Studies:** As new initiatives and practices are implemented based on the findings, follow-up studies can gauge their impact over time, providing feedback for refinement and course correction.

In essence, the study's findings have vast implications that span across policy formulation, practical implementations, and future research directions, emphasizing the intricate interplay of various actors in championing child rights.

6.5 Limitations

The scope of this study was limited to students at Juaboso Senior High School in the Juaboso District. Moreover, the inclusion of only the experiences of students at Juaboso Senior High School (supported by a few key informants' accounts) is also a limitation. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings. However, in order to enhance triangulation, multiple data gathering methods were adopted. Future research works should incorporate the perspectives of a substantial number of duty bearers such as parents, traditional authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations set up to protect the rights of children among others, for a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. There is also the likelihood of reporting some biases due to the researcher's prior knowledge and working experiences at the study area. However, to mitigate these predispositions the researcher ensured that participants' perspectives were presented as mentioned. The research supervisor for this thesis also served as an important interpretational guidance on several occasions throughout the research processes, rendering participants' voices more audible. Despite these limitations, the study sheds light on Juaboso Senior High School students' knowledge and understanding about child rights and emphasizes insight drawn from the interest theory and the socio ecological model in addressing barriers to the realization of child rights at the study area.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Demographic Details

Participant No/Pseudonym:

Age:

Sex:

Highest Educational Qualification:

Religion:

A: Understanding and Perspectives on Child Rights

- Can you describe your awareness or understanding of child rights?
- In what ways have you learned about child rights, and through which sources or experiences?
- How would you explain what child rights are to someone who has never heard of them?
- What types of rights do you believe children should have, and why?
- How would you describe the level of understanding of child rights among students in this school?
- In your experience, how do teachers or school authorities address issues related to child rights?

Section B: Barriers to the Realization of Child Rights

- In your opinion, what makes it difficult for children to enjoy their rights in school or at home?
- Can you share any experience where you or someone you know was denied a right as a child?
- What are the cultural or societal beliefs in your community that affect how children's rights are respected?
- How do parents or guardians in your community respond when children talk about their rights?

Section C: Benefits of Understanding Child Rights

- How do you think knowing your rights can help you as a student?
- How have you ever used your knowledge of child rights to solve a problem or situation?
- In what ways do you think students' academic or personal lives could improve if they understood their rights better?

Section D: Enhancing Knowledge and Understanding of Child Rights

- What do you think is the best way for students to learn about child rights?
- Would you be interested in attending programmes or sessions that educate students about their rights? Why?

- How can schools and teachers help students better understand and exercise their rights?
- What can be done to make to promote child rights awareness in your school?



APPENDIX B- INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

Demographic Details

Participant No/Pseudonym:

Age:

Sex:

Highest Educational Qualification:

Marital status:

Religion:

A: Understanding and Perspectives on Child Rights

- Can you describe your awareness or understanding of child rights?
- In what ways have you learned about child rights, and through which sources or experiences?
- How would you explain what child rights are to someone who has never heard of them?
- What types of rights do you believe children should have, and why?
- How would you describe the level of understanding of child rights among students in this school?
- In your experience, how do teachers or school authorities address issues related to child rights?

Section B: Barriers to the Realization of Child Rights

- In your opinion, what makes it difficult for children to enjoy their rights in school or at home?
- Can you share any experience where you or someone you know was denied a right as a child?
- What are the cultural or societal beliefs in your community that affect how children's rights are respected?
- How do parents or guardians in your community respond when children talk about their rights?

Section C: Benefits of Understanding Child Rights

- How do you think knowing your rights can help you as a student?
- How have you ever used your knowledge of child rights to solve a problem or situation?
- In what ways do you think students' academic or personal lives could improve if they understood their rights better?

Section D: Enhancing Knowledge and Understanding of Child Rights

- What do you think is the best way for students to learn about child rights?

- Would you be interested in attending programmes or sessions that educate students about their rights? Why?
- How can schools and teachers help students better understand and exercise their rights?
- What can be done to make to promote child rights awareness in your school?

