

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**PARENTS' AWARENESS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHT
TO PARTICIPATE IN FAMILY DECISION-MAKING
IN AKROPONG-AKUAPEM, GHANA**



MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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**A thesis in the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies,
Faculty of Social Sciences Education, 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.**

MAY 2023

DECLARATION INFORMATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, John Quarshie, declare that this thesis, except for quotations and references contained in published 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 were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis/dissertation/project as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Dr. Seth Tweneboah (Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

Madam Rose Okoto Daniels, my mother.



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GLOSSARY

African Union (AU): A continental organisation established to promote unity, cooperation and development among African nations. Previously known as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) from 1963 to 2002, the African Union works towards enhancing political, economic and social integration across Africa.

Akans: The largest ethnic group in Ghana, accounting for 45.7% of Ghana's population in 2021. The Akans encompass a diverse range of subgroups, including Bono, Asante, Adanse, Twifo, Asen, Fante, Akuapem, Akyem, Akwamu, Kwahu, Sehwi, Awowin, Nsima and Ahanta. These subgroups share common linguistic and cultural characteristics, contributing to the rich tapestry of Ghana's cultural landscape.

Akuapem Twi: It is one of the principal dialects of the Akans in Ghana, specifically spoken by the people in the Akuapem Mountains of southeastern Ghana. It is noted for its rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Akuapem Twi, like other Akan dialects, is tonal, meaning that the pitch or tone at which a word is spoken can change its meaning. It has unique vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar rules. It holds cultural significance among the Akuapem people, and it plays a vital role in communication, storytelling, music and other forms of cultural expression within the community.

Tokenism: In the context of children's participation, it refers to a superficial or symbolic form of involvement, where children are included in decision-making processes, but their input is not genuinely considered or valued. It gives the appearance of participation without granting children meaningful influence or control over decisions that affect them.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
APA	American Psychological Association
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DCYA	Irish Department of Children and Youth Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
UEW	University of Education, Winneba
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund



ABSTRACTS

This study investigates parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making within the context of Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana. Anchored in the principles of the UNCRC and the Lundy Model of Participation, the research explores how parents' understanding of childhood shapes their awareness of and support for their children's right to participate. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the study engages 33 participants through semi-structured interviews, utilising purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The investigation reveals that parents understand childhood as a period of dependency, identity formation and empowerment, deeply tied to cultural traditions and family dynamics. This understanding of childhood has profound implications for parents' awareness of children's right to participate. Findings underscore diverse parents' viewpoints on children's participation in family decisions. While some parents consider participation as inherent, recognising children's voices within ongoing decision-making, others exhibit a lack of awareness and encounter the concept for the first time. Sociocultural norms, historical perspectives and evolving notions of childhood shape parents' viewpoints, emphasising the challenge of translating theoretical ideals into practical application. The study highlights the significance of bridging the gap between theoretical principles and practical implementation. It recommends culturally sensitive awareness campaigns, training programs, community dialogues and collaboration with educational institutions and policymakers. These efforts aim to foster an environment where children's participation is not only valued but also actively integrated into family decisions, aligning with the UNCRC and the Lundy Model of Participation. Ultimately, this research contributes to the promotion of informed awareness and meaningful children's participation in family decision-making within the unique sociocultural context of Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the gateway to justifying the study. Its primary purpose is to outline the main objectives, establish the context, highlight the significance of addressing the identified problem and introduce the key components of the study. Thereafter, setting the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the research landscape and its central focus.

1.1. Background to the Study

For several centuries, the proper place of children in the family, particularly when it comes to matters of decision-making concerning them has been a topic of contention. Most families hold traditional views that children should be seen but not heard and that decisions should be made by adults without consulting children (Greene & Hogan, 2005). Some families also assert that decisions should be made by adults without consulting children and that children's opinions are not valuable and relevant (Arnett & Jensen, 2021). Hence, in many instances, some families contend that they know what is best for their children and that involving them in decision-making processes may be confusing or overwhelming for them. For these reasons, like most societies elsewhere, traditional and contemporary Ghanaian families view children as immature beings who are vulnerable and dependent on their parents and require intense parenting (Twum-Danso, 2011). Because of this, families hold children as both agents and mediums for continuing and maintaining their values and heritage. Families have well-established structures, socio-cultural values and indigenous parenting practices that ensure children's survival, growth, development and protection in the family. These indeed form an ideal both within state and non-state

contexts in many societies. Thus, in Ghana, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2014) found that “children often live in closely connected families where extended family members foster their care and protection” (p. 1). This highlights the concept that although children are considered under the purview of the state, their upbringing in Ghana is the collaborative efforts of the extended family in the care, nurturing and protection of children within the context of family culture. To corroborate this finding, Lodhi et al. (2021) reiterated that “culture has been shown to regulate the family functioning by defining barriers, cooperation rules, connection patterns, adequate practices, regulation and ranking in the family” (p. 2). This reveals that culture plays a significant role in shaping how families operate. Culture can create barriers or rules that influence how family members interact with each other, such as who is allowed to participate in family decision-making. Culture can also define practices that are considered appropriate or acceptable within the family regarding children, such as language, dressing and greetings. Additionally, culture can establish a hierarchy or ranking system within the family, where certain family members have more authority or power than others.

However, Dzamedo, Amoako and Amos (2018) found that due to “social change in modern times, extended families are breaking down” (p. 45). This aligns with the findings of Care Reform Initiative Ghana (2020) that, “due to the continued socioeconomic pressures on families in recent years, extended family mechanisms are breaking down” (p. 11). This reveals that children's direct experience of the family's cultural values begins primarily with the parents who are naturally and legally entrusted with the care, protection and nurturing of the children. Ultimately, this justifies the growing emphasis on the nuclear family. This family structure forms the

immediate home of children, where indigenous parenting is the preferred model. It serves as the available medium for promoting children's participation in family decision-making. Therefore, indigenous parenting is a crucial responsibility. It ensures that parents nurture, instruct, direct, and guide children with the family's cultural and ethical values.

Despite the primary role of parents in instilling the cultural and ethical values of the family within most indigenous Ghanaian households, children are frequently not allowed to actively participate in family decision-making in all matters concerning them. Björnsdóttir & Einarsdóttir (2020) corroborated that adults make the decisions, while children's role is to sit, listen and learn because parents consider it unethical for children to be seated with adults to express their views freely on all matters that concern them. Hence, children simply follow instructions and comply without hesitation. That is why a study conducted by Huang, Bornheimer, Dankyi and Aikins (2018) revealed that "parenting in Ghana broadly fits into the authoritarian parenting style, characterised by a high degree of control and low levels of warmth" (p. 834). Consequently, Ghanaian adults value a patriarchal system where the father or eldest male in the family usually holds power for decision-making, including decisions on child-rearing (Huang, Bornheimer, Dankyi, & Aikins, 2018). This implies that children who attempt to exercise their rights by expressing their views on matters affecting them can be scolded and instructed to remain silent. Twum-Danso (2010) confirmed it in a study that found that within the Ghanaian socio-cultural context, consulting children is not a right that children should have or a parents' obligation; thus, children who express their views or assert themselves are often viewed as social deviants, leading to punishments or insults. In effect, parents perceive their children

as disgracing them, especially when visitors are around because it is a behaviour that shows that the children have not been culturally nurtured, hence, they lack critical cultural values such as respect and obedience for adults and authority. Consequently, children do not have enough influence in family decision-making resulting in their inability to participate confidently in family decision-making in all matters that concern them.

However, “the principle of children's right to participate, which is one of the four fundamental principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), adopted in 1989, has been acknowledged as a vital component of children’s rights for decades” (Children's Rights Alliance, 2010, p. 2). It has been recognised as a fundamental aspect of the overall development and well-being of children. Article 12 of the UNCRC outlines this principle of children’s right to participate freely in all matters concerning them and to have their opinions given due weight per their age and maturity (United Nations, 1990). The principle is well-established in international law, as well as in various national laws and policies like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Children’s Act 1998 (Act 560) of Ghana. It emphasises the importance of children's active participation in family decision-making. Thus, the UNCRC recognises the importance of promoting children's participation in decisions that affect their lives, as a means of empowering them and fostering their overall development. The principle also recognises children as active agents in their own lives and as individuals with their perspectives, opinions and preferences (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010). Therefore, it is an essential aspect of promoting children's rights for their holistic development and well-being.

Research has found that children who actively participate in family decision-making tend to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy and overall well-being (Lansdown, 2010). Additionally, family decision-making that includes children's participation can lead to improved communication and relationships within the family (Ho, 2014). Furthermore, studies have found that children's participation in decision-making enhances their sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, improves their communication skills and fosters a positive parent-child relationship (Hart, 1992). Similarly, children who are actively involved in family decision-making have better social and emotional well-being, higher levels of self-esteem and stronger family relationships (Huang et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019). Additionally, children are more likely to develop decision-making skills, have a sense of agency and autonomy and feel more connected to their families (Lundy, 2007). In effect, children's participation in family decision-making can be linked to improved decision-making skills and greater confidence in decision-making in adulthood.

On the contrary, studies have found that the lack of awareness and implementation of children's right to participate in family decision-making can have negative consequences on children's overall development. It can result in their inability to express themselves, develop decision-making skills, and have a sense of agency and autonomy (Mason & Johnston, 2014). Therefore, it makes children feel powerless and disengaged from their families leading to a lack of motivation, reduced self-esteem and an increased likelihood of behavioural problems (Baker & Hoelscher, 2013).

However, parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making in all matters affecting their children in Ghana, especially Akropong-Akuapem, remains unknown because there are rare empirical findings regarding parents' awareness in Akropong-Akuapem. Meanwhile, the Lundy Model of Participation was developed to provide a structured approach for enhancing parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making and the role of making children influence decisions that affect them (Lundy, 2007) as inspired by Article 12 of the UNCRC. When examining the context of Akropong-Akuapem through the lens of the Lundy Model of Participation, it becomes apparent that the traditional perspectives and family cultural norms that dictate decision-making often fall short of providing children with meaningful and active participation because the prevailing viewpoint that children should be seen and not heard largely limits their voices and influence in family decision-making that concern children. The emphasis on adult authority and the patriarchal structure in Akropong-Akuapem could hinder children's opportunities to contribute their opinions and influence decisions within the family. Consequently, the traditional practices and cultural norms that shape family traditions often result in children having limited participation and so within the framework of Lundy Model of Participation, parents' awareness of the principle of children's rights to participate in family decision-making in Akropong-Akuapem becomes evident.

Ultimately, addressing parents' awareness of children's right to participate in Akropong-Akuapem is not only a matter of aligning with international legal standards but also a step toward providing children with their rightful opportunities to express their views and influence the decisions that concern them. Therefore, it underscores

the need to move beyond mere acknowledgement of children's participation towards fostering an environment where their participation is valued, respected and integrated into the family's decision-making with the appropriate influence. Hence, by integrating the Lundy Model of Participation into the analysis, this study aimed to explore parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decisions and the effort to implement it within the context of families in Akropong-Akuapem.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Globally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stands as a resolute testament to the collective commitment towards safeguarding and upholding the rights of children, a fundamental aspect of human rights (United Nations, 1990). Ghana's historical role as the first nation to ratify the UNCRC exemplifies its unwavering dedication to promoting the welfare and rights of its children, fostering their holistic development (Benson, Achanso, & Mohammed, 2021). Central to this agreement is the fundamental principle that children possess the inherent right to actively participate in family decision-making in all matters that directly concern them, aligning with contemporary views of nurturing empowered and socially engaged children within the family.

Empirical studies have explored various aspects of children's right to participation, encompassing legal and ethical frameworks, and within school, societal and family contexts. These studies have delved into themes such as children's rights within the family (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), the role of children in family decision-making (Ekasasi, 1996), the effectiveness of children's participation programs, interventions, or educational initiatives designed to increase children's awareness of their rights and

encourage their active involvement in family decision-making (Hart, 1997) and the importance of empowering children to have a voice in decisions affecting their lives (Lansdown, 2005). Additionally, studies have examined legal and policy frameworks related to children's rights and family decision-making, discussing associated challenges and opportunities (Franklin, 1992; Twum-Danso, 2011). Other studies have focused on different parenting styles and their influence on children's participation in family decisions (Richter & Zartler, 2011) as well as children's participation in decision-making within the cultural contexts of Yoruba culture (Okewumi & Akanle, 2022).

However, within this overarching commitment, a critical gap exists that demands attention. Specifically, there is limited empirical understanding regarding parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making within the context of the indigenous Ghanaian culture, particularly in the unique locale of Akropong-Akuapem. Situated atop the Akuapem mountain, Akropong represents a distinct cultural enclave within Ghana, characterised by the fusion of traditional values and contemporary aspirations. Renowned for its pioneering contributions to formal education, this historic town boasts a rich cultural heritage defined by chieftaincy, family systems and indigenous traditions (Ayesu, 2013). Furthermore, Akropong-Akuapem showcases a complex interplay between Christian and African Traditional Religions (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975) significantly influencing childhood experiences, family culture and children's participation. However, the traditional and indigenous norms deeply embedded in their cultural practices and family systems continue to view children as passive and dependent individuals within the construct of family and household dynamics (Boyden &

Levison, 2000). This perspective potentially hinders the advancement of children's participation and prevents parents from recognising their children's right to actively participate in the processes of family decision-making. Within this cultural setting, the critical research gap lies in the exploration of parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making within the context of Akropong-Akuapem. This limited attention to the subject within this unique cultural and family context impedes a comprehensive understanding of how parents are aware of their children's right to participation. This understanding is not only crucial for academic discourse but also informs policy and practice to design appropriate strategies that pave the way to foster an inclusive and rights-based environment for family decision-making resonating within the cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem, distinct from more metropolitan or Western contexts.

Concerning these considerations, this study aims to bridge this gap by exploring parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making in Akropong-Akuapem through the lens of the Lundy Model of Participation, thereby contributing to the broader dialogue on children's rights and cultural practices within this unique cultural landscape.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate and analyse parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making in all matters concerning children in the specific cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem in Ghana.

1.4. Research Objectives

The research work aimed at achieving the following objectives.

1. To explore how parents' understanding and conceptualisation of childhood in Akropong-Akuapem influence their awareness and support for their children's right to participate in family decision-making.
2. To establish parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making in Akropong-Akuapem.

1.5. Research Questions

The study intended to answer the following questions to attain the desired objectives.

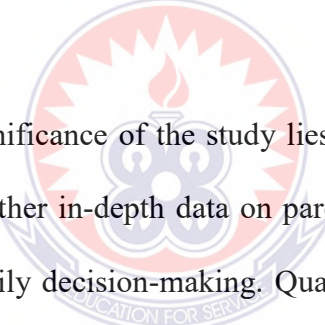
1. How do parents' understanding and conceptualisation of childhood in Akropong-Akuapem influence their awareness and support for their children's right to participate in family decision-making?
2. How are parents in Akropong-Akuapem aware of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study holds significance in addressing gaps in knowledge. It is important to note that while the UNCRC recognises children's right to participate in family decision-making affecting their lives, empirical findings are scarce regarding parents' awareness. Similarly, children's right to participate is often overlooked or not fully understood by parents due to existing traditional views. By exploring parents' awareness and understanding of this principle, the study is significant in filling knowledge gaps about parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making, especially in Akropong-Akuapem. The study is

also noteworthy in contributing to the existing body of literature by shedding light on parents' awareness of children's right to participate.

The significance of the study also lies in the promotion of cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance. With Akropong-Akuapem as the study area, the research acknowledges the importance of cultural sensitivity. This focus recognises that children's rights are both universal and culturally relative; they should be understood and implemented in ways that align with the cultural values and traditions of the community. This approach promotes a more holistic and respectful understanding of children's rights, considering the unique traditions of Akropong-Akuapem's cultural heritage.



Methodologically, the significance of the study lies in the utilisation of a qualitative case study approach to gather in-depth data on parents' awareness of their children's right to participate in family decision-making. Qualitative research allows for a rich exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences, providing a distinct understanding of complex social phenomena like parents' awareness of children's right to participate through methods such as semi-structured interviews.

Theoretical significance is also present in the study's use of the Lundy Model of Participation as a theoretical framework for analysing parents' awareness of their children's right to participate in family decision-making. The Lundy Model of Participation is a well-established framework that recognises children's full participation and their impact on decision-making, in contrast to theories like tokenism (Hart, 1997), where children's inputs have limited influence on actual

decisions. Unlike tokenism, Lundy's Model of Participation ensures the complete conceptualisation of children's participation and agency, emphasising the importance of children's participation in decision-making.

Moreover, the study's significance extends to empowering children. One potential outcome of the research is the empowerment of children within their families. As parents become more aware of their children's right to participate in decision-making, they may implement it, leading to increased self-esteem and agency for children. When children see that their opinions are valued and considered, it can positively impact their overall sense of self-worth, contributing to healthier psychosocial development and a stronger sense of identity within the family and community, promoting a more ethical approach to parenting and child caregiving.

Consequently, the study's significance lies in the academic and practical utility of the findings. Academically, the findings could enrich discussions around children's rights, cultural dynamics and family decision-making in academic circles. Practically, the findings might be used to develop training programmes for professionals working with families, including educators, social workers and policymakers. The study could establish a research legacy and provide concrete examples and recommendations that enhance these professionals' ability to effectively promote children's participation rights.

1.7. Delimitations of the Study

Geographically, the study specifically focuses on the community of Akropong-Akuapem in Ghana. Here, the study primarily gathers data from parents regarding

their awareness and attitudes toward children's participation in family decision-making. This focus will not extend to other regions or communities within Ghana or beyond. Additionally, while children's perspectives are important, they will not be included as primary participants due to the scope of the study.

Culturally, the study is limited to exploring the influence of Akropong-Akuapem's cultural context and practices on parents' awareness and implementation of children's right to participation, specifically through parents' understanding and conceptualisation of childhood. The study will not extensively analyse the cultural context of other regions in Ghana or other countries.

The study is conducted in Akuapem Twi and English languages, which are commonly spoken in Akropong-Akuapem. Language barriers might limit the inclusion of certain individuals who do not speak the chosen languages. As a result, the findings of the study might be specific to the context of Akropong-Akuapem and might not be readily generalisable to other communities or regions with different cultural backgrounds.

1.8. Organisation of the Study

This section outlines the structure of the study and the contents of each chapter. The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by providing the background to the research topic. It includes the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study and the organisation of the study. In chapter two, the literature related to the research topic is reviewed. The Lundy Model of Participation

is introduced as the theoretical framework. Gaps in the existing literature are highlighted and the chapter explains how the current study contributes to filling these gaps.

Additionally, chapter three presents the research methodology employed in the study. It discusses the philosophical underpinnings, research approach, research design, study area, instrumentation, research population, target and accessible population, research sample, sampling technique, trustworthiness, reflexivity, data analysis, ethical considerations and positionality. Also, in chapter four, the data gathered is analysed and the results of the study are interpreted and presented. The findings are organised and presented clearly, using narratives to illustrate the results. The interpretation of the findings is done with the research questions and the literature review. The implications of the findings are also discussed, highlighting their contribution to the existing literature.

The final chapter concludes the study by summarising the findings, drawing major conclusions, providing recommendations and suggesting areas for further research. The chapter discusses the implications of the findings, outlines the limitations of the study and proposes directions for future research.

The references used in the study have been acknowledged. They have been appropriately cited following the APA 7 citation style.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of the chosen theoretical framework for the study and relevant scholarly work in alignment with the research questions and objectives to fully understand the subject matter. Thus, identifying gaps to be filled through critical analysis, and synthesis of the knowledge and insights available.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

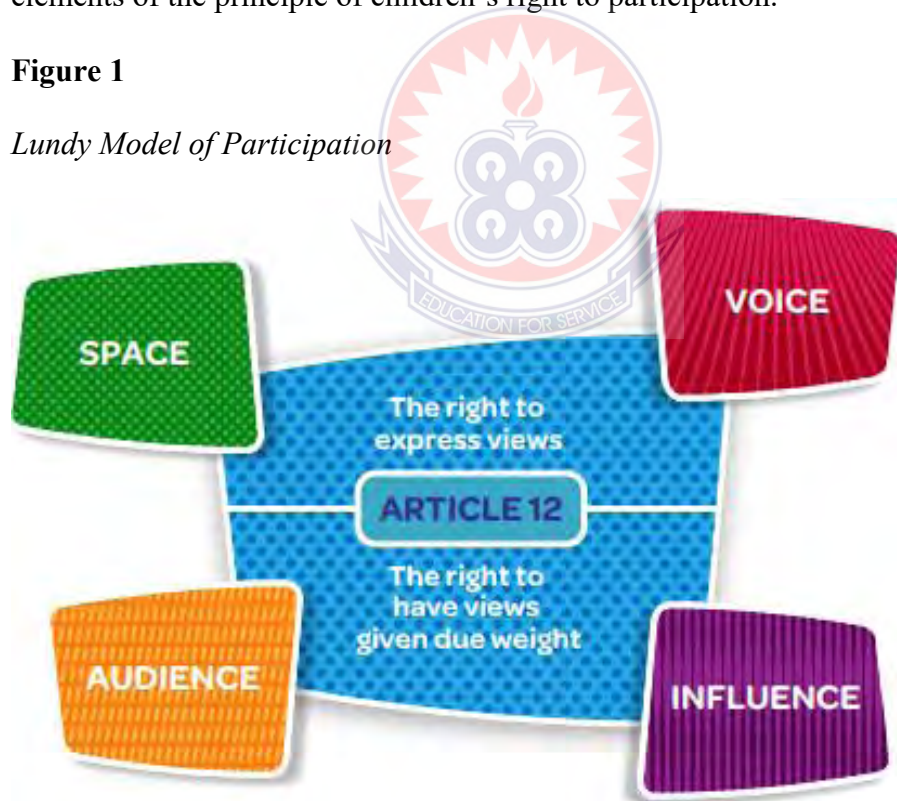
The researcher adopted the Lundy Model of Participation as the theoretical framework. It is a framework widely used as a tool for assessing and promoting children's right to participation, in complete alignment with Article 12 of the UNCRC, in a variety of settings, including family decision-making, education and community development in a way that is appropriate to their age and maturity. In recent times,

tokenism (Hart, 1992) and the *voice of the child* (Noyes, 2005) have been used to represent Article 12 of the UNCRC, highlighting children’s right to participation. However, Lundy (2007) argued that these concepts do not fully encompass Article 12 but diminish children's participation benefits. Accordingly, she developed the Model of Participation, comprehensively capturing children’s right to participation.

To establish parents' awareness of the principle of children’s rights to participate in family decision-making, Lundy proposed “four distinct but interrelated elements to be considered: space, voice, audience and influence” (Welty & Lundy, 2013, pp. 2-3). Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between these four distinct but interrelated elements of the principle of children’s right to participation.

Figure 1

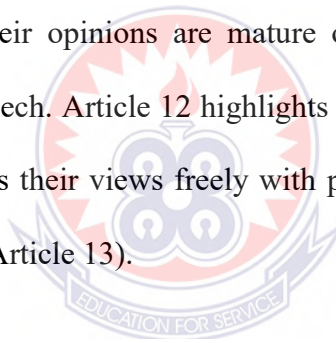
Lundy Model of Participation



Note. The Lundy Model of Participation as included in Ireland’s National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020. Adapted from *Department of Children and Youth Affairs*, by Laura Lundy, 2007. <https://assets.gov.ie/24462/48a6f98a921446ad85829585389e57de.pdf>

Lundy (2007) highlighted that enabling meaningful participation of children in decision-making requires creating a safe and inviting space for them to share their opinions. This involves actively encouraging their input rather than merely receiving it. The term ‘assure’ signifies the obligation of taking proactive measures to facilitate children’s expression of views. This space must ensure their safety, guarding against abuse (Article 19) and allowing them to voice their opinions without fear of rebuke, reprisal and discrimination (Article 2).

Secondly, it is important to enable children to express their views. According to Lundy (2007), this involves granting them the right to express their views freely, regardless of whether their opinions are mature or not. This expression can take various forms beyond speech. Article 12 highlights the importance of children having the opportunity to express their views freely with parents’ guidance (Article 15) and the right to information (Article 13).



Thirdly, adults must listen to and acknowledge children’s perspectives. Lundy (2007) pointed out that children should have the ability to convey their opinions to a specific person or group designated to listen. This process aligns with Article 12, which requires adults to give due consideration to children’s viewpoints. Unlike many other parts of the UNCRC that draw from previous human rights texts, Lundy argued that this aspect of Article 12 does not have a clear historical precedent.

Finally, it is essential to take appropriate action based on children’s opinions (influence). Lundy (2007) highlighted that true participation requires purposeful listening. This means adults actively receive, and consider children’s words and when

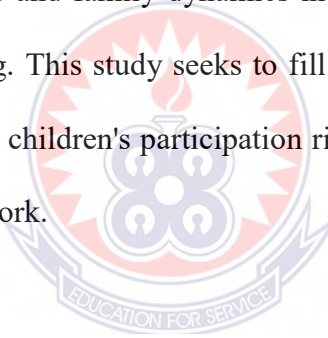
suitable, make decisions in the best interests of the children (Article 3). The term 'appropriate weight' in Article 12 embodies this idea of making a meaningful impact (influence), which is pivotal: children should genuinely feel its effect.

Since its inception in 2007, the Lundy Model of Participation has remained largely unchanged. Instead, it has gained widespread use and recognition across different contexts to assess and evaluate children's participation in decision-making. For instance, the Irish Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DYCA) prominently featured and endorsed this model in their recent “National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, covering the period from 2015 to 2020” (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015, p. 21). The DYCA's support for this strategy demonstrates its ongoing commitment to empowering children and youth to influence decisions affecting their lives. The department actively works to establish and maintain structures and processes that facilitate meaningful participation opportunities for young individuals.

Kennan, Brady and Forkan (2019) conducted valuable research on the Lundy Model of Participation within child welfare practice. They focused on its four key components: space, voice, audience and influence. The study revealed that the model was designed to assist professionals in effectively honouring a child's right to participate, as outlined in Article 12. The model emphasises that a narrow interpretation of Article 12 falls short, as genuine participation involves a sequence of actions. This starts with creating a secure and inclusive space for children to express their views, supporting them in doing so, actively listening and then appropriately acting on their input. All these steps are vital for realising children's right to

participation. Merely establishing a safe environment for children to express their views is insufficient; their opinions must genuinely be heard and considered throughout the decision-making process.

Kennan, Brady and Forkan's (2019) research focused on the Lundy Model of Participation within child welfare, emphasising its four key components: space, voice, audience and influence in ensuring children's right to participation. However, this research was limited to child welfare, leaving a gap in understanding how this model applies in the cultural context and family decision-making in Akropong-Akuapem. Their work highlighted the importance of these components but did not explore their alignment with the culture and family dynamics in Akropong-Akuapem, specifically regarding decision-making. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating parents' awareness and support for children's participation rights in family decisions using the Lundy Model as a framework.



The BBC Child in Need (2019) used the Lundy Model of Participation to develop their A Million & Me Programme. It was a programme that supported children experiencing difficulties but not yet receiving clinical interventions. Its “core element was to ensure that children’s views are central to the development and running of the initiative aiming to reflect, advise and help steer and evaluate the programme” (p. 4). They concluded that one of the ways to implement the model was to ensure that the project could draw directly on the experiences and views of children.

The BBC Child in Need (2019) implemented the Lundy Model of Participation in their A Million & Me Programme, emphasising children's participation, especially for

those facing difficulties. However, the application of the model was program-specific, creating a gap in understanding broader applications, particularly in culturally unique contexts like Akropong-Akuapem. Thus, there's a need to explore how parents in Akropong-Akuapem perceive and enable their children's right to participate in family decision-making, expanding comprehension beyond specialised programs. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining parents' awareness concerning their children's right to participate in family decisions using the Lundy Model of Participation.

Lansdown (2018) developed a conceptual framework for measuring the outcomes of adolescent participation. He concluded that while participation can be consultative, collaborative, or adolescent-led, to be rights-based, it must always comply with the Lundy Model of Participation by providing opportunities for space, voice, audience and influence for quality participation. Meaningful participation contributes to the empowerment of children and allows them to influence matters that concern them directly or indirectly.

Lansdown's (2018) work highlights the significance of adolescent participation based on rights, incorporating key elements like space, voice, audience and influence from the Lundy Model of Participation. Despite its importance, a gap emerges in applying this framework, especially in diverse cultural and everyday family contexts. This gap becomes apparent when considering the practical implementation of this principle in unique cultural settings like Akropong-Akuapem. The research gap centres on the need for a more in-depth examination of how parents in Akropong-Akuapem understand and put this principle into practice within their families and how it aligns with the Lundy Model of Participation.

The Lundy Model of Participation offers a valuable framework for understanding and implementing the principle of children's rights to participate. Thus, using it as the theoretical framework for this study provides a comprehensive and well-established framework for analysing and evaluating parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in decision-making within the family context of Akropong-Akuapem. However, applying the model in the context of the indigenous family system of Akropong-Akuapem, certain aspects of the model might require critical evaluation and adaptation to align with the cultural context.

Given that the Lundy Model of Participation was originally developed in a Western context, it might require adjustments to resonate with Ghanaian cultural beliefs, family dynamics and parenting practices. To effectively apply the model's concepts in the Akropong-Akuapem family context, it is crucial to balance promoting children's right to participate with respecting cultural values. Additionally, Ghanaian families have a hierarchical structure that emphasises respect for elders and collective decision-making, which contrasts with the model's emphasis on child-initiated decision-making. In Ghanaian families, decisions involving extended family members and elders and children's participation may not align with the model's focus on child autonomy. Furthermore, the model's emphasis on age and maturity may not align with Ghanaian cultural norms, which prioritise age and experience in decision-making. In Ghanaian culture, children expressing differing opinions from adults can be seen as disrespectful, potentially limiting their ability to voice their opinions.

Therefore, introducing the model in Akropong-Akuapem requires tailored educational and advocacy efforts to bridge cultural gaps and adapt the model's stages to accommodate the diverse conceptions of childhood across societies. To effectively integrate the model's principles, the concept of childhood, parents' awareness, children's participation and an understanding of family traditions are essential.

2.3. Conceptualisation and Understanding of Childhood

Literature on the concept of childhood plays a fundamental role in investigating parents' awareness of the principle of children's rights to participate in family decision-making because families are influenced by their socio-cultural and ethical values of childhood. For instance, Liebel (2017) explained that "childhood is a socially constructed phenomenon that evolves and takes on many shapes with differing expectations and behaviours based on historical, sociological and cultural settings" (p. 79). To buttress this assertion, Cook (2020) found that "societies socially construct childhood as sets of beliefs and behaviours about what children and child-adult relations are or ought to be like, with complex varieties of constructed childhoods in different times and places" (p. 93). Additionally, Heywood (2018) emphasised that "childhood is a social construct that changes over time and, no less importantly, varies between social and ethnic groups" (p. 13). All these insights critically highlight the idea that childhood is a socially constructed concept that is shaped by historical, sociological and cultural factors that are not a fixed or universal experience but vary across time, space and ethnic groups. Thus, societies construct childhood differently in response to their unique cultures in fulfilment of contemporary times. For instance, currently, practices like child labour or child marriage have significantly decreased compared to previous decades, partly due to the

influence of children's rights legislation on cultural norms. Hence, understanding the diversity of constructed childhoods in different contexts is crucial for understanding how childhood is perceived or experienced in diverse groups.

In this regard, the concept of childhood in the past in the Gold Coast (now modern Ghana) was limited and it was not well integrated with the worldwide historical context that has shown that the idea of childhood is something constructed by society. Thus, when talking about children in Ghana, they are usually depicted as either students with potential or as vulnerable individuals (Lord, 2011). In a similar position, Lassonde (1996) reiterated that modern discussions about childhood in Ghana clearly state what activities children should be engaged in, with a strong moral perspective. Essentially, education is seen as the norm for childhood, and learning is perceived as a natural and morally superior activity for children. Because of this, a childhood spent working is seen as a departure from the norm, an unfair situation, or a negative outcome of history (Balagopalan, 2008).

In an empirical study conducted by Lord (2011), he found that “Ghanaians have implicitly endorsed or adopted the educative model of childhood” (p. 88). A model that emphasises the importance of education and learning in shaping children's growth and development to gain knowledge, skills and experiences that contribute to their overall learning and personal growth. To fulfil this, Boakye-Boaten (2010) intimated that “the continuous existence of any society depends on the ability of the society to socialise its childhood model in the art of survival and cultural perpetuation” (p. 105). Therefore, to enforce the educative model of childhood in Ghana, the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection (2018) concluded that “childhood should be

viewed as a period of instruction, upbringing, training and discipline from social, cultural and religious perspectives” (p. 10). It reveals that childhood is seen as a phase in a person's life that involves not only growing up physically but also receiving instruction, upbringing, training and discipline. Hence, childhood is a time of learning and preparation for the responsibilities and expectations that come with adulthood. Hence, children are moulded, guided and prepared for their future roles in society. This perspective acknowledges the importance of social, cultural and religious factors in shaping children’s ethical values during this crucial phase. Also, Mbise (2013) found that in Ghana, the cultural perception of childhood is significant, as children are regarded as valuable assets to families, communities and the nation. Children’s duties to their parents, extended family and communities continue to influence perceptions of childhood and children’s treatment in society. Children are seen as contributors to society, valued not only for their inherent worth but also for their active roles in communal tasks and responsibilities. These cultural norms require children to engage in tasks like household chores, following elders' guidance and participating in communal activities, which contribute to their education and development. These expectations continue to shape the understanding of childhood and influence how children are treated within Ghanaian society. These findings are supported by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection’s (2014) definition that, “childhood is when an individual is under the authority, control and care of persons considered adults in society” (p. iv). This perspective underscores that childhood involves dependence on adults for various needs, encompassing physical, emotional, educational and social aspects. Essentially, cultural variations in Ghana can influence the perception and experiences of childhood, with appropriateness for children differing based on regional norms.

Significantly, a comprehensive understanding of childhood is essential to defining and understanding the concept of a child because it is the state of being a child. Shanahan (2007) posited that “the concept of a child can be defined within the biological, legal and cultural frameworks of childhood” (p. 422). For this study, literature related to the legal and cultural frameworks in defining a child was reviewed. Legally, Article 1 of the UNCRC states that “every human being under 18 is a child unless the majority attained earlier under the law applicable to the child” (United Nations, 1990, p. 1). Article 2 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years” (African Union, 1990, p. 9). Seemingly, Section 1 of the Children’s Act, 1998 (Act 560) of the Republic of Ghana defined a child as “a person below the age of 18 years” (Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, 1998, p. 6). Also, Article 28(5) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, states that “a child means a person below the age of 18 years” (Government of Ghana, 1992, p. 31). Thus, childhood ends at the age of 17 for transition into adulthood at age 18.

Culturally, Boakye-Boaten (2010) emphasised that in traditional African settings, “it is important to emphasise that a child is a human being in need of help and direction” (p. 108). This underscores the traditional understanding that being a child is “anyone dependent on the shared responsibility among adults to provide the necessary help and direction for growth, regardless of cultural context. It means that a child is still largely dependent on an adult for the necessities of life” (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2014, p. iv). This statement highlights the importance of recognising children's dependence on adults and the critical role that adults play in

ensuring the well-being of children. This culminates in the finding that traditionally, Ghanaian society perceives children both as biological and vulnerable, needing protection and nurturing where children prescribe the parents' role to be played and are considered as emotionally, economically, physically and religiously dependent on their parents (Boakye-Boaten, 2010).

The existing literature on childhood conceptualisation provides valuable insights into how different societies and cultures perceive and understand childhood. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research that explores how families and parents in Akropong-Akuapem, specifically conceptualise and understand childhood within their unique cultural, historical and religious context. Filling this gap would not only contribute to the academic understanding of childhood but also ensure an in-depth exploration of how the conceptualisation and understanding of childhood influence parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in decision-making and the support for children's right to participate in Akropong-Akuapem. Additionally, since understanding parents' awareness is crucial, this gap highlights the need for a deeper investigation into parents' awareness of children's right to participate.

2.4. Parents' Awareness of Children's Right to Participate

Parents' awareness of children's rights and specifically, the principle of children's right to participate is of great importance to the implementation of the UNCRC. Article 42 provides that governments must create awareness of children's rights through active means such as educational programmes, public awareness campaigns, publications and community engagement initiatives for parents, ensuring

understanding, support and implementation. This empowers parents to advocate for these rights, fostering a society that respects and protects children's well-being and facilitates their participation in family decision-making. Additionally, Article 5 provides that States must respect the roles of parents in guiding children's exercise of rights according to their evolving abilities. Supporting these children's rights provisions, Welty and Lundy (2013) reiterated that greater awareness is needed of the fact that respecting children's views is not just a model of good pedagogical practice but a legally binding obligation since one of the ongoing obstacles to the successful implementation of children's participation is the limited awareness of the children's right to participate. Nevertheless, Cross-cultural studies by Smith, Buckhalt and Hruska (2015) and Chen and Wang (2018) found that parents' awareness of children's right to participate can significantly differ based on cultural norms. It revealed that, in collectivist societies, decisions are often made collectively, considering the opinions and needs of the entire family or community. Parents might perceive their role as primary decision-makers because decisions are made based on what is best for the family. This perspective could lead parents to believe that they have a central role in making choices for the family without necessarily seeking extensive input from their children. In contrast, individualistic societies prioritise individual autonomy and personal choice. In these societies, parents may value their children's opinions and perspectives more, as they are seen as independent individuals with valid viewpoints. Parents might encourage their children to express their thoughts and wishes and take these into account when making decisions. This dynamic reflects the emphasis on personal autonomy and the belief that individuals, including children, should have a say in matters that affect them directly. The information highlights that parents' awareness of children's right to participate can vary due to cultural norms, affecting

how parents perceive their role in decision-making and the importance they give to their children's input. Practically, understanding these cultural differences is vital to comprehending parents' awareness.

The literature acknowledges that cultural differences significantly affect how parents perceive and prioritise their children's right to participation. However, there's a notable gap in research focusing on the in-depth exploration of parents' awareness of children's participation rights, especially in culturally diverse contexts like Akropong-Akuapem. Such research would uncover how cultural norms shape parents' awareness and their role in facilitating their children's participation in family decision-making in this specific context. Closing this gap is essential not just for academic knowledge but also for effectively promoting parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decisions in Akropong-Akuapem.

Lawal and Ajayi (2020) researched parents' and children's awareness and knowledge of the Child Rights Act and its effect on children in Nigeria. The study aimed to explore the level of knowledge and awareness of both the parents and their children on the Child Rights Act and its application in the earliest years of child development. After using a descriptive survey design and a simple random sampling of the purposive technique to collect data from 120 children and 120 parents, it was found that there are aspects of the child's rights that parents need to pay more attention to and ensure their children have the rights they deserve. Even though 52% of parents are aware of the Child's Rights Act, 77% of the parents have a high level of knowledge of their children's rights.

The study by Lawal and Ajayi (2020) provides insights into parents' and children's awareness and knowledge of the Child Rights Act in Nigeria but does not specifically investigate parents' awareness of children's right to participate. Therefore, the identified gap here is the need for research that focuses on parents' awareness of children's right to participate in decision-making processes

Kosher and Ben-Arieh (2019) conducted a study on social workers' perceptions of children's right to participation. The study explored how social workers implement this principle in their everyday practice and whether there is a relationship between their perceptions and their actions. The findings revealed that social workers tend to endorse a protective position concerning children's participation and that they only partially implement children's right to participation in their daily practice.

The study by Kosher and Ben-Arieh (2019) focuses on social workers' perceptions and implementation of children's right to participation, but it does not delve into the area of parents' awareness of this right. Therefore, the identified gap is the lack of research that directly investigates parents' awareness of children's right to participate, especially within the unique cultural and socio-economic context of Akropong-Akuapem.

Björnsdóttir and Einarsdóttir (2020) researched child participation in Ghana: responsibilities and rights. After using qualitative methodologies such as participant observation, focus group discussions, visual methods and interviews to engage children as participants in the study, it was found that children were confident that adults who feared or spoke out against child rights and participation did so because

they were uninformed about or unaware of the content of child participation. The children emphasised that their parents were regarded as uneducated and needed better knowledge of the positive aspects of child participation. It means that some adults are ignorant of child participation and need more education on the content and benefits of child participation. It means that when parents are not educated on the relevance of child participation for better understanding, they do not appreciate the reality and importance of child participation in the family and society. Because of that, parents perceive child participation as making them arrogant, stubborn and disrespectful towards the elderly.

The study by Björnsdóttir and Einarsdóttir (2020) investigates children's perceptions of adults' awareness of child participation, however, it lacks a direct exploration of parents' perspectives on children's right to participate. Hence, the identified gap is the need for research that specifically delves into parents' awareness of children's right to participate, their perspectives and the factors influencing their views, particularly within the unique cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem.

Manful and Manful (2014) researched child welfare in Ghana: the relevance of children's rights in practice. It was aimed to provide insight by comparing how children's rights are perceived by professionals at the strategic and operational levels in Ghana. Drawing on in-depth interview data with government personnel who have strategic responsibilities of childcare policies and with operational staff in a residential childcare institution. It was concluded that for many of the operational staff children's rights appeared to be an abstract concept even though it was central to their daily work. The study suggested that implementation of the UNCRC has so far remained largely at the policy level. It is therefore critical to organise more child

rights training for professionals who are engaged in direct work with and/or for children at all levels of Ghanaian society to inform their practice.

The study by Manful and Manful (2014) examined the perception and implementation of children's rights by professionals in Ghana. It emphasises the need for child rights training among professionals involved in childcare. However, it does not directly investigate parents' awareness of children's right to participate. Therefore, there exists a gap in the literature regarding parents' awareness of this specific aspect of children's rights, particularly in the context of Akropong-Akuapem.

Afenyo (2019) researched the knowledge of child rights in Ghana: implementation of Article 42 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The study employed both primary and secondary data using the qualitative research design. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Using the qualitative content analysis method, findings revealed that teachers had inadequate knowledge of child rights and the UNCRC. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the State should consider embedding the UNCRC into the educational curricula of children and explore other practical avenues of child rights education.

The study conducted by Afenyo (2019) investigated the knowledge of child rights among teachers in Ghana, with a focus on the UNCRC. While it offers valuable insights into teachers' awareness, it does not directly explore parents' awareness of children's right to participate. Consequently, there is a gap in the literature regarding

parents' understanding of this aspect of children's rights, particularly within the cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem and this must be addressed in this study.

2.5. Principle of Children's Right to Participate in Family Decision-Making

The principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making is a fundamental principle of children's rights, emphasising their active participation in matters that concern them within the family setting. It recognises children as rights-holders with legitimate stakes in decisions that impact their lives. In the context of Akropong-Akuapem, understanding how parents are aware of and implement this principle is a central focus of the study. The subsequent literature delves into it.

2.5.1. Children's rights

Children's rights are "the human rights of children that provide a useful guideline for identifying areas where children may require additional support or protection" (Council of Europe, 2013, p. 13). Children have the same human rights as every other human being, nevertheless, their age and vulnerability are recognised as requiring special attention because "they are a group that often find it difficult to access their rights fully" (Council of Europe, 2013, p. 14). Hence, their exclusive rights are necessary to ensure children's survival, along with appropriate protection, development and discrimination-free participation. These exclusive rights, known as children's rights, encompass adequate and acceptable living standards for children. They are for every child "regardless of who they are or live with, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or a girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, they are rich or poor." (United Nations, 1990, p. 2).

Kofi Annan once stated:

No trust is more sacred than the one the world holds with children, there is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace (Johnson, Agbényiga, & Bahemuka, 2013, p. 1).

Kofi Annan emphasised the unparalleled commitment of the world to children. He emphasised the critical duty of safeguarding children's rights, ensuring their well-being and freedom from fear and deprivation and providing opportunities for peaceful growth. As a result, these rights have been enshrined in several international, regional and national legal instruments like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Children's Act 1998 (Acts 560). Emphasis has been given to four rights known as the four fundamental principles because they are considered the pillars of implementing all other children's rights, namely, "non-discrimination (Article 2), the best interests of the child (Article 3), the right to life, survival and development (Article 6) and the children's right to participate (Article 12)" (Children's Rights Alliance, 2010, p. 2). The scope of this study is the principle of children's right to participate, specifically in family decision-making.

2.5.2. Principle of children's right to participate

Article 12 of the UNCRC, Article 7 of the ACWRC and Section 11 of the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) of Ghana provide that no individual should deprive children capable of forming views, the right to express an opinion, to be listened to and to participate in decisions which affect their well-being, the opinion of the child being considered appropriately following the age and maturity of the child. According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), it earnestly constitutes one of the

fundamental principles of the UNCRC, broadly conceptualised as ‘participation.’ Although this term does not appear in the writing of Article 12, it has evolved and is “widely used to describe ongoing processes, including information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect” (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, p. 5). Thus, children’s right to be heard is distinguished as children’s right to participate. As a principle, it is not just a right in and of itself but also one that should be considered while interpreting and implementing all other rights.

Bonvin and Stoecklin (2014) posited that the principle of children’s right to participate is “the masterpiece of child participation and a general principle, making it a substantial right and a procedural guarantee in implementing other rights” (pp. 4-5). It reveals that the significance of the principle not only recognises children's right to participate in decisions that affect them, but it also ensures that their participation is taken seriously and has an influence on the outcome of those decisions. It gives the children the right to participate in all matters affecting them only if they can form views and sets the basis for promoting other rights. It acknowledges children as rational individuals with the right to express their views on all matters affecting them, while also ensuring that adults give adequate attention to these views and thoughts. Significantly, Doek (2014) intimated that “the right to express views freely means that the child must not be manipulated or subjected to undue influence or pressure” (p. 199). Instead, children should be provided with meaningful opportunities to express their views confidently. These views must be listened to and considered seriously. It begins with the parents as they enforce it in family decision-making.

Essentially, children can form their views even when they cannot communicate verbally. To buttress this, Lansdown (2010) suggested that “children’s right to participate should not be limited to expressing views in an adult’s language because tiny babies speak a complex language and adults who can read it provide more sensitive and appropriate care” (p. 12). As such, non-verbal forms of communication such as “play, body language, facial expression, or drawing and painting, through which little children make choices, express preferences and demonstrate understanding of their environment must be recognised and respected” (Lansdown, 2010, p. 12). The children have the free will to express ideas without prejudice since it is the basis for protection and provisions. The children's views may add relevant perspectives and experience to decision-making, policymaking and preparation of laws and their evaluation.

This section offers an in-depth and comprehensive exploration of the concept of children’s right to participate, encompassing its legal principles and significance. It also highlights the importance of recognising children's capacity to form views and the various forms of communication through which they express these views, emphasising that participation goes beyond verbal expression. However, the gap in this section lies in directly connecting this extensive discussion on the principle of children's right to participate to the specific context of parents' awareness of this principle within Akropong-Akuapem.

2.5.3. Children's participation in family decision-making.

Children’s right to participate must be implemented within the family framework in Ghana. Parents should not see it as a limitation but as an obligation to assess

children's capacity to form views that have a positive influence on family decisions. Parents must ensure that all family decision-making in which children participate is child-friendly, transparent, respectful, safe, relevant and inclusive (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009) because children's participation promotes the children's interest and commitment to activities and decisions that affect their dignity and impart them.

Thomas (2007) referred to children's participation as "generally taking part in an activity, or specifically, taking part in decision-making" (p. 199) in the family. So, in practice, children's participation in family decision-making is the process by which children have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly in the family (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015). It is active participation because the children have reasons to believe that their participation will influence decision-making (UNICEF, 2017). This is best achieved through "empowering children and fostering positive relationships within the family based on mutual respect and partnership" (Cuevas-Parra, Stephano, & Zhu, 2016, p. 6). The result is the establishment of a new paradigm "that positions children as competent individuals with a democratic breakthrough, highlighting children's agency and their extensive right to participate in society" (Clark & Ziegler, 2014, p. 219). Lansdown (2018) defined child participation as "children (individually or collectively) engaging with opportunities to form and express their views and to influence matters that concern them directly and indirectly" (p. 16). Integrating the concept into the family, Lansdown (2010) stated that children's participation in family decision-making involves "a transfer of power to children by introducing legal rights, means of redress and wide-ranging cultural

change towards respect for children as rights holders, entitled to active participation in all the decisions that impact their lives” (p. 22). It denotes that adults who ensure children’s participation transfer power to children to transform them into active participants to make it effective, meaningful and sustainable. This transforms the status of children from passive recipients to active agents who are informed and able to influence decisions affecting their lives.

Empirically, Martensen & Grønholdt (2008) researched children’s influence on family decision-making examining parents’ perception of their children’s (5-13-year-olds) participation in and general influence on the family decision-making process when purchasing in 14 different product categories. Based on a survey, the findings indicated that children exercise quite a strong influence on the family decision-making processes, particularly for products relevant to them.

While the study by Martensen & Grønholdt (2008) provides valuable insights into children's influence on family decision-making, it primarily focuses on parents' perception of children's participation and influence in purchasing decisions related to various product categories. The identified gap in the literature is that it does not delve into the specific cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem, and how parents in this unique cultural setting perceive and understand their children's right to participate in family decision-making beyond purchasing decisions. Therefore, there is a need for research that specifically explores parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in a broader range of family decisions within the cultural, historical and religious context of Akropong-Akuapem.

Also, Ekasasi (1996) investigated the role of children in family decision-making. The study found that even though husband and wife hold a dominant influence on the family decision-making process, children's role in the family decision-making process is also significant today. This means that to market successfully to children, marketers must understand children's buying decision-making process and what media can be used to socialise their products to them. To corroborate these findings, Richter and Zartler (2011) researched children participating in family decisions. Using a qualitative study to take a closer look at families and the negotiating procedures within them, the study found that children were allowed to participate in different fields from furnishing their room to deciding on changing the home in different ways. It means that participation was very much influenced by the actual and ascribed competence of the children.

The studies by Ekasasi (1996) and Richter and Zartler (2011) provide valuable insights into the role of children in family decision-making processes, emphasising the significance of children's influence in various aspects of family choices. However, both studies primarily focus on the perspective of children and their involvement in decision-making within the family context. The identified gap in the literature is that these studies do not specifically address parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making, especially within the unique cultural and socio-economic context of Akropong-Akuapem. Therefore, there is a need for research that explores how parents in this cultural setting perceive and understand their children's right to participate in family decisions, beyond the children's perspective, and how this awareness influences their actions and decisions.

Similarly, Okewumi and Akanle (2022) investigated children's participation in decision-making within the family context of Yoruba culture. Examining the context of children's experiences within their families based on in-depth interviews conducted in four local governments within the Ibadan metropolis, the study found that cultural beliefs and generational relations influence how children are allowed to participate in decision-making. Thus, relevant contributions are made to understanding childhood in Africa.

The study by Okewumi and Akanle (2022) sheds light on children's participation in decision-making within the Yoruba culture, providing insights into how cultural beliefs and generational relations shape the role of children in family decisions. While this research contributes to the understanding of childhood within a specific cultural context, it does not directly address parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making. The identified gap in the literature is that this study does not explore parents' perspectives and their awareness of children's right to participate, particularly within the cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem. Therefore, there is a need for research that investigates how parents in Akropong-Akuapem perceive and understand their children's right to participate in family decisions, considering the cultural and socio-economic factors unique to this specific locale.

2.5.4. Benefits of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) has stated that "a family where children can freely express views and be taken seriously from the earliest ages

provides an important model and is a preparation for the child to exercise the right to be heard on the broader society” (pp. 20-21). Parents are to provide appropriate direction and guidance to their children to enable enhanced family relations, support children’s socialisation and play a preventive role against violence in the home and family. Promoting children’s right to participate in family decision-making is a parenting style and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) explained that this parenting style “builds on existing positive behaviours and attitudes and disseminates information on the rights of children and parents enshrined in the convention” (p. 22). Significantly, children’s participation builds children’s capacity to build their ‘own views (Clark & Ziegler, 2014). Consequently, the principle of children’s right to participate serves as a basis for parents to effectively implement the children’s right to participate in family decision-making in all matters that concern them. Suppose parents identify this principle as duty-bearers and engage children meaningfully as right-holders; in that case, it will build the capacity of children as they grow up with higher self-esteem.

Traditionally, some indigenous Ghanaian proverbs, especially from the Akans¹, provide the benefits of children’s participation in family decision-making. For instance, “*abofra hu ne nsa hohoro a, [ne mpanyinfo na edidi*” (Rattray, 1916, p. 103). It means that when a child washes his/her hands well, he/she eats with adults. This proverb reflects the benefits of the principle of children’s right to participate in family decision-making by illustrating the idea that responsible behaviour and active engagement lead to inclusion and participation in important matters. This aligns with

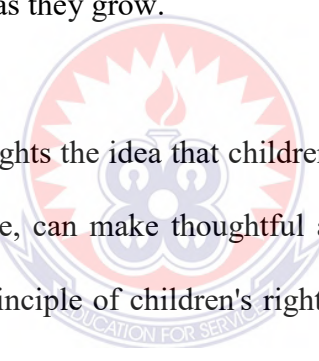
¹ “Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana, making up 45.7% of the population of Ghana” (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021, p. 36). The Akans in Ghana comprise “the Bono, Asante, Adanse, Twifo, Asen, Fante, Akuapem, Akyem, Akwamu, Kwahu, Sehwi, Awowin, Nsima and Ahanta” (Buah, 1998, p. 8).

the notion that children who actively engage in responsible behaviour are better positioned to take part in family decisions. Similarly, children who exercise their right to participate responsibly can contribute meaningfully to family discussions. Practically, the proverb suggests that children's ability to complete a task (washing hands well) signifies their readiness for greater responsibilities (eating with adults). In the same vein, the principle of children's right to participate recognises children's capacity to contribute constructively to decision-making processes. It acknowledges that children possess valuable insights, perspectives and ideas that can enrich family decisions. The proverb also highlights the empowerment and inclusion of children in adult activities because of responsible behaviour. In the same vein, the principle of children's right to participate emphasises empowering children by involving them in decisions that affect them, whether in family matters or broader societal contexts. This inclusion fosters a sense of belonging, respect for their opinions and overall well-being. Furthermore, the proverb implies that children's actions (washing hands well) are indicative of learned behaviour, which contributes to their growth and development. The principle of children's right to participate recognises that engaging in decision-making processes provides children with learning opportunities. They learn about negotiation, compromise, critical thinking and the importance of considering multiple viewpoints. Additionally, the proverb suggests that children's integration into adult activities reinforces family unity. Similarly, the children's right to participate fosters stronger family bonds by allowing children to be active contributors to decisions that impact the family. This can lead to increased communication and understanding and a sense of collective responsibility. Consequently, the proverb underscores the idea that responsible behaviour and active participation lead to the privilege of being included in important activities. This aligns

with the benefits of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making, which includes recognising children's abilities, empowering them, facilitating learning and promoting a sense of unity within the family.

Another relevant proverb is “abofra b[nwa na [mm[akyekyere” which means a child breaks a snail, but he/she does not break a tortoise. The proverb suggests that children might handle fragile things (like a snail) carelessly or without much consideration, resulting in unintended harm. On the other hand, when dealing with something more robust and important (like a tortoise), the child exercises greater caution and restraint. This proverb can be seen as a metaphor for how children's participation in decision-making can impact the outcomes. It reveals that allowing children to participate in family decisions gives them a sense of empowerment and responsibility. When children are allowed to have a say in matters that affect them, they are more likely to take their role seriously and make thoughtful choices, much like how they would treat a valuable and robust entity (the tortoise) with care and consideration. Seemingly, when children are engaged in the decision-making process, they gain a deeper understanding of the consequences of their choices. Just as the proverb suggests that they treat a tortoise with care, involving them in decisions teaches them to consider the potential outcomes and impacts of their actions on themselves and others. Additionally, participation in decision-making helps children develop important life skills, such as critical thinking, communication, negotiation and problem-solving. Just as they would need to handle a delicate snail carefully, they learn to handle complex decisions thoughtfully.

Significantly, the principle of children's right to participate underscores the idea that children have a legitimate stake in matters that concern them. By recognising and respecting this right, parents show children that their opinions and participation are valued and worthy of consideration. Consequently, when children's participation is considered, family decisions are more likely to reflect a broader range of viewpoints. This can lead to better, more balanced outcomes, as different perspectives are considered, like how decisions about a tortoise's well-being would involve various factors. And so, just as a tortoise represents longevity and stability, involving children in decision-making can have a positive impact on their development and well-being over the long term. It helps them build a sense of agency and prepares them for more complex decision-making as they grow.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central sunburst or starburst design in white and red, set against a blue background. Below the sunburst, there are two stylized figures or symbols in white and blue. The text "UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA" is written around the perimeter of the circle, and "EDUCATION FOR SERVICE" is written at the bottom.

Overall, the proverb highlights the idea that children, when given the opportunity and responsibility to participate, can make thoughtful and careful decisions. This aligns with the benefits of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making, emphasising their capacity for understanding and positive contributions to the family's choices. In light of this, Björnsdóttir and Einarsdóttir (2020) found that child participation helps “children build confidence, boost competence, allay fears regarding how others would react to their ideas and enable them to speak in front of a large crowd” (p. 287). It means that child participation makes them develop critical thinking skills and helps them to make their opinions more reasonable to adults. Similarly, UNICEF (2018) found that child participation “improves services and policies about children because children have a unique body of knowledge about their lives, their needs and concerns, together with ideas and views that derive from their direct experiences” (p. 8). It means that child participation enhances protection

because having both the right and the space to participate in safety acts is a powerful means through which situations of violence, abuse, threat, injustice or discrimination can be challenged. The Council of Europe (2012) reiterated that “children who exercise their right to express their views freely are protected from harm, including intimidation, reprisals, victimisation and violation of their right to privacy” (p. 7). This situation harnesses children's energies, skills, aspirations, creativity and passion. It can also strengthen democratic discourse, challenge injustice and promote children's capacities for tolerance and respect for others. Hart (1992) posited that child participation is “an important antidote to traditional educational practice, which runs the risk of leaving children alienated and open to manipulation” (p. 36). He explained that through genuine participation, children develop critical reflection skills and comparing perspectives, which are essential to self-awareness and a democratic society. Also, it will help children become peer educators on their rights and successfully participate in decision-making that affects them.

Despite the compelling benefits associated with children's participation in family decision-making, a notable gap exists in the current literature. This gap pertains to the connection between children's participation in family decision-making and parents' awareness of their children's right to participate. While numerous studies have recognised the theoretical ideals and extensively documented the positive outcomes linked with child participation, including its essential role in enriching both family decision-making and children's overall development, this literature identifies a noticeable gap. This gap can be characterised by the divergence between the awareness of the principle of children's right to participate and the realisation of the tangible benefits stemming from their active participation in family decision-making.

Thus, this study addresses the gap by exploring parents' awareness of the principle's theoretical merits within the context of everyday parenting practices situating it within the specific context of Akropong-Akuapem.

2.5.5. Barriers to the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making

Child participation processes face challenges because recognising that children possess such rights presents an enormous challenge to long-established traditional and indigenous values and practices. Mbise MSW (2013) found that “although the image of childhood in Ghana has evolved because of the UNCRC, the socio-cultural constructions of child rights cannot be ignored” (p. 488), hence, the traditional silencing of children is a barrier to child participation. To affirm this, Björnsdóttir and Einarsdóttir (2020) explored child participation in Ghana: responsibilities and rights. Using qualitative methodologies to engage children as participants in the study, they uncovered three key barriers to children's engagement. Firstly, cultural age hierarchy and punitive practices limit Ghanaian children's participation, with age-based ranking restricting their voice and causing emotional restraint. Secondly, children highlighted adults' lack of awareness about the benefits of child participation, leading to undervaluation and negative perceptions. Finally, children criticised authorities for not implementing new child participation laws, showing a gap in solving issues. The study emphasises the need for authorities' commitment to foster progress in child participation, as children censured them for prioritising power and image over child rights and participation. In another scope, Tara (2016) researched a child's right to participate: implications for international child protection. It was found that children's participation is difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons, including age

discrimination, denial of opportunity, tokenism and irrelevant participation initiatives. As a result, society requires more sophisticated narratives to address culture and attitudes that deny children and adults equal status because the UNCRC has significantly impacted adults' beliefs and expectations about children.

Furthermore, Leviner (2018) investigated children's right to participation in the Swedish child protection system through legal representatives, focusing on whether and how children are allowed to influence choices made concerning them in this context. Using critical legal analysis, the study found that the Swedish system has a distinct child-friendly image but is problematic in both dimensions. As a result, the study proposed that society reconsider how to achieve children's participation best and clarify what participation means for the Swedish child protection system to live up to its child-friendly image and truly and honestly consider becoming more child-inclusive. Because of this, Reyneke (2013) posited that “one of the important challenges children face in exercising their right to be heard is that they are first of all dependent on the cooperation of adults” (p. 207). She explained that adults are reluctant to give effect to children's rights because they are sceptical of children's capacity to contribute meaningfully to decision-making. They are also concerned that giving children more control would undermine their (the adults') authority and that the processes of giving effect to this right would be too time-consuming. She also found that there is limited awareness of the content of the right to participate and its application.

The challenges and gaps highlighted in these studies underscore the complexity of bridging the gap between the principle of children's right to participate in family

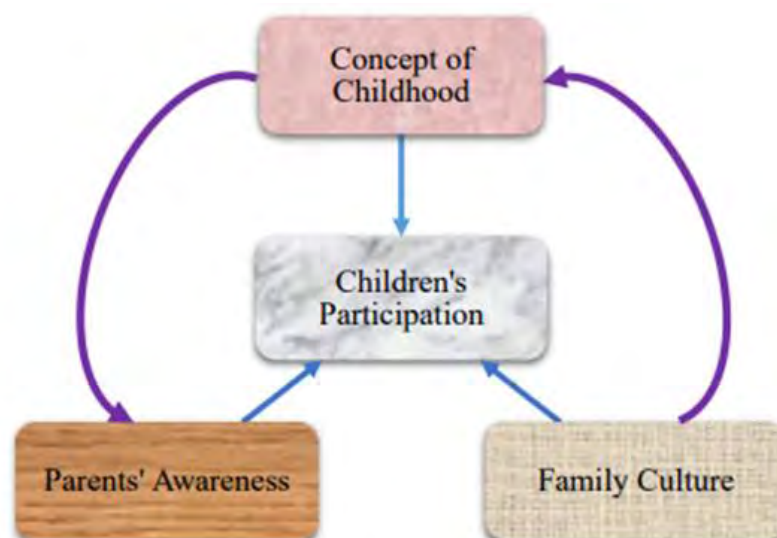
decision-making and parents' awareness and implementation. Traditional values, lack of awareness, negative perceptions, implementation challenges, tokenistic participation and scepticism about children's abilities all contribute to this gap. Addressing this gap requires efforts to raise awareness among parents about the benefits of children's participation, educate them on age-appropriate ways to involve children and overcome cultural and attitudinal barriers that hinder meaningful participation.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework serves as a structured lens to investigate the interplay between family culture, the concept of childhood, parents' awareness and children's participation (in terms of space, voice, audience and influence) within the unique cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana. Its purpose is to guide the exploration of how these elements interact in this distinct cultural setting, shedding light on parents' awareness of children's right to participate in all family decisions concerning them.

Figure 2

Parents' Awareness of Children's Rights to Participate in Family Decision-Making in Akropong-Akuapem



Source: Adapted from *Lundy Model of Participation*, by Laura Lundy, 2007.

Furthermore, this framework facilitates an examination of how these elements influence the actual implementation of children's participation, encompassing their opportunities for space, voice, audience and influence in family decision-making. In practical terms, this framework offers a clear and comprehensive structure for researching the dynamics of children's participation in Akropong-Akuapem. The elements are discussed as follows:

Family Culture: The Foundation

At the foundation of this framework lies family culture. Family culture in Akropong-Akuapem is a rich blend of traditions, values and beliefs passed down through generations. These cultural distinctions significantly influence how families conceptualise childhood, shaping the very essence of what it means to be a child in this community. Family culture acts as a lens through which parents view their roles, obligations and the participation of their children in decision-making.

The Concept of Childhood: Shaping Perceptions

Nestled within family culture is the concept of childhood. Akropong-Akuapem's unique concepts of childhood drive parents' attitudes and behaviours. Parents here understand childhood as a time of dependency, identity formation and empowerment. It is a period during which children rely on their parents and trusted adults for their well-being, a time when their interactions and guidance profoundly influence their

sense of self. Childhood is seen as a dual empowerment system: parents are empowered with authority and responsibility, while children are empowered to express their needs and desires.

Parents' Awareness: The Bridge

Parents play a pivotal role in this framework. Their awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making acts as a bridge between family culture, the concept of childhood and the actual participation of children. It is their awareness of this principle that sets the stage for children's participation in decisions concerning their lives. Parents are duty-bearers, entrusted with fulfilling their children's basic needs and nurturing their development. Understanding their role within this cultural context is crucial to enabling children's participation.

Children's Participation: Space, Voice, Audience, Influence

At the forefront of this framework are the dimensions of children's participation: space, voice, audience and influence. Space denotes the physical and psychological environment that allows children to engage in decision-making. Voice signifies the opportunity for children to express their thoughts, desires and concerns. Audience refers to parents who listen, acknowledge, and respect children's voices and influence the actual impact children have on decisions.

Respectively, family culture shapes the concept of childhood, which, in turn, influences parents' awareness of children's participation rights. Parents' awareness then paves the way for children to have space, voice, audience and influence in family decision-making processes. These components are interconnected and play a crucial

role in determining how children are allowed to participate in family matters within a specific cultural context like Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana.

2.7. Summary

This chapter delves into children's right to participate in family decisions, emphasising its foundational role in promoting children's well-being. It explores the evolution of participation as a fundamental principle underpinning various rights and highlights its broader dimensions beyond verbal expression. The chapter underscores the significance of children's participation in family decisions, fostering their agency, skills and self-esteem. It examines Ghanaian cultural barriers and lack of awareness that hinder children's active participation. Indigenous proverbs emphasise responsible participation, empowerment and unity within the family. While recognising theoretical benefits, the chapter addresses a gap between ideals and practice due to cultural norms and scepticism about children's capabilities. It concludes with a conceptual framework highlighting family culture, the concept of childhood, parents' awareness and children's participation as interconnected factors that seek to shed light on effective strategies for enhancing parents' awareness of promoting and supporting children's active participation in family decision-making that affects their lives.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the approach and techniques the researcher used to conduct the study. It provides a clear roadmap for gathering, analysing and interpreting data to address the research objectives and answer the research questions. In doing so, it contributes to scholarly discourse and enhances the overall trustworthiness of the research outcomes.

3.1. Philosophical Underpinning

This study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, a philosophical approach that encourages researchers to engage with participants in their natural settings to better understand and appreciate their viewpoints and interpretations. The interpretivist paradigm aligns with the endeavour to immerse into the society of the research participants to unveil insights that may be concealed through other research methods.

According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), “the interpretivist paradigm entails a perspective of multiple realities constructed and co-constructed by both the researcher and the researched” (p. 88). This central principle reflects the concept that reality is not a fixed entity but rather emerges from the interactions between researchers and participants, resulting in diverse interpretations of the same phenomena. Singh (2019) further asserts that interpretivists acknowledge the social construction of multiple realities and offer various avenues to access them. This social construction of reality

resonates with the core tenets of interpretivism, signifying that reality is not objective but rather shaped by shared interactions, beliefs and understandings within specific cultural and social contexts.

The interpretivist paradigm, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018), “directs researchers to seek a profound understanding of the world they inhabit and to develop subjective meanings from their experiences that are directed towards specific objects or concepts” (p. 60). This emphasises that interpretations and understandings of the world are rooted in individual perspectives and subjectivity. Hence, the interpretivist approach values participants' perspectives and aims to unearth the personal and cultural significance attached to their experiences.

Practically, the interpretivist paradigm enabled the researcher to immerse into Akropong-Akuapem, facilitating a comprehensive discovery and interpretation of parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making. By focusing on understanding participants' interpretations, this paradigm unveiled concealed social systems and influences shaping parents' understanding and awareness. VanderStoep and Johnston (2009) underline the diversity in research participants' interpretations of their own experiences and the social systems they interact with. Additionally, the interpretive approach allowed the researcher to rely on parents' views, actions and perspectives as a means to interpret their awareness, aligning with Beuving and de Vries' (2015) assertion that “interpretivism views society as emerging from the actions and perspectives of its members” (p. 27).

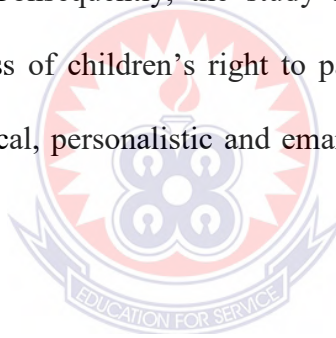
Thus, this interpretivist approach underscores the interactive relationship between individual agency and collective constructs, aligning seamlessly with the study's exploration of parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making. This paradigm acknowledges that parents actively contribute to the construction of their awareness of this right.

3.2. Research Approach

The researcher used the qualitative research approach for the study. Qualitative research allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation, which is parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate. By exploring the context, perspectives and motivations of participants, the researcher uncovered rich insights. In this regard, Mills and Gay (2018) defined qualitative research as “collecting, analysing and interpreting comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., non-numerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest” (p. 7). Consequently, the definition by Mills and Gay characterises qualitative research as a process that involves collecting various types of data, analysing that data to identify patterns and then interpreting those patterns to gain a deeper understanding of a specific issue. This approach goes beyond numerical data to capture the complex and often subjective aspects of human experiences and social interactions. In support of this, Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasised that “it is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals ascribed to a social problem” (p. 41). This highlights that qualitative research prioritises exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals give to social problems. Also, this approach involves delving into the subjective interpretations and experiences of individuals to gain insights into the complex dynamics that shape their perceptions of and responses to various issues. Invariably, qualitative research seeks to uncover the

underlying meanings and complexities that cannot be quantified through numbers alone.

Furthermore, Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2020) intimated that “qualitative research is the approach that allows the researcher to identify issues from the perspective of the studied participants and understand the meanings and interpretations that they give to behaviour, events, or objects” (p. 10). This idea highlights that qualitative research involves understanding issues from the perspective of participants and uncovering the meanings and interpretations they assign to behaviours, events, or objects. It emphasises the importance of participant perspectives and the exploration of subjective experiences. Consequently, the study focused on parents defining and redefining their awareness of children’s right to participation so, it made the study more “situational, empirical, personalistic and emancipatory than predictive” (Stake, 2010, p. 36).



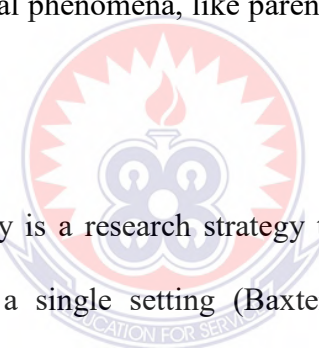
The qualitative approach helped the researcher to explore parents’ awareness of the principle of children’s right to participate in family decision-making in all matters that concern children, which is a complex concept, subjective experience and multifaceted phenomenon that is difficult to quantify or measure. Also, it provided a holistic view of parents’ awareness of children’s right to participate within the natural context of Akropong-Akuapem by considering the cultural, social, historical and environmental contexts that stimulate parents’ awareness, leading to more comprehensive interpretations. The qualitative research also helped the researcher to be inherently flexible by adapting the methods, questions and approaches based on the evolving data and insights. This flexibility enabled the researcher to explore unexpected

findings and adjust focus as needed. Additionally, this approach guided the researcher to prioritise parents' perspectives, allowing their voices and experiences to be central to the research process. This offered a platform for marginalised or underrepresented voices to be heard and understood clearly. Consequently, this approach helped the researcher to generate rich and detailed data, often in the form of narratives, quotes or descriptions, which was very useful for presenting vivid examples and strengthening the authenticity of research findings. Finally, qualitative research encouraged the researcher to ensure a more personal and human approach to the study, fostering meaningful connections between the researcher and parents to explore and discover unique insights regarding their awareness of children's right to participation to enrich the field of study. Thus, this ensured field-oriented research that facilitated close interaction with participants where the researcher gathered firsthand data to be analysed and interpreted for decision-making and addition to scholarship.

3.3. Research Design

The researcher used a case study as the research design. This selection emanates from the researcher's recognition that a close engagement with the specific case on parents' awareness regarding children's right to participate enhances motivation, comprehension and the collection of elaborate data for accurate analysis and interpretation of findings. This alignment facilitated a deep understanding and interpretation of parents' awareness regarding children's right to participate. In the views of Gerring (2017), "a case study is an intensive study of a single case or a small number of cases which draws on observational data and promises to shed light on a larger population of cases" (p. 28). This definition underscores the thorough nature of case study research, relying on methods like interviews to holistically grasp parents'

awareness of the principle of children's rights to participate in family decision-making in all matters that concern children, thus contributing to broader understandings that have relevance and provide insights applicable to parents in Akropong-Akuapem, emphasising valuable knowledge for broader understanding and implications. Specifically, Yin (2018) indicated that "the more the research questions seek to explain some current circumstance (for instance, how or why some social phenomenon works), the more that case study research will be relevant" (p. 35). That notwithstanding, a case study is relevant because the questions require an extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon. This is indicative that the case study approach becomes particularly suitable for inquiries that delve into the functioning of current social phenomena, like parents' awareness of children's right to participate.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central lamp with a flame, set against a background of a sunburst. The lamp is flanked by two stylized figures. Below the lamp, the text "UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION" is visible, and further down, "WONNEBA" and "FOR SERVICE" are partially visible.

Importantly, the case study is a research strategy that focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Thus, through accurate analysis of Akropong-Akuapem's complexities, deeper insights were uncovered to inform a broader theoretical understanding of parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making in all matters that concern children. This aligns with the reality that a case study centres on understanding and interpreting the elaborate interactions, processes and relationships that exist within a specific and bounded environment or context. In practical terms, adopting a case study helped the researcher to have an in-depth concentration on parents' awareness of children's right to participation and establish a complete, real-world perspective that enhanced the research findings, data analysis and accurate data interpretation. This methodology aligns with Yin's (2018) assertion that "a case study

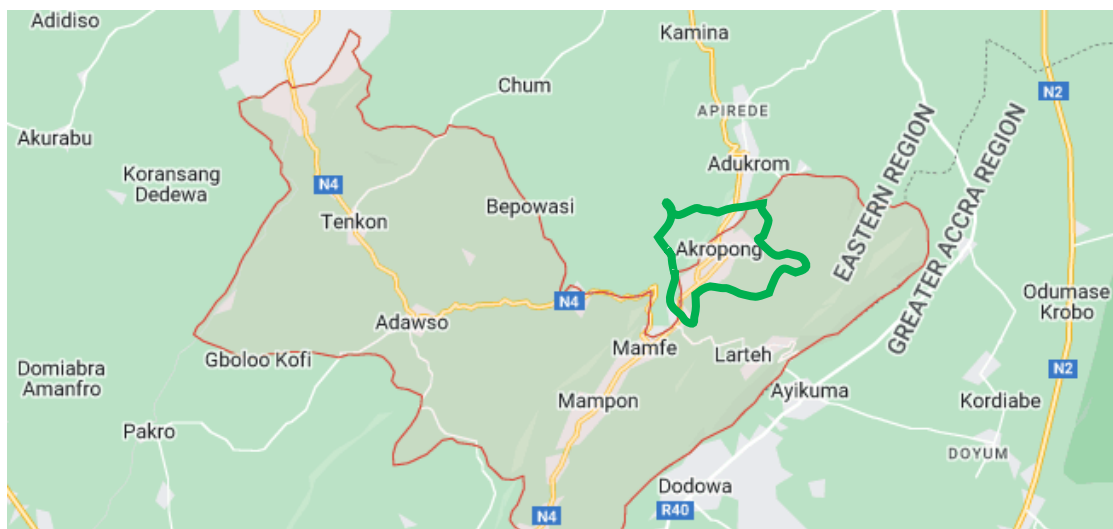
is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident” (p. 50). It also enabled the researcher to delve deeply into the complexities of parents’ awareness and its real-world setting to gain more understanding of its interactions and dynamics with Akropong-Akuapem and its culture. Thus, through this method, researcher receptivity and curiosity were apparent as parents shared insights into their understanding and awareness of children's rights to participate in family decision-making to reflect their level of awareness. Finally, findings from the case studies had practical implications and applications of parents’ awareness which informed decision-making, policy formulation and practical solutions.

3.4. Study Area

Akropong-Akuapem served as the study area, focal point and a crucial backdrop for investigating parents' awareness of the principle of children's rights to participate in family decision-making in all matters that concern children. Akropong-Akuapem is a historic town located in the Akuapem North Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana, West Africa.

Figure 3

The Map of Akropong-Akuapem



Note. This is the map of Akuapem North Municipality with Akropong-Akuapem as the capital city. Adapted from *2023 Google Map Data*, by Google Maps, 2023. <https://www.google.com/maps/@5.9832664,-0.2245387,12z?entry=ttu>

It is situated within the Akuapem Mountains (hills and valleys). The town's distinct geographical location, the unique blend of traditional practices, social interactions, modern development and cultural heritage shapes the interactions and relationships within families and make it an ideal setting for a comprehensive study on parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making. By immersing the study within the confines of Akropong-Akuapem, the researcher aimed to uncover insights that are embedded within the local context. This localised approach ensured that the findings reflected the uniqueness of the community's culture, values and social interactions, contributing to a deeper understanding of parents' awareness.

Traditionally, it is the capital city of the Akuapem Traditional Area and politically, it is the seat of the Akuapem North Municipal Assembly and the Akuapem North Constituency. Akropong-Akuapem covers an area of 1.943 km² and approximately 47km when driving from Accra, the capital city of Ghana (City-facts, 2015). It has spring-like weather throughout the year, especially in the evenings and a picturesque landscape that attracts foreigners and tourists. In 2022, It had a total population of 21,476. This comprised 10,094 males and 11,382 females (Akuapem North Municipality, 2022). So, in 2022, approximately 47.11% of the population were males and approximately 52.89% were females.

The predominant languages spoken and studied are the Akuapem Twi and English Languages. Akuapem Twi's history as a literary dialect originates with its selection to serve as the basis of the Akan translation of the New Testament, published in 1870 with a second edition in 1878 and the entire Bible, published in 1871 principally by German missionary and linguist Johann Gottlieb Christaller and native Akropong-Akuapem linguists and missionaries like David Asante, Theophilus Opoku, Jonathan Palmer Bekoe and Paul Keteku both of the Gold Coast Basel Mission (Reindorf, 1895; Debrunner, 1967; Ofosu-Appiah, 1977). Akropong-Akuapem boasts a strong educational foundation with a range of schools, both modern and traditional, offering education to various age groups. The Presbyterian College of Education which was established on 3rd July 1848 as the first teacher educational institution (tertiary institution) on the Gold Coast is situated at Akropong-Akuapem (Asare-Danso, 2014). It also has the Akuapem campus of the Presbyterian University, Ghana and the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture (a tertiary, postgraduate research and training institute of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana). It also has the famous Okuapeman Senior High School, Mt. Sinai Senior High School and the Akropong School for the Blind. Several public and private basic schools exist there.

The town is home to various religious faiths, with Christianity, Traditional African Religions and Islam coexisting. Churches, shrines and a mosque dot the landscape, representing the diverse spiritual beliefs of the residents. It is known as the citadel of Presbyterianism because Akropong-Akuapem is the place where the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (Basel Evangelical Missionary Society) was first established on 18th December 1828 (Nkansa-Kyeremateng, 2015).

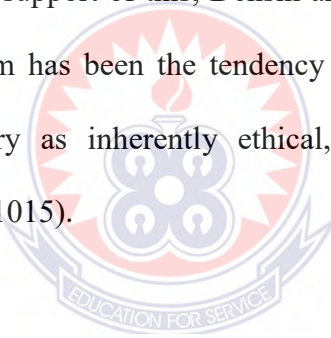
While Akropong-Akuapem has embraced modernisation, challenges such as infrastructure development, healthcare accessibility and employment opportunities persist. Balancing traditional values with the demands of contemporary life presents a dynamic tension within the community. The unique blend of cultural heritage, historical significance and modern development in Akropong-Akuapem provides a rich ground for interdisciplinary research. Studies could explore topics such as cultural preservation, social dynamics, urban-rural interactions, education systems and sustainable development strategies within this distinct geographical and cultural context. While research on children's rights is prevalent, a comprehensive study focused on parents' awareness of these rights in the context of Akropong-Akuapem is limited. This study area offers an opportunity to bridge this research gap by investigating the relationships between family traditions, the concept of childhood, parents' awareness and child participation. The findings will contribute to scholarly discussions, inform policy recommendations and provide insights that empower families and communities to better recognise and respect children's rights to participate in family decisions.

3.5. Instrumentation

The researcher developed a qualitative interview guide as an instrument to gather data. In qualitative research, research instrumentation refers to “the tools that the researcher developed and used to collect the study data. These data collection instruments, which can also be called protocols or guides, include the questions, prompts and/or procedures that guide data collection” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Primarily, it also refers to the tools, techniques and methods used to systematically collect and gather data (Smith, J. A., 2015).

The qualitative interview guide helped the researcher gather rich and in-depth data from parents of Akropong-Akuapem regarding their awareness of the principle of children's rights to participate in family decision-making in all matters that concern the children. Relatively, Yin (2016) emphasised that "the qualitative interviewing guide is more convenient and preferred than unstructured interviewing, intensive interviewing and in-depth interviewing because it has become sufficiently diverse that, under different circumstances, it may include any of the variants or in some combination" (p. 141). In support of this, Densin and Lincoln (2018) found that "the qualitative interview boom has been the tendency among qualitative researchers to portray qualitative inquiry as inherently ethical, or at least more ethical than quantitative research" (p. 1015).



The interview guide consisted of semi-structured questions. This decision was influenced by the assertion of Ravitch and Carl (2016) that in semi-structured interviews, the researcher uses the interview instrument to organise and guide the interview but can also include specific, tailored follow-up questions within and across interviews. In a practical sense, the researcher initiated a conversation with participants by asking a predefined set of open-ended questions to collect data. These questions served as a starting point to elicit participants' views, understandings, experiences, perceptions, interpretations and awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making. Additionally, the researcher used probing and follow-up questions during the interview to delve deeper into participants' responses

and to gain a more detailed understanding of their awareness regarding children's right to participate in family decision-making. This method encouraged a flexible and dynamic interaction, allowing participants to share their thoughts in a natural and unrestrained manner while also permitting the researcher to explore specific points of interest in greater depth.

The researcher conducted an individual interview which aligns with Patton (2014) that an individual interview in qualitative research is a data collection method where a researcher engages in one-on-one conversations with participants to gather in-depth insights and perspectives on a specific research topic. Therefore, this method allowed participants to share their personal experiences, beliefs, emotions, viewpoints and awareness in a private and focused setting. It also provided the participants with a comfortable environment to express themselves openly.

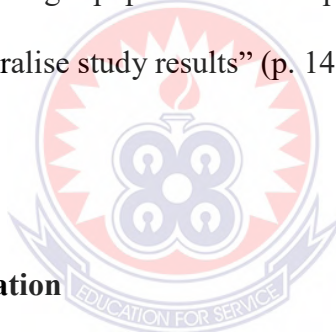
3.6. Research Population

The population for the study was all parents in Akropong-Akuapem. This aligns with Manna and Mete (2021) that “population refers to any collection of a specified group of human beings or non-human entities such as objects, educational institutions, geographical areas and time units having the same characteristics” (p. 35). It further confirms Hennink et al. (2020) explanation that “the population of the study needs to be clearly defined so that the researcher can determine who is eligible to participate in the study and also the best method to recruit them” (pp. 133-134). This means that the research population was expected to be a set of individuals with specific features. Thus, the researcher considered interviewing all parents, yet because of their numbers, time constraints and the use of a qualitative approach, the researcher resorted to a

target population. The researcher was interested in their contribution to the study's findings, which could later be applied to all parents.

3.7. Target Population

In this study, the target population is all parents residing in Akropong-Akuapem who have at least one child and are actively involved in their children's upbringing and decision-making processes. Babbie (2020) explained that a target population refers to the specific group of individuals, objects, or entities that a researcher intends to make conclusions about based on their study. Therefore, it represents the larger group to which the study's findings are intended to apply. This aligns with Mills and Gay's (2018) assertion that "the target population is the population to which the researcher would ideally like to generalise study results" (p. 148).



3.8. Accessible Population

The accessible population for the study were all parents residing in Akropong-Akuapem who have at least one child and are actively involved in their children's upbringing and decision-making processes. It comprised those who were willing to participate and provide the necessary information for the study, easily available, accessible within Akropong-Akuapem for data collection within the researcher's time frame and communicated effectively in the Akuapem Twi or English languages.

The accessible population represents a subset of the target population that is feasible to access for data collection. This aligns with Babbie's (2020) explanation that the accessible population refers to the subset of the target population that the researcher

can realistically access and collect data from for their study. It means that it is the group of individuals who are eligible and reachable for participation in the study, given the limitations of time, budget and other practical considerations.

3.9. Research Sample

In this study, a sample size of 33 parents was purposefully selected to provide rich and diverse insights into the research topic. They comprised 19 females and 14 males from Akropong-Akuapem. A sample is a subset of a population upon which research is conducted because it possesses the characteristics of that population to which it belongs (Manna & Mete, 2021). This was reiterated by Neuman (2021) that a research sample is a subset of individuals, objects, or entities selected from a larger population to represent that population in a study. The sample size of 33 parents served as a manageable and feasible group from which data was collected, analysed and presented to draw accurate conclusions about the target population.

Qualitative research often prioritises depth of understanding over large numbers and as such, the sample size was determined based on the principle of data or thematic saturation. “Data or thematic saturation refers to the point in data collection when issues begin to be repeated and further data collection becomes redundant” (Hennink, Kaiser, & Weber, 2019, p. 1483). Thus, saturation occurred when new information, views, perceptions and insights ceased to emerge from additional participants, indicating that a sufficient level of understanding had been achieved. It is worth noting that, failure to reach data saturation could impact the quality of the research conducted by hampering the trustworthiness of the data gathered. Therefore, Fusch and Ness (2015) reiterated that “data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new

information has been attained and when further coding is no longer feasible” (p. 1408). Data replication refers to the process of reproducing or re-conducting a research study's data collection and analysis procedures to verify the trustworthiness of the original findings (Neuman, 2021). This is achieved by recruiting a similar sample and reproducing the research design and methodology. Hence, through data replication, researchers aim to authenticate that the results obtained in the initial study can be consistently reproduced to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings and contribute to the accumulation of knowledge in the field. The functions of a research sample are crucial for drawing meaningful and reliable conclusions from a study. Working with a sample was more feasible, practical and efficient than studying the entire population because of time and budget retraining (Neuman, 2021). A sample size allows for statistical techniques to be applied, providing insights into relationships, patterns and effects (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). A diverse sample captures different perspectives and variations within the population, enhancing the richness of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Working with a subset of the population minimises intrusion and respects participants' time and willingness to engage (Punch, 2013). In effect, selecting an appropriate sample size optimises resource utilisation while maintaining the validity of results (Maxwell, 2013).

3.10. Sampling Technique

The researcher employed purposive sampling to select the respondent. It involved a conscious and intentional selection process, wherein the researcher identified and targeted participants who willingly provided valuable insights into the study for their relevance to the research objectives and their potential to provide in-depth insights. According to Mills & Gay (2018), purposive sampling, “also referred to as judgment

sampling, is the process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population” (p. 159). Thus, the researcher employed the convenient sampling technique of purposive sampling to select the 33 parents who were readily available and easily accessible for inclusion in the study. Convenience sampling is a purposive (non-probability) sampling technique where researchers select participants based on their easy availability and accessibility (Babbie, 2020). In this method, participants were chosen because they were conveniently recruited, often due to their proximity or willingness to participate. This approach ensured that the sample consisted of parents residing in Akropong-Akuapem, who had at least one child and were actively involved in their children's upbringing and decision-making processes. The sample includes a diverse range of participants to capture various perspectives and experiences. Diversity was sought in terms of parents' roles, age groups, socio-economic backgrounds and cultural contexts. This approach enhanced the richness of the data collected and allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the topic.

3.11. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a critical concept in qualitative research, serving to establish the reliability and validity of qualitative research findings (Mills & Gay, 2018). It assures readers and researchers that the findings, interpretations and conclusions drawn from qualitative research data are credible, accurate and reflective of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Guba (1981) proposed four interrelated naturalistic criteria to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Additionally, reflexivity and the researcher's positionality have been addressed under trustworthiness. These criteria collectively

provide a robust framework for validating the quality and integrity of qualitative research outcomes to provide the necessary understanding and application.

Credibility: It pertains to the accuracy and authenticity of research findings and the extent to which they resonate with participants' lived experiences. To enhance credibility, the researcher employed various strategies such as prolonged engagement, triangulation and member checks. The prolonged engagement involved sustained interactions with participants, allowing the researcher to immerse himself in the participants' context and viewpoints, and fostering a collaborative and friendly atmosphere to obtain accurate data. Triangulation, which involved using multiple sources of data or different methods to examine the same phenomenon; parents' awareness of children's right to participate, strengthened the credibility of findings by corroborating evidence from various angles. Member checks entailed sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify whether their perspectives have been accurately captured, ensuring that interpretations align with their experiences. This process helped establish an agreement with the participants and built the researcher's confidence in the truthfulness and accuracy of the findings.

Transferability: It concerns how research findings can be applied or generalised to other contexts or settings beyond the study's scope. To enhance transferability, the researcher emphasised providing rich, contextual descriptions of the study's context and participants and phenomena. Thick descriptions, narrative accounts and detailed contextual information enable readers to assess the relevance of the findings to their contexts. By offering insights into the underlying dynamics and nuances, transferability extends the applicability of the research outcomes to diverse situations.

This approach helped the researcher understand the underlying meanings and intentions of socio-cultural values and actions and their significance. By providing a rich context, this approach demonstrated that the findings apply to similar situations, circumstances, populations and phenomena.

Dependability: It reflects the consistency and stability of research findings over time and across conditions. The researcher established dependability by documenting and articulating the research process in detail, allowing others to replicate the study or trace the decision-making process. Peer debriefing and external audits, involving independent reviews of the research process, contributed to minimising the influence of researcher bias but enhancing the study's reliability. The goal was to ensure that the findings were consistent and dependable regardless of the circumstances or fluctuations in data collection.

Confirmability: It focuses on the objectivity and neutrality of research findings by ensuring that they are not influenced by the researcher's perspectives, biases, or interpretations. Researchers maintain confirmability by documenting their analytical process, including coding schemes and reflections. An audit trail of the research journey provides transparency, enabling others to evaluate the alignment between data, analysis and conclusions. By emphasising objectivity and minimising subjective interpretations, confirmability reinforces the integrity of the research outcomes.

Reflexivity: Researcher reflexivity refers to the practice of self-awareness and self-analysis by the researcher regarding his perspectives, biases, values and potential influence on the research process and findings. It involved the researcher

acknowledging and addressing how his background and experiences could shape the research process and impact the interpretation of data. Olmos-Vega, Stalmeijer, Varpio and Kahlke (2023) defined reflexivity as “a set of continuous, collaborative and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes” (p. 242). This was highlighted by Olmos-Vega, et al (2023) that reflexivity is an ongoing process that extends across the entire duration of a research endeavour and must involve critical attention to personal, interpersonal, methodological and contextual factors that influence the study being conducted. In simple terms, reflexivity is an awareness of the researcher’s role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge how he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes.

In this study, the researcher maintained personal reflexivity because of the specific characteristics and focus of the study to explore parents' awareness of the principle of children's rights to participate in family decision-making in Akropong-Akuapem. It encouraged the researcher to engage in critical self-examination and self-awareness throughout the study. To enhance the transparency and trustworthiness of the research findings, the researcher addressed his assumptions, biases and potential impacts on the study. Olmos-Vega, et al. (2023) explained that “personal reflexivity requires researchers to reflect on and clarify their expectations, assumptions and conscious and unconscious reactions to contexts, participants and data” (p. 244). In principle, Palaganas, Sanches, Molintas and Caricativo (2017) intimated that “personal reflexivity is shaping and being shaped during the research process” (p. 430). The researcher can ruminate on how his aspirations, characters, values, philosophies,

experiences, belief systems, political commitments, and social identities have shaped the research and ponder about how the research may have touched, affected and possibly transformed the researcher. Because of this, the researcher acknowledged and examined how his background and relationships might influence the research process and outcomes. This encouraged the researcher to critically examine his role in shaping research questions, interacting with participants, making decisions about sampling and data analysis and interpreting findings. This self-awareness enhanced the transparency and trustworthiness of the research by acknowledging and managing the potential sources of bias.

Personal reflexivity aligned with this study because the study involved engaging with parents in a specific cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem. It ensured identity and context. Personal reflexivity enabled the researcher to reflect on how his identity and background might influence his interactions, interpretation and understanding of participants' perspectives within this cultural context. Also, it established power dynamics because exploring children's rights and family decision-making involves power dynamics within the family context. It further allowed the researcher to critically examine how his position as a researcher might impact his understanding of power dynamics and how he interacts with participants who may have varying power roles within their families. Additionally, it ensured cultural sensitivity. Given the cultural context, the cultural background and identity of the researcher might affect his interpretations and interactions. Engaging in personal reflexivity helped the researcher acknowledge and address potential biases or assumptions stemming from his cultural perspective.

Furthermore, it promoted participant interactions. Understanding how the researcher's presence questions and demeanour might influence participants' responses is crucial in qualitative research. Personal reflexivity enabled the researcher to be attuned to how his role as a researcher shapes the data collection process. Finally, it aided transparency. Personal reflexivity enhanced the transparency of the research by openly acknowledging the role, biases, and potential influences of the researcher and building trustworthiness and credibility with the participants.

Positionality Statement: In conducting this study, it was imperative to acknowledge and reflect upon the researcher's positionality, as it inevitably shaped the research process and the interpretation of findings. The researcher's background, beliefs, experiences and social identity acted as a lens through which data was collected, analysed, comprehended and applied. This positionality statement underscores the explicit acknowledgement of the researcher's role in shaping the research endeavour and its outcomes.

Approaching this study with empathic neutrality, the researcher, John Quarshie, assumed the role of a pastor, parent and educator, who is accustomed to the significance of maintaining an empathic and unbiased stance throughout the research journey. In an empathic neutrality approach, the researcher recognises the significance of empathising with participants, valuing their experiences and deeply understanding their viewpoints. This empathic connection facilitates rapport-building, encouraging participants to share their stories more openly to generate richer qualitative data. Ebrahim (2018) explained empathic neutrality as an unequivocal stance in working with study respondents to seek vicarious understanding without judgement

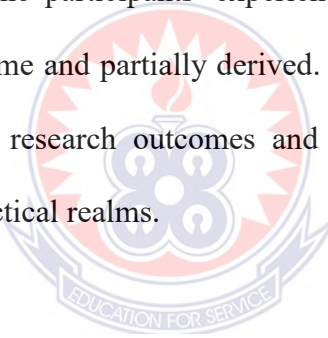
(neutrality) by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness and responsiveness; in observation, it means being fully present (mindfulness). Grounded in educational studies, theology and human rights, this background contributed to a genuine perspective that influenced the formulation of research questions, the engagement of participants and the interpretation of data. Recognising the potential impact of these perspectives is essential for the research process, including decisions regarding data collection methods, data analysis and the overarching framing of the study,

Furthermore, the researcher's cultural identity and experiences as an Akuapem as well as a parent for 18 years, a teacher for 13 years and a pastor for 7 years hold the potential to influence interactions with participants and shape the researcher's lens through which data is collected and interpreted. The researcher's awareness of potential biases and preconceived notions stemming from these experiences is fundamental. Reflexive practices, such as ongoing self-examination and engagement with relevant literature, have been employed to mitigate these biases. Throughout the study, conscientious efforts have been dedicated to upholding open-mindedness, treating participants and data with sensitivity and approaching the research with neutrality. While the goal is to strive for objectivity, the researcher acknowledges that complete detachment may be unattainable. Nevertheless, the aspiration remains to present a transparent account of the research process, offering insight into how the researcher's positionality has influenced various dimensions of the study.

To mitigate potential biases, reflexivity has been harnessed as a tool for critically examining and addressing the intersections between the researcher's positionality and the research context. The documentation of the research process underscores the steps

taken to minimise personal biases and enhance the study's rigour and integrity. By recognising and actively engaging with positionality, the researcher seeks to amplify the transparency and trustworthiness of the research. Ultimately, this study embodies a collaborative venture between the researcher and participants, both contributing to the construction of knowledge. The insights and narratives shared by participants are esteemed for their authenticity and individuality. The researcher's role is one of facilitation and interpretation, undertaken with an unwavering commitment to empathy, fairness and ethical conduct.

By rigorously applying these criteria, the researcher ensured that the interpretation of findings is grounded in the participants' experiences, applicable beyond the study context, consistent over time and partially derived. Ultimately, trustworthiness instils confidence in qualitative research outcomes and enhances their value within the broader academic and practical realms.



3.12. Data Analysis

The process of analysing the collected data was a critical phase of this study. The collected raw data, primarily in the form of transcribed interviews, formed the foundation for deriving meaningful insights. These insights were obtained through a systematic approach that involved coding, categorisation and thematic analysis.

Qualitative data analysis was chosen as the appropriate methodology due to the nature of the research, which utilised qualitative interviews to explore parents' awareness of the principles of children's rights to participate in family decision-making. According to Lune and Berg (2017), qualitative data analysis is the most obvious way to analyse

interview data due to its emphasis on capturing nuances and depths of meaning. Mills and Gay (2018) stressed that “qualitative data analysis requires that the researcher be patient and reflective in a process that strives to make sense of multiple data sources, including field notes from interviews” (p. 567).

The initial step in the data analysis process involved organising the collected data thematically. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the data were categorised based on the classification of respondents into two main groups: males and females. This organisational structure facilitated a focused analysis by grouping data from similar sources while respecting participants' privacy. After the categorisation of data, the process of transcription was undertaken. Field notes from the interview were transcribed into clear and coherent narratives, providing a textual representation of the collected data. This transcription process aimed to ensure accuracy and accessibility for subsequent analysis. To enhance familiarity with the data, a process of repeated and intensive reading was conducted, aligning with Wilkinson and Birmingham's (2003) “recommendation to scrutinise and immerse oneself in the content” (p. 107). This phase allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances and intricacies present in the data.

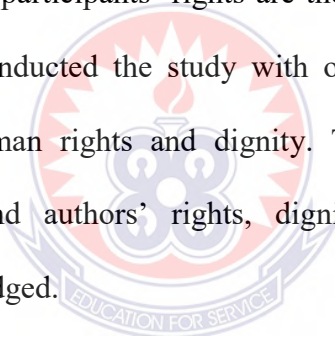
Thematic analysis was then employed to identify and categorise emergent themes. Thematic analysis, as described by Dawson (2009), is “a highly inductive process where themes emerge as data collection and analysis progress, without imposing preconceived categories” (p. 119). These themes were discerned based on patterns, trends and ideas that were also informed by the literature reviews conducted earlier.

The data was meticulously coded, with each code representing a specific aspect, concept, or idea within the dataset. Codes were systematically assigned to segments of data, enabling the researcher to create a coding matrix that captured relevant elements (Hennink et al., 2020). The coding process was guided by the researcher's engagement with the data, allowing for a deeper exploration of the data's meaning. The codes were then integrated into broader themes, creating a framework for interpreting and understanding the collected information. These themes acted as a lens through which the data was examined, enabling the researcher to identify connections, contradictions and insights that shed light on parents' awareness of children's rights in family decision-making.

To add complexity and depth, the researcher provided detailed descriptions for each code under its respective theme. This approach resonates with Dawson's (2009) explanation of coding as systematically assigning labels to specific characteristics within the text. These descriptions were crafted from various perspectives, considering factors such as gender and cultural background, to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the data. The data analysis process was further enriched by the integration of enabling literature. As noted by Olmos-Vega et al. (2023), “reflexivity involves continuously critiquing and evaluating subjectivity's influence on the research process” (p. 242). In this context, the researcher's engagement with the literature helped contextualise the findings, enabling an interpretation that aligned with or challenged existing knowledge.

3.13. Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for conducting research are of utmost importance. The responsibility falls on the researcher to ensure that the study is conducted in a morally acceptable manner. It refers to “the specific principles, rules, guidelines and norms of research-related behaviour that a research community has decided are proper, fair and appropriate” (Davis & Lachlan, 2017, p. 108). Similarly, Bos (2020) explained that “research ethics has to do with norms, values practices concerning the collection, analysis and dissemination of scientific findings about the world” (p. 38). Dawson (2009) posited that “research ethics is the respect and honesty shown to the participants for the valuable time spent to help the researcher and the information/personal information disclosed” (p. 149). Parveen and Showkat (2017) also established that “the participants’ rights are the researcher’s obligations” (p. 3). Hence, the researcher conducted the study with objectivity, honesty, equality and integrity to promote human rights and dignity. The researcher ensured that the research participants’ and authors’ rights, dignity, interest and security were maintained and acknowledged.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central figure holding a torch, surrounded by a sunburst pattern. The text "UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA" is written around the top inner edge, and "EDUCATION FOR SERVICE" is written around the bottom inner edge.

Since the truthfulness and legitimacy of research results relied on the data gathered from the research participants, their rights and information were ethically held in high esteem with sufficient protection. The researcher developed sound ethical principles to harness good relationships with research participants. The researcher ensured ethical considerations by negotiating access to research settings: A letter (**Appendix A**) was obtained from the Centre for Human Rights, Conflict and Peace Studies of the University of Education, Winneba, to negotiate access and create a point of entry with parents in Akropong-Akuapem. It helped to seek the appropriate permission from respondents who voluntarily participated in the study for data collection. The

researcher also provided all the information the potential respondents needed to decide whether to participate (informed consent). It included the study's objectives, how it ought to be carried out, the required time, the kind of data needed and the benefits and how it will be reported. The researcher provided them with the university and researcher details. The respondent's consent gave the researcher the right to involve them in the study.

Additionally, the researcher ensured a harm-free study (no harm to the researcher and respondents). The researcher did not ask sensitive questions that ignite negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, fear, or intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts. The researcher mitigated the stigma and non-reporting of sensitive data to avoid a breach of privacy and legal consequences. Since the study concerns children's rights, the respondents were promised anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher did not link the respondents to their data for labelling but concealed their identity. The researcher did not collect personal information like names, phone numbers, email addresses, or house addresses and photos to guarantee anonymity, and held all the respondents' information and data collected confidently without disclosure to a third party because the respondents have the right to privacy. The researcher had maximum respect for the participants. Respect for the family, their time and privacy were paramount. Special recognition was also given to their socio-economic and cultural values. The researcher avoided plagiarism and para-plagiarism. The sources of intellectual property used during the study were duly acknowledged and credited through citations and references.

3.14. Summary

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the research, focusing on exploring parents' awareness of the principle of children's rights to participate in family decision-making. It operates a qualitative research design, utilising a qualitative interview guide with semi-structured questions to collect in-depth data. The research population is defined as all parents in Akropong-Akuapem, while the target population comprises parents actively involved in their children's upbringing. A purposive sampling technique selects 33 parents for the study, ensuring data saturation. The researcher emphasises trustworthiness through criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, using strategies like prolonged engagement and member checks. Reflexivity addresses the researcher's background and potential biases. The researcher's position as a pastor, parent and educator is acknowledged and efforts to mitigate biases are highlighted. Data analysis involves thematic analysis and coding, while ethical considerations prioritise participant rights and confidentiality. This chapter offers a comprehensive insight into the study's methodology, ensuring rigour, ethics and transparency in the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher delves into the analysis of the data and presents a detailed discussion of the results. The data presented here is exclusively from primary sources collected specifically for this study and the analyses are closely aligned with the established research questions and objectives. To conduct this investigation, a qualitative research design with a case study approach was adopted. The researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews; a method carefully chosen to

gather firsthand data from the study's participants. Grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, the data analysis aimed to reveal the participants' viewpoints within the context of their families in Akropong-Akuapem. This approach sought to unveil the subjective meanings inherent in their experiences and perspectives.

The primary objective of this study was to explore and analyse parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making, particularly concerning all matters that affect children, within the unique cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem. To achieve this, a methodically designed qualitative interview guide was employed. This guide facilitated data collection from a total of 33 participants purposively and conveniently sampled, comprising 19 female parents and 14 male parents, all of whom represented the Akropong-Akuapem community. The study has the interview guide in **Appendix B**.

Following the data collection phase, the researcher accurately executed a comprehensive qualitative data analysis. This multifaceted process included data organisation, transcription, coding, theme generation, and detailed analysis and interpretation. Such a rigorous approach not only ensured a coherent and systematic analysis but also added credibility to the findings. With this robust foundation in place, the subsequent sections of this chapter delve into the specific findings and results of the data analysis. The researcher thoroughly examines the unique themes that emerged from the data, carefully aligning them with the research objectives and questions of this study.

4.2. Parents' Understanding and Conceptualisation of Childhood in Akropong-Akuapem and its Influence on their Awareness and Support for their Children's Right to Participate in Family Decision-Making.

The rationale for undertaking this investigation is firmly rooted in the understanding that the sociocultural context in which individuals reside plays a pivotal role in shaping their understanding and conceptualisation of childhood. This, in turn, exerts a considerable influence on how parents within this context become aware of their children's right to participate, value this right and subsequently develop the required parenting attitude towards their children's right to participate in family decision-making, especially in all matters that directly concern their children.

It is widely acknowledged that childhood is not a universally static concept but one that is intricately moulded by the cultural, historical and societal context in which it is situated. In the context of Akropong-Akuapem, this holds particularly true. The cultural norms, historical legacies and contemporary societal values of this specific locale have a profound impact on how parents in this community perceive and understand the concept of childhood.

The data presented for analysis and results are closely aligned with the first research question, which serves as the focal point of our investigation: **How do parents' understanding and conceptualisation of childhood in Akropong-Akuapem influence their awareness and support for their children's right to participate in family decision-making?**

By unravelling the elaborate interplay between the cultural context, parents' conceptions of childhood and their approach to children's right to participate, this

study seeks to provide critical insights into how these dynamics influence the larger framework of children's participation in family decision-making. To achieve this objective, the researcher methodically investigated how parents in Akropong-Akuapem understand and conceptualise childhood within the context of their unique socio-cultural environment. This exploration further sought to understand how this understanding and conceptualisation influence parents' awareness of and support for their children's participation in family decisions. By gaining insights into parents' understanding of childhood, the researcher aimed to uncover the motivation behind parents' decisions, even when these decisions might diverge from conventional or universal frameworks governing childhood, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Notably, the works of authors like James and Prout (2015) have emphasised that childhood is not merely a biologically determined stage of life; but it is also intricately shaped by societal norms and culture. This means that, practically, childhood is the phase in life when human beings depend on others for their care and protection, marked by the relative lack of autonomy and legal rights, with a focal point on learning and preparation for adulthood. It means that childhood is more than a biological stage; it is profoundly moulded by societal norms and culture. Childhood denotes dependence, lack of autonomy and legal rights, emphasising learning and readiness for adulthood. This phase centres on care and protection from others, shaping individuals beyond biology.

Correspondingly, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2014) aptly states that "childhood is when an individual is under the authority, control and care of persons considered adults in society" (p. iv). It reveals that childhood is a period

where individuals are under the authority, control and care of adults in society. In juxtaposition to alternative narratives concerning childhood, Lord (2011) found that “Ghanaians have implicitly endorsed or adopted the educative model of childhood” (p. 88). This paradigm underscores the significance of education and learning in shaping children's growth and development.

Empirically, the findings of this study unveiled a diverse range of parents’ understanding and conceptualisation of childhood within the Akropong-Akuapem community, shedding light on how these viewpoints influence parents’ awareness and support of their children's right to participate in family decision-making. This diversity led to the identification of several overarching themes, as articulated by the respondents. The themes of childhood as a period of dependency, identity formation and means of empowerment emerged as central concepts encapsulating the local understanding and conceptualisation of childhood by the parents of Akropong-Akuapem to corroborate that childhood is not universally static but culturally relative. Other themes that emerged were the influence of the concept of childhood on parents’ awareness and support for their children's right to participate in family decision-making and conceptualisation of childhood and the definition of a child in the context of Akropong-Akuapem. These themes not only resonate with the viewpoints of the respondents but also contribute to the broader discourse on the multilayered nature of childhood, parents’ awareness, child participation and the definition of who a child is across various cultures.

4.2.1. Childhood is a period of dependency.

The concept of childhood as a phase characterised by dependency is elucidated through the viewpoints and lived experiences of the research participants. Within this socio-cultural context, childhood is fundamentally understood as a stage in an individual's life journey during which children predominantly depend on their parents or trusted adult figures for the multiple needs of their overall well-being. These encompass not only the most basic needs but also crucial dimensions of nurturing and guidance.

The research participants, in their diverse ways, articulated and conveyed these perceptions regarding childhood. Their narratives provided rich insights into the multifaceted nature of childhood within the Akropong-Akuapem community. These qualitative accounts have been carefully documented and presented in the research findings to facilitate a precise and comprehensive analysis. By presenting these narratives, the study strives to offer an authentic portrayal of how childhood is perceived within this cultural setting. It underscores the significance of contextualising childhood within the framework of dependency, emphasising the fundamental role of parents and trusted adults in nurturing, guiding and meeting the diverse needs of children during this critical phase of life. Let's delve into some of the key responses provided by participants to illuminate this perspective:

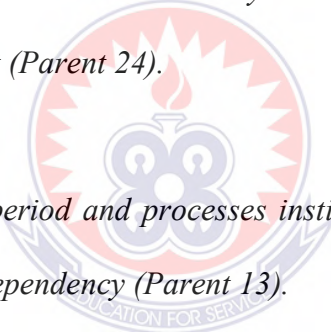
Well, for me I think in my literal understanding, childhood is when a child stays with their parents, a family member, or a preferred adult for food, clothing, shelter, schooling and training until the child becomes an adult (Parent 14).

I believe or understand childhood as when children stay with their parents or a family member or guardians for survival until they mature (Parent 07).

Looking at my children and what they do and experience, I will say that childhood is the process that children undergo whilst living with a parent or a dependent adult until they become independent (Parent 03).

Childhood is all the processes children undergo while living with a parent or a dependent adult until they become independent when they are deemed fit (Parent 24).

Childhood is the period and processes instituted by the family to ensure a smooth dependency (Parent 13).



From the viewpoints of the respondents, childhood is fundamentally characterised by the children's state of dependence on the care and support provided by parents, family members, or trusted adults as caregivers from a statement like “childhood is when children stay with their parents or a family member or guardians for survival.” According to the perspectives shared by respondents in the Akropong-Akuapem community, childhood encapsulates a period during which children are closely associated with these caregivers for various essential aspects of their well-being and development. The concept of childhood as a period of dependency encompasses more than just physical needs. It also encapsulates the nurturing and guidance required for

children's holistic development, including education and training with the educative model of childhood (Lord, 2011). It also suggests that childhood exists when parents assume their responsibilities as duty-bearers to fulfil the needs of children as right-holders who depend on parents for their nurturing and direction.

It was also found from statements such as “childhood is the process that children undergo whilst living with a parent or a dependent adult until they become independent,” that childhood is when persons depend solely on an adult until they become independent based on the adult's judgment. This idea suggests that childhood is a process of activities between an independent person (parent) and a dependent person (child) to help, guide and train the child to become independent and self-sufficient. The statement “childhood is all the processes children undergo while living with a parent or a dependent adult until they become independent when they are deemed fit” reveals that childhood is a process of gradually transitioning from dependency to independence. This perspective adds depth to the understanding of childhood, showcasing the active role parents play in guiding children toward self-sufficiency. It also means that childhood is a relationship between children and parents because parents are their immediate family. This perspective reinforces the interconnectedness of childhood and family dynamics. It articulates the idea that childhood involves parents assuming the role of duty-bearers, responsible for fulfilling the needs of children. As duty-bearers, they ensure the child's rights; for example, the child's rights to be fed, clothed, sheltered, educated, and trained to grow and mature to become independent and responsible. This aligns with established frameworks such as the UNCRC, which emphasises “the role of parents as the primary caregivers with responsibility for the upbringing of their children and obliges

governments to support parents in fulfilling their essential role” (United Nations, 1990, p. 1). Furthermore, the findings align with Plastow (2015) that “for there to be a child also suggests the presence of parents or caregivers who take responsibility for the child” (p. 3). Thus, it can be said that childhood is a fundamental and legitimate relationship between children and parents.

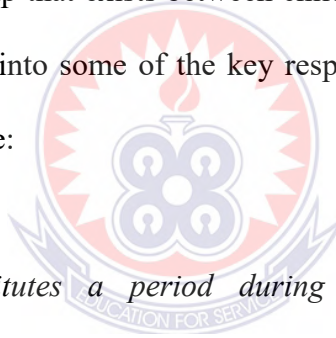
The viewpoints expressed by the respondents provide valuable insights into the cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem and how it shapes the understanding of childhood. The emphasis on dependency underscores the interconnectedness of family members and the significance of caregiving relationships. This underscores the notion that parents should understand and conceptualise childhood as a period of dependency. Parents must recognise that throughout this stage, children rely on them for a range of fundamental needs that contribute to their well-being, growth and total development. These essential needs encompass provisions such as sustenance, clothing, health, shelter, education and training. Additionally, parents should exercise their role as duty-bearers, bearing the responsibility of ensuring that their children's requirements are met as right-holders.

Moreover, parents should internalise the understanding that childhood is a gradual progression toward independence. This realisation highlights the key role that parents play in nurturing their children through this transformative journey. By nurturing and guiding children, parents facilitate their transition from dependency to autonomy, instilling essential skills and values that empower them to navigate the complexities of adulthood. Hence, parents hold a vital position in steering their children's

developmental trajectory, ultimately contributing to their capacity for self-sufficiency and responsible citizenship.

4.2.2. *Childhood is a means of identity*

The study conducted a comprehensive exploration of the composite relationship between childhood and the formation of children's identities. It revealed that childhood is a decisive phase in the development of an individual's sense of self. Within the context of the Akropong-Akuapem community, respondents shared profound insights into how childhood serves as a fundamental building block for shaping one's identity. This perspective is deeply rooted in the intimate and interconnected relationship that exists between children and their parents and broader family units. Let's delve into some of the key responses provided by participants to illuminate this perspective:



Childhood constitutes a period during which children are predominantly associated with their family, primarily through naming ceremonies, puberty rites and parents. The naming of children and puberty rites are customary practices that give children a unique identity and mark their acceptance as family members. (Parent 03).

Childhood serves as a stage through which parents and families transmit the heritage of their lineage to children, safeguarding the family's identity by imparting elements such as names, puberty initiations and even chieftaincy traditions (Parent 05).

Children's identity conforms to the culture and tradition of their parents. Thus, during childhood, before parents allow their children to do anything communal, they ensure that it resonates with the family's traditions and culture to ensure respect and honour in the community (Parent 16).

This idea suggests that through customary practices such as naming ceremonies and puberty rites, children acquire a distinct identity that solidifies their acceptance within the family unit. The statement “naming of children and puberty rites are customary practices that give children a unique identity and mark their acceptance as family members during childhood” reveals that children's identities are intimately linked with their family context and the act of naming becomes a foundational component of identity construction during childhood. However, this practice also reflects that children are their parent's property and heritage, as parents ultimately decide on their children's names and associated rights.

This practice, although immersed in cultural tradition, also hints at the preservation of family traditions and parents' authority over the agency and individuality of children. It suggests a tension between the preservation of cultural heritage, and the promotion of children's rights and agency to make choices that align with children's aspirations and interests. Consequently, this tension conflicts with the principle of children's right to participate especially in decisions that affect them in the family because they do not have absolute input in deciding on their names. It is the outright decision of parents and families. It can also defeat Article 6 of the UNCRC which emphasises that every

child has the inherent right to life and development. This includes the right to develop their personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential. Naming, for example, is related to an individual's personality, however, children do not have a stake in it.

Furthermore, the complex interplay between identity and community is brought to the forefront as said that during “childhood, before parents allow their children to do anything communal, they ensure that it resonates with the family's traditions and culture to ensure respect and honour in the community.” The community's perception of a child's identity is heavily contingent on their family. Children are recognised and identified by the larger community through their parents, reinforcing the profound influence of family ties on the construction of identity. This interaction between family and communal identity underscores that a child's identity is not only an individual attribute but also an integral component of their community's fabric.

Another layer of identity revelation comes to light when observing children's roles within various societal institutions. Children's decision-making and actions often necessitate parents' consent and participation, emphasising the primacy of family in shaping children's identity within external spheres. Additionally, the alignment between a child's identity and their family's cultural and traditional values emerges as a prominent theme. Children's actions, decisions and engagement in communal activities are intricately tied to the traditions upheld by their families. This connection is upheld to gain respect and esteem within the community, emphasising the vital role of cultural identity in the development of one's overall sense of self.

This intricate relationship between childhood and identity echoes the assertion made by Twum-Danso (2010) that “in the Ghanaian family context, children are identified

as the property of their parents who must do as they are told and not question” (p. 133). This resonates with the finding that a child's identity is not only a personal marker but also a reflection of their parent's rights. These perspectives highlight the deep connection between childhood and cultural identity. Childhood is presented as a stage where children become immersed in their cultural context through rituals, practices and adherence to traditions. This immersion contributes to the development of a sense of belonging and a shared identity within the community.

Practically, parents must appreciate childhood as an identity formation. Parents ought to conceptualise the complex interplay between family, communal and cultural influences on children's identity. Parents must understand that childhood is marked by naming ceremonies, family relationships and cultural ties, shaping children's identities within the broader context of their families and communities. The link between personal identity and parents' influence underscores the multifaceted nature of identity construction during childhood, presenting intriguing insights into the sociocultural dynamics at play. This perspective aligns harmoniously with the provisions of Article 29 (1c) of the UNCRC, emphasising the importance of fostering respect for children's cultural identity, language and values.

Consequently, children's rights policymakers, implementers and promoters must take note that cultural practices may still conflict with children's right to participate in family decision-making. Cultural practices such as naming, and puberty rights can excessively limit children's agency, expression and individuality. This can create tension between cultural heritage and children's rights to participate and develop their

personality. This tension highlights the importance of finding ways to strike a balance between preserving traditions and respecting children's rights in a changing world.

4.2.3. Childhood is a system of empowerment.

Childhood, as perceived by parents, is fundamentally a system of empowerment. This concept can be dissected into two primary dimensions: parents' empowerment and children's empowerment. By examining these facets, we can gain a deeper understanding of how childhood operates within the cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem.

Parents' Empowerment: Parents, within this framework, derive a sense of empowerment from childhood. They see childhood as affording parents the authority to control, guide, discipline, and incentivise their children's behaviour and development. It is a period during which parents are entrusted with the responsibility of shaping their children's lives, imparting values and ensuring their overall well-being. This empowerment is expressed through various aspects of parenting, from setting rules and boundaries to providing emotional support and educational guidance.

Children's Empowerment: Simultaneously, childhood also uniquely empowers children. It grants them the agency to articulate their needs, assert their rights and demand appropriate care and resources from their parents. This empowerment extends across various domains of children's lives, including their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Children, within this framework, can advocate for their health, education, nutrition, clothing and other essential aspects of their growth. It is a

perspective that recognises children not as passive recipients but as active participants in shaping their own lives.

This exploration of childhood as a system of empowerment sheds light on the dynamic interplay between parents and children in Akropong-Akuapem. It underscores how this cultural context perceives childhood as a period of mutual influence, where both parties are empowered. To illustrate these perspectives, let's delve into some sampled responses from the study's participants:

During childhood, children directly and indirectly request their needs from their parents whilst parents are responsible for controlling, directing and guiding their children toward becoming acceptable individuals in the family and society (Parent 04).

Because childhood is the period children depend on parents and family members for their livelihood, parents and family members with their scarce resources provide for the children and so parents and family members responsibly control and direct children into good morals and family ethics (Parent 09).

Childhood is a time when we, as parents, have the authority to instil values and discipline in our children. We guide them towards becoming responsible individuals as we ensure they have what they need and ask for, to ensure their growth (Parent 11).

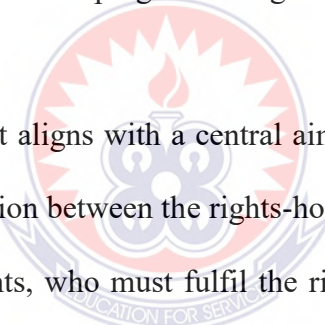
In childhood, my children asked me for things like going to school, having nutritious meals and getting proper clothing. They become needs and expectations that I must fulfil (Parent 21).

The responses from the participants collectively highlight the reciprocal nature of childhood as a system of empowerment in Akropong-Akuapem. On one hand, parents perceive themselves as having the authority and responsibility to guide and nurture their children. They see childhood as a time when they can instil values, provide discipline and ensure that their children have the necessary resources for growth. On the other hand, children are also empowered during childhood. They have the agency to voice their needs and expectations, particularly in areas related to education, nutrition and clothing. This empowerment underscores the idea that children are not passive recipients but active participants in shaping their own lives and well-being.

The phrase "directly and indirectly request their needs from their parents" reflects children's agency and ability to voice their requirements. This aligns with the notion of child empowerment, where children are given the power to express their needs and desires. The parents' role of "controlling, directing and guiding their children" speaks to the aspect of parents' empowerment, highlighting their responsibility to nurture and shape their children's development. This dual-sided perspective reveals how childhood empowers children to communicate their needs while empowering parents to fulfil their duty as guides and caregivers.

Similarly, the phrase "depend on parents and family members for their livelihood" underscores the reliance children have on their parents for their well-being. This

dependence leads to parents and family members actively providing for the children's needs, which reinforces the idea of childhood empowerment. The mention of "responsibly control and direct children into good morals and family ethics" reflects the parents' role in fostering values and ethics. This portrays how parents utilise their authority to empower children with moral and ethical guidance, highlighting the broader empowerment concept within childhood. These findings collectively illustrate how childhood operates as a system of empowerment. They showcase the reciprocal relationship between children and parents, where children are empowered to express their needs and parents are empowered to guide and provide. This dual empowerment approach enhances children's development and well-being while strengthening parents' roles in nurturing and shaping the next generation.



This idea of empowerment aligns with a central aim of human rights that establishes and sustains a cordial relation between the rights-holder (children, who have the right) and the duty-bearer (parents, who must fulfil the right). This finding aligns with the provision of Article 27(1) of the UNCRC that “States Parties recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (United Nations, 1990, p. 8).

Accordingly, parents' empowerment provides children with security and protection. As children are vulnerable, they can demand security and protection from their parents. This notion of childhood empowerment aligns with Article 2(2) of the UNCRC, which requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against discrimination or punishment based on their status,

activities, expressed opinions, or opinions beliefs of their parents. (United Nations, 1990, p. 2).

Overall, childhood as a system of empowerment establishes a power dynamic between parents and children, benefiting both parties. This concept of childhood empowerment aligns with Cook's (2020) view that “societies socially construct childhood through beliefs and behaviours about what children and child-adult relationships should be like” (p. 93). It highlights the significance of respecting children's rights, promoting their agency and power and recognising their role in their overall development and well-being.

Practically, the effect of childhood as a system of empowerment is that parents must understand and conceptualise that children are empowered during childhood to voice their needs and desires. This result highlights how childhood empowers children to communicate their requirements and preferences, fostering a sense of agency and active participation in their development. Parents must appreciate their role in guiding, controlling and directing their children toward becoming responsible individuals in the family and society. It is a demonstration that parents are empowered with the responsibility of shaping their children's behaviour, values and overall development. The findings also promote the active participation of children in their development and the crucial role of parents and family members in shaping this development. The process of requesting needs, guidance and ethical direction during childhood is seen as a pathway to empowerment. Thus, parents have the power to instil good morals and family ethics in their children.

Furthermore, Childhood empowers family members to provide for children's livelihood despite scarce resources. This underscores the commitment of parents to meet their children's basic needs, which is an important facet of child empowerment. Also, parents are empowered to utilise their authority to instil moral and ethical values in their children. This underscores how parents are empowered to pass on cultural, social and ethical values, guiding children in their development. Additionally, parents must appreciate that data depicts a reciprocal empowerment process wherein children are empowered to express their needs and parents are empowered to provide guidance, support and values. This dual-sided empowerment approach reinforces the importance of mutual empowerment within the family.

These perspectives highlight childhood as an interactive phase where parents and children actively contribute to empowerment and development. It emphasises cooperation and mutual influence between them. Parents provide care and facilitate their children's growth, enabling self-expression. Children are viewed as active participants encouraged to voice their opinions and develop autonomy. This perspective promotes a dynamic, two-way relationship, recognising children's contributions and the importance of a collaborative and empowering environment during childhood.

4.2.4. Influence of the concept of childhood on parents' awareness and support for their children's right to participate in family decision-making

The findings presented in this study represent a significant contribution to our understanding of how parents in Akropong-Akuapem perceive and define childhood. Within this rich cultural context, childhood emerges as a complex and multifaceted

concept, characterised by interwoven threads of dependency, identity formation and empowerment. These three fundamental aspects of childhood serve as the basis upon which parents' awareness and actions regarding their children's participation in family decision-making are built. Each of these aspects plays a crucial role in shaping parents' attitudes and behaviours regarding their children's right to participate in family decision-making. This section will delve into how these findings are intricately linked to parents' awareness of and support for children's participation in family decision-making.

Dependency and Awareness of Children's Rights: In Akropong-Akuapem, parents commonly perceive childhood as a phase marked by dependency, where their children rely upon them and trusted adults for various aspects of their well-being. This perspective is closely intertwined with the recognition of children's vulnerability and their need for continuous care and support. As parents become increasingly aware of their children's dependence during this crucial period, it naturally heightens their consciousness regarding children's rights. Parents acknowledge their pivotal role as duty-bearers, responsible for fulfilling their children's fundamental needs and ensuring their holistic development. This acknowledgement accentuates the weight of parental responsibility in providing for their children's requirements. Such an understanding reflects a heightened parental awareness, potentially influencing their approach to decision-making processes within the family.

When parents perceive childhood as a phase where children rely on them for sustenance, health, education and other essentials, it cultivates a disposition towards considering their children's well-being in decision-making. This perspective fosters a

willingness among parents to include their children's perspectives when making decisions that impact these vital areas of their lives. In this way, children's influence on the outcomes of family decision-making processes is recognized and valued, reinforcing a harmonious and participatory family dynamic.

Identity Formation and Support for Participation: The understanding that childhood plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's identity holds profound significance among parents in Akropong-Akuapem. Parents here readily acknowledge that their interactions, guidance and overall upbringing of their children during this formative period have a lasting impact on how their children perceive themselves. This heightened awareness regarding the profound influence of childhood on identity formation can effectively translate into strong support for children's active participation in family decision-making processes.

Parents within this cultural context firmly grasp the idea that involving their children in decisions that directly concern them contributes positively to their children's identity development. It is widely recognised to empower children, providing them with a platform to articulate their opinions and preferences. This, in turn, fosters a sense of self-worth and autonomy among the young ones. Furthermore, the concept that childhood is intrinsically linked to the formation of identity accentuates the role of cultural and family values in shaping children's overall development. Parents who possess this insight understand that the values they impart and the cultural identity they cultivate in their children are deeply connected to their formative years. This awareness renders them more open to engaging their children in meaningful discussions about family decisions. They grasp that their children's input can

significantly contribute to the preservation and evolution of the family's shared values and cultural identity.

Consequently, parents' awareness within the Akropong-Akuapem community encompasses a profound recognition of the interplay between childhood, identity formation, cultural values and children's participation in family decision-making. This understanding underscores the depth of their appreciation for the importance of involving their children in shaping family dynamics and decisions, ultimately enriching their children's sense of self and preserving their cultural heritage.

Empowerment and Active Participation: Childhood is perceived as a system of empowerment where both parents and children derive power in their respective roles. Parents are empowered with the authority and responsibility to guide, nurture and provide for their children. This empowerment reinforces their role as duty-bearers in upholding their children's rights. Simultaneously, children are empowered to express their needs and desires, particularly concerning their well-being and development. This dual-sided empowerment concept supports the idea that children are active participants in their own lives. This perspective of childhood as a system of empowerment highlights that children can express their needs and desires. This notion of children's agency can create parents' awareness regarding the importance of involving children in family decision-making. If parents view childhood as a time when children are empowered to communicate their requirements, they are more likely to value children's opinions and input in family matters. Additionally, the concept of reciprocal empowerment in childhood emphasises the dynamic nature of parent-child relationships. If parents recognise that childhood empowers both children

and parents to communicate and provide guidance, parents are more likely to view family decision-making as a collaborative effort where everyone is allowed to actively participate. Similarly, parents who understand childhood as a complex interplay of dependency, empowerment and identity formation are more likely to support their children's right to participate in family decision-making. They are likely to view their children as active contributors to the family's well-being, development and values, leading to a more inclusive and collaborative family environment.

These findings are fundamental because they lay the foundation for understanding how parents' conception of childhood influences their awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making. When parents recognise childhood as a time of dependency, identity formation and empowerment, they are more likely to be aware of their children's rights and supportive of their active participation in family decisions that affect their lives. The multifaceted concept of childhood, as revealed by this study, has direct implications for parents' awareness of and support for children's participation in family decision-making. Understanding childhood as a period of dependency, identity formation, and empowerment equips parents with the knowledge and perspective necessary to foster an environment where children's rights to participation are acknowledged and respected. It underscores the interconnectedness of these aspects and their significance in shaping parents' attitudes and behaviours within the cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem.

Parents in Akropong-Akuapem must be acutely aware of their responsibilities during childhood as a period of dependency. They must acknowledge their role as primary providers for their children's basic needs, highlighting parents' awareness of their

caregiving role. The understanding of childhood as a means of identity must underscore parents' awareness of cultural and traditional values because they are key influencers in transmitting cultural identity and heritage to their children. Also, the concept of childhood as a system of empowerment means that parents must be aware of their role in both nurturing and empowering their children. Parents' awareness extends to the need for balancing control with the promotion of children's agency and participation.

Concerning children's participation, the data, while not directly addressing children's participation in decision-making, implies that parents must be aware that children have a voice and agency during childhood. Parents must appreciate that their awareness of children's needs and empowerment fosters an environment conducive to children actively participating in family decision-making processes, contributing to their overall development and well-being. Thus, parents' understanding of childhood as a period of dependency, identity formation and empowerment significantly influences their awareness of and support for their children's participation in family decision-making. This awareness, coupled with a holistic perspective of childhood, encourages parents to nurture a family environment where children's voices are heard, valued and integrated into decision-making processes.

4.2.5. Concept of childhood and the definition of a child in Akropong-Akuapem

Exploring how parents in Akropong-Akuapem define childhood and who qualifies as a child is a vital aspect of this study. It serves as a foundational element in understanding how their understanding and conception of childhood shape their attitudes and actions regarding children's participation in family decision-making.

This line of inquiry is paramount in shedding light on the first research question: **How do parents' understanding and conceptualisation of childhood in Akropong-Akuapem influence their awareness and support for their children's right to participate in family decision-making?**

This exploration is not just an abstract exercise; it provides crucial context for comprehending how parents view childhood within their cultural context. By examining how parents establish criteria for identifying who qualifies as a child, whether through age, social roles, or cultural practices, we gain rich insight into what childhood represents in this community. These definitions are central to understanding how parents' concepts of childhood intersect with their awareness of and support for children's participation in family decisions.

This theme serves as a vital thread in this study, connecting various elements to provide a comprehensive understanding of parents' awareness, attitudes and behaviours regarding their children's right to participate in family decisions. By thoroughly investigating how parents ascertain and delineate the boundaries of childhood within their cultural context, we gain invaluable insight into the foundation upon which their attitudes and behaviours regarding who qualifies as a child are built. This understanding opens a window into the uniqueness of family life in Akropong-Akuapem and enlightens the relationship between cultural norms, parents' roles and children's rights in the realm of family decision-making.

This section, therefore, delved into the conception of childhood and the criteria used to designate someone as a child within the Akropong-Akuapem community. The

objective was to unearth the considerations and factors that contribute to the identification of individuals as children within this cultural context. By examining how parents define a child, we gain deeper insights into the stage at which these perceptions intersect with their consciousness of and support for their children's rights to participate in family decision-making.

To unravel this connection, respondents were tasked with articulating their definitions or descriptions of what characterises a child. This line of inquiry was thoughtfully designed to unveil the cognitive linkages that parents in Akropong-Akuapem establish between the overarching concept of childhood and the specific status of being a child. A holistic understanding of the concept of childhood fundamentally depends on a clear definition of who qualifies as a child in their view. Consequently, selected responses have been presented from the respondents for in-depth analysis.



I have a 15-year-old son in Junior High School form I consider my son a child because he is not mature enough; moreover, I care for him. (Parent 31).

I have four children aged 14, 11, 8 and 2. I consider all four as children because we (my husband and I) care for them and provide for all their needs (Parent 33).

I have two grandchildren, aged 7 and 5, living with me. I consider them children because they do not know anything (Parent 40).

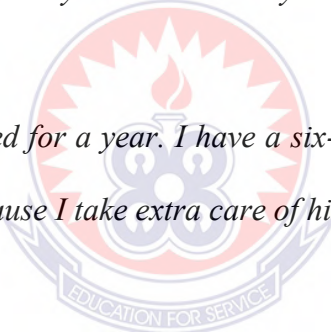
I have three children aged 20, 15 and 12. I consider all children because they stay with me, and I care for them (Parent 25).

I have two children, aged 21 and 13, who stay with me. I consider all the two, children because I provide for their needs (Parent 6).

I have five children aged 18, 16, 12, 10 and 4. I consider all four of them children because I care for their needs (Parent 7).

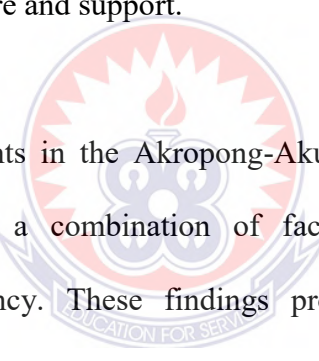
I am a single parent with two children aged 17 and 6. I consider all children because they do not know anything (Parent 18).

I have been married for a year. I have a six-month-old child. I see him as a child because I take extra care of him (Parents 29).



The responses from various parents in the Akropong-Akuapem community shed light on how they define a child within their cultural context based on their perceptions of childhood. These responses reflect a range of considerations, including age, caregiving responsibilities, maturity and dependency. The analysis of these responses reveals several key themes that contribute to the community's understanding of who a child is. Many of the parents mentioned the ages of their children when discussing their definition of a child. For instance, Parent 31 referred to their 15-year-old son and Parent 06 mentioned having children aged 21 and 13. The ages mentioned vary but age is a significant factor in determining whether someone is considered a child in the community. Also, several parents mentioned that they consider their children as

children because they care for and provide for them. Parent 33 mentioned having four children and considering them children because of the care and provision they offer. Parent 25 and Parent 7 also emphasised providing for their children's needs as a defining factor for considering them as children. Furthermore, some parents, such as Parent 4 and Parent 18, mentioned that they consider their grandchildren and children as children because they "do not know anything." This perspective suggests that a lack of knowledge or maturity is linked to the concept of childhood in the community. Consequently, the responses consistently highlight the role of caregiving and dependency in defining a child. Parents often refer to their responsibility for their children's well-being, suggesting that people are considered children if they are dependent on adults for care and support.



The responses from parents in the Akropong-Akuapem reveal that the concept of childhood is shaped by a combination of factors, including age, caregiving, knowledge and dependency. These findings provide insights into the cultural understanding of who a child is within the community and contribute to a deeper understanding of how parents conceptualise childhood and its implications for their attitudes toward children's participation in family decision-making.

From the analysis, it is evident that the findings regarding the concept of childhood and the definition of a child in the Akropong-Akuapem community have several important implications, significance and results that shed light on cultural norms, caregiving roles and the potential impact on children's participation and rights. The findings highlight the influence of cultural norms and contextual factors on how a child is defined within the community. Age, caregiving roles, knowledge and

dependency are intertwined with cultural values and practices. The findings support the assertion by Shanahan (2007) that “childhood and the child can be defined within biological, legal and cultural frameworks. Biologically, the child is the living, breathing person inhabiting a particular temporal, cultural and social space called childhood” (p. 422). It also affirms Boakye-Boaten's (2010) position that in traditional African settings, “it is important to emphasise that a child is a human being in need of help and direction” (p. 108). Similarly, it also affirms the statement of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2014) that, generally, “a child is still largely dependent on an adult for the necessities of life” (p. iv).

This understanding emphasises that parents must consider local cultural nuances when discussing who a child is and children's roles in decision-making. Also, the emphasis on age as a determinant of who a child is suggests that there might be age-related expectations and responsibilities attached to children. Such expectations can affect children's participation in various aspects of community life, including family decision-making. Parents must understand age-related norms for addressing children's rights and roles within the community. Intrinsicly, the centrality of caregiving and provision in defining who a child is underscores the caregiver-child dynamics. Parents' roles as caregivers and providers play a significant role in shaping children's identities and expectations. Parents must understand that the caregiver-child dynamic has implications for children's autonomy and decision-making within the family. Furthermore, the concept of childhood being linked to dependency highlights a potential tension between children's increasing autonomy and their continued reliance on caregivers. This tension could influence how parents perceive children's rights and readiness for participation in family decisions and other matters. Additionally, the

findings provide insight into how parents' perceptions of childhood might influence their attitudes toward involving children in family decision-making. Parents who consider children as "not knowing anything" might be less likely to value children's opinions. On the other hand, parents who recognise children's agency and needs might be more open to children's participation. Parents must appreciate children's agency and must be more open to children's participation as Lansdown (2010) expressed that non-verbal forms of communication such as "play, body language, facial expression, or drawing and painting, through which little children make choices, express preferences and demonstrate understanding of their environment must be recognised and respected" (p. 12).

Correspondingly, the findings underscore the need for parents to address children's rights and protection within the community. Understanding how persons are defined as children has implications for safeguarding their well-being and ensuring their rights are respected, especially considering their vulnerability and dependency. Also, the analysis highlights potential challenges in cross-generational communication and understanding. Because some parents link childhood to a lack of knowledge, there might be barriers to effective communication between generations. Parents must bridge this gap to enhance and promote mutual understanding and support. Furthermore, while the findings reflect existing perceptions, they also suggest the potential for change. Hence, as societal norms evolve and as children grow and mature, parents must be proactive in shifting to influencing children's roles and rights. Lastly, the analysis has implications for advocacy efforts and raising awareness about children's rights. By understanding how childhood is defined within the community,

advocates and policymakers should tailor interventions and programs that promote children's meaningful participation and well-being.

In effect, the analysis and findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how childhood is perceived, and child defined in the Akropong-Akuapem community. These insights have far-reaching implications for children's participation, well-being and rights within the community. Recognising cultural norms, caregiving dynamics and the evolving nature of childhood is essential for fostering an environment that supports children's holistic development and meaningful participation in family decisions and community life.

4.3. Parents' Awareness of the Principle of Children's Right to Participate in Family Decision-Making in Akropong-Akuapem

This study places an overarching emphasis on the thorough investigation of parents' awareness of the fundamental principle encompassing children's rights to participate in the decision-making occurring within their families regarding them. With parents in Akropong-Akuapem serving as the primary reference group, this investigation takes centre stage. The overarching objective aligns closely with the second research question: **How are parents in Akropong-Akuapem aware of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making?**

By designating parents in Akropong-Akuapem as the focal point of this inquiry, the study endeavours to uncover the unique dynamics and distinctions that shape their awareness regarding children's right to participate actively in family decision-making. This deliberate choice enabled the researcher to delve deeply into the cultural context

specific to this community, thereby offering helpful insights. This, in turn, offers valuable insights into the broader theme of children's rights within a culturally specific context of the complex interplay between cultural norms, parents' awareness and children's rights, and contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding this vital aspect of child development and well-being.

Specifically, this investigation seeks to obtain an understanding of how parents within the Akropong-Akuapem community perceive, internalise and actualise the principle underpinning children's right to participate in family decisions. Doing so, not only broadens our insights into the unique dynamics at play within this cultural context but also underscores the significance of cultural relativism and sensitivity when addressing children's rights globally. Additionally, the awareness of parents in Akropong-Akuapem becomes a crucial theme, linked with cultural traditions, family values, and children's rights, contributing to the overarching narrative of children's participation and empowerment.

The study identified three key themes based on the responses received from the participants: parents' awareness of children's rights, parents' awareness of children's participation and the implementation of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making.

4.3.1. Parents' awareness of children's rights

The central focus of this theme was to gain deep insights into parents' awareness of their children's rights within the family context. This involved an exploration of how parents understand and implement these rights in their roles as duty-bearers and

decision-makers, particularly regarding how they engage their children in the decision-making processes that directly impact their children's lives.

The overarching objective was to establish an in-depth understanding of how parents in Akropong-Akuapem appreciate the core principle underpinning children's rights, namely, the children's right to actively participate in family decision-making. To this end, the research aimed to shed light on how parents in this cultural context navigate the fine balance between parents' authority and children's right to participate. It aimed at satisfying the second research objective: **to establish parents' awareness of the principle of children's participation in Akropong-Akuapem** which was premised on the research question: **How are parents in Akropong-Akuapem aware of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making?**

To accomplish this objective, the study collected and analysed data, which were responses from parents, providing rich and diverse perspectives. These responses serve as valuable pieces of information that will be analysed and discussed in the subsequent sections to uncover the depth of parents' awareness and implementation of their children's rights.

Hence, this research seeks to contribute to the understanding of the complex interplay between parents' roles, cultural context and children's rights within the family. By gaining insights into parents' awareness of and implementing these rights, a better understanding of the systems that shape children's upbringing and development within the specific cultural milieu of Akropong-Akuapem is uncovered. Extracts of the responses have been provided for analysis.

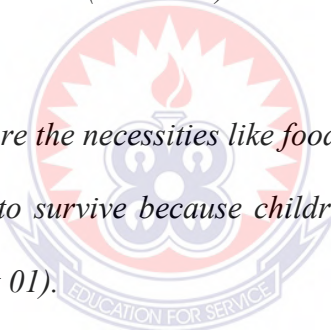
I have not heard of the term, children's rights. But they have to do with the entitlements of children as they live with us (Parent 10).

I know that children have rights. They are the children's basic needs provided by their parents for survival (Parent 02).

The children's rights are the child's entitlements and privileges (Parent 13).

Children's rights are the provisions from parents to their children to ensure their livelihood (Psalm 14).

Children's rights are the necessities like food, shelter, clothing and education needed to survive because children cannot provide for themselves (Parent 01).



I know children have rights. That is why parents take care of them because, without parents' care, children cannot do anything (Parent 6).

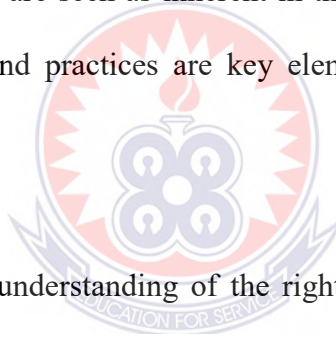
Children's rights are what we do for children because they cannot take care of themselves (Parent 17).

The children's rights are all the provisions for children to make their lives convenient and comfortable (Parent 08).

The responses provided by parents in Akropong-Akuapem offer insights into their understanding of the rights of the child. The analysis of these responses reveals several key themes and patterns that shed light on how parents perceive children's rights and their implications within the community context. Respondents express limited familiarity with the formal term, *children's rights* because some parents explicitly state not having heard of the term. This suggests that the specific terminology associated with children's rights might not be widely known within the community. Respondents consistently associate children's rights with entitlements and basic needs like “the child's rights are the child's entitlements and privileges.” They emphasise that these rights pertain to the fundamental necessities provided by parents to ensure children's survival. It aligns with the Council of Europe's (2013) assertion that “child rights are the human rights of children, providing a valuable shortlist of the areas where children most likely need further support or protection” (p. 13). This view reflects an understanding of children's rights in terms of caregiving and provision. They highlight the role of parents in fulfilling children's rights and refer to child rights as provisions from parents to children. This idea aligns with Article 27 (2) of the UNCRC, which states that “parents or guardians are primarily responsible for securing the necessary living conditions for their children's development within their abilities and financial capacities” (United Nations, 1990, p. 9). They mentioned the necessity of parents' care for children's well-being and asserted that children's rights involve what parents do for them. These statements underscore the parents' responsibility to meet children's needs and protect their well-being. This stance demonstrates that parents prioritise the best interests of their children and this aligns with Article 18 1(b) of the UNCRC, which affirms that “parents or legal guardians are

primarily responsible for their children's upbringing and development, with the child's best interests being their primary concern” (United Nations, 1990, p. 5).

The respondents emphasise that children's rights arise from their dependence on their parents. They assert that children cannot provide for themselves, which is why parents take care of them. This perspective reinforces the idea that children's rights are tied to their vulnerability and inability to fully care for themselves. The responses collectively convey the notion that children's rights enable parents to provide care and support for their children. The respondents suggest that children's rights encompass what parents do to care for children. This perspective implies that understanding and fulfilling children's rights are seen as inherent in the parent's role and responsibility, thus, parent awareness and practices are key elements in implementing children's rights.



The analysis of parents' understanding of the rights of their children in Akropong-Akuapem highlights several implications. The responses suggest that formal terminology related to children's rights might not be widely recognised in the community. This emphasises the importance of culturally sensitive communication when discussing children's rights. There is a need to create cultural awareness among policymakers and civic educators to enhance parents' awareness of the term, *children's rights*.

Respondents' emphasis on caregiving and provision aligns with cultural norms of family support and responsibility. This understanding must serve as a foundation for discussions about children's rights and responsibilities within the family by parents

and the community. The notion that children's rights arise from their dependence and inability to provide for themselves reflects a recognition of children's vulnerability within the community. This awareness must enhance parents' contribution towards safeguarding children's well-being. The respondents' view of children's rights as linked to their actions underscores the critical role of parents in fulfilling these rights. This perspective must serve as a basis for promoting parents' support for children's rights and well-being. The findings suggest that there is potential for educating parents about the broader concept of children's rights, encompassing legal entitlements and protections beyond basic needs. This education could empower parents to advocate for and uphold children's rights in various contexts. Thus, governmental and non-governmental agencies responsible for non-formal and communal education should endeavour to promote this adult education.

In conclusion, the analysis of parents' understanding of the rights of their children in Akropong-Akuapem reveals a focus on caregiving, dependence and parents' responsibility. While there are gaps in awareness regarding the formal terminology of children's rights, the emphasis on meeting children's needs and vulnerabilities underscores the community's recognition of children's well-being and protection. These findings have implications for culturally sensitive approaches to children's rights education and advocacy within the community.

4.3.2. Parents' awareness of children's participation in family decision-making.

This section constitutes an in-depth exploration and painstaking analysis of the complex themes and discernible patterns that surfaced from the interviews, shedding light on parents' perceptions of children's roles and their participation in family

decision-making. At the heart of this investigation lies the central focus of the study to explicitly discover parents' awareness of children's rights to actively partake in family decision-making processes, especially those that significantly impact the lives of children. It aimed at satisfying the second research objective: **to establish parents' awareness of the principle of children's participation in Akropong-Akuapem** which was premised on the research question: **How are parents in Akropong-Akuapem aware of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making?**

The theoretical framework guiding this inquiry is anchored firmly in the Lundy Model of Participation. It highlights four necessary components: space, voice, audience and influence in the full conceptualisation, awareness and implementation of Article 12 of the UNCRC. which is the basis for children's participation. Article 12 serves as the bedrock upon which the principles of children's right to participate are built. By utilising this model, the researcher constructs a framework that reveals the multidimensional nature of children's right to participate, transcending mere theoretical awareness and extending into tangible implementation.

Within the scope of this study, samples of interview data have been provided and are thoughtfully presented for in-depth analysis and rigorous discussion. These data extracts provide invaluable insights into the complexities of parents' perspectives and the unique context that influences their awareness of children's rights, with a specific emphasis on their right to participate actively in family decision-making. Through an exhaustive examination of these qualitative responses, the researcher endeavours to unravel the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes that underpin parents' stances on children's participation in family matters.

This section serves as a critical point for understanding the dynamics of children's participation in Akropong-Akuapem and the factors that shape parents' awareness and actions concerning this fundamental principle. It lays the foundation for a deeper exploration of the interplay between parental perspectives and children's rights within the family context, which ultimately contributes to the broader discourse on child rights and well-being.

The child has the right to express his views on family matters but not necessarily on issues that concern them. I sometimes seek my child's concerns when cooking or buying a dress for him. (Parent 01).

Children can express their concerns to their parents, but the parent does not need to work with the children's concerns (Parents 06).

Traditionally, children are not permitted to engage in decision-making with their parents; they can request their needs but cannot discuss with parents what to do; it is a sign of unethical upbringing (Parents 07).

The children can ask for anything they need regarding health, education, food and clothing but satisfying these requests depends on available resources (Parents 18).

A child cannot be part of a decision-making process in the family, even if it concerns them. Decisions are often made whilst in bed or at the workplace and implemented. The child can present his or her plights but not partake in the decision-making. How do you engage such a child and what will be his or her contribution? (Parents 20).

The responses provided by parents in Akropong-Akuapem offer insights into their awareness of children's participation in family decision-making within the context of Akropong-Akuapem. The analysis of these responses revealed several key themes and patterns that shed light on parents' awareness of children's participation in family decision-making within the context of Akropong-Akuapem with the Lundy Model of Participation serving as a conceptual framework for examining parents' awareness in this context.

Limited Scope of Participation: The analysis of the data underscores the pivotal role that socio-cultural norms and parenting practices play in shaping how children's participation in family decision-making is understood by parents in Akropong-Akuapem. This understanding brings to light the complex interplay between established cultural traditions and evolving perspectives on children's participation.

Within this context, it is evident that some parents recognise and uphold children's fundamental right to express their opinions and viewpoints. However, this recognition is often accompanied by certain limitations imposed by societal norms and established

parenting practices. These limitations reflect the historical emphasis on adult authority within family structures, where children's agency may have been historically subordinated to that of adults. In this scenario, parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making is evident. Parents acknowledge that children possess the capability to voice their thoughts, needs and preferences. Nevertheless, this awareness is often constrained by predefined boundaries that restrict the scope of children's participation. Such boundaries are symbolic of the broader cultural norms that assign a unique role to children and adults within the family hierarchy.

The specific issues where children's voices are solicited for input, such as matters concerning clothing or food choices, showcase the delicate balance that parents strike between acknowledging children's voices and adhering to traditional family dynamics. This balance reflects an attempt to integrate contemporary ideals of children's empowerment with cultural values that have long shaped family interactions. As a result, children's participation is observed within specific domains that do not disrupt the established balance of family authority.

So, the limited scope of children's participation is a distinct outcome of the interplay between sociocultural norms and parents' awareness. While parents recognise children's agency and ability to contribute, these recognitions are often mediated by historical and cultural frameworks that have historically guided family interactions. This dynamic emphasises the need for a delicate balance between embracing children's participation and respecting the traditional fabric of family life.

Resource-Dependent Participation: The data analysis reveals that parents are aware that children possess the capacity to effectively articulate their needs, particularly in crucial domains like health, education and other fundamental necessities. This parents' awareness of children's role in expressing their requirements demonstrates an awareness of children's evolving capabilities and their rightful place in decision-making processes within the family. What is especially noteworthy within this context is the definite link drawn between children's participation and the availability of resources. Parents are regulated to the practical implications of incorporating children's input into decision-making, a realisation that showcases a holistic awareness of the challenges posed by socio-economic circumstances. This awareness is reflected in the way parents weigh their children's opinions against the backdrop of the family's financial and resource constraints.

By considering children's viewpoints in tandem with the feasibility of meeting their needs, parents highlight their understanding of the practical realities that shape the decision-making landscape. This recognition demonstrates a level of parents' awareness that extends beyond the theoretical realm of children's participation to encompass the pragmatic factors that influence the implementation of their opinions.

Correspondingly, the phenomenon of resource-dependent participation signifies that parents' awareness of their children's role in decision-making is deeply rooted in an understanding of both children's evolving agency and the practical considerations dictated by socio-economic factors. It underscores the dynamic nature of decision-making within families, where parents' awareness of the socio-economic context is compared with their acknowledgement of children's participation, ultimately culminating in a balanced approach to family decision-making.

Traditional Views of Children's Participation: Traditional views of children's participation, as discerned from the data, offer a compelling glimpse into the complex interplay between historical cultural norms, family culture and contemporary awareness. These views are immersed in long-standing societal values that have exerted a profound influence on the way parents perceive and navigate their roles in guiding their children's engagement in family decision-making. The data underscores the enduring belief that children should not actively partake in the decision-making processes within the family unit. Instead, they are allowed to voice their needs and concerns, a manifestation of a culturally entrenched hierarchy that elevates adult perspectives. This outlook is symbolic of a collective mindset that has spanned generations, with its origins embedded in cultural traditions that emphasise respect for authority and the wisdom that accompanies age. These traditional beliefs resonate within parenting practices, where parents are inclined to retain the role of primary decision-makers.

The data suggests that parents are acutely aware of these established norms and often uphold them as they ensure the complex environment of raising their children. This awareness underscores the tension between adhering to historical cultural norms and embracing modern concepts of children's participation that are informed by evolving understandings of childhood. In this light, parents' awareness of traditional views of children's participation reflects the challenge faced by parents in reconciling age-old cultural values with contemporary principles. The data implies that parents are aware of the tension that arises between cultural expectations and the growing emphasis on ensuring children's active participation. This awareness signifies a dynamic discourse

within families, where parents are confronted with choices that intertwine past and present, tradition and progression.

The exploration of these traditional views of children's participation serves as a lens through which the complex web of sociocultural dynamics and parenting practices becomes evident. It affirms Twum-Danso's (2010) claim that "within the Ghanaian social and cultural context, consulting children is not seen as a right that children should have or an obligation that parents must meet" (p. 134). It underscores the delicate balance that parents strike as they ensure the environment of shaping their children's roles in family decisions while contending with the legacy of time-honoured beliefs. This awareness encapsulates the ongoing transformation of parenting norms and reflects the ongoing dialogue between historical values and contemporary aspirations for children's active participation.

Interpretation within the Lundy Model of Participation

The findings from the parents' responses shed light on various dimensions of parents' awareness of children's participation in family decision-making, offering valuable insights when analysed within the framework of the Lundy Model of Participation.

Space: Responses regarding parents' awareness indicate limited room for expression. Within the context of the Lundy Model of Participation, the responses indicate that there is some space for children to express their views. However, this space is largely confined to specific, relatively minor decisions, such as selecting clothes or discussing meals. The significant limitation here is that this space does not encompass a broader

range of decisions that may significantly impact children's lives, such as educational choices or matters related to their health and well-being.

Voice: The data on parents' awareness suggests partial recognition of children's voices. The concept of "voice" in the Lundy Model of Participation signifies not only the ability to express concerns but also how these expressions are genuinely heard and considered in decision-making. Parents in Akropong-Akuapem partly recognise children's voices, acknowledging that children can express their concerns or needs. However, the depth of active listening and consideration of these voices in decision-making processes remains ambiguous.

Audience: Parents are primarily the audience with variability. Within the Lundy Model of Participation, the "audience" component pertains to those who actively engage with and listen to children's voices. The data suggests that parents are generally the primary audience for children's expressions within the family. Nevertheless, how parents engage with these voices varies significantly. Additionally, cultural norms and traditional beliefs significantly influence the composition of the audience. The notion of ethical upbringing implies that certain prospects exist about who should participate in family decision-making discussions, potentially limiting the inclusion of children's voices.

Influence: This is uncertainty regarding impact. The Lundy Model of Participation underscores the significance of children's voices having an actual influence on decision outcomes. In the case of Akropong-Akuapem parents, the data reflects uncertainty regarding this influence. While children do have some room to voice their

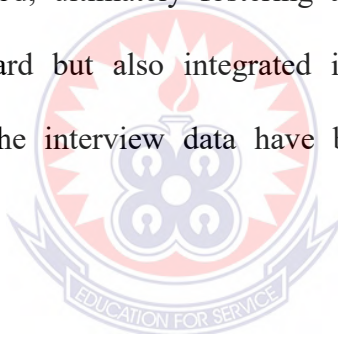
concerns, the actual impact on decision outcomes appears to be limited. This limited influence is further compounded by practical factors, such as resource availability. Economic constraints can significantly limit the extent to which children's preferences are considered in decision-making processes.

These results imply that parents' awareness of children's right to participate varies, shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, practical and traditional factors. While there is some recognition of children's voices, practical challenges and cultural norms may curtail the complete realisation of children's right to participate, as delineated in the Lundy Model of Participation. These findings emphasize the urgency of comprehending children's right to participate within Akropong-Akuapem's cultural contexts and point to areas where awareness and practices can be further developed to align with international standards.

4.3.3. Implementation of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making

This section explored and analysed the themes and patterns that emerged from parents' awareness by examining their roles in the implementation of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making on issues that concern them. The primary objective was to examine the implementation of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making in Akropong-Akuapem through the lens of parents' awareness within the framework of the Lundy Model of Participation. This was to satisfy the second research question: **How are parents in Akropong-Akuapem aware of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making?**

Its focus was on the practical approach of implementing children's participation by parents in Akropong-Akuapem to ascertain their awareness of children's rights to participate in family decision-making on issues that concern children. Through an exploration of parents' viewpoints, this analysis aims to shed light on the extent to which children's participation is understood, valued and integrated within family decision-making processes. With the diverse parents' approach presented in the data, the degree to which children's participation is a realised principle or an unexplored concept is uncovered. Thus, through this analysis, the importance of aligning parents' practices with the principles enshrined in the UNCRC and the Lundy Model of Participation is understood, ultimately fostering an environment where children's voices are not only heard but also integrated into the family decision-making processes. Samples of the interview data have been presented for analysis and discussion data.



Children are already a part of the family and decision-making is an ongoing process in the family that does not require conscious effort to ensure its implementation (Parent 19).

I do not implement children's right to participate in family decision-making on issues that concern them because I do not know of it as a principle (Parents 22).

I do not know that there is any principle that prompts parents to ensure children's participation in family decision-making on issues that concern children (Parent 19).

I am hearing this principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making on issues that concern children for the first time (Parent 41).

The analysis of parents' perspectives on the implementation of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making reveals a diverse range of viewpoints and levels of awareness. These viewpoints provide insights into how parents perceive the integration of this principle into their family dynamics and decision-making processes. The analysis underscores the complexity of translating this principle into practical actions within the family context.

Absence of Conscious Implementation: The statement "children are a part of the family and decision-making is an ongoing process that does not require conscious implementation" reflects a perspective that assumes children's participation in decision-making is inherent to family life. This viewpoint suggests that parents perceive children as naturally being a part of family discussions and decisions, without the need for deliberate implementation. It hints at a family dynamic where involving children in decision-making is considered an inherent and integrated aspect of family interactions.

Certainly, the finding that children are a part of the family and decision-making is an ongoing process that does not require conscious implementation aligns closely with

the Lundy Model of Participation. The Lundy Model of Participation emphasises four key elements for meaningful participation: space, voice, audience and influence. Thus, the statement indicates an understanding that children are inherently included within the family structure and decision-making processes. This aligns with the notion of providing children with a space within the family context where their voices can be heard and valued. The recognition that children are "a part of the family" suggests that the space for their participation is already acknowledged. Similarly, the finding implies that parents perceive children as having a voice in family decision-making. The idea that decision-making is an "ongoing process" implies that children's viewpoints and opinions are taken into consideration over time. This resonates with the Lundy Model's emphasis on children's right to express their views on matters that affect them.

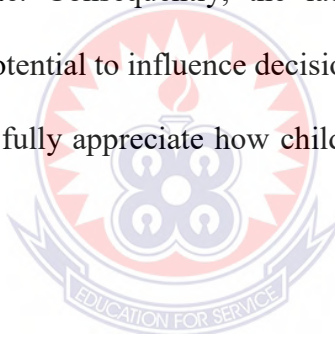
Concerning the audience, the finding that children are naturally part of family decision-making implies that parents themselves are the audience for children's voices. Parents are seen as receptive listeners to children's perspectives, aligning with the Lundy Model's principle that children's voices should be directed to those who are making decisions that impact their lives. Finally, the finding suggests that children's participation is integrated into the decision-making process without requiring conscious efforts to implement it. This resonates with the idea that children's views can directly influence decisions within the family context. The ongoing nature of decision-making implies that children's influence is ongoing as well, in line with the Lundy Model's emphasis on children's ability to influence decisions.

Consequently, the perspective conveyed in the statement reflects family environments where children's participation in decision-making is not viewed as an external principle that needs to be consciously implemented. Instead, it embodies the principles of the Lundy Model by recognising children's presence, voice, audience and influence within the family dynamic. It signifies an understanding that children's participation is an integral and natural aspect of family life, aligning with the spirit of the Lundy Model of Participation vision for meaningful child participation.

Lack of Awareness: The data also illustrates instances where parents express a lack of awareness regarding the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making. Statements such as "I do not implement children's right to participate in family decision-making on issues that concern children because I do not know of it as a principle" and "I do not know that there is any principle that prompts parents to ensure children's participation in family decision-making on issues that concern children" underscore the absence of knowledge about this principle among some parents.

The expressions of "lack of awareness" among parents, as indicated in the findings, align with the Lundy Model of Participation, particularly in terms of the "voice" and "audience" elements of the model: The finding reflects a lack of awareness regarding the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making highlight that some parents may not fully understand or be aware of this principle. This directly relates to the "voice" element of the Lundy Model of Participation, which emphasises that children have the right to express their views on matters that affect them. In this context, parents' lack of awareness potentially limits the space for children's voices to

be heard and considered in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that parents who lack awareness are not positioned as an audience for children's voices in family decision-making. The absence of knowledge about this principle may mean that parents are not familiar with the significance of actively seeking out and valuing children's input. This misalignment with the "audience" element of the Lundy Model of Participation underscores the challenge of implementing and achieving effective children's participation when parents are unaware of their role in creating space for children's voices. The lack of awareness might also lead to the involuntary exclusion of children's participation from family decisions. Without recognising the importance of children's voices, parents might overlook opportunities to create space for children to contribute. Consequently, the lack of awareness can hinder the realisation of children's potential to influence decisions. If parents are not aware of the principle, they might not fully appreciate how children's input can lead to better and more inclusive outcomes.



Consequently, the expressions of "lack of awareness" as seen in the statements correspond with the Lundy Model of Participation by highlighting how gaps in understanding impact the "voice" and "audience" aspects of children's participation. Addressing this lack of awareness is crucial for aligning family decision-making processes with the principles of the Lundy Model of Participation, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and participatory environment for children.

Discovery of the Principle: Another viewpoint emerges where parents express surprise at encountering the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making for the first time. The statement "I am hearing this principle of

children's right to participate in family decision-making on issues that concern children for the first time" indicates a lack of prior exposure to this principle. This perspective highlights a potential gap in awareness and understanding of children's participation rights within the family context.

The finding aligns with the Lundy Model of Participation, particularly with the "voice" and "audience" elements of the model. The finding that parents are encountering the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making for the first time reflects a situation where parents were not previously aware of this principle. In the context of the Lundy Model of Participation, this aligns with the "voice" element, as children have the right to express their views on matters affecting them. Parents' newfound awareness implies that there may have been a lack of opportunity for children's voices to be fully heard in previous decision-making processes. Parents' discovery of the principle also underscores that they were not positioned as an audience for children's voices when it comes to family decisions. The fact that they are hearing about this principle for the first time implies that they were not previously aware of their role in actively seeking out and valuing children's input. This aspect relates to the "audience" element of the Lundy Model of Participation, highlighting the importance of parents being attentive and receptive to children's perspectives. Additionally, this perspective has broader implications for the Lundy Model of Participation. The newfound awareness of the principle introduces the possibility of creating a new space for children's participation in family decision-making. Parents who are now aware of this principle may begin to intentionally include their children's voices, thereby providing them with the space to contribute. Also, the discovery of the principle opens the door to recognising the potential

influence of children's input on family decisions. Parents who were previously unaware of this aspect may now consider the value that children's perspectives can bring to the decision-making process.

The "discovery of the principle" perspective aligns with the Lundy Model of Participation by highlighting how awareness impacts the "voice" and "audience" aspects of children's participation. This newfound understanding has the potential to reshape family decision-making processes in a manner that respects children's rights and promotes their active involvement.

The analysis underscores the range of parents' awareness and understanding concerning the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making and its implementation, as viewed through the lens of the Lundy Model of Participation. Some parents intuitively perceive children's participation as an integral part of family decision-making. On the other hand, some parents reveal a lack of knowledge about the existence of such a principle. This diversity of perspectives illustrates the necessity for heightened awareness and parents' education regarding the vital role of children's participation in shaping decisions that directly affect them, as highlighted by the Lundy Model of Participation. The gap between theoretical principles and practical implementation within the family context is evident. The perspectives that suggest the absence of conscious implementation or discovery of the principle indicate potential challenges in creating inclusive decision-making environments. These viewpoints emphasise the need to promote the idea that children's voices hold value and can contribute meaningfully to family discussions. Encouraging parents to recognise children's agency and viewpoints can lead to more

comprehensive and inclusive family decision-making processes. The diversity of parents' perspectives underscores the significance of ongoing advocacy and engagement efforts. These efforts can encompass workshops, information sessions and resources that inform parents about the principle of children's participation. By equipping parents with the knowledge and tools to involve children in family decisions, advocacy initiatives can encourage the practical application of this principle.

The analysis also highlights the influence of cultural norms and practices on parents' perspectives. It is essential to approach advocacy efforts with cultural sensitivity, understanding that different cultures may have varying views on children's roles and participation within the family. The cultural context must be considered when promoting the principle of children's participation to ensure that awareness-building initiatives are respectful of local values and traditions.

Consequently, there is an opportunity for further discussions and initiatives to foster a better understanding of children's participation rights. These efforts can facilitate the alignment of parents' practices with the principles enshrined in the Lundy Model of Participation, thus empowering children to voice their opinions and contribute meaningfully to family decisions that impact their lives.

4.4. Barriers to Parents' Awareness of the Principle of Children's Right to Participate in Family Decision-Making in Akropong-Akuapem

This study, guided by the Lundy Model of Participation, delves into parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making and its practical manifestation within the Akropong-Akuapem community. Central to

this exploration is the disclosure of barriers that inhibit parents from fully recognising and embracing this fundamental principle. These barriers present complex challenges, often rooted in cultural, traditional and practical considerations. Understanding these barriers is essential as they offer critical insights into parents' awareness within this cultural context. Thus, the barriers that emerge from the analysis of data within the Lundy Model of Participation can be categorised as follows:

Cultural Norms and Traditions: The data indicates that traditional beliefs and cultural norms strongly influence parents' awareness and perceptions. These norms may emphasise hierarchical family structures where children have limited say in decision-making. Overcoming these deeply established cultural norms can be a significant barrier to parents' awareness of children's right to participation.

Limited Scope of Participation: Parents seem to recognise children's voices in specific, often ordinary matters like choosing clothes or discussing meals. However, extending this recognition to more significant decisions might be challenging. The perception that children's input is not needed for important family decisions can hinder their awareness of children's participation rights.

Resource Constraints: Practical factors, such as resource availability, play a role in children's influence in decision-making. Parents may consider children's preferences, but their actual impact on decisions can be limited due to economic constraints. This can be a barrier to parents fully recognising children's participation rights.

Communication Challenges: The data suggests that there might be communication challenges between parents and children when it comes to expressing views on family matters. Parents might not actively listen to their children's concerns or engage them in meaningful dialogue, which can impede children's ability to participate effectively.

Interpretation of Ethical Upbringing: Some parents view involving children in decision-making as a sign of unethical upbringing. This perspective, rooted in cultural beliefs, can deter parents from actively engaging their children in family decisions, acting as a significant barrier to awareness.

Lack of Knowledge about International Standards: Parents may not be fully aware of international standards, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which emphasises children's participation rights. This lack of knowledge can hinder their understanding of these rights and how they should be upheld in family decision-making.

Lack of Education and Awareness Programs: The absence of educational programs or awareness initiatives within the community might contribute to parents' limited awareness of children's participation rights. Such programs could provide parents with information and guidance on how to effectively involve children in decision-making.

Generational Gap: The data suggests that older generations may hold more traditional views on children's roles in decision-making compared to younger parents. Overcoming this generational gap in perceptions can be a barrier to enhancing parents' awareness of children's participation rights.

These barriers collectively underscore the need for targeted efforts, including education, awareness campaigns and cultural sensitivity, to enhance parents' awareness of children's right to participate in family decision-making.

4.5. Summary

The data analysis and results explored multiple facets of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making through the lens of the Lundy Model of Participation. The analysis delved into parents' awareness, children's agency and the alignment of parents' practices with international standards. It revealed the intricate interplay between socio-cultural norms, parenting practices and evolving perspectives on children's participation. The findings showcased a range of parents' viewpoints, including limited scope of participation, resource-dependent involvement and children's limited engagement. Additionally, some parents exhibited a lack of awareness about the principle itself. These diverse perspectives underscore the need for increased parent education and awareness to bridge the gap between theoretical principles and their practical implementation and overcome barriers of parents' awareness within the family context. The analysis highlighted the importance of fostering an environment where children's voices are valued and integrated into family decisions, aligning with international principles and fostering a collaborative approach to family decision-making.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overarching view of the study's roadmap, summarising its key findings, drawing conclusions from the findings, making recommendations to remediate the issues raised in the study and making suggestions for further research.

5.2. Summary of Key Findings

The first research question aimed at investigating how the sociocultural context of the families in Akropong-Akuapem significantly shapes how childhood is understood and conceptualised and subsequently, influences parents' awareness, values and practises regarding their children's participation in decision-making on matters that concern their children. This study found that childhood is a period of dependency, where children rely on parents and trusted adults for essential needs, training and guidance. This perception signifies parents' role as duty-bearers, responsible for fulfilling children's needs and supporting their development. Moreover, the findings highlight childhood as a gradual transition toward independence, with parents playing a critical role in facilitating this journey. The study also found that childhood is a means of identity. Childhood is instrumental in shaping one's identity due to the intimate bond between children and their families. This perspective is underpinned by customary practices such as naming ceremonies and puberty rites, which endow children with distinct identities rooted in their family's traditions. This family imprint resonates beyond personal identity, intertwining with communal and cultural aspects. Children's roles within societal institutions also emphasise the family's role in identity development. Additionally, the study found that childhood is a dual empowerment system, shedding light on how it empowers both parents and children. Childhood serves as a platform for parents to exert control, direction and guidance over their children while simultaneously empowering children to voice their needs and rights.

This dynamic is exemplified through parents' responsibility in nurturing their children's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Children, in turn, are empowered to make demands and express themselves. This reciprocal relationship underlines how childhood is a system of empowerment, where parents guide and provide for children's well-being and children actively engage in their development. The study also found that multifaceted concepts involving dependency, identity formation and empowerment have profound implications for parents' awareness of and support for their children's right to participate in family decision-making. When parents recognise childhood as a period of dependency, where children rely on them for essential needs, they are more likely to consider their children's well-being in decision-making. Similarly, an understanding of childhood as a means of identity formation highlights parents' role in preserving cultural values and may encourage them to involve children in family decision-making that upholds these values. Moreover, the perspective of childhood as a system of empowerment leads parents to recognise children's agency and consider their input in decision-making. The notion of reciprocal empowerment reinforces the collaborative nature of family context. Additionally, the study found that the conception of childhood and the definition of a child offer crucial insights into how parents' understanding of childhood influences their attitudes towards children's participation in family decision-making. It was found that age is a significant factor in defining who a child is. Caregiving responsibilities and provision are also key determinants, indicating that children are considered if they are dependent on adults for care and support. Therefore, the consideration of local cultural norms, addressing age-related expectations and understanding the caregiver-child dynamic is essential to support children's well-being and meaningful participation.

The second research question aimed to determine the awareness among parents about children's rights to participate in family decision-making and the methods used to implement these rights. This objective was crucial as it aimed to provide insights into how parents are knowledgeable about and comply with children's rights to participate in the family setting. This study found that while many parents are not familiar with the formal term "rights of the child," they demonstrate a strong understanding of the concept in practical terms. Parents associate children's rights with entitlements and basic needs, emphasising that these rights are about providing for children's survival. It was found cultural sensitivity influences communication when discussing children's rights within the community, as the formal terminology may not be widely recognised. It was further found that parents' awareness of children's right to participate is influenced by sociocultural norms and traditional family tenets. While parents acknowledge children's rights to express their opinions and needs, this recognition often comes with certain limitations imposed by historical and cultural norms. It was found that parents are aware of their children's rights to express their needs, especially in crucial areas like health and education. This awareness is coupled with the understanding that children's participation is linked to the availability of resources. Parents consider their children's opinions while also weighing practical considerations driven by socio-economic circumstances. It was found that deep-seated traditional beliefs shape parents' awareness of children's right to participate. These beliefs prioritise adult authority and restrict children's active participation in decision-making. It was found that parents' awareness of children's participation in family decision-making is a complex interplay of cultural norms, historical beliefs and evolving ideals. Additionally, the study found that some parents perceive children's

participation in family decision-making as an inherent aspect of family life. They view children as already being a part of the family and consider decision-making an ongoing process that does not require conscious implementation. This perspective aligns with the Lundy Model of Participation's principles of providing space, voice, audience and influence for children's participation. Parents who hold this view recognise children's presence and voice within family decisions without needing explicit effort to implement it. It was found that some parents express a lack of knowledge about the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making. This lack of awareness might limit the space for children's voices to be heard and considered in decision-making. Parents' unawareness hinders the realisation of children's potential to influence decisions, as they may inadvertently exclude children from discussions. Also, it was found that some parents expressed surprise at encountering the principle of children's participation for the first time. This newfound awareness suggests that children's participation was not previously acknowledged or actively sought out. Parents' discovery of the principle introduces the possibility of creating a new space for children's participation in family decision-making. This perspective underscores the potential to reshape family dynamics and decision-making processes based on a newfound understanding of children's rights. It was found that the efforts to bridge the gap between theoretical principles and practical implementation should consider the cultural context, promote the value of children's input and provide resources that empower parents to involve children in family decisions. Addressing these perspectives can lead to more inclusive and meaningful family decision-making processes, aligning with the principles of the Lundy Model of Participation. Consequently, the study identified key barriers that include deep cultural norms and traditions, limited scope of children's participation, resource

constraints, communication challenges and varying interpretations of ethical upbringing. Understanding these barriers is vital for addressing the complexities surrounding parents' awareness and implementation of children's right to participate within this cultural context.

5.3. Conclusions

This study offers a comprehensive exploration of parents' understanding, awareness and implementation of children's rights, particularly in the context of Akropong-Akuapem. The findings reveal a range of parents' awareness of children's rights, shedding light on both areas of awareness and barriers to practical implementation.

Parents' understanding of children's rights exhibited variations in familiarity with formal terminology. It became evident that while the specific language associated with children's rights might be unfamiliar to many parents, there was a consistent association of these rights with essential entitlements and basic needs. These concepts of caregiving and provision align seamlessly with cultural norms of family support and responsibility. However, the study emphasised the need to extend parents' awareness beyond these basics. There's a clear call to foster a broader understanding of children's rights encompassing legal entitlements and protections. This shift in awareness can empower parents to become advocates and defenders of their children's rights.

The investigation into children's participation in family decision-making exposed diverse parents' viewpoints. Some parents intuitively recognise children's roles in decision-making, considering their participation as an inherent part of the family's

decisions. However, some lacked awareness or encountered the concept for the first time. This view highlighted the complex challenge of translating theoretical ideals into tangible actions. Cultural norms, historical perspectives of the families and evolving notions of childhood were found to play pivotal roles in shaping parents' awareness. The findings underscore the importance of striking a balance between traditional family structures and modern ideals of children's empowerment and participation.

The analysis of the implementation of children's right to participate within the family unveiled a distinct landscape. Parents' awareness and comprehension varied, with some embracing the idea as an intrinsic aspect of family life, while others grappled with newfound awareness or remained unaware. This diversity highlighted the critical need to bridge the gap between theoretical principles and their practical application. The study underscores the significance of educating parents about the importance of children's right to participate and equipping them with the resources to effectively integrate children's voices. Such efforts are essential for nurturing family decision-making environments that genuinely include children's participation.

Collectively, this study provides invaluable insights into the intricacies of children's rights awareness and implementation within Akropong-Akuapem. The findings underscore the necessity for culturally sensitive strategies that bridge the chasm between abstract concepts and real-world practice. To create an environment where children's rights are not just acknowledged but actively integrated into family life, efforts must focus on raising awareness, promoting education and fostering open dialogue among parents, communities and policymakers. By aligning parents'

practices with the core principles of the UNCRC and the Lundy Model of Participation, society can cultivate generations that are empowered, participatory and poised to contribute to the holistic well-being of families and societal progress at large.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive exploration of parents' awareness of the principle of children's right to participate in family decision-making within the context of Akropong-Akuapem, several key recommendations emerge to promote an inclusive and informed approach to family decision-making that aligns with the principles of the UNCRC and the Lundy Model of Participation.

It is recommended that there be a collaboration between government agencies on children's rights with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community leaders and educational institutions:

1. to design and implement awareness campaigns that integrate children's right to participate in cultural contexts using various channels, such as community meetings, radio broadcasts and social media, to reach parents and caregivers.
2. to develop training programs that emphasise the compatibility of children's right to participation with local cultural values and norms. The training should focus on enhancing parents' understanding of how these rights can be integrated into traditional family structures without compromising cultural identity.
3. to organise workshops that empower parents with practical tools and strategies to effectively involve children in decision-making processes. Cover topics

such as active listening, age-appropriate communication and fostering a supportive and open family environment.

4. to organise regular community dialogues that provide a safe space for parents, elders and youth to discuss the importance of children's right to participate. Encourage intergenerational conversations that bridge gaps in understanding and promote mutual respect.
5. to develop culturally relevant and child-friendly media, such as videos, cartoons and comic books to explain children's rights and participation. Make these resources available in local languages to enhance accessibility.
6. to establish local support networks for parents where they can share experiences, challenges and success stories related to involving children in decision-making. These networks can provide a platform for learning from each other's practices.
7. to organise events that celebrate local traditions and practices, showcasing how children's participation can enrich and preserve cultural heritage and highlight how children's input contributes to the continuity of community values.
8. to conduct long-term studies to track the impact of awareness campaigns, workshops and policy changes on parents' attitudes and practices related to children's right to participate. Regular assessments can provide valuable insights for continuous improvement.
9. to train community leaders, including elders, religious leaders and local authorities on children's rights and the importance of involving children in family decisions. Their endorsement and support can significantly influence societal acceptance and change.

10. to encourage collaborations between academic researchers to conduct participatory action research. This approach ensures that research findings and recommendations are relevant to local needs.
11. to integrate lessons on children's rights and participation into the school curriculum. Encourage discussions and activities that promote children's understanding of their rights and their role in family decision-making.

These recommendations are designed to create a multi-faceted approach that addresses the complexities of parents' awareness of children's right to participate in the unique cultural context of Akropong-Akuapem to foster an environment where children's voices are actively sought and valued in family decision-making processes.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Research

It is suggested that a prospective study be conducted to explore **Children's Participation in Family Decision-Making: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study** using the conceptual framework of this study as a test model. Building on the existing research on children's participation in family decision-making, this proposed further research would delve deeper into the cross-cultural aspects of this phenomenon to investigate how cultural variations influence the level, nature and effectiveness of children's participation in family decision-making.

Also, a prospective study be conducted to investigate the **Applicability of the Lundy Model of Participation in Family Decision-Making: A Mixed-Methods Approach**. This study underscores the importance of understanding children's participation in family decision-making and how it aligns with the Lundy Model of

Participation by employing a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively evaluate the various components of the Lundy Model of Participation concerning their practicality, relevance and effectiveness in facilitating children's participation in family decisions.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A
LETTER TO NEGOTIATE ACCESS



Our Ref: CHRAPS.44/VOL. 2/10

Your Ref:

August 17, 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

JOHN QUARSHIE - 202146429

We write to introduce to you, John Quarshie with index number 202146429 pursuing Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) in Human Rights, Conflict and Peace Studies at the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies of the University of Education, Winneba.

He wishes to collect data for his thesis on the topic "**Awareness of Parents Regarding the Principle of Children's Right to Participate in Family Decision-Making**".

We would be grateful if he is given the needed assistance from your outfit, please.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linus Nangwele".

REV. FR. DR. LINUS NANGWELE
For. Ag. Director

APPENDIX B

KEY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The researcher administered these questions during the semi-structured interview session with parents in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana.

A. Understanding and Conceptualisation of Childhood:

1. How do you personally define or understand the concept of childhood within the context of your family and community in Akropong-Akuapem?
2. How many children do you have?
3. Describe what, in your opinion, characterises someone as a child within your cultural context.
4. How does your concept of childhood and who a child is, influence your support for your children to participate in decision-making?

B. Parent's awareness of the Principle of Children's Right to Participate

5. How do you understand the term children's rights?
6. Give and explain examples of children's rights that you know.
7. What, in your opinion, are the roles of children in family decision-making?
8. Express your view on the principle that children must participate in family decision-making.

9. How do you ensure that your children participate in family decision-making in all matters that affect them?

