

Research Article

Impacts of Small-scale Mining on Hazardous Child Labour in the Upper West Region, Ghana

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Abstract

This study investigates the impacts of small-scale mining on hazardous child labour in the Upper West Region of Ghana, drawing on the poverty hypothesis and the conceptualization of children as household assets. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research engaged 33 purposively selected participants through in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis revealed that children are driven into hazardous child labour due to factors such as poverty, poor academic performance, parental absence, and the weak enforcement of educational and child labour laws. Additionally, the study identified the detrimental effects of hazardous child labour on children's education and health. Many children engaged in small-scale mining exhibited poor academic performance, fatigue, and health complications such as skin rashes, respiratory issues, and joint pains. The findings emphasize that hazardous child labour perpetuates cycles of poverty, deprives children of their fundamental rights to education and well-being, and poses a significant barrier to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (quality education) and 8 (decent work and economic growth). This study recommends strengthening the enforcement of child labour laws, providing social safety nets for impoverished families, and raising public awareness about the risks associated with child labour. Furthermore, the involvement of traditional authorities and community stakeholders is critical to combatting hazardous child labour and fostering a protective environment for children. The research contributes to the limited literature on hazardous child labour in small-scale mining, offering valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners.

Keywords

Hazardous Child Labour, Child Labour, Child Work, Legal Frameworks, Small-scale Mining, Ghana

1. Introduction

Child labour persists as a global, multidimensional, and intricate problem. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reports that approximately 350 million children globally are involved in child labour, including more than one-fifth of the worldwide population of children aged 5 to 17 years [1]. Recent global estimates from the ILO and UNICEF offer essential insights into this urgent issue. Although the propor-

tion of children engaged in labour has stayed constant since 2016, the total number has escalated by eight million, especially among younger children aged 5 to 11, bringing the global total to 160 million [1]. The detrimental impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic have intensified this scenario, jeopardising advancements achieved in the fight against child labour. The ILO and UNICEF anticipate that an additional

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8.9 million children will participate in child labour by the end of 2022, with those aged 5 to 11 constituting more than half of this increase.

The survey indicates that roughly 72% of child labour transpires within familial environments, frequently under circumstances detrimental to children's physical health. Furthermore, child labour is closely associated with school absenteeism, since numerous youngsters were compelled to abandon their education to work during the pandemic. Disturbingly, 50% of child labourers—approximately 79 million—are employed in perilous settings that jeopardise their health, safety, and moral integrity. The prolonged shutdown of schools resulting from COVID-19 has intensified the situation. Collectively, recent information reveals a grim scenario about the worldwide child labour crisis in numerous nations, including Ghana, especially concerning Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7, which seeks to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2030 [2].

In Ghana, many legal measures have been implemented to address child labour. Notable instances comprise the Children's Act of Ghana (1998) and the Human Trafficking Act (2005; modified in 2010). At the international level, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) forbids the exploitation of minors through labour in Article 32, Clause 1. Likewise, Article XV, Clause 1 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (1990) reaffirms this prohibition. Child labour, in whatever form, infringes upon children's fundamental rights, including access to education and healthy development [3]. In Ghana, 21.8% of children aged 5 to 17 participate in child labour, with an additional 14.2% engaging in dangerous activities [4].

The designation "hazardous" was initially utilised to describe detrimental child labour in Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified in 1990. The provision requires states to safeguard children from "work that may be hazardous or disrupt the child's education." In the 1990s, an agreement emerged that not all employment harms children; specific types of labour facilitate their survival, assist their families, and foster skill acquisition [5]. In 1999, the ILO enacted the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) and its Recommendation R190. This framework offered a thorough methodology to differentiate hazardous child labour and the most egregious types from standard ones. The Convention assigned national authorities to identify the "worst forms of child labour," directing them to create a national list in collaboration with workers' and employers' organisations. The Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation (1999) delineated criteria for recognising hazardous work, highlighting health hazards and disruption of education [6].

- (a) Work that exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse;
- (b) Work underground, underwater, at dangerous heights, or in confined spaces;
- (c) Work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools

that involve the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;

- (d) Work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents, or processes or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- (e) Work under harsh conditions, such as work for long hours, during the night, or where the child is unreasonably confined to the employer's premises.

The Northern Region of Ghana, encompassing the Upper West Region, was formerly omitted from dialogues regarding artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) owing to the historical lack of such operations. The recent proliferation of substantial illegal mining operations in the region warranted this study. Despite several laws prohibiting child labour, the problem endures, necessitating this study on the effects of small-scale mining on hazardous child labour in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The study aimed to investigate the factors contributing to children's involvement in hazardous child labour within artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) and to evaluate the impact of this labour on children's education, health, and general well-being. This study is especially significant given that most current research on child labour in Ghana has been on alternative industries [7, 8]. Previous research has investigated child labour in artisanal fishing, cocoa production, domestic employment, and commercial sexual exploitation. Furthermore, studies have underscored the challenges faced by teenage girls from rural northern Ghana who relocate to urban centres to serve as *kayayei* (female porters), transporting substantial burdens in markets while encountering increased threats of sexual abuse and exploitation. This study enhances the understanding of child labour dynamics in Ghana by examining the generally overlooked topic of hazardous child labour in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) in the Upper West Region.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Overview

The study's theoretical foundation is the poverty hypothesis and the concept of children as household assets. The poverty hypothesis suggests a clear correlation between poverty and child labour; this method, as defined by [9, 10], facilitates the identification of the specific mechanism involved. They presume that all families opt for child labour as their initial strategy to optimise the present discounted value of the household's income. Parents evaluate the foregone earnings while their child is in school against the present value of the future income of an educated child when deciding whether to permit their child to work. Families can only offset their children's economic losses when the educational return on investment is inadequate. Impoverished parents exhibit impatience, undervaluing future prospects more than other families, resulting in a diminished educational return for their children compared to their peers, as indicated by [9]. The educational return for impoverished children will be minimal if schools are distant,

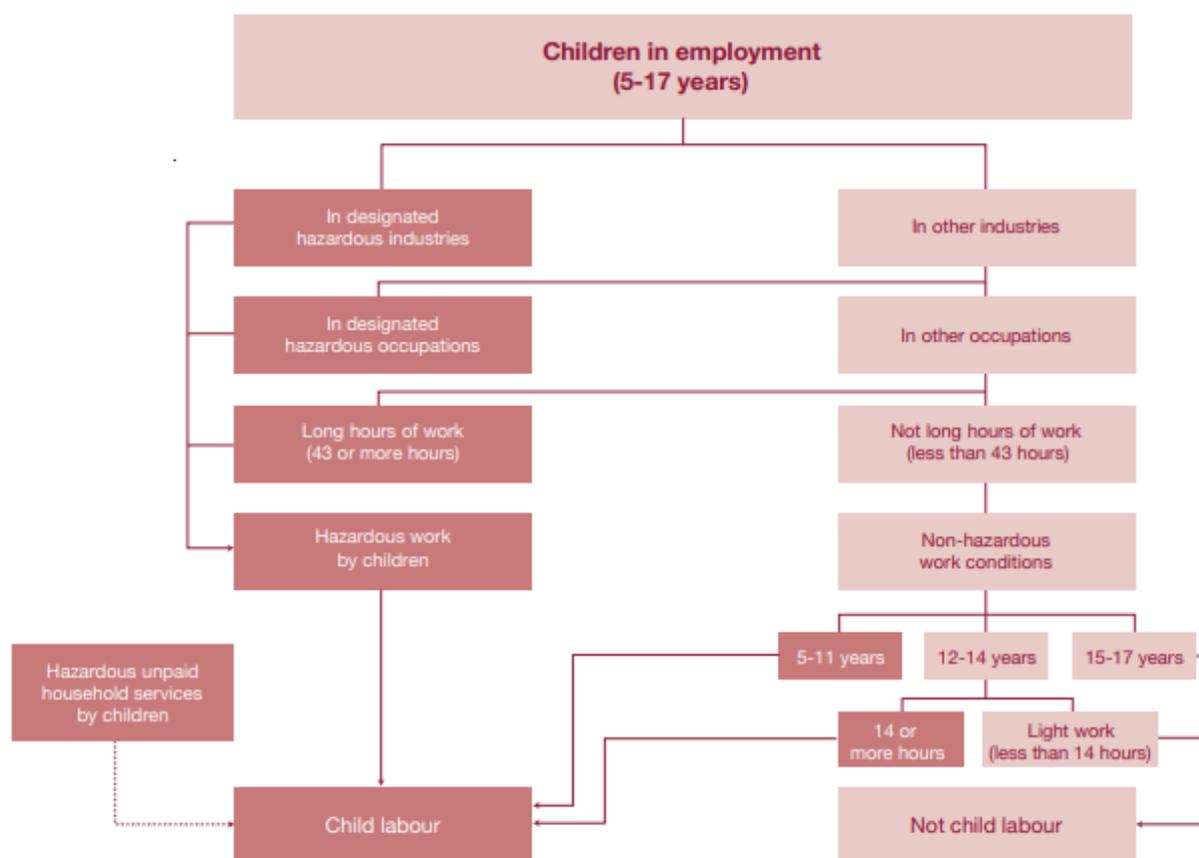
inadequately staffed, or deficient in instructional tools and supplies. If parents are uneducated, the advantages of education may remain unrecognised. As stated in [9], policies that incentivise parents to make suboptimal choices may adversely impact children's well-being.

The household assets model posits that when children possess limited bargaining power, parents make decisions without regard for the child's welfare [9]. In this paradigm, children are regarded solely for their worth as possessions [9]. Parents must first ascertain the number of children they intend to have. Subsequently, they must determine whether to invest in the child's quality or get immediate benefits [9]. Consequently, the number of offspring and the investment in their human capital are alternatives. Additionally, parents may opt to produce multiple children to mitigate risk, enrolling some in educational institutions while employing others.

Views on kid policy and discussions are generally categorised into two main spectrums. The initial spectrum classified child employment as dangerous or non-hazardous, while the subsequent spectrum distinguished between acceptable and inappropriate child labour. Research on hazardous child labour (HCL) frequently emphasises its prevalence in partic-

ular places and its adverse effects on children's physical and mental well-being [11]. Literature repeatedly underscores that for work to be categorised as HCL, it must be detrimental or provide a possible hazard to children. The majority of authors concur that HCL constitutes an intolerable kind of child labour [11]. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has prioritised the elimination of the most egregious types of child labour, particularly hazardous child labour (HCL), based on the principles of damage and unacceptability. In response to the ILO's advocacy, numerous developing nations, including Ghana, have implemented legislation limiting child involvement in hazardous child labour (HCL).

The ILO recognises several types of children's labour as permissible, such as "light work" and age-appropriate chores, as long as they are performed under safe conditions, foster positive development, and are integrated into family enterprises [12]. From an international policy standpoint, children's engagement is generally classified into economic, non-economic, or non-work activities. Non-economic activities encompass domestic tasks conducted within the child's household and educational pursuits. Hazardous child labour is explicitly defined about economic activities, as depicted in Figure 1.



Note: The dotted lines refer to the measurement of hazardous unpaid household services being optional as per the 2008 Resolution Concerning Statistics of Child Labour.

Figure 1. Measurement framework for the global estimation of child labour.

"Economic activity" is defined by the System of National Accounts (SNA) (rev. 1993), which offers the international statistical framework for quantifying the market economy, as seen in Figure 1. This concept encompasses all market production and specific forms of non-market production, including creating commodities for personal consumption. Economic activity refers to a wide range of economic endeavours performed by children, regardless of whether they are market-oriented, compensated or uncompensated, part-time or full-time, casual or regular, and legal or unlawful. Nevertheless, it omits domestic tasks and educational activities within the child's residence. For a child to be deemed economically active, they must have engaged in employment for at least one hour on any day within a seven-day reference period. Small-scale mining (SSM) is defined as the extraction of mineral deposits by individuals or small groups pos-

sessing little technical proficiency and minimum mechanisation, as stated in [13]. In certain nations, small-scale mining is characterised by its production levels and the workforce engaged. In Ghana, the definition emphasises the requisite capital and people resources. The Minerals and Mining Act 2006 (Act 703) characterises "small-scale gold mining operation" as the extraction of gold employing practical and economical methods by an individual, a small group (not exceeding nine individuals), or a cooperative society (comprising a minimum of 10 members). All lower-tier mining operations, whether mechanised or non-mechanized, that do not fall under the definition of conventional industrial mining activities are defined as small-scale mining [15]. In Ghana's Upper West Region, small-scale gold mining is predominantly illegal and unregulated, as depicted in Figure 2.

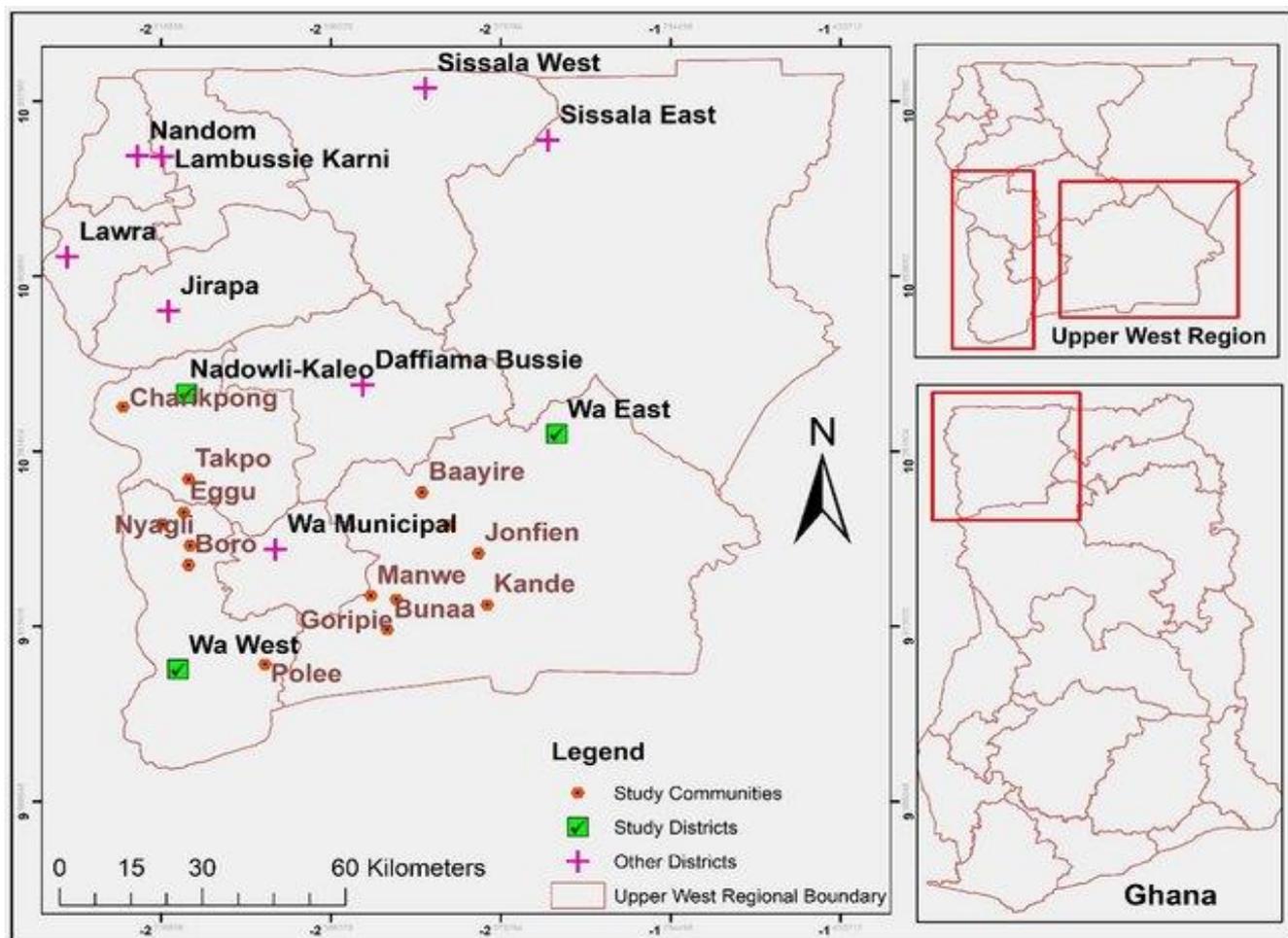


Figure 2. Map showing the distribution of ASM activities in the Upper West Region. Source: Field Survey (2023).

3. Causes and Effects of Small-Scale Mining on Children

Rural parents ought to be regarded as persons discontented

with the education system rather than illiterates oblivious to education's significance [16]. This study's findings reveal that parents have implemented a coping mechanism due to inadequate school quality, access issues, and uncertainty over post-graduation employment opportunities. This tech-

nique entails enrolling some of their children in school while others participate in mining, fishing, agriculture, or various economic pursuits. In environments where education is compulsory, accessible, and seen as vital, the incidence of child labour is generally diminished. A qualitative study by [17] in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) investigated the factors and consequences of child labour in mining. The research indicated that children contributed to family income, resulting in elevated high school dropout rates. Furthermore, it underscored health hazards, including injuries and exposure to detrimental minerals such as copper and cobalt. There were also reports of a few instances of sexual assault. Likewise, a separate study by [18] indicated that poverty, educational expenses, and the necessity for children to finance their own or their siblings' school fees significantly contributed to their participation in mining in the DRC.

As stated in [19], child labour—regardless of its detrimental effects—may offer potential advantages for children by facilitating the development of social skills and accumulating social capital. These competencies and networks are essential for the survival of working street children and other marginalised populations [20-23]. Nonetheless, [24] posits that detrimental activities may be warranted if the advantages gained surpass the accompanying suffering. A study in Tanzania examined the ecological factors affecting child labour in artisanal and small-scale gold mining through a qualitative methodology [25]. The results indicated that poverty, divorce, restricted diversification of income sources, socialisation, parental influence, peer pressure, and inadequate enforcement of mining regulations are substantial factors contributing to children's participation in small-scale mining.

4. Methodology

4.1. Study Setting

The Upper West Region is located between latitudes 9°35'N and 11°N, and longitudes 1°25'W and 2°50'W. It shares its northern border with the Republic of Burkina Faso and its southern boundary with the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. The Northern and Savannah Regions of Ghana delineate the area to the south. The Upper West Region encompasses an area of approximately 18,476 km², representing 12.7% of Ghana's total land area. The region's geological structure comprises Pre-Cambrian rocks, featuring metamorphic and granite formations that are abundant in gold. The resources have established the area as a central hub for artisanal mining activity in multiple communities within the Wa East, Wa West, and Nadowli-Kaleo districts. The region is home to Azumah Resource Limited, an international mining enterprise under the JULIE Concession.

4.2. Study Design

The research employed a qualitative methodology to investi-

gate and comprehend the issue of child labour. The qualitative research approach effectively reveals the interpretations attributed to a phenomenon by individuals who have personally encountered it, as highlighted by [26]. The objective was to comprehensively understand children's involvement in perilous small-scale mining in the Upper West Region. This method enabled the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants [27, 28]. This research employed a single case study design. A case study is characterised as an empirical investigation that analyses a contemporary occurrence within its real-life setting, especially when the distinctions between the phenomena and its context are ambiguous, utilising many sources of information. Case studies frequently depend on acquiring qualitative data [27, 28]. The single case study approach is adaptable and facilitates a comprehensive investigation of a particular, distinctive occurrence with a limited number of participants [28]. Child labour in perilous small-scale mining constitutes a case because of its unique prevalence in specific locales within the Upper West Region, where information regarding the practice is now scarce.

4.3. Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The sample comprised 33 participants (Table 1) from three districts where ASM is prevalent. The researchers concluded that a modest sample size is necessary for qualitative research to gather comprehensive data [27, 28]. The participants, including children, individuals engaged in ASM and social welfare officers, were selected using maximum variation purposive sampling. This was conducted because these individuals possess sufficient expertise regarding child labour difficulties in small-scale mining in the Upper West Region.

Table 1. Sample distribution.

Participant Category	Sample
Nadowli-Kaleo (children)	5
Wa East (children)	5
Wa West (children)	5
Staff of District Social Welfare (1 from each district)	3
Key informants (opinion leaders, household heads, teachers, adults involved in mining etc.)	15
Total	33

4.4. Instruments, Data Collection and Analysis

Self-designed interview guidelines were utilised to obtain data from participants in the field. The interview guide concentrated on the causes and consequences of small-scale mining concerning children and labour conditions. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Board of the

Simon Diedong Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies. Subsequently, an informed consent letter was dispatched to the Departments of Social Welfare in the three districts consented to participate. Participants were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and security from harm. Data collection occurred from March 1 to March 30, 2023. Consent was obtained to audio record the interviews, which was approved. Interviews with youngsters were performed on-site with the consent of their employer or legal guardians at a mutually agreeable time. The interviews were conducted on-site, but the employers were absent. This allowed the students to articulate their perspectives regarding their experiences. Key informants were questioned at their residence or workplace, depending on their desire and convenience. Each interview duration ranged from 30 to 45

minutes for youngsters and key informants.

The data were initially transcribed, followed by a thematic analysis. The task was executed manually using an inductive methodology. This analytical method entails identifying, examining, and reporting patterns (themes) within data [29]. Upon the discovery and refinement of codes, and in the absence of new codes, they were categorised by topics and thereafter discussed [30]. Table 2 delineates the phases and processes pertinent to the data analysis. The data were conveyed in written form. From a reflexive standpoint, the researchers' lack of familiarity with the subject location mitigated biases. The aggregation of data from diverse stakeholders aimed to facilitate participant triangulation. Furthermore, member checks were conducted with select key participants to ensure the validity of the results.

Table 2. Phases of thematic analysis.

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting data features in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work about the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating to the analysis of the research question and literature, producing a scholarly analysis report.

Source: Adopted from [29]

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Causes of Child Labour

The study sought to explore the impacts of small-scale mining on hazardous child labour in the Upper West Region, Ghana. From the interviews, sources of employment and increased income for miners, parental absence due to death, divorce or separation and poor enforcement of educational and child labour laws appeared as some of the causes of child labour in small-scale mining.

5.1.1. Source of Employment and Increased Income for Miner

The small-scale mining sector is a significant employer of

many people (including children) and, in many cases, indigenous people in mining communities. Key informants acknowledged that members of their households who were children were involved in small-scale mining activities. A young girl aged 16 years at Baayire, Wa West District (March 18, 2022) reported:

Previously, I was attending school but had to drop out to work at the Galamsey site. When I earned my initial money from head porting at the site, I used a portion of it to start my “pito” (local beer) brewing business and some other part of the money to provide food for sale; I also sell sachet water at the Galamsey site. “I have been doing this business for the past six months, ” and I don't intend to return to school. I am content with the earnings from my business,

Further, in an interview with an official from the Social Welfare Department (March 23, 2023) stated that:

My brother and I know that children as young as 15 years

old are working at the mining sites in the region. However, the biggest challenge is how to enforce the law. We are aware that it is an illegality; we only turn a blind eye to it. We cannot prosecute offenders. Don't forget that some of the children have their parents' consent, and some work at the site with their family members.

Similar findings were made by [31] in the Mengwe Community in the Funsu District in the Upper West Region. In a study conducted in Upper East Region in Ghana, [32] found that low-income families struggle to provide for all their family needs, making child labour significant in increasing the family income. The finding also supports the poverty hypothesis that children engage in child labour due to poverty [9].

5.1.2. Parental Absence Due to Death, Divorce or Separation

Parents play a critical role in the life of a child. The absence of a parent in a child's life through death, divorce, or separation could be disastrous for the growth and development of the child. The death of a parent (s) could become a turning point in children's lives as it can lead to inadequate care by other family members, especially with the collapse of the extended family system. Children must provide for themselves and support their immediate families in such situations. A little boy aged 14 years at Funsu narrated, 'I am working at the Galamsey site because my father is dead, leaving my mother to take care of us. We are five in number. Currently, my mother is taken ill and bedridden. I have to work to support the family. [25] reported that in Tanzania's artisanal and small-scale gold mines, divorce was one of the factors that triggered child labour in the sector. This suggests that children from such homes would have limited prospects of going to school. The finding also aligns with the poverty hypothesis which opines that poverty may push parents or caregivers into pushing children into child labour [9]. It further supports the arguments of the model on children as household assets since it maintains that when children have little bargaining power in the household, parents make decisions without considering the impact on the child [9]. As such, the parents or guardians engage the children without considering its impact on them.

5.1.3. Poor Enforcement of Educational and Child Labour Laws

The study showed that poor enforcement of educational and child labour laws contributed to children working in the mines. A male Social Welfare Officer recounted, 'you find so many children of late working at the small scale mining sites and no one dare to questions them and their parents walk freely because child labour laws are not effectively implemented'. In addition, by acknowledging their role in providing interventions to children engaged in child labour, a female Social Welfare Officer noted 'many children are

working in the small scale mines because laws against child labour are not fully implemented and institutions that are to ensure that the laws are enforced like ours are weak and under-resourced. [25] also made similar findings that child labour is rampant in Tanzania's artisanal and small-scale gold mines because of weak enforcement of laws.

The implication of the above narration suggests that the incidence of hazardous child labour is evident in the mining sites of the upper west region and affects children's school attendance. This supports the assertion made by [1] that child labour interferes with children's education. School attendance is foregone in favour of work, or learning is inefficient, either because the children are not allowed to do their homework or because they cannot pay proper attention in school because of fatigue. UNICEF's study in Ghana and a review of similar studies by the ILO have shown that hazardous work harms learning achievements in general.

Also, [33] found that working children in Ghana spent an average of one hour per week less in school. Children's school attendance is key to their educational achievements, and for that matter, anything that affects children's school attendance equally affects their educational achievements. This is consistent with the findings of [5, 33, 34], whose studies reported similar findings. For instance, [34], whose quantitative study was based on the Brazilian school achievement test data, noted that children who worked seven hours or more per day had a 10% decrease in their test scores compared to other students who did not engage in any kind of work. Working and schooling come with double pressure, which children will likely find difficult to bear. Consequently, they may put much attention and effort into the work they are engaged in at the expense of their education, which could result in poor academic performance.

5.2. Effects of Hazardous Child Labour in Small Scale Mining

This segment concentrates on exploring the effects that child labour in small-scale mining has on the children engaged in it. Generally, the interviews and observations emerged that children's education and health are negatively impacted by their activities in the small-scale mining sector.

5.2.1. Effects of Hazardous Child Labour on Children's Education

Child labour affects children in varied ways. Children engaged in labour are likely to do so at the expense of their development as they may be deprived of their right to education, dignity and personal growth. The study revealed that children engaged in galamsey activities performed poorly in class. A male child participant said, 'Since I started working at the Galamsey site, I have been repeated twice because of poor academic performance, which makes me feel bad. As a result of this continuous poor academic performance, I feel like quitting school because I sometimes feel embarrassed

due to my performance in school. I work from morning to evening on Saturday and Sundays; I get tired before morning, sometimes have to be absent from school to work at the Galamsey site, and sometimes, I go and work half day after school. This is the reason for my poor performance. Another child had this to say:

I don't perform well in class tests and exams; sometimes, my friends laugh at me. At first, I was doing better in class when I was not working at the Galamsey site, but since I started working at the Galamsey site, I now perform badly in class.

A teacher indicated that many children who engaged in galamsey activities usually came to school tired and did not have much time to learn. The performance of such children was always poor. They will never do their homework, and they come to class in the morning looking tired. I found out they were engaged in galamsey activities, such as digging and head potting, which is hazardous. [18] made a similar finding that in DR Congo, small-scale artisanal mining negatively affected children's schooling as they missed out regularly on school while some dropped out.

5.2.2. Effects of Hazardous Child Labour on Children Health

A male teacher also said that 'children working at the galamsey site are not healthy; they look tired and typically complain of headaches in school. Sometimes, they complain of their eyes, rashes, and stomach aches. Some fall sick so that they will come to school today but not tomorrow due to sickness.

A key informant had this to say: the weight of the items children carry on their heads at the galamsey sites was very challenging. It has many effects on their health. Some carry heavy loads, and the children work without safety gear. It is tiring and hazardous. According to [35], children carrying loads on their heads could adversely affect their health. Some of the adverse health effects of carrying heavy loads, according to [35], are the energy cost of head-loading, long-term biomechanical impacts, risk of acute injury, and physical deficiencies.

Among the many health effects of working on the galamsey site include skin rashes, coughs, and joint aches. A male child said, 'The galamsey site is full of different sicknesses. Look at my palms; they are full of blisters due to digging. I have been treating skin rashes for a while now, and I believe I got it because of the contact with the chemicals used at the site'. Another child added:

Skin rashes are common here because if one or two people are affected, they quickly spread to others. "Last time," one woman told us that when one gets skin rashes, he or she is supposed to stay home to prevent them from spreading. The problem is that if you stay home, what will you eat? These children also inhale dust, which could affect their health.

The study found that children engaged in mining experienced health-related challenges such as chronic pain or dis-

comfort in their bodies after work, experiencing body injuries, and experiencing negative emotions such as anger, stress and worry. [18]

6. Conclusion

This research examined the effects of small-scale mining on hazardous child labour in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The study's findings have elucidated the characteristics, motivations, and risks connected with children's involvement in small-scale mining. Poverty and squalor, parental absence, ignorance, and inadequate law enforcement were highlighted as factors contributing to children's involvement in hazardous child work. This study reveals that hazardous child work is exploitative and deprives children of their health and education, among other aspects. Involving youngsters in perilous employment at the cost of their education equates to robbing them of their future. These youngsters engage in activities that contravene Article 3, which delineates the conditions of hazardous labour, as outlined in the Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999. It can be concluded that children engaged in small-scale mining activities in the Upper West Region endure physical and psychological abuse, operate underground, handle dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools, carry heavy loads on their heads, labour in unhealthy environments that expose them to hazardous substances, and work extended hours, often from 8 am to 6 pm. All these factors indicate that children engaged in small-scale mining in the Upper West Region are participating in hazardous child employment. This circumstance may hinder Ghana's capacity to fulfil sustainable development goals 4 and 8, which emphasise the attainment of quality education and the promotion of decent jobs and economic growth.

7. Policy Implications

Hazardous child work persists in obstructing the growth and development of children, necessitating an urgent resolution. It would be prudent for law enforcement agencies, such as the Ghana Police Service, to enforce all legislative laws, including the Human Trafficking Act of 2005 and the Children's Act of 1998, to safeguard children from exploitation. The Government of Ghana should assist impoverished households with school-aged children through the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program (LEAP) to diminish the probability of these children opting to work for supplementary income rather than attending school. Moreover, the Department of Social Welfare, National Commission for Civic Education, and Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) should cooperate to inform, raise awareness, and motivate parents and children regarding the hazards of involving children in economic activities, including small-scale min-

ing. The function of traditional authority in combating unlawful mining and specifically dangerous child labour is essential. The traditional authority serves as the guardian of tradition and culture. The struggle to eradicate this threat may depend on tradition and culture. The Government must urgently demonstrate the political will to eradicate illicit mining nationwide, with a specific focus on eliminating dangerous child exploitation in small-scale mining.

Abbreviations

DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
HCL	Hazardous Child Labour
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Author Contributions

Mohammed Sulemana is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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