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Psychosocial determinants of child labour in gold panning: Case of the sub-prefecture of grand-Zattry, South-West, Côte d'Ivoire

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Abstract

Child labour is a persistent phenomenon in Côte d'Ivoire. It is not only in the coffee and cocoa plantations that it can be observed. Many miners risk their lives in the gold mines. Using a comprehensive approach, the aim of this study is to understand the psychosocial motivations of employers and migrant child workers in the Grand-Zattry area. Specifically, it aims to map out the social perceptions of migrant and trafficked child workers, their families, and their home and

host communities. This study is part of a qualitative approach. It uses both a questionnaire and interview guides for data collection. The study also aims to be explanatory, as it was able to explain the reasons for the persistence of child labour in gold panning. The study reveals complicity between parents and children in this phenomenon. Children are victims of economic exploitation by their employers and their families, for whom they are a real source of income.

Keywords: Work, Child, Actor, Perception, Motivation, Gold Panning, Grand-Zattry

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the deepening of the economic crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the phenomenon of child labour has shifted from a socialisation framework to a tough economy (Abou and Pokou, 2006). Children do not act as simple apprentices, but as key links in the practice of certain activities (Oura and N'dri, 2016). Many children have their future compromised in 'areas of lawlessness' such as the gold panning sites in Grand-Zattry. The phenomenon is even recurrent. It is generally built around a complex network, inherently generating risks, and its social, spatial and economic organisation can be affected by the occurrence of an internal or external, natural or technological hazard. Generally speaking, in most of the gold mining villages of Grand-Zattry, clandestine artisanal gold mining is rife with child labour. Children are prime targets for cheap labour in artisanal mining.

This multi-dimensional phenomenon, exacerbated by neo-liberal globalisation, requires a detailed approach and response. It could be about the social motivations of employers, of child migrant workers. It may also be about the social perceptions of migrant and trafficked child workers, their families and their home and host communities.

In psychology, motivation is seen as a centre of biological, cognitive and social regulation of the individual. For several researchers, the concept of motivation represents;

The integrated hypothetical used to describe the internal and/or induced forces triggering, directing, intensifying and persisting the behaviour" (Vallerand & Thill, 1993; cited by Sarrazin, 2001).

In the case of the latter, the hypothetical construct used to describe the internal and/or external powers producing the triggering, trajectory, intensity and persistence of the behaviour (Vallerand & Thill, 1993; cited by Sarrazin, 2001:1).

Motivation is not a palpable reality but a hypothetical construct that exists only through behavioural manifestations from which the motivational state of a person is inferred (Tatio, 2007). Human behaviour is determined by multiple interfering factors, which makes motivation highly dynamic. Among these 'interfering' factors responsible for the motivation of individuals, most contemporary theories emphasise two types of variables: the social environment, and the cognitions of individuals. Hence the term 'socio-cognitive' or 'psychosocial' that surrounds these theoretical approaches" (Sarrazin, 2001).

Also, the phenomenon of child labour raises concerns about the social perception of the actors involved in gold panning in Grand-Zattry. In the case of the perception of actors of child labour, several factors have an influence on the perception. These include:

"Expectations through the person with whom one interacts, motivations that make the perceiver encounter in the other what he or she would like to encounter, goals that influence the way information is processed, familiarity and experience."

There are several effects that change the social perception of child labour actors:

"Depending on the value of the impulse, perceptual scansion can occur when the value of an impulse is large, it is perceived as larger than it is or the Halo effect. If a person is seen positively about some of his or her traits, then he or she will tend to produce a distortion in self-perception and to see himself or herself positively about all of his or her other traits.

"Depending on the emotional significance of the impulse, perceptual defence against threatening impulses or perceptual insight into impulses that may be need-filling or beneficial.

"Stereotyping, which is the assignment of attributes based on group identity, prejudice, which is the individual way of making judgments about people or things while departing from the common social perception, and projection, which is the effect of one's own emotions when evaluating people or situations, are also modified effects of perception.

Referring to these explanations, the aim of this study is to understand the psychosocial motivations of employers of migrant child workers in the Grand Zattray area. Specifically, it aims to map out the social perceptions of migrant and trafficked child workers, their families, and their home and host communities.

2. Methodology

Fieldwork for this study was conducted between March and June 2022 in the sub-prefecture of Grand-Zattray. The surveys were carried out at the sites of Pierrekro, Albertkro and Zougouzoa. The main source of data used in this study was the literature review and field data. The methods used for data collection were semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Interviews were conducted with a sample of people working in the gold panning sector and migrant child workers. In the gold panning sites, our interviews were with the heads of the holes, the women, the owners of the sites and the children. There were also interviews with a wide range of other actors, including parents and guardians of child workers, and adult gold miners. These interviews sought their perceptions of migrant child labour in gold panning. The participatory observation was a necessary factor in the skeleton of our data collection. The observation guide focused on employers, their behaviour, attitudes and motivations for using children in mining. Over two hundred people were interviewed, including fifty children working in the mining areas, thirty-four boys and sixteen girls. Forty-two of these children were working in gold panning and the remaining eight, including five girls, were child workers in other sectors such as childcare, domestic work, agriculture or small businesses. We also interviewed ten young adults aged 18 and 19, seven of whom were working in a gold mine and three of whom were involved in the sex trade at a

mining site, Zougouzoa. The majority of the children interviewed lived with other family members or guardians, but eight lived with their parents and nine lived alone.

3. Results

The results of the study revealed that children are involved in gold panning activities for various reasons. They are employed by their parents as labourers who are particularly involved in the process of mineral extraction. The deterioration of socio-economic living conditions due to the agricultural crisis in the rural areas of Grand-Zattray is pushing the population towards gold panning, which appears to be a permanent solution. It is in this context that parents who practice this activity seek the help of their children. Indeed, children are the preferred targets for cheap labour in the mining industry in Grand Zattray. More than half of the children were in favour of child labour, both girls and boys, and thought it was a good thing. They said that they work to get money, material goods or to make up for the lack of activities in the communities.

3.1 Psychosocial motivation for child labour

Many children consider this enterprise in order to have money, material possession or a need to make up for the lack of activities in their communities. Migration, child labour and child trafficking is a problem with many roots. According to our survey data we were able to identify five major points:

- Poverty and the lack of credible alternatives to child labour,
- The financial needs of children and their families
- The need for self-assertion,
- The low level of information, organisation and participation of parents and communities, and lack of awareness of and/or resistance to child protection measures,
- The absence of a coherent institutional mechanism for monitoring compliance with the relevant provisions.

The people who work at these gold panning sites, including the children, are real supporters for their various families. The gold panning activity gives them hope and the means to contribute to their families' expenses. Life on the gold panning sites and the activity of gold panning give the children the opportunity to express their personality, to do what they want to do and which they cannot always afford in their community. Gold panning is an alternative source of income for families, and for children. It gives them the means to participate in the life of their family. In the localities of Grand-Zattray, gold panning helps to keep children in the village and prevents child migration. As for the reasons for immigration, they are multiple. Children say they have come to the site to have money, to have material goods and because of the lack of activity in the village, and just to imitate their peers. Others came to assert their personality, make discoveries and followed their parents. Parents' opinions on the reasons why children work on the gold panning sites are very divided. The vast majority of respondents mentioned economic reasons, notably the poverty of the parents. Some believe that it is because of a lack of activity that children end up on the sites. Others believe that children do it to help their families. Still, others say that children have no choice, which is why they have come to the site.

3.2 Social perceptions of child labour

3.2.1 Perception of child workers

The unanimity of the children on the issue of motivation for child labour hides profound differences in views between the children who are native to the site and those who are migrants. More than half of the children were in favour of the migration of girls and boys and thought it was a good thing. More than a third of the children said that gold panning was a traditional activity and part of their livelihood strategy in the communities. Commitments with employers are rather often respected. The gold panning site is a space of freedom, it does not fit well with coercion and forced labour according to one respondent.

MD: "Here even his own child, if you force him in a certain way, he will leave you, he is sure to be able to find a job, earn what he needs and do what he wants".

3.2.2 Employers' perceptions

The perception of child labour by different employers varies. It is necessarily subjective. Child labour is therefore not perceived as a socially reprehensible phenomenon, as evidenced by the fact that a large number of respondents think that child labour is a good thing, even though many of the activities involved in gold panning are, in principle, considered to be physical and therefore their performance by children is socially and religiously reprehensible. In interviews, employers say that adults are very expensive. That is why they resort to children.

3.2.3 Perception of communities on gold panning sites

Child labour is not generally perceived as taboo by communities, opinion leaders and even local government authorities. There is a general lack of awareness of the legislation and regulations on the subject. Communities believe that it is normal for children to work to contribute to the survival of the family unit. The employer is seen as a benefactor, a patron who feeds and maintains his staff before they strike gold. There is no formal working relationship between employers and children or their guardians. For these communities, the concept of the child remains relative and subjective. In practical terms, for both women and men, one ceases to be a child with marriage; this event occurs for girls between the ages of 14-15 and 18-21 for boys. In terms of participation in family activities, for many, this begins at the age of 7-8 years, although it may be less, depending on the parent's assessment of the child's abilities. Participation in activities for the child is progressive and is done with a view to learning. It becomes total from the age of 10-12 years, in any case, learning and socialisation must be completed before marriage, when the child is obliged to assume social and economic responsibilities in the household and towards his or her family. In this respect, it can be noted that the girl ceases to be a child 4 to 6 years before the boy of the same age, and consequently, her training will be more or less accelerated depending on the time constraint between childhood and marriage.

4. Discussion and analysis

The motivations of child labourers are multiple, inseparable and interrelated, but they are also related to different factors, both economic, social, political and cultural (Fall and Massart, 2007; Massart, 2009^[3]; TDH, 8 2009^[6]; Imorou,

2010; Ndao, 2010). However, the primary cause of child labour is to be found in the poverty that many families experience. Indeed, survival in most rural areas of Africa depends mainly on natural resources. But in recent years, the crisis in this sector has exacerbated food insecurity and other socio-economic difficulties in these areas. The impacts of climate change, such as drought, unstable rainfall, soil infertility in some areas, and the rudimentary practice of this activity, among others, have led to a sharp decline, or even stagnation, in agricultural production, and a significant decrease in cultivable areas and yields (Ndiaye, 2007)^[5]. Faced with this situation, rural populations are trying to find other means of subsistence, including the work of children, both girls and boys. Both girls and boys generally work to help their families back in the village.

The work of children in gold panning thus responds to a need to assert one's personality and to be like the other children. More than half of the children claim to be unaware of the risks and dangers of child labour. The majority of child workers on the gold panning sites claim to be free to stop the work and leave the site as they wish. This can be understood as the children's perception of their degree of freedom from employers, parents and guardians. Employers perceive child labour as normal. Nearly a quarter of employers consider child labour to be a good thing. Their preferences for them are for the following reasons: they cost less, they are more productive, they are docile, they are better suited to certain tasks and, they are more diligent. These results are consistent with the views of several authors on social motivation. Through these authors, it is easy to understand the motivation of the actors in the child labour phenomenon.

Indeed, the overarching social motivations (Stevens & Fiske, 1995; Fiske, 2000) are part of the social cognition perspective. It is particularly interested in how individuals 'think' about themselves and others (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). By analysing the different stages of social cognition, Operario & Fiske (1999) show that three perspectives have succeeded one another.

"The first conception has been that of the naive scientist who formulates and tests naive hypotheses about the social world around him."

"The second view, that of cognitive misery, was put forward when experimental evidence showed that instead of thinking carefully and deeply, individuals use cognitive shortcuts (e.g. schema, scripts, stereotypes) to form their opinions. Thanks to these mental shortcuts, people preserve their mental resources and are thus able to make judgements more quickly."

"The last perspective, on which the core of social motivation is based, points to a motivated tactician."

The theme of cognitive misery provides a portrait of the child labourer remarkably adapted to his social environment who sacrifices the accuracy of his judgements to make them efficient, endowed with a constitutionally biased mental architecture. This approach has the particularity of containing the first two perspectives through the third perspective.

The child labourer is seen as a fully engaged thinker who can deploy multiple strategies available to him/her based on

choice, goals, motivations and needs. Child labour actors may in some situations process information systematically and thus in the manner of a naive scientist and in other situations less parsimoniously in terms of cognitive economy, but always with an eye to satisfying their motivations. From this perspective, dual systems, of which cognitive-experiential theory (Epstein, 1991) is just one example, fit perfectly into this logic.

"The first of these subsystems is generally characterised by automatic, spontaneous and inexpensive processing, while the second is more controlled, deliberative and resource-intensive.

Child labour actors generally tend to use the first system more often because it uses fewer cognitive resources than the second. However, when child labour actors are motivated to think in a more applied way, they use the second sub-system, which is much more resource-intensive. Dualist models reconcile the tension between the naive scientist and the cognitive misery approach by suggesting that motivations and goals function to orient towards one or other of these tendencies. Children work primarily within the framework of the family, and from this point of view, many parents must surely learn to live solely within the framework they form. Work as a learning and socialising activity and as the child's pure participation in economic activity, production, the family economy and the community economy is at the discretion of each parent and each individual. Families... The nature and diversity of demand for goods and services by different segments of the community are changing profoundly. This can be seen in terms of food, clothing, housing, transport, social participation/contribution, play and leisure. The products and services that meet this need are often provided by the market and always have a market value. People's traditional activities (agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts, etc.) that once served their needs are now ineffective.

5. Conclusion

The study found no restrictions on child labour at any of the sites. Several heads of household cited poverty and the need for children to help their parents as reasons for allowing children to work on the gold-mining sites. The more or less positive perception of child labour and the lack of knowledge of the legal and regulatory provisions governing work, particularly child labour, partly explain the violations of children's rights. Indeed, a large proportion of employers state that they do not know the texts governing child labour. In response to the question on the minimum age of admission of children to employment, opinions are very divided. This indicates a notorious ignorance of the texts, let alone respect for them. Those who claim to know them to think that these texts do not correspond to their social values. They believe that these texts have been imported from elsewhere and that they do not conform to their realities. Parents are very little aware of this issue, as are the customary authorities. As for children, their opinions are very divided on the minimum age for admission to employment, which indicates a lack of knowledge of the texts governing child labour. The extent of child labour in the gold mines is assessed in terms of its depth and breadth, with an assessment of the phenomenon including the number of children working, their age and the number and

nature of activities involving them. Without a serious baseline knowledge of the living and working conditions of gold-rush children, the effectiveness of any intervention on their behalf is more or less uncertain.

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