

Gender dimensions in the worst forms of child labour In Kenya: a case of Thika West District, 2013

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Abstract:

This study aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of gender dimensions in the worst forms of child labour in Thika west District in Kiambu County. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between factors, gender dimensions and children's involvement in worst forms of child labour. The study sought to establish how these dimensions exist in an endeavour to suggest solutions that can have a greater impact in the fight against worst forms of child labour. The study was based on the following objectives: To identify the worst forms of child labour prevalent in Thika West District; to identify and analyze the gender dimensions in the worst forms of child labour; and to suggest effective strategies of curbing the worst forms of child labour. The study adopted a descriptive survey approach. The target population was all children in Thika West District aged of 5 - 17 years since all children in this age group are vulnerable to child labour. The researcher purposively selected two locations for this study, namely, Biashara and Juja locations. Out of the 180 sample size, 123 respondents returned the questionnaires giving a total of 68.3% response rate in the 2 locations sampled through stratified sampling of low socio-economic status, population density and prime area of child labour opportunity. The data collection instruments used in this study was questionnaires, interview schedules and observation checklists. The interview schedule was administered to 3 Key informants who included a social worker attached to Kiandutu slum, the Thika West District Children's Officer (DCO) and Juja Location Chief. The study also used structured observation by focusing on a small number of specific behaviour patterns among children involved in child labour. Data collected were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis with quantitative analysis done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). During data collection, the researcher followed all ethical codes and regulations. The results of the study indicate that there is prevalent Worst Forms of Child Labour in Thika West district affecting both boys and girls, a majority aged between 5-17 years. The study also found that there were significant dynamic changes in gender roles especially by parents and guardian and this has also influenced boys and girls in their choice of work. Gender socialization clearly influenced boys and girls in their way of life, experiences and expectations. Other factors found to be at playing included economic hardships, poverty and dynamic changes in the family setup which has resulted in single parent families especially headed by women, orphanage as well as street families. In order to curb the worst forms of child labour, there is urgent need to address the economic situation for the majority of the parents in the area who live below the poverty level. This can be achieved by funding economically viable project, equitably distributing resources especially financial as well as providing equitable opportunities to both men and women in the area. Parents should be educated on the need to send their children to school, giving both boys and girls equal opportunities to access and benefit from education. The government should ensure that children's rights are protected and especially the rights of orphans and other vulnerable children.

The study recommends that a situational analysis should be done across the country to establish the extent and effects of worst forms of child labour since according to the findings of the study, the future projection shows that the region will be adversely affected in its social and economic development. This in turn will affect the development agenda of the country and especially the achievement of vision 2030.