

The Influence of Wharfs on School Children: A Case Study of Portee Wharf in Freetown, Sierra Leone

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Abstract: The focus of this research is to investigate the influence of wharfs on school children. Therefore it will report the findings of the result on the influences of wharfs on school children with specific case on Portee Wharf in Freetown, Sierra Leone in West Africa. In this regard, the introduction describes the research area, stating the statement of the problem, the overall goal and specific objectives that will be attained in this study, justification for selecting the topic, problems to be encountered during the course of carrying out this research and major influences. Besides, an indication of the methods used to investigate the topic will also be highlighted. Moreover, the studies will analyze the actual responses of the respondents of the activities of the wharf on school-going children. It will address the questionnaire in accordance with the following: Background information of respondents, this investigated areas such as sex, age, religion, occupation and tribe; It enquires about the activities of the wharfs, reasons and consequences of children engaged in wharfs and strategies to control problems that may emanate from the wharf. The paper will show the findings, gives the summary, conclusion and recommendations of problems identified while carrying out the research.

Keywords: Wharf, Influence, School children.

1. Introduction

At birth, the child distinguishes nobody. He is skillful of developing just as warm a relationship of love to an adoptive mother as he would to his actual mother. But within a few months has commenced to pick out individuals in the household who are conversant and who are related in his mind with food and comfort. Soon he becomes conscious not only of how people perform towards him, but also how they behave towards each other. He develops up in a social environment, which has an honestly uniform decoration of behavior amongst its members,

because they follow to certain values and standards of conduct, politeness and custom. The causes of juvenile delinquency have their social origins in problem homes, the socio-economic status of parents television and the mass media, peer group influence and the school, to name but a few. Therefore, reduction of juvenile delinquency is a combined venture involving parents, teachers, religious leaders, the community and counselors [1].

Besides the children also participate in fishing. They use hooks to trap fish. They also

use small nets to wrap up fish. To some extent some children do go with elders to fishing in deep-water. The war over the years stimulated a large number of children in wharfs. The wharfs have increased in size in terms of population. The refugees and internally displaced people used their children to get their daily bread. The children become professional beggars in wharfs. The life in wharfs is detrimental to the future of children. The presence of films, shows, ghettos, bars pots and gambling grounds greatly influenced the progress and education of children. In that regard, children are deeply affected by their involvement in the activities in wharfs. The children are exposed to: early sex, early pregnancy, prostitution, diseases; example, Cold, HIV and AIDS, alcoholism, smoking, child labour, rape, murder, theft, truancy, idleness and juvenile delinquency to name but a few [2].

It is very necessary to study about the activities of school-going children's involvement in wharfs as this will help parents, teachers, the police, Head Teachers and community leaders to take preventive measures in protecting school-going children from wharfs for better concentration in their academic fields.. Some outcomes of poverty and Academic performance were highlighted. Yet still, there was a gap to know the results and findings of the influence of wharfs specifically on School-Going children [3].

This study will check the effect of the involvement of school children in the activities of wharfs. The Aim and Objectives of the Study is to investigate the effect of the activities at Portee Wharf on the educational development of the community with specific objectives such as:

1. To identify the activities of wharfs that negatively influences school-going children.
2. To identify the consequences of these activities on school-going children.

3. To identify measures that could be taken to prevent school-going children from involving into these activities.
4. To suggest strategies that will reduce the number of children involve in wharf activities.

A wharf is usually found in seashore serving different purposes. These wharfs have contributed immensely to the economic development of the country as a whole by providing a base for fish and fishing, transportation of commodities making and repairing of boats and a lot more. They promote the economic viability of the country through large income generation from transportation, dues, employment, fish production and trading. Nevertheless, the activities in the wharfs are so numerous that evil elements are incorporated. There are films shows, ghettos, bars, pots, gambling grounds, which instill bad influence on the children that are around the environment. As for the children, they go to school filthy and smelling bad odor for lack of care from parents. The exposure of children in wharfs influences their ways of lives. The wharfs promote prostitution, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, street trading, street children and many more. The answer to objectives of this research is to highlight the influence of the activities in wharfs on school-going children [4-5].

2. Methodology

2.1. Introduction

This section looked at the procedures used in carrying the research. It involved the research design, population and sample, research instruments, method of data collection and presentation and data analysis.

2.2. Research Design

The variable consisted of both independent variables such as fishing, measuring of fish, bars, ghettos, gambling

corners, film shows, and dependent variables such as prostitution, gambling, smoking, drug abuse, truancy, juvenile delinquency, school dropout, and fitness in school, disobedience, challenge of authority, misbehavior and poor academic work. The study area covered portee wharf and its environs. The researcher also used information from secondary and primary schools that are found around the east-end of Freetown. Teachers, pupils and concerned persons all gave testimony about their experience and observation about the topic. Portee wharf was selected because of its strategic position of incorporating all types of people, activities and forms of lives.

2.3. Population and Sample

A large number of school-going children from portee are attending the following secondary schools in Freetown:

- a) Ahmadiyya Secondary School
- b) St. Helena Secondary School
- c) Richard Allen High School
- d) Methodist Boys' High School
- e) Sierra Leone Muslim Congress Secondary School
- f) Kankaylay Secondary School for Girls
- g) Sierra Leone Muslim Union Vocational Technical and Secondary School.

The population is about 1000 people. The sample size consists of 30 school pupils, 10 police officers, 10 school teachers, some community leader and drop outs.

2.4. Research Instruments

The instrument used in this investigative study included interview guide, observation, questionnaires and discussion of certain issues.

The use of this interview guide is justified due to the fact that the respondent

(school-going children, traders, buyers, fish mongers etc) might be incompetent to respond to the items in a questionnaire. With the interview method (face to face) it is possible for the researcher to probe or go into get the required information and to rephrase the questions where they create any doubt.

Observation was used to assess genuinely the interviewee's responses. The activities at the wharf were thoroughly observed by the researcher. Also the researcher observed the different selling centers and the participation of children in all these centers.

A questionnaire guide was meant for the teachers and police officers. These two categories of people are believed to be able to read (literate) and write since that is part of their occupation. So they can share information in writing.

For more information, some issues like selling, education etc. were discussed with the target group. It was done officially or sporadically for example while selling cookery to people, while making or measuring fish etc.

2.5. Procedure

This approach used interview guide, observation, questionnaire and discussion to the teachers, police officers, school-going children, drop outs, parents and key players at the wharf.

The interview guide was read verbally to school children, parents, fish mongers etc. while their corresponding answers were filled on their behalf. The interview questions were read verbally to the respondents by the researcher himself. This is due to the high illiteracy rate of the participants in the wharf. Also, the method was applied in order to avoid skipping out some vital details from the interview as the researcher used the interview guide to ask questions.

Some other important data were collected by means of observation in the busy life of the wharf, attributes such as trading, fishing, gambling, prostitution and child-labor, treatment of children, the behavior of parents to their children.

Besides the questionnaires were administered by given them to teachers/police officers randomly selected in schools/police station and were given time to fill the question at their leisure hours. The researcher was available for further clarification to avoid misinterpretation of the questions or any question. The researcher collected the questionnaires from the teachers and police officers at the end of the exercise.

2.6. Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was treated or analyzed by qualitative and quantitative means. The data elicited from questionnaires, interview, observation and discussion were carefully assembled collated and thoroughly looked at. Trends revealed from these were thus analyzed through quantitative and qualitative expressions.

Table 1. Categories of Respondents

Types of Respondents	Sex		Total	Percentage
	Male	Female		
School Pupils	17	13	30	60%
Police	7	3	10	20%
teachers	5	5	10	20%
Total	29	21	50	100%

Table 2. Religious Background of Respondents

Religion	School Children	Police	Teachers	Total	Percentage
Islam	25	6	8	39	78%
Christianity	5	4	2	11	22%
Freethinker	-	-	-	-	-
Total	30	10	10	50	100%

3. Results and Discussion

The data analysis below was made in respect of the interviews conducted, questionnaires administered and observation made in the research of the influence of Portee Wharf on school-going children.

The analysis indeed shows that 30 school children were interviewed, 10 teachers and 10 police responded to questionnaires, and a general observation was made taken into consideration of so many parameters within the Portee Wharf activities. Simple selection was done on a random basis with a view of giving each school child, teacher, police a reasonable chance of being represented in the sample. The following are results obtained from analysis of Data.

3.2. Results

Table 1 shows the respondents, which are pupils, police and teachers. The pupils' number was higher at 60% while the police and teachers were 20% respectively.

Table 3. Tribes of the Respondents

Tribes	School Children	Police	Teachers	Total	Percentage
Loko	7	-	-	7	14%
Temne	19	4	6	29	58%
Mende	2	4	2	8	16%
Creole	-	1	1	2	4%
Limba	2	1	1	4	8%
	30	10	10	50	100%

Table 4. School Children's Report

	ACTIVITIES IN THE WHARF									
	No. of Respondents	Fishing	Gambling	Selling	Smoking Hemp	Watching Films	Toting	Drinking Alcohol	Swimming	Gathering Fish
School Children	30	30	25	30	-	30	18	-	24	30
%		100%	83%	100%	-	100%	60%	-	80%	100%

Table 5. Teachers' Point of view about the Activities at the Wharf Engaged by School Pupils

Respondents	No. of Teachers	ACTIVITIES IN THE WHARF							
		Fishing	Gambling	Selling	Smoking Hemp	Watching Film	Prostitution	Drinking Alcohol	Swimming
Teacher	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 6. Police Point of View about the Activities at the Wharf where School-Going Children are Engages

Respondents	No. of Teachers	ACTIVITIES IN THE WHARF							
		Fishing	Gambling	Selling	Smoking Hemp	Watching Film	Prostitution	Drinking Alcohol	Swimming
Police	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 2 indicates that the religions that are predominant in Portee Wharf area are Islam and Christianity. From the table, 78% of respondents are Muslims while 22% are Christians. This is also manifested by the presence of Seven Mosques in the area while there is only one church.

Table 3 shows a clear picture of the tribes that are found within Portee Wharf. From the table it is observed that Temne carries the highest percentage of 58%. This indicates that Temne people are the majority. Besides, the language that is predominantly heard spoken in and around Portee Wharf is

Temne. Although the area is mostly dominated by Temne people yet still there are other tribes. The Mendes are the second largest with 16%, while the Loko are closed to the Mendes with 14% percent in the area. There are other minority tribes like Limba with 8% and Creole 4%.

In a bid to properly identify the general information of the respondents, it is worthy to note that, the school children formed the bulk of respondent, which is 60% of the respondent. The police and the teachers were just 20% each.

In addition, the Muslims are the majority to the Christians. Besides the area is predominantly Temne. Temne is the common language mostly spoken by people. Indeed there are other majority tribes like Mende, Loko and Creole.

3.2.2. Section B - The Activities at the Wharf in which School-Going Children are engaged

Table 4 illustrates that 30 school children were interviewed; all of them are engaged in fishing, selling, watching films and gathering fish by the seashore. Therefore all the school children are 100% involved in all these activities. Besides, 83% are engaged in gambling and 80% in swimming. Those who carry loads for payment represent 60%. With regards to smoking hemp and drinking alcohol, no school child admitted involving in the act.

Table 5 shows the teachers' point of views about the activities that school-going children are engaged in the wharf. From the table it is clear that 100 percent of the teachers say that School Children are engaged in all the activities listed on the table, which are: Fishing, Gambling, Selling, Smoking Hemp, Watching Film, Prostitution, Drinking Alcohol, Swimming and Gathering of Fish.

Table 6 shows that 100% of the respondents (Police) asserted that, school-going children are involved in all the activities at the Wharf. The school-going children participate in fishing, gambling, selling, smoking hemp, watching film, prostitution, drinking alcohol, swimming and gathering fish – this is clear with 100% for all the activities.

From the three tables above – which analyses responses from school children, teachers and police, it indicates that school children are engaged in fishing, selling, watching film and gathering fish at the wharf. As for gambling, toting, swimming, some school children accept their involvement while others do not. In fact, school children did not admit their involvement in smoking hemp and drinking alcohol. But the teachers and the police unanimously agreed that school-going children are involved in all the activities in the wharf –which are as follows: fishing, gambling, selling, smoking hemp, watching film, toting, drinking alcohol, swimming and gathering of fish.

From my observation, adolescent male pupils who are seen loitering around ghettos, rum bars and some gambling spots, some are seen smoking hemp in the open ghettos. However, from my observation, they represent a very small percentage. Female school children are mostly seen in the video centres watching film.

Male adolescent pupils mingled with non-school-going children in other activities like playing football and setting a round Ataya shops drinking Ataya and arguing on different topics ranging from politics to football clubs in Europe.

3.2.3. Section C - Reasons for School-Going Children Engaging in Wharf Act

Table 7 illustrates the reasons for school-going children going to the wharf. The table clearly indicates that, 100% of them go to the wharf through peer group influence. Just as

the saying goes, birds of the same feathers flock together, school children participate in the wharf with their fellows in fishing, playing games, watching films, setting idly, discussing and arguing on varying topic in Ataya Shops. Besides, 100% also go to the wharf to “dreg” meaning looking for ways of getting money. This is done through selling, toting, gambling and even prostitution. One of the school-going children indicates that they go to the wharf for the schooling purposes. Indeed the wharf is not a conducive pace for learning. Everybody is busy with selling or movement from one place to another, talking here and there, and the noise is sometimes unbearable.

Table 8 analyses the views of the teachers with regard to the reasons for the engagement of school-going children in the wharf. The table above clearly shows that 100% of respondents attributed the going of school children into the wharf area to sell and help family member. 80% of the respondents say they go there for fishing and playing and 60% say that they go for begging lunch from

relatives. More so, 50% and 30% go for swimming and visiting relatives respectively.

Table 9 illustrates that, there is 100% accepted opinion from respondents of the engagement of school-going children at the wharf, for each of the following; peer group influence, selling, fishing and playing and watching films. There is also 80% group influence, selling, fishing and playing and watching films. There is also 80% and 50% acceptance that children go there for gambling and swimming respectively.

As analyzed in the three tables above, it is true that all three categories agreed on the following as the major reasons for engaging in the wharf peer group influence and selling. It is obvious that peer pressure offers children a chance to be instrumental for one another's growth and change. Because of the opportunities for interaction in groups, the members can express their concerns and be genuinely by their parents or guardians. 67% indicated that such children are involved in raids, when found loitering in ghettos.

Table 7. School Children's Reasons

Respondent	No. of Children	Reasons for Going to the Wharf		
		Peer Group Influence	Schooling Purposes	To Seek Source of Living
School children	30	30	-	30
%	100%	100%	-	100%

Table 8. Teachers Preseason's for School Children Engaging in Wharf Activities

Respondent for Engagement in Wharf	No. of Respondent	Total Percentage
Peer group influence	10	100%
Help family members	10	100%
Beg Lunch from relatives	6	60%
Visit Relatives	3	30%
Fishing and Playing	8	80%
Swimming	5	50%
Selling to sustain the home	10	100%

Table 9. Police Reasons for School Children Engage in Wharf Activities

Respondent for Engagement in Wharf	No. of Respondent	Total Percentage
Peer group influence	10	100%
Selling to make money	10	100%
Fishing and playing	10	100%
Swimming	5	50%
Gambling for money	8	80%
Watching Films	10	50%

Table 11. Teachers' Point of View of the Consequences of the Wharf Activities

Consequences	No. of Respondent (10)	Total Percentage
Irregular in School	10	100%
Not punctual in school	10	100%
Truancy	10	100%
Scolding by Parent	10	100%
Stealing	10	100%
Abusing	10	100%
Arrested in Raiding	10	100%
Smoking	10	100%
Poor Health	10	100%
Drugs Addicted	10	100%
Fighting	10	100%

Table 12. The Police's Point of View on the Consequences of Wharf Activities on the School-Going Children

Consequences	No. of Respondent (10)	Total Percentage
Stealing	10	100%
Abusing	10	100%
Smoking	10	100%
Fighting	10	100%
Slap others	10	100%
Drug Addict	10	100%
Prostitution	10	100%
Drop Outs	10	100%
Street Children	10	100%
Smuggling	10	100%
Street Traders	10	100%

Table 11 shows that 100% of the respondents agreed that school-going children that engaged in different activities at the wharf, are exposed to all the consequences which include: irregular in school, not punctual in school, truancy, scolding by parent, stealing, abusing, police arrest in raiding, smoking, poor health, drug addiction and fighting in school and at home.

Table 12 indicates that, 100% of the respondent accepted that school-going children who engaged in various activities at the wharf are involved in the following problems: stealing, abusing, smoking of hemp, fighting, stabbing of other people, drug addiction, prostitution, drop out of school, street children, street trading and smuggling.

4. Discussion

From the analysis in the tables (1-12) respectively on consequences on school-going children on the activities at the wharf, it was unanimously agreed that, school-going pupil's activities at the wharf resulted into: stealing, abusing and fighting. Such crimes are very common within the school; some of these children steal their friends; pens, books and other properties. A case in point from one teacher related to the researcher that, on 23/2/18 a sister of one school pupils came to the school one morning and complained her sister that she stole her wrist watch. The school pupils denied but her bag was immediately searched and the wrist watch was found – This took place at the Sierra Leone Muslim Union Secondary School, Portee. Besides, the school children usually fight each other often. They also confront their teachers. In the same school above, the researcher was told by a teacher that school pupils determine which punishment to give to them if they commit any crime, failure to conform, result into confrontation with the teachers. Another case was related to researcher that, in Kankaylay Islamic Secondary School –Kissy

Mess-Mess, two girls abused each other in class to the extent that they fought and both were expelled from the school. This happened on 10th April 2018.

In addition, school children and teachers agreed that the wharf involvement result to lateness in school and absenteeism. The researcher observed the negative attitudes of the indigenes of Portee area towards education. They marry a lot of women who are active in finding money in the wharf. These women have a lot of children who they cannot control and care for adequately, or educate. The few ones, who send their children to school, also use these children to sell or their daily chores which interferes with the children's schooling. In the morning, children perform a great deal of work like pushing the boats to the sea, checking for the presence of nets, fetching water, assisting in cookery shops, piling of wood and selling soda or related items before going to school. With these works school-going children are usually late to school. Others willfully force the children to continue with the housework and forget about the school for some days. Other children are influenced by the environment because they see their peers playing around they also feel the same by joining their friends to play and by that they are absent from school.

Furthermore, the teachers and the police pointed out that some of the consequences are: drug addiction and smoking. As related to the researcher by a teacher in Kankaylay Secondary for girls, sometimes the principal searched the bags of girls to look out for a stolen watch in one form one. Unfortunately, a rubber of Sasman (hard rum) was found in one of the bags of the girls. On enquiring, it was revealed that there was a group of girls that were meeting during lunch at a secret place to drink alcohol within the school.

Also in Sierra Leone Muslim Congress Secondary School, another teacher related that, school children want with a pistol to class. As one of the teachers wanted to punish him for disrupting the class, the child took out the pistol and pointed it to the teacher. The teacher was panicked and he ran out of the class.

The police also pointed out that other consequences are: Prostitution leading to early and teenage pregnancies and diseases like sexually transmitted diseases, drop outs, street children, smuggling and street trading. From observations by the researcher, majority of the men and women in the wharf had started schooling sometimes but could not further. The researcher observed many can listen to BBC focus in Africa news and do understand the message to some extent. Others have record books to write some of their businesses. More so, the researcher observed the presence of school girls with uniform. They are always by a corner on the stones by the seashore with some men. From the police observation, these girls always have some dresses in their bags. At times they change along the way or in the pots or ghettos. Some girls do not go to school at all; they spend the day with boys or men during the school hours, and only return to their houses at the end of school day [6].

The police had also observed that since school children in and around the wharf carry loads for money, some people who may smuggle things to the wharf, at times, give it to young boys to carry it for them to a particular place while they go ahead or standby far enough not to be noticed or caught. If the load is intercepted, the owner may not appear to claim it. The police arrested some loads from children (who are school children without uniform) without the owner appearing.

Of course, street children are so many in the wharf. The results of the rebel war that has forced some people to move to the city with their parents. Time was hard for them so

they could not continue their school. The parents whose properties have being vandalized from their home are still fighting to live in Freetown. There is a large number of these people in the wharf. Their children who could not continue school are many in street trading. So many of them are sleeping on booths, broken houses, boats and many other places in and around the wharf [7].

4.1.1 Section E - Strategies to Solve the Problems

The respondents suggested strategies to minimize the problems of wharf activities of school-going children. According to the researcher, the three categories of respondents suggested ways of minimizing these problems to parents/guardian, the government and the school/community.

4.1.2 Strategies for Parents/Guardians

1. To encourage school-going children by giving them their needs, monitor their behavior both at home and school.
2. To collaborate with teachers to provide extra classes for school-going children so they are always kept busy.
3. To empower the harbor master to be strict with school children to avoid the wharf, especially within school uniform.
4. To stop sending children to sell during school time.
5. To prevent their children from involving in the wharf activities.
6. To provide the children with recreational facilities that will keep them at home.
7. Children are provided with food and other necessities.
8. To monitor the peer group of children, so that proper guidance is provided for the holistic development of child.

9. To stop using children as a source of income.
10. To explain to children the danger of association to the wharf.
11. To spend time with children so that their problems are known.
12. Children should not be taken along for fishing [8].

4.1.3. Strategies for Community/School

1. Provision of recreational facilities to keep the children within the school
2. Make bye-laws that will control the involvement of children in the wharf.
3. The school community should be in readiness to monitor their activities and teach children the value of education.
4. Develop their environment and control the area.
5. Strong measures against any parent whose child is caught within the wharf premises.
6. Regular meetings to plan for the progress of the children through CTA meeting.
7. The community should empower the school to severely deal with any school child caught in the wharf with school uniform.
8. In respect to this, the community should make rules and regulations to help the school administration to combat the odd behavior of school-going children.
9. Form special committees that are geared towards the protection of children in the wharf.
10. To establish extra lesson that will keep the children busy instead of loitering around.
11. The school teachers must bring the children's misbehaviour to the notice of the parent/guardian.

12. To control their children and allow them to engage in learning.
13. To put laws against anybody misusing and abusing children [9].

4.1.4. Strategies for Government

1. Government should set up police post in the wharf to control and regulate the activities of the wharf.
2. To set up workshops for parents and community member with special attention to the involvement of children in the wharf and its consequences.
3. To give scholarship to children so that they will be able to learn.
4. To direct and encourage some NGOs that will help eradicate the poverty scale of people.
5. Build more school that will accommodate children so that they will be kept busy.
6. Empower the police, schools and community authorities in controlling the affairs of the wharf environment.
7. Teachers paid promptly so that they will put their attentions to the children.
8. Provide employment for people so that they can be able to meet their family obligations.
9. Abolish all ghettos, bar, "pot" within the children vicinity.
10. To inflict punishment to parents who treat children as child laborers.
11. Provide recreational facilities for schools and special incentives to motivate school-going pupils.
12. Enforce the law of compulsory education for school-going children with proper monitoring of teachers to do the work efficiently.
13. Establish school, Technical and Vocational Institutions in the community sensitize the

community about the advantage of Education.

14. The Guidance Counsellors should be employed in schools [10, 11].

5. Conclusion

In the school setting, school pupils often display behavior problems, such as excessive fighting, chronic tiredness, truancy, drug abuse, stubbornness, extreme withdrawal, incapability to get along with peers and abandonment of appearance. The family is the rudimentary unit of any society. This is because it is on the family that basic needs are fulfilled. Besides, the family is the place where personality building and values are communicated and acquired. Strong family units make good societies.

The consequences of this is that there is the tendency of these children to influence other children attending with schools with whom they share time, as the street child trader already exposed to handing money on his or her own, tend to influence other children in school who don't carry money along as much their counterparts – other school-going children. This gross violation of the children's right by parent or guardians must be checked now if we would want to see well-raised children of this country.

In modeling, contingency contracting, shaping and reinforcing student behavior in order to curb juvenile delinquency, teacher's administrators and counselors, should realize that relevance is the key issue to be considered. School programmers should help young people to know their rights and responsibilities. School children who might have become delinquent for want of a school programmed, which is relevant to their particular interests and needs, should find a vent for their special talents.

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