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Illegal mining impact on children's basic education: The case of selected mining municipal and district assemblies in Ghana

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Abstract
The issue of illegal mining activities in Ghana has attracted the interest of both the international and local community. This work investigated the consequences of illegal mining activities on children's basic education at some selected mining districts in Ghana. The study leveraged school attendance data which was gleaned from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) Population and Housing Census platform. In addition, mining area data were sourced from literature and the Ghana Chamber of Mines (GCM). The research showed that minors' education is affected substantially, upon their participation in mining activities. Specifically, the most glaring effect was on their basic education attendance. Further, parental pressure and poverty were among the primary cause reasons children engaged in illegal mining operations. Overall, community stakeholders were advised as a form of recommendation to focus more of their efforts on combating children's engagement in illegal mining activities.

Keywords: illegal mining activities, school attendance data, Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census

Introduction

Education systems around the world are very concerned about the attendance and performance of elementary school students. Importantly, education serves as a reliable gauge of the effectiveness of a nation's leadership in the future. The foundation for higher education is the basic knowledge and skills learned in primary school. The purpose of education, be it formal or informal, according to McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975) [27], has been to bring out people who will be valuable members of society. People with appropriate education are better able to contribute meaningfully to maximize productivity because they have the requisite knowledge, skills, competencies, and capacities. Research has shown that a nation's social, political, and economic well-being is directly impacted by education. With reference to the education national development nexus, Herowitz (1960) [21] asserts that the efficiency of a worker is directly linked to their level of education. It is widely acceptable that developmental sustainability is an importance of education. Advanced nations such as Korea. America, England, Germany etcetera, where the literacy rate is high is a demonstration of the importance of education. It is a burgeoning fact that the level of development is very high as a result of their high level of literacy rate. Education provides the knowledge and abilities to find and produce things we need. Most African countries like Ghana, a third world country have the circumstance to be different despite the fact that our educational policy mandates attendance at school for all students who are of school age. However, according to UNICEF (2000), in actuality, 20% of children who are supposed to be in school remain at home and are involved in various working activities that can be qualified as child labor.

In recent times, the rapid technological growth is a clear testament that any nation or group that disregards education will fade out in this global village of ours. As indicated by Hilson (2008) [22], there is a growing amount of attention being paid both domestically and globally to the problem of minors being involved in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) industry. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of minor engagement in illegal mining, with Asia and the Pacific coming in second and third. In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Ghana, there is a growing trend of minors being involved in illicit gold mining activities.

It is noteworthy that, one social issue linked to the growth of industrial production and capitalism is the involvement of minors in illicit mining activities. According to estimates from the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2013), 200 million minors are working worldwide between the ages of five (5) and fourteen (14) years old. The majority of these minor workers are abused, forced to labor long hours in appalling conditions, and deprived of their fundamental rights, like access to healthcare or education (ILO, 2013).

The growing high unemployment rate across the nation is the major factor contributing to the significant increase of illicit mining operators. There is great concern, fear, and anxiety growing among those who are involved in illegal mining activities due to the practice's destructive impact on the environment and the issue of children working at these artisanal mining sites, which has drawn attention from across the country, per Darbi (2011) [12].

Keehn (2010) alludes that of some 30,000-50,000 illegal mining operators in Ghana, an estimated 10,000 of them are minors of school-going age putting their lives and health in jeopardy. Undoubtedly, the majority of young people's involvement in mining and other menial work as a means to amass wealth quickly is on the rise in Ghana. Children have also observed that the most affluent individuals in the community possess minimal or no educational qualifications. Mostly some of the financially secure individuals within these areas are private business owners, who have never attended school. This has attracted school-aged children who are to be in school supposedly to involve themselves in illegal mining activities. The government implemented a number of programs to promote consistent attendance at school. For instance, the establishment of a Capitation Grants policy to cover the tuition of students gives parents and guardians a form of relief from paying such fees. This policy aims at promoting equal opportunity to students from rich and poor homes. Yet children in these mining communities are actively involved and participate in illicit mining activities and hence do not attend school. It is a very serious issue because attending school is the foundation for self-development and nation-building. It is significant to note that punctuality is a key factor for a successful education. In light of the above issue, this study sought to examine the illegal mining impact on the basic school education of children. The issue of the nature, causes, and trends of children's engagement in illicit gold mining activities must be clearly understood to be addressed amicably. Against this backdrop, the study seeks to provide answers to the following questions (1) what is the perception about children's involvement in illicit mining activities in Ghana (2) what are the factors that cause children's involvement in illegal mining activities (3) What is the impact of illegal mining activities on children's basic education in selected mining districts and municipals in Ghana.

Literature Review

The factors that encourage young people into illegal small-scale mining activities

Despite environmental concerns, illegal mining remains a significant issue, with people actively engaged in this practice despite its widespread media coverage on the risks and dangers involved. The reasons why people participate in illegal mining activities despite the risks have not been well investigated. According to Ofosu-Mensah and Ababio (2011) [33], mining especially gold and related activities are first and foremost considered highly alluring, particularly for individuals who are looking for a good fortune. As a result, to raise their standard of living, the youth from nearby mining areas who are unemployed have moved to the mining sites. Akabzaa (2000) [1], reported that almost all young individuals who work as illegal mining workers do so because they cannot find employment because of their lack of education and experience. Because of the rewards associated with the trade, this has been a major factor in the increment of migrants involved in illicit mineral extraction activities.

The second important factor is societal status and a luxurious way of living life. Ofosu-Mensah and Ababio (2011) [33] suggested that among the reasons why most young individuals are swarming toward the mining industry is because of the societal high status and luxurious way of life that these miners lead. The concept of prestige defines a reputation or influence that results from accomplishment, success, status, or other positive qualities. Based on reports, gold miners make approximately USD 100.00 a day on average. As individuals tend to be paid this money every day when they report for work, they have additional funds to spend on indulgences. Thus, with this, one may finally engage in illicit mining activities.

Another reason why young people participate in illegal gold activities is the prospect of becoming wealthy. Mining individuals are said to have a higher chance of becoming wealthy quickly than those in other vocations. As indicated by Ofosu-Mensah (1999), non-compliance with the law against illegal mining activities may have resulted from the socio-cultural value of gold mining in traditionally wealthy communities of the nation, as well as the challenges associated with monitoring and enforcement. It is often believed that the primary cause of school-age young people dropping out and starting jobs is poverty.

Families in rural areas turn to mining as a means of increasi ng their income (Bloeman, 2009; Bo-as and Hatloy, 2006; Hilson, 2010) [9, 23]. Additionally, lower-income households tend to have more children, making it extremely impossible for them to depend on just a member of the family with a relatively meager salary.

They thus turn to their children as a source of income. As reported, these minors with the least age of eight years old labor to support their jobless guardians, using the money they make for clothing and food. In addition, others drop out of school to earn money, particularly if their parents are not able to support them. As a result, the majority of these school-aged children stop attending school since they believe that more money is received from the mining industry rather than the value education provides. Furthermore, some parents and guardians are so inconsiderate that they expect young children to take care of themselves as indicated by Bloeman (2009) [9].

The factors that influence basic school attendance

In Rural Africa, the majority of schools, according to a World Bank Report from 2000, have deteriorating structures, and the desks, chairs, and tables are either damaged or missing. There are inadequate sanitary facilities there. The study revealed that the facilities are in poor condition as a result of a lack of a maintenance culture, which deters students from attending. Farrant (1988) [13] reported that children's attendance at school can decline as a result of the way school activities are organized, which breeds boredom. He believed that other factors, such as strict teaching

methods, school anxiety, peer bullying, and others, also have an impact on students' punctuality at school. Additionally, he mentioned that some parents and guardians encourage younger ones to work instead of attending school.

Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) [6] asserts, in the same opinion that school children in Ghana's urban centers find it extremely simple to skip class or participate in absenteeism. While some children may arrive at school and disappear after a couple of hours, some children leave their homes under the false impression that they are going to school. Instead, they arrive at the school and are discovered somewhere doing their own thing. According to Asiedu-Akrofi, some of the children tend to avoid going to school if they think that either the facilitator or some of the students like them. As a result, students who disapprove of the teacher's teaching methods get weary. All things considered, chronic absenteeism results in low attendance at school, which in turn leads to poor academic results. While Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) [6] and other studies agree that chronic absenteeism does lead to subpar performance in the classroom, they disagree with the idea that uninteresting teacher instruction is the primary reason for low attendance. The researcher does concede, though, that sometimes students are pulled into some very alluring extracurricular activities.

According to Lockhead and Verspoor (1991), students and t eachers tend to be absent from developing countries because the fundamental components of a well-organized school environment are usually absent as well. In the same way, Quaigrain (1988) [40] believed that the majority of guardians who work as fishmongers and fishermen urge wards to assist them in their fishing endeavors rather than going to school. Those who are girls help with the sale and preservation of fish, while the boys join the fishing team. The wards are made to believe that, supporting the family in that aspect is a way of keeping other relatives well-off by enabling them to make enough money to maintain the family and keep them from having to go to school, these parents hope to keep their children morally intact.

According to Zaney (2010) [48], sexual harassment in schools is a problem that has to be addressed because gifted girls and schoolchildren are subtly withdrawing from both sports and education as a result of it (Ghana Daily Graphic). Sexual exploitation in a school setting refers to obtaining sexual favors in return for high marks and other advantages like not having to pay for supplies or school fees. In addition to tight enforcement of current regulations, the author advocates for an effective legislative framework that would make all sexual connections between instructors and pupils unlawful. While sexual exploitation was not mentioned by the author as a factor influencing students' attendance at school, it is obvious that such a habit and embarrassing relationships will inevitably result in subpar attendance and attractive performance.

A study conducted in Bangladesh by Ravallion and Wodon (2000) [43] found no correlation between child labor and enrollment in school. According to research conducted in Ghana by Boozer and Suri (2001) [11], every hour that a child works reduces their attendance at school by approximately 0.38 hours. According to Psacharopoulos (1997), children who work sacrifice roughly two years of education. In a similar vein, Levy (1985) [25], Rosenzweig and Evenson (1977) [44] noticed that children who made to work decrease when educational institution enrollment increases as parents' societal status standing and literacy attainment also have an impact on school attendance. Students' attendance at school is also influenced by a number of factors, including the school's location, the way they approach their studies and the teachers, the lack of facilities, and the way parents and teachers supervise their children's activities (Oghuvbu, 1998 & Alio, 2003) [34, 3]. Poor instruction quality, students' dismal attitudes toward learning, crammed classrooms, and subpar infrastructure in schools are a few of the issues that have been highlighted (Oghuvbu 1998, 2000, and 2003) [34]. Children's educational achievements are ultimately influenced by the quantity household resources, Haveman and Wolfe (1995) [19].

Impact of illegal mining activities on basic education.

It is impossible to examine child labor alone without also considering education and how child labor affects it. Therefore, the impact of child labor on children's education. Has it had a positive or detrimental impact on children's education? Consequently, this is the query we pose. This connection may be shown by looking at the Children's Act since the age at which children are anticipated to graduate from junior high school is also the minimal age for child labor. While it is impossible to definitively state that education ensures financial stability or even socioeconomic mobility, it does provide a child with the chance to have a better life than their parents.

The Education Act of 1961 and the 1992 Constitution, both of which support free, compulsory primary education, demo nstrate Ghana's recognition of the value of education (UNIC EF, 2000).

There were numerous ways in which mining impacted children's education. Children spent a lot more time and effort mining than they did paying attention to the lessons that were being given in class. As a result of spending so much time mining, children have not participated as well in class, and many of them have fallen asleep during class hours owing to exhaustion. Many children decide not to attend school at all due to the quick wealth they acquire from mining.

Theoretical framework

To explain why children, get involved in illegal mining activity, the study used Parsons and Goldin's (1989) [38] theories of market failure and multiple equilibrium.

The market failure and multiple equilibrium theory places a strong emphasis on the relationship between market features and child labor, suggesting specific market manipulations as a potential remedy. It assumes that guardians and parents are seen to be responsible for the care and well-being of other family members. For example, Basu (1999) [8] evaluated the scenario where child labor is driven by rigidities in the adult labor market. From this vantage point, he sees a market where adult unemployment rises due to a downwardly inflexible adult wage. The likelihood that a child will work is higher in cases where an adult is unemployed.

Parsons and Goldin (1989) [38] looked at how decisions made in the physical and human capital markets affected school attendance and child labor. On the other hand, parents have the ability to invest in both physical and human capital, specifically in their children's education. Both direct and indirect educational costs are included in the investment of human capital. Grootaert and Kanbur (1995) primarily examined the benefits that an educated child provides to the broader public. Because of this, a subsidy for schooling will help internalize the externality and may even have some

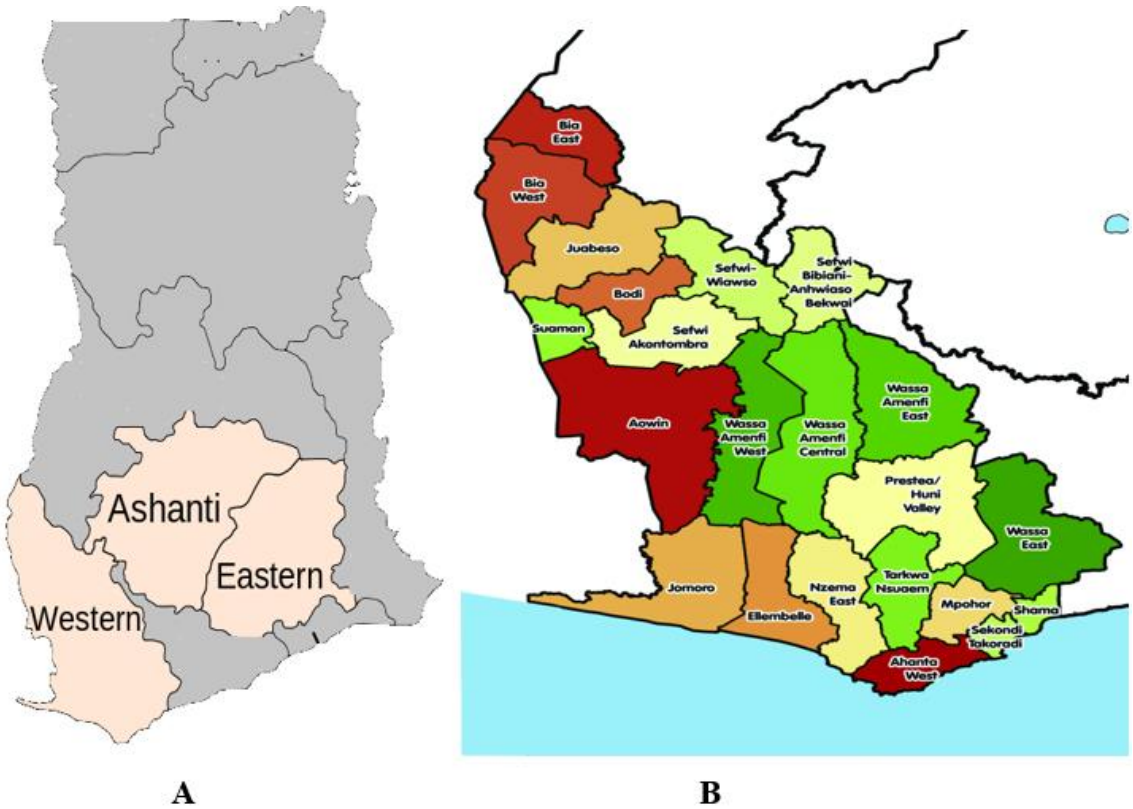
advantages over ending child labor. The scenario in which the majority of amiable parents remove their kids from the workforce when the adult income hits a certain threshold was studied by Basu and Van (1998). Basu (1999) [8] and Ranjan (2001) [41] both came to similar results while examining the evolving effects of capital market failure. Ranjan (2001) [42] examines the circumstances in which extremely low-income families would not be able to have access to the capital market when such families want to educate their wards, because of the market failure. It is also well known that these families raise impoverished, illiterate children who then perpetuate the pattern for the following generation. According to this model, if a family makes a deliberate effort to educate one generation of these children, they will eventually be able to move away from the point at which they are dependent on their children's labor to survive.

Methodology

Study site selection and description

The Western, Ashanti, and Eastern Region of Ghana were selected for the study and represent the most active mining activity regions in Ghana.

They have the highest concentration of large gold mining companies (LSMs) and regulated artisanal small-scale gold mining companies (ASMs) as well as being the highest producer of Gold in Ghana (ICMM AND GCM (2015); Griffis *et al*., (2002); GSS (2021)). It is believed that illegal mining activities are prevalent in areas with LSMs and regulated ASM operations.

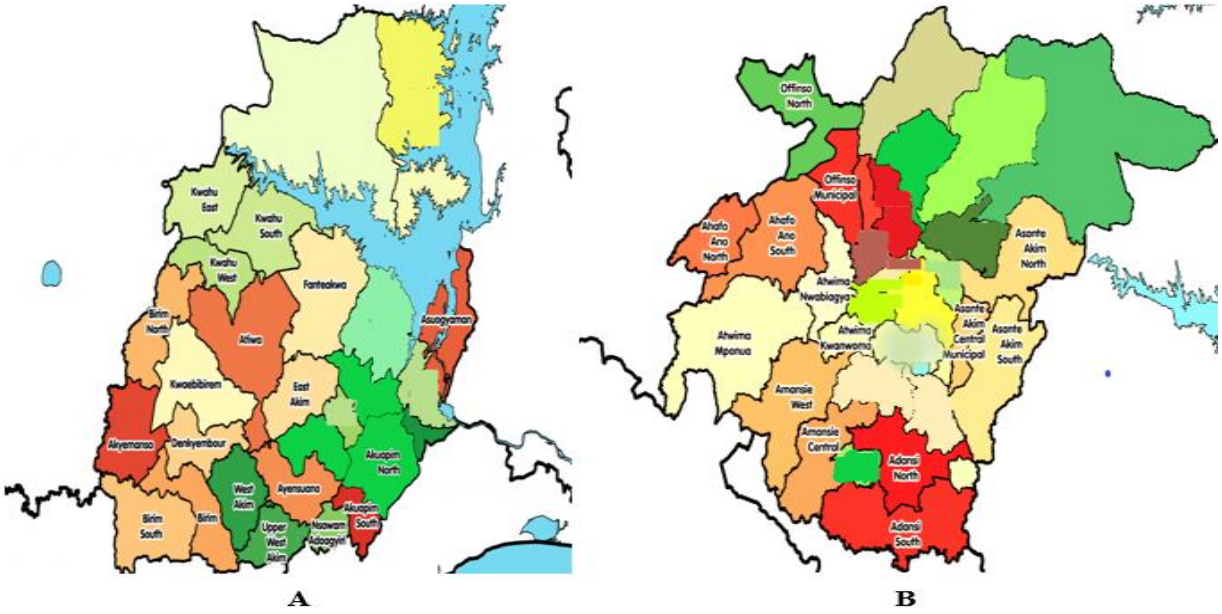


***Source*:** Adapted from ghanareview.com and Local Government Service

Fig 1: Illustration A is the map of Ghana showing the selected regional Locations and B shows the distribution of MDAs in the Western Region of Ghana

From Western Region, eleven (11) Municipal, and District Assemblies (MDAs) in the region were chosen for the study (refer to Figure 1). In Ashanti (refer to Figure 2) and Eastern Region eighteen (18) (refer to Figure 3) and seventeen (17) Municipal, and District Assemblies (MDAs) were respectively selected.

In selecting the districts for the study, most of the districts chosen host LSMs. Other random districts selected are known to be hosting ASMs and have a rich illegal mining history. The total number of selected districts from the three (3) regions was forty-six (46).



***Source*:** Local Government Service

Fig 2: Illustrations A and B show the map distribution of MDAs of the Eastern and Ashanti Region of Ghana respectively

Data collection

The data collection for the study involved two distinct phases namely the planning and preparatory phase and the secondary data collection phase. An examination of relevant research was part of the planning and preparation stage. Literature on the various mining areas in Ghana types of from published and unpublished reports (Amankwah *et al*., (2003) [5]; Amegbey *et al*., (2003) [4]; Mantey *et al*., (2016) [28]; Ntibrey *et al*., (2001) [31] and media reports (Ghanaweb (2017) [14]; Modernghana (2022)) were reviewed. This was done to obtain information on all the mining districts in Ghana where legal and illegal mining activities are prevalent. To identify the selected MDAs with illegal gold activities, as well as their geographical, demographic, social, and economic characteristics, a review of literature and information on the chosen regions was conducted.

Table 1: Selected mining MDAs in the Western Region and number of children that never attended school

	Ages and sex of children that never attend school					
	3-5 years		6-10 years		11-14 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Region						
Western Region						
Selected MDAs						
Ellembelle	1010	808	353	356	206	191
Nzema East	210	198	582	520	228	215
Wassa East	1107	966	464	404	234	142
Mpohor	331	301	156	119	65	59
Tarkwa-Nsuaem	1147	1091	389	369	162	181
Prestea/Huni Valley	2047	1862	827	751	403	372
Wassa Amenfi East	1475	1321	551	500	301	370
Wassa Amenfi Central	1159	1085	453	470	246	248
Wassa Amenfi West	1295	1176	488	448	224	187
Jomoro	1150	1042	449	417	222	249
Ahanta West	948	917	384	312	216	164

***Source*:** Computational by author based on the Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census (2021) data

The several topics under discussion were also examined using established analytical techniques. A more traditional method is used to analyze school attendance. The attendance for school going age children is examined within the framework of prevalent mining areas using cross-sectional data from Ghana Statistical Service (2021), Population and Housing Census. This employs graphical representations to demonstrate trends and explanations providing the rationale for the prevailing patterns.

Table 2: Selected mining MDAs in the Ashanti Region and number of children that never attended school

	Ages and sex of children that never attend school					
	3-5 years		6-10 years		11-14 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Region						

Ashanti Region						
Selected MDAs						
Amansie South	807	740	221	230	133	158
Amansie Central	692	605	212	178	95	112
Akrofuom	462	388	146	125	49	56
Adansi South	873	787	225	196	85	75
Adansi Asokwa	597	519	147	129	63	53
Adansi North	211	150	56	52	24	24
Amansie West	871	782	198	175	106	100
Atwima Kwanwoma	695	674	177	147	96	96
Asante Akim South	844	722	234	197	97	87
Asante Akim North	593	551	219	206	101	115
Atwima Nwabiagya North	584	527	210	206	110	122
Atwima Nwabiagya South	460	447	108	86	41	61
Atwima Mponua	1547	1412	483	443	192	199
Ahafo Ano South West	763	671	173	196	86	105
Ahafo Ano North	816	780	224	178	89	66
Ahafo Ano South East	727	633	204	162	68	72
Offinso North	1265	1174	650	622	275	261
Offinso	1319	1221	491	414	211	203

***Source*:** Computation by author based on the Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census (2021) data

Table 3: Selected mining MDAs in the Eastern Region and number of children that never attended school

	Ages and sex of children that never attend school					
	3-5 years		**6-10 years**		**11-14 years**	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Region						
Eastern Region						
Selected MDAs						
West Akim	766	643	290	234	109	99
Upper West Akim	781	722	334	229	130	90
Ayensuano	1021	918	372	334	120	81
Nsawam Adoagyiri	565	500	165	144	78	92
Akwapim South	424	384	93	83	33	35
Abuakwa South	498	457	127	103	61	42
Denkyembuor	239	217	99	75	45	36
Akyemansa	588	450	192	119	92	54
Kwaebibirem	424	365	145	125	69	48
Birim North	381	299	113	83	53	55
Atiwa West	219	216	54	52	50	34
Atiwa East	271	268	82	60	39	29
Fanteakwa South	245	213	245	213	21	31
Asuogyaman	713	591	223	167	64	74
Fanteakwa North	559	521	288	198	102	73
Kwahu South	679	537	235	151	122	80
Kwahu West	600	552	168	155	100	85
Kwahu East	701	574	350	254	157	82

***Source*:** Computation by author based on the Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census (2021) data

Data analysis

In analyzing the data, descriptive statistical tools like histograms and percentages were employed. Due to the kind of data used for this work, various data analysis techniques were combined and used.

Results and Discussions

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The majority of wards who never attended school were males 52.8% while the rest were females. Moreover, the majority of children never attended school 65.3% were between 3 years and 5 years while 23.7% were aged between 6 years and 10 years and the rest were aged between 11 years and 14 years as illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Sex and age categorization of the population

Background characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	54051	52.8
Female	48325	47.2
Total	102376	100
Age		
3-5 years	66848	65.3
6-10 years	24260	23.7
11-14 years	11268	11
Total	102376	100

***Source*:** Computational data by the author based on the Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census (2021) data.

The perception people have about children's engagement in illegal mining activities

The research discovered the high majority of children that have never attended school in hotspot mining areas (the selected districts) which may be attributed to children's involvement in mining activities. Consequently, it is important to determine whether using child labor for illicit gold mining is a good idea and should be encouraged, or whether it poses a risk to the children's welfare and education and calls for the implementation of measures to address it.

According to Nachinaab (2018) [30], people perceive that illegal mining activities inculcate a hardworking attitude in children, and also both education and mining are the most effective and efficient ways of getting one's self out of poverty and finally, it is a way of initiating children into adulthood.

The discernment of the people in all the selected municipal and district assemblies hold on child labor in illicit mining activities is that illegal mining activities inculcate a hardworking attitude in children. It is imperative to change this perception of these mining areas on children's engagement in any form of mining activities to reduce or eradicate early childhood illiteracy. In the way forward, we propose that public awareness in the form of education should be intensified for individuals in these areas, on the negative effects this practice has on children's education and their development as a whole. Finally, the mining laws and laws against child labor should be implemented strictly to curb the activity of rampant illegal mining activity and children's engagement in the practice.

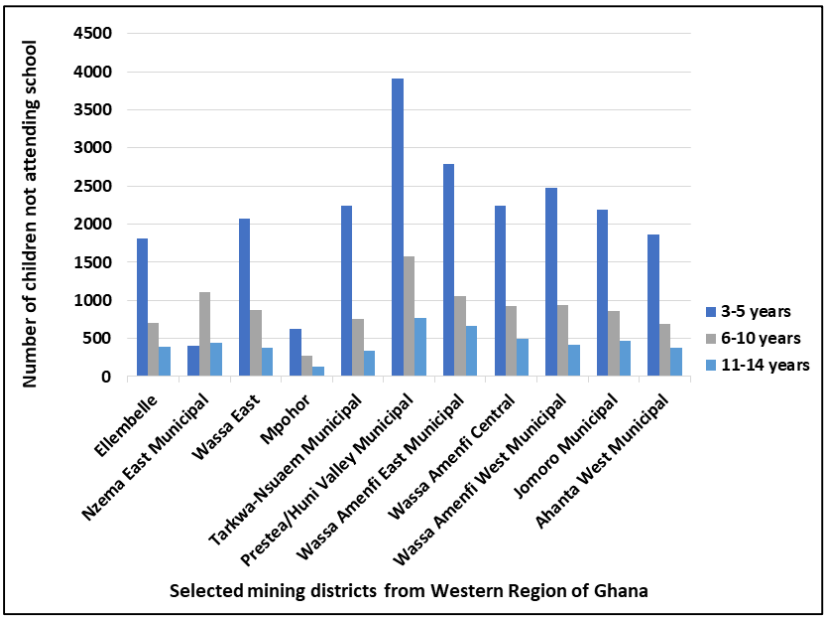
Factors that cause children involvement in illegal mining activities

It was shown that children's involvement in illicit mining was primarily caused by poverty.

Poverty is cited by 89% of the targeted population as most of them are children in their early childhood education level and hence their parents are responsible for the care of their needs. In such a case, a broken home contributes significantly to the cause of child labor at mining sites. These study's findings are consistent with the claims made by Bloeman (2009) [9] and Hilson (2010) [23], suggesting that, the primary motivator leading to the school-age children looking for work is poverty.

Illegal mining activity effects on the education of children

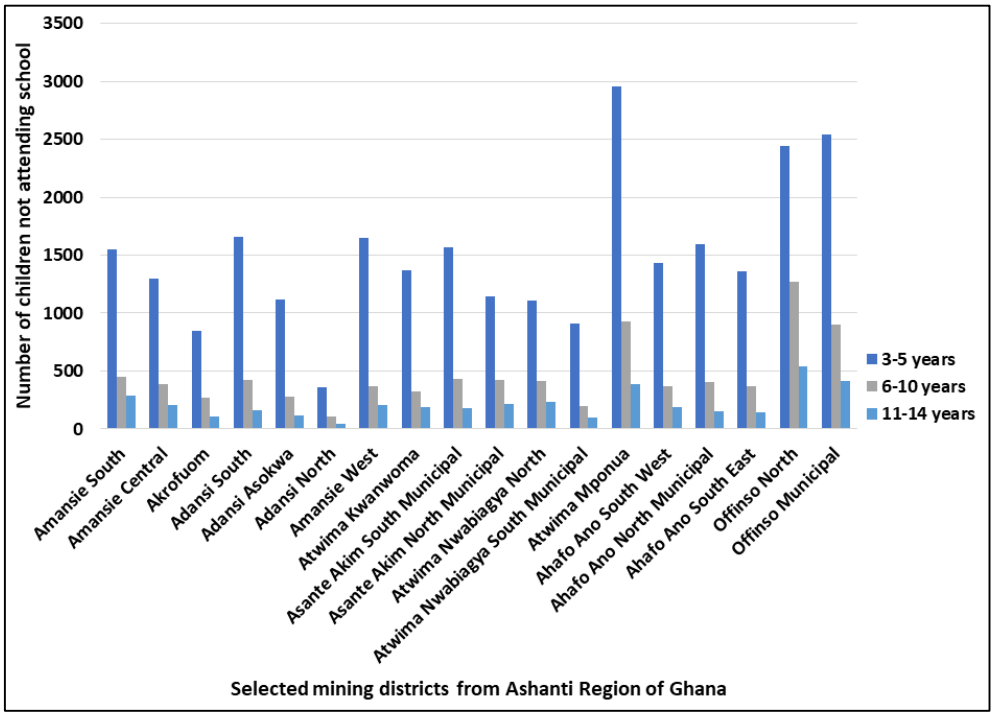
The level of children's engagement in mining activity and its effect on education has been analyzed in this section. On the mining activity's impact on education, a comparison between hotspot mining districts and districts with low mining activity has been done by the researcher to determine the rate of school attendance.



***Source*:** Computation by author based on the Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census (2021) data

Fig 1: Number of children who never attended school in the selected mining MDAs in the Western Region

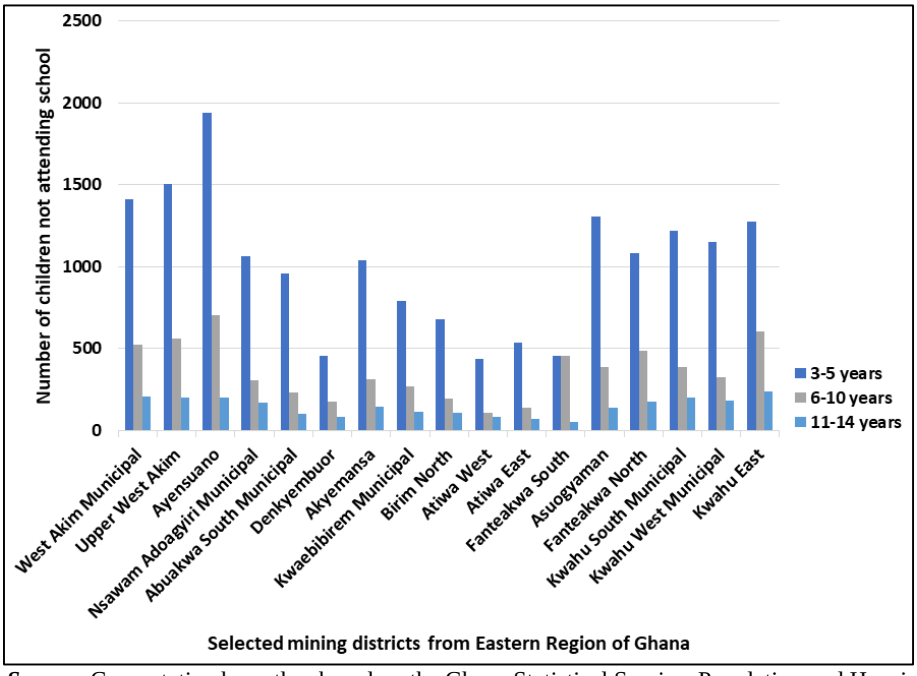
From Figure 1, it was revealed that an overwhelming number of basic school-going children at hotspot districts, that is, Prestea-Huni Valley, Wassa Amenfi East, Wassa Amenfi West, have never attended school. In the Western Region, only Mpohor has the least number of never attended school with 2.76% of the total number of children considered. These numbers can be attributed to the fact that illegal mining activity in areas causes parent not to have time to care for their ward's early childhood education (ages from three (3) to five (5) years).



***Source*:** Computation by author based on the Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census (2021) data

Fig 2: Number of children who never attended school in the selected mining districts in the Ashanti Region

Other ages considered not attending school is an extension of children continuing with what they are used to. Lack of early childhood education makes it difficult to proceed to lower and upper primary level hence children decide not to attend school at all.



***Source*:** Computation by author based on the Ghana Statistical Service, Population and Housing Census (2021) data

Fig 3: Number of children who never attended school in the selected mining district in the Eastern Region

Figure 2 above shows that in the Ashanti region, Atwima Mponua and Offinso North have a majority number of basic school-going age children that have never attended school with the percentage of 10.93% and 10.86% of the total Ashanti region selected districts population. Adansi North has the least number of never-attended schools with 1.32% of the total number of basic school-age children considered.

In the Eastern region, Ayensuano has a majority number of basic school-going age children (refer to Figure 3) that have never attended school with a percentage of 10.96% of the total Eastern region selected 17 districts with illegal mining activities. Atiwa West has the lowest number of never attended schools with 2.41% of the total number of basic school-age children considered.

In summary, it was revealed that an overwhelming number of basic school-going children who have never attended school are from the Western Region, especially in the areas of Prestea-Huni Valley, Wassa Amenfi East, and Wassa Amenfi West Municipal. Adansi North of Ashanti Region has the least number of never attended school. These numbers can be attributed to the fact that illegal mining activity in areas causes parent not to have time to care for their ward's early childhood education (ages from three (3) to five (5) years). Other ages considered not attending school is an extension of children continuing with what they are used to. Lack of early childhood education makes it difficult to proceed to lower and upper primary level hence children decide not to attend school at all. In suggesting ways that could curb childhood illiteracy rate, and the issue of children's involvement in mining activity, we proposed that public awareness in the form of education should be intensified for individuals in these areas, on the negative effects these practices have on children education and their development And finally, the mining laws and laws against child labor should be implemented strictly to curb the activity of rampant illegal mining activity and children engagement in these practices.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

This study considered illegal mining impact on the basic education of children with a focus on some selected mining municipalities and district assemblies of Ghana. After the work, it was observed that illegal mining certainly creates a means of livelihood for people living in these communities within our selected municipalities and districts. And that young adults especially, are prone to this engagement in illicit mining activities because it is a lucrative endeavor. It was also observed after a critical assessment that, there are school going age children with their parents or guardians who are involved in illegal mining activities which in turn affect the child's school attendance or enrollment in formal education. This can be confirmed by the large number of early childhood education-aged population being the highest number not attending school in all the selected Municipal and District Assemblies. Hence it can be concluded that illegal mining is a contributing factor to low school attendance and enrollment in formal education. The study also found that it is a result of poverty and the perception that the individuals living in these communities have about the labor of children in mining activities are the reasons for these issues. It is therefore imperative to recommend that parents and guardians in these communities, with the help of opinion leaders and all stakeholders, be educated on the essence of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy that eradicates poverty as a hindrance to the acquisition of basic formal education. Finally, with regard to child labor, the researchers recommend that parents or guardians of any child found to be involved in any form of mining activity should be punished. This will compel the parents to assume complete accountability for monitoring their children.

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