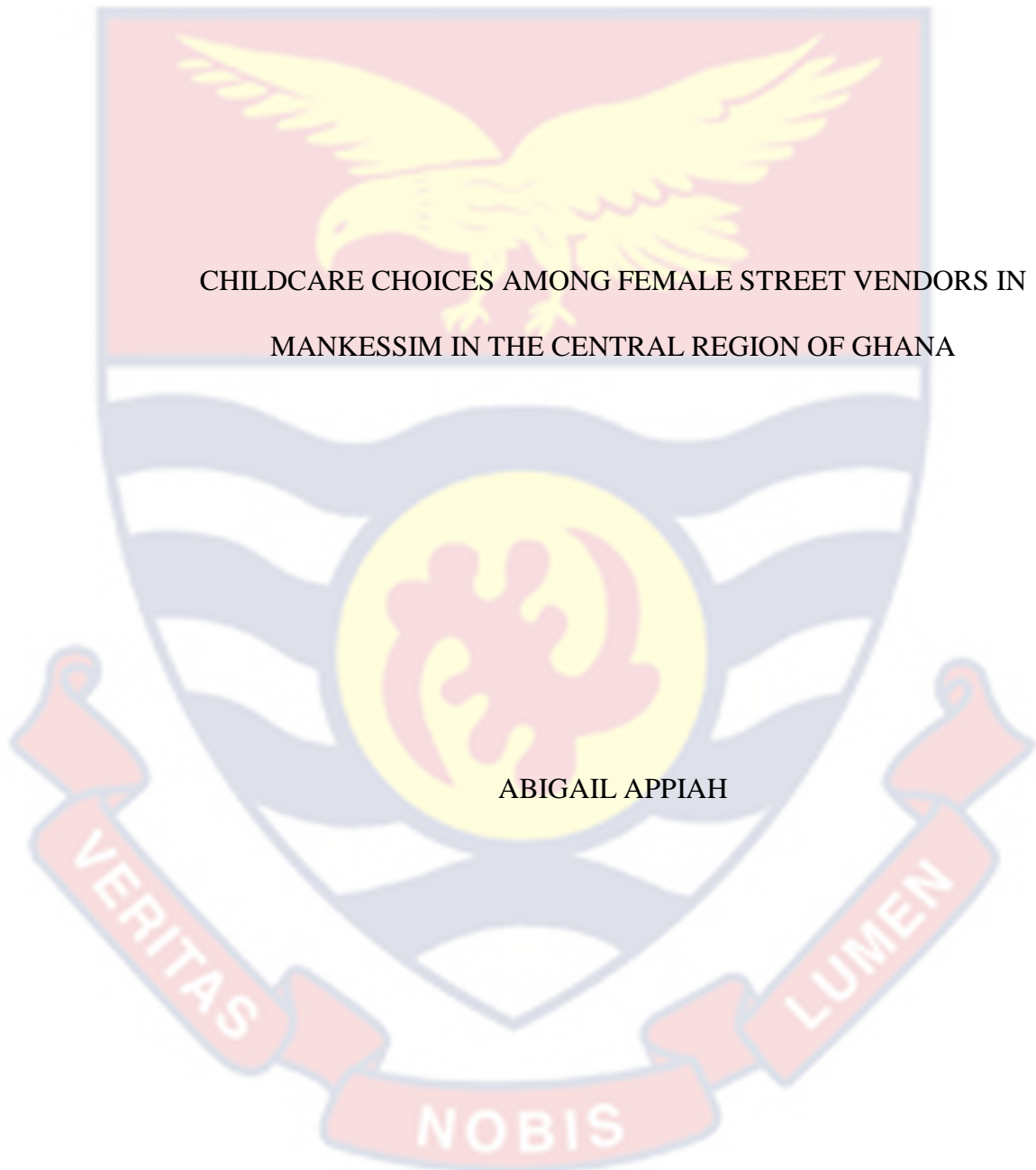


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



CHILDCARE CHOICES AMONG FEMALE STREET VENDORS IN
MANKESSIM IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

ABIGAIL APPIAH

2023

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



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BY

ABIGAIL APPIAH

This thesis submitted to the Department of Integrated Development Studies of the School for Development Studies, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Development Studies

NOVEMBER 2023

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in the university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Abigail Appiah

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature..... Date

Name: Prof. Akua Opokua Britwum

ABSTRACT

This study explored the Childcare Choices of female street vendors in Mankessim with children aged zero to three years. Employing qualitative research methods, the study conducted 38 individual interviews, drawing on insights from various study participants, including 21 female street vendors, seven market and non-market-based child caregivers, and 10 key informants. This study adopted social reproduction theory as its theoretical framework and employed a thematic approach for data analysis. The findings revealed that the childcare system in Mankessim had gaps in quality and accessibility. The findings revealed that female street vendors had childcare needs of affordable, safe, and reliable childcare provision. The findings suggest that female street vendors in Mankessim often rely on non-market-based childcare arrangements to fulfil their children's caregiving needs. Finally, factors such as the cost of childcare, notions of appropriate motherhood, childhood, and the presence of social support networks shape the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim. The study recommends implementing strategic approaches aimed at improving the general economic situation of women informal economy workers, such as female street vendors, to indirectly alleviate some of their childcare challenges. Additionally, this study recommends the establishment of a community-based childcare centre in the central business area specifically tailored to meet the needs of female street vendors and other informal economy workers in Mankessim.

KEY WORDS

Childcare Choices

Informal Work

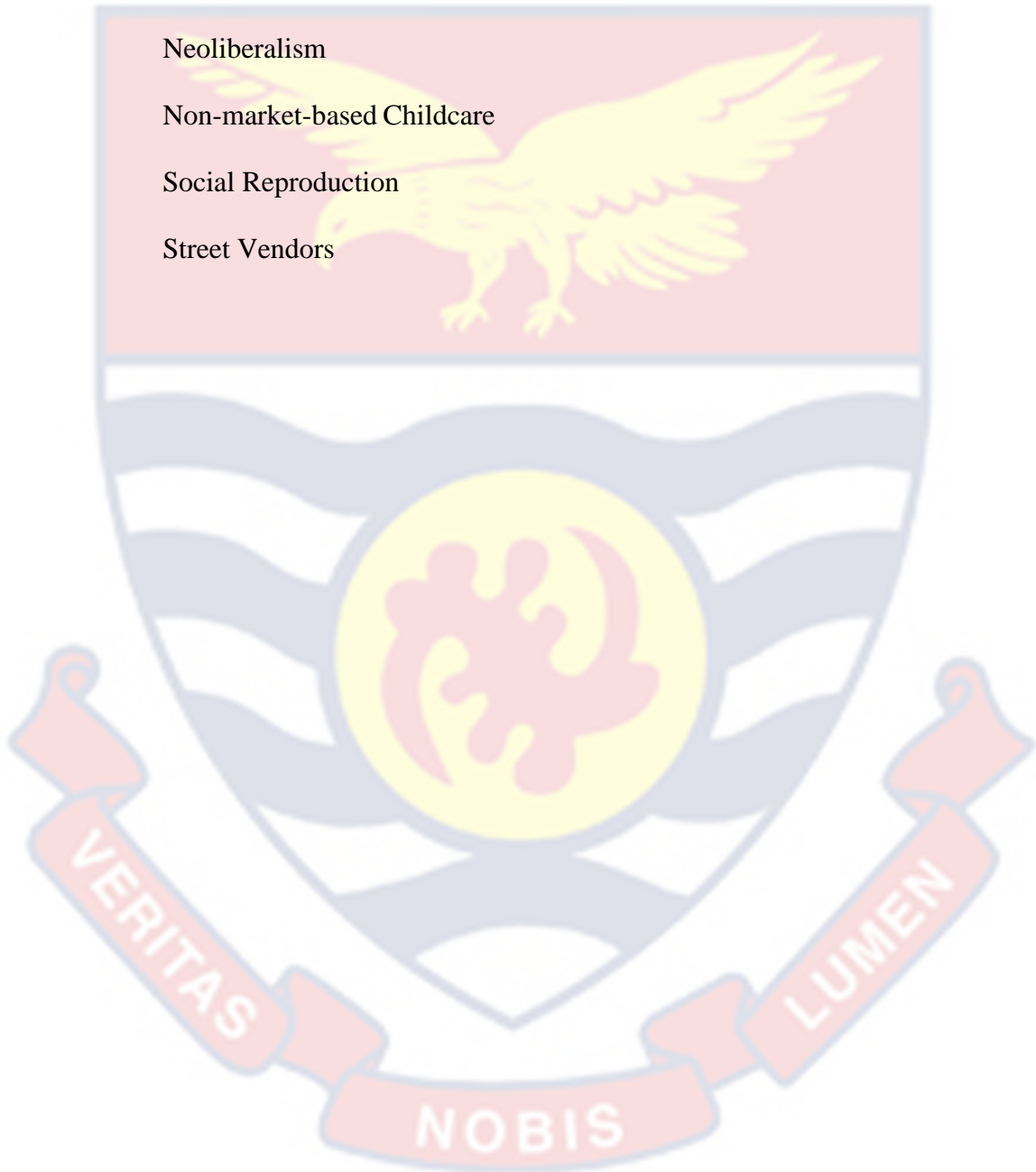
Market-based Childcare

Neoliberalism

Non-market-based Childcare

Social Reproduction

Street Vendors



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DEDICATION

To the loving memory of the late Ms. Dorothy Ackon.



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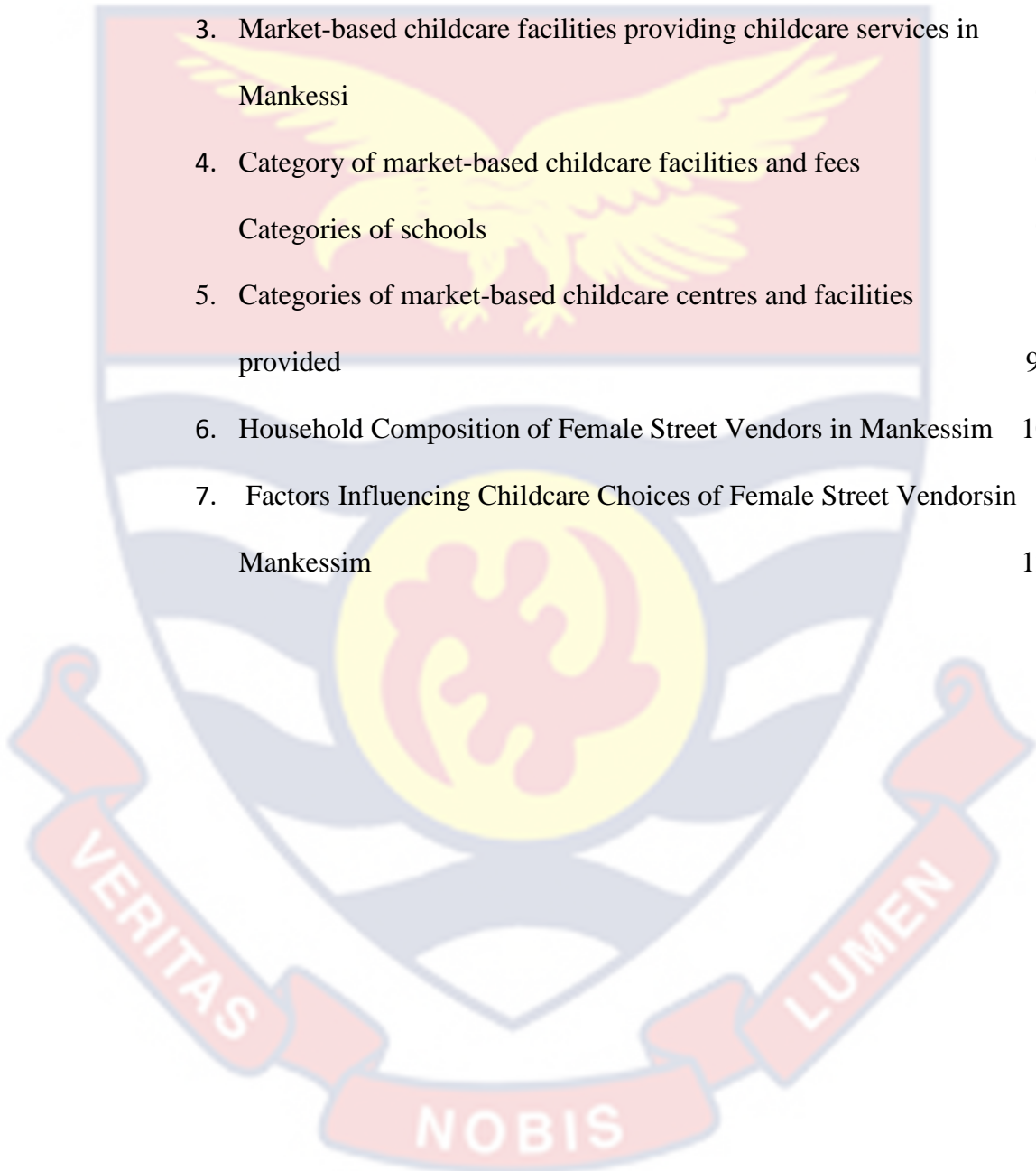
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DSWCD	Department of Social Welfare and Community Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
GES	Ghana Education Service
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NASIA	National Schools Inspectorate Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SR	Social Reproduction
SRT	Social Reproduction Theory
WHO	World Health Organisation
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment Globalising and Organising



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Childcare is a pressing concern for parents, primarily working women, seeking to contribute to the economic security of their families (Moussié, 2017). Specifically, the childcare choices of working mothers in the low-income category, influenced by broader social and economic structures in society, have implications for the well-being of both mothers and their children. The practical and theoretical goal of this study is to explore a deeper understanding of childcare choices made by female street vendors in Mankessim.

Background to the Study

Childcare studies have existed for many years, with historical records indicating how various societies have addressed issues of care over the centuries (Kammerman, 2007). Studies on childcare have continually evolved and expanded as researchers have become increasingly interested in understanding the implications of childcare on women's engagement in economic activities outside the home (Haslip & Gullo, 2018). This has been evident since the 19th century, with the rise of women's rights movements and their increasing participation in the paid labour force (Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020). This topic gained further prominence during the 1970s and 1980s, particularly because of Marxist feminist discussions on social reproduction (Bhattacharya, 2017; Fraser, 2017).

Women have worked both inside and outside the home, contributing immensely to society's wealth and values (Barbagallo, 2016). Traditionally, due to the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and their accompanying social structures that shape gender roles, women have been disproportionately

responsible for raising children and performing various household tasks. These reproductive tasks underpin the functioning of families as well as the well-being and development of society (Bhattacharya, 2017; Fraser, 2017; Boakye, 2021).

In the last 20 years, the delivery of childcare is considered to have undergone profound changes. How, where, and by whom care is provided has been restructured (Gallagher, 2022). Marxist feminist scholars have consistently contended that the nature of childcare provision has evolved from within households to becoming progressively commodified (Vandenbeld, 2014). As Fraser (2016) argued, this shift is significantly influenced by the tenets of neoliberalism that shape societal structures and practices. The provision of childcare characterised by neoliberal ideologies, which advocates for market-driven approaches and minimal state interventions, has far-reaching implications for how childcare is perceived, valued, and delivered within contemporary societies.

The changes in the provision of childcare have been analysed by Fraser (2016) over three historical periods, starting from the 19th century to the present day 21st century. In the 19th century, during liberal competitive capitalism, households provided childcare without external support. 20th-century state-managed capitalism saw states supporting family wages, in which families were paid enough to take care of their childcare needs. However, in the context of contemporary 21st-century financialised neoliberal capitalism, states have reduced childcare support due to neoliberal ideologies, leading to increased commodification of childcare. According to Coe (2023), the commodification of social reproduction implies that the practice previously

provided through non-market means, especially through kinship obligations, is being moved into the privatised market sphere, indicating a key sign of the spread of global capitalism.

In various global contexts, neoliberal reforms led by the World Bank and the IMF have reshaped the state's role and functions, emphasising market-driven policies over state interventions (Otoo, 2016). As states prioritise market-driven policies, the social safety net for childcare is reduced and workers are forced under neoliberalism to take on the cost of their reproduction. Consequently, the provision of affordable and accessible childcare has become challenging for working mothers, especially those in the low-income category (Holloway, 2016; O'Brien, 2018; Gallagher, 2022).

The shifts in childcare provision have prompted welfare states to address childcare policies more comprehensively, particularly in Scandinavian countries where public and parental responsibilities are recognised in caring for preschool children (Leira, 2008). Outside northern countries, many southern countries, such as Brazil and South Africa, have also introduced childcare initiatives to address the childcare needs of families (Alfers, 2016). However, the extent and effectiveness of these initiatives vary globally.

The proliferation of neoliberalism and its core principles, encompassing privatisation, deregulation, trade and investment liberalisation, has played a pivotal role in reshaping labour markets in developing nations. This transformation is marked by a decline in formal sector employment and a corresponding rise in the informal economy driven by various factors and policy choices. Among these, the adherence of governments to neoliberal ideologies has been a central catalyst, enabling the profound shifts observed in

labour market dynamics (Boampong, 2010; Britwum & Akorsu, 2017).

Within the informal economy, as outlined by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2019), women tend to remain concentrated, and engage in various activities that contribute to the economic landscape of many developing countries. These activities encompass a diverse range of occupations, including trading, small-scale manufacturing, and food processing (Osei-Boateng & Ampratwum, 2011). Specifically, within the informal sector, women engage more in street vending, waste picking, unregistered domestic work, subsistence farming, seasonal agricultural labour, and assisting in small family enterprises (Chant & Pedwell 2008; Bonnet et al. 2019).

The informal economy is characterised by precarious employment status, irregular income, inadequate family friendly policies, limited or no access to social security, and a limited ability to organise for the enforcement of international labour standards (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2018). These inadequacies, which reflect the broader limitations of market-driven economic policies, significantly impact access to safe and supportive childcare options for women in the informal economy. Profit maximisation and reduced state intervention often come at the expense of labour rights, further increasing the childcare dilemma for women in the informal economy.

The challenge of maintaining a balance between ensuring the well-being of children and actively participating in economic activities continues to make childcare choices stand out, as one of the most crucial decisions women are called upon to make on behalf of themselves and their children. Several studies show that, due to competing demands and changing support structures,

decisions about childcare are not easy for women, especially those in the informal economy (Alfers, 2016; ILO, 2018; Bhan et al., 2020; Maharaj, 2022).

The discourse on childcare choices is leading to ongoing debates about the best choices that parents can make and the various factors affecting their choices (Chaudry 2011; Weber 2011; Del Boca 2015). Discussions have highlighted various factors such as accessibility and availability of affordable childcare services as contributing to shaping childcare decisions. Studies on the accessibility of childcare as a factor informing childcare choices have shown that access to affordable and quality childcare is a major challenge for many families, particularly for women in low-income families (McCartney, 2007; Ojambo, 2015).

In Ghana, the informal economy constitutes a larger portion of the labour force than the formal economy (Britwum, 2022). According to recent data from the Ghana Statistical Service (2021), approximately 71 per cent of the country's workforce is engaged in the informal sector. This trend is closely associated with the long-standing role of Ghanaian women as economic providers of their households. For many women in Ghana, economic independence is crucial, which drives their active participation in the labour market (Britwum, 2022). As a result, a higher proportion of female workers in Ghana are employed in the informal sector, amounting to 85.1 per cent, compared with 67 per cent of male workers (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

Most Ghanaian women, constrained by their domestic responsibilities and low educational attainment, tend to find work in the informal economy (Osei-Boateng & Ampratwum, 2011). This preference is driven by the flexible

work schedules offered by informal jobs, which can better accommodate caregiving needs. However, working conditions within an informal economy, especially for street vendors, present additional difficulties in balancing work and childcare responsibilities (Moussié, 2021).

Street vending, an important trading activity and safety net for women, introduces significant occupational challenges owing to the inherent safety and physical constraints of this line of work. Bustling streets, crowded spaces, and exposure to vehicular traffic increase the risk of accidents and render the working environment unsafe for children (Mapumulo, 2021). Consequently, the children of mothers engaged in street vending face vulnerabilities, including inadequate nurturance, exposure to noise and air pollution, and poor sanitary conditions arising from the vending environment (Sekgabo & Maripe, 2019; Mbulayi et al., 2020).

The childcare challenges faced by street vendors are further complicated by diminishing familial and social network support systems, which have traditionally helped with childcare (Moussié, 2021). Contrary to this popular notion, many women are unable to rely on family support for childcare because of the significant social changes. Even in situations in which family members are nearby, the capacity to assist one another with childcare is waning, especially when economic requirements compel all adult family members to engage in economic activities for survival. (Gilliam & Reyes, 2018). This has had profound implications for family life and undermined traditional notions and practices of care (Trask, 2022; Afrifa, 2018).

Childcare challenges within Ghana's informal economy are not isolated; they intersect with broader socio-economic forces, particularly the

influence of neoliberalism. In the Ghanaian context, childcare for children aged zero to three predominantly relies on market-based solutions, whereas the government primarily assumes a regulatory role. The government's commitment to supporting childcare underwent a significant shift with the introduction of Structural Adjustment policies in the 1980s and the 1990s. These policy implementations have multifaceted repercussions for a country's economic landscape. Notably, a substantial reduction in government expenditures on social services has exacerbated the difficulties experienced by women regarding childcare. This shift has placed a significant portion of the financial burden on childcare services squarely on the shoulders of individuals and families (Terry, 2019).

The existence of commodified childcare within a competitive market framework contributes to pronounced disparity in access to high-quality care. This tends to favour those with greater financial resources, raising the philosophical issue of social justice (Nxumalo & Adair, 2019). Children born to different families have unequal prospects from the beginning of their lives. This disparity in access is considered to have a lasting impact on children's development and opportunities while perpetuating cycles of inequalities (Nxumalo & Adair, 2019).

Childcare crisis is a complex issue that transcends individual choices. By expanding theoretical frameworks and advocating for systemic change that emphasises shared public responsibility for childcare, childcare crises can be addressed more comprehensively, and a society can be created where caregiving and economic opportunities are not mutually exclusive for women

and families. This will lead to a more equitable and inclusive social and economic environment, fostering the well-being of families and society.

Statement of the Problem

In contemporary society, a global childcare crisis is unfolding, placing significant burdens on women, who must navigate the balance of caregiving while pursuing their economic responsibilities (Grantham, 2021). This crisis, exacerbated by the pervasive issue of time-poverty, encompasses a range of issues, including limited availability of quality childcare, high costs of childcare that strain family budgets, and concerns regarding the overall quality of care. At its core, this crisis fundamentally concerns the choices mothers are compelled to make regarding childcare.

To understand these choices, researchers have traditionally turned to various theoretical frameworks, including attachment theory, the economic theory of human capital, the life course perspective, and the social-ecological model among others. These theories have focused on individual decision-making processes and have disregarded the larger structural factors that impact families' choices. Consequently, resulting is the idea that the decision around caring for a child is constructed more as a private matter for which individuals bear the cost and responsibilities rather than a public responsibility (Gromada et al., 2021).

Within the context of the Marxist feminist tradition and social reproduction theory, it becomes evident that the rise of neoliberalism and capitalism has significantly shaped the economic and social landscapes and in turn, shape the choices and constraints faced by women. The discourse on childcare has shifted, framing childcare provision increasingly as a choice.

Meanwhile, these choices are not made in a vacuum and are not free choices but are influenced by the broader economic and social context in which women live (Barbagallo, 2016).

Currimjee et al., (2022) argue that when the provision of childcare shifts from being perceived as a private concern to a shared public responsibility, it paves the way for the households, regardless of income, to access childcare services on an equitable basis. This transformation will not only lead to better and equal childcare but also provide families, especially women, with improved financial stability. In addition, more women will be encouraged to return to their economic activities, knowing that their childcare responsibilities are being catered for, thereby enhancing economic development within nations.

Within childcare research, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), as a lens, has predominantly focused on wage workers, particularly in countries of the Global North (Rosen, 2019). This has been attributed to the way capitalist perspectives typically depict the concept of the working class as existing exclusively through formal wage employment (McDermott, 2021). Additionally, the emergence and subsequent development of SRT in the Global North has been significantly shaped by the social, economic, and historical dimensions specific to these countries.

This study addresses a significant gap in the application of SRT by expanding its scope beyond the conventional focus on wage workers in the Global North. It delves into the realm of childcare choices made by female street vendors in Ghana's informal economy, a group of non-waged informal economy workers who lack legal recognition or protection, and grapples with

precarious working conditions, unstable incomes, and gender-based violence. These women's childcare experiences are deeply rooted in society's social and economic structures. Understanding these unique circumstances offers a valuable perspective for exploring how societal frameworks impact childcare choices in Ghana.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to explore childcare choices among female street vendors in Mankessim in the Central Region of Ghana. More specifically the study sought to:

1. Profile the childcare delivery system in Mankessim
2. Determine the childcare needs of female street vendors in Mankessim
3. Describe the childcare arrangements among female street vendors in Mankessim
4. Examine the factors that inform childcare choices among female street vendors in Mankessim

Research Questions

1. How is the childcare delivery system structured in Mankessim?
2. What are the childcare needs of female street vendors in Mankessim?
3. How do female street vendors make childcare arrangements in Mankessim?
4. What factors inform the childcare choices female street vendors in Mankessim make?

Significance of the Study

The study is developmentally significant because it sheds light on the challenges faced by informal economy workers, particularly female street vendors, and the trade-offs they make in balancing the responsibilities of earning a livelihood and taking care of their preschool children. The study further provides an understanding of how existing broader economic and social structures influence women's decision make regarding childcare which may impede their contribution to national economic development.

This study broadens the understanding of the realities and intricacies of care work under capitalism more specifically, childcare in the context of non-waged workers, particularly female street vendors, through the lens of social reproduction theory. The study will inform policies and practices that support women's informal economy workers in securing the care they need for their children to promote gender equality and access to quality care by defining the systemic barriers that limit their access to quality childcare.

Delimitations

This study focused on childcare as a social reproductive task among the various caring activities in the care economy. The study was delimited by the inclusion criteria of respondents in the sense that it concentrated only on female street vendors who are non-wage workers in the informal economy with children aged zero to three years. The study further focused on informal caregivers, heads of market childcare institutions, and the head of the DSWCD as well as the municipal coordinating director at the Mfantseman Municipal Assembly in Saltpond. Another delimitation of this study is its geographical scope. The study

focused on only female street vendors in Mankessim in the Central Region rather than considering the experience of female street vendors across a larger geographic area

Limitations

The study employed a qualitative research approach and utilised thematic analysis as its analytical framework. The identified limitations of the use of this approach and technique include the inability to generalise the findings. The study's findings cannot be generalised because of the specific geographical context in which it was conducted. The nature of the childcare system in Mankessim may differ from that of other trading towns. Despite this acknowledged limitation, the qualitative approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the unique childcare experiences of female street vendors to be captured through in-depth interviews with participants.

Access to research participants was limited because of the nature of female street vendors' work. This challenge was particularly pronounced among mobile street vendors, who had to actively approach moving vehicles and pedestrians to sell their products. To address this challenge, interviews were conducted during non-peak selling times of female street vendors. In addition, some of interviews were arranged at the participant's convenience to avoid disrupting their work.

Definition of Terms

The following are operational definitions used in the study

Social Reproduction

Social reproduction refers to activities and relationships that reproduce, nurture, and maintain life both daily and generationally to ultimately produce

labour power and ensure the continued functioning and stability of societies.

Childcare

Childcare refers to the activities of care, nurturing, and supervision provided to children by parents or nonparents.

Market-based Childcare

Market-based childcare refers to childcare provided through market models in which childcare is considered a commodity and purchased by parents or caregivers as consumers.

Non-market-based childcare

Non-market-based childcare encompasses caregiving embedded within family ties and social networks, where the basis for providing childcare without any monetary compensation arises from a sense of duty and responsibility among family and community members.

Childcare Needs

Childcare needs consist of the caring activities and conditions that predisposes parents to make a childcare choice.

Childcare Arrangement

Childcare arrangement refers to the specific ways in which parents organise care or the various ways children are cared for.

Childcare Choices

Childcare choices refer to the decisions families make regarding the selection of a particular childcare arrangement.

Childcare Delivery Systems

Childcare Delivery Systems refer to institutions, policies, and regulatory frameworks designed to shape childcare provision.

Street Vendors

Street Vendors refer to individuals who sell goods or services on the streets rather than in fixed storefronts.

Non-waged Workers

Non-waged Workers are individuals who work in an informal economy and do not receive a wage or salary for their labour.

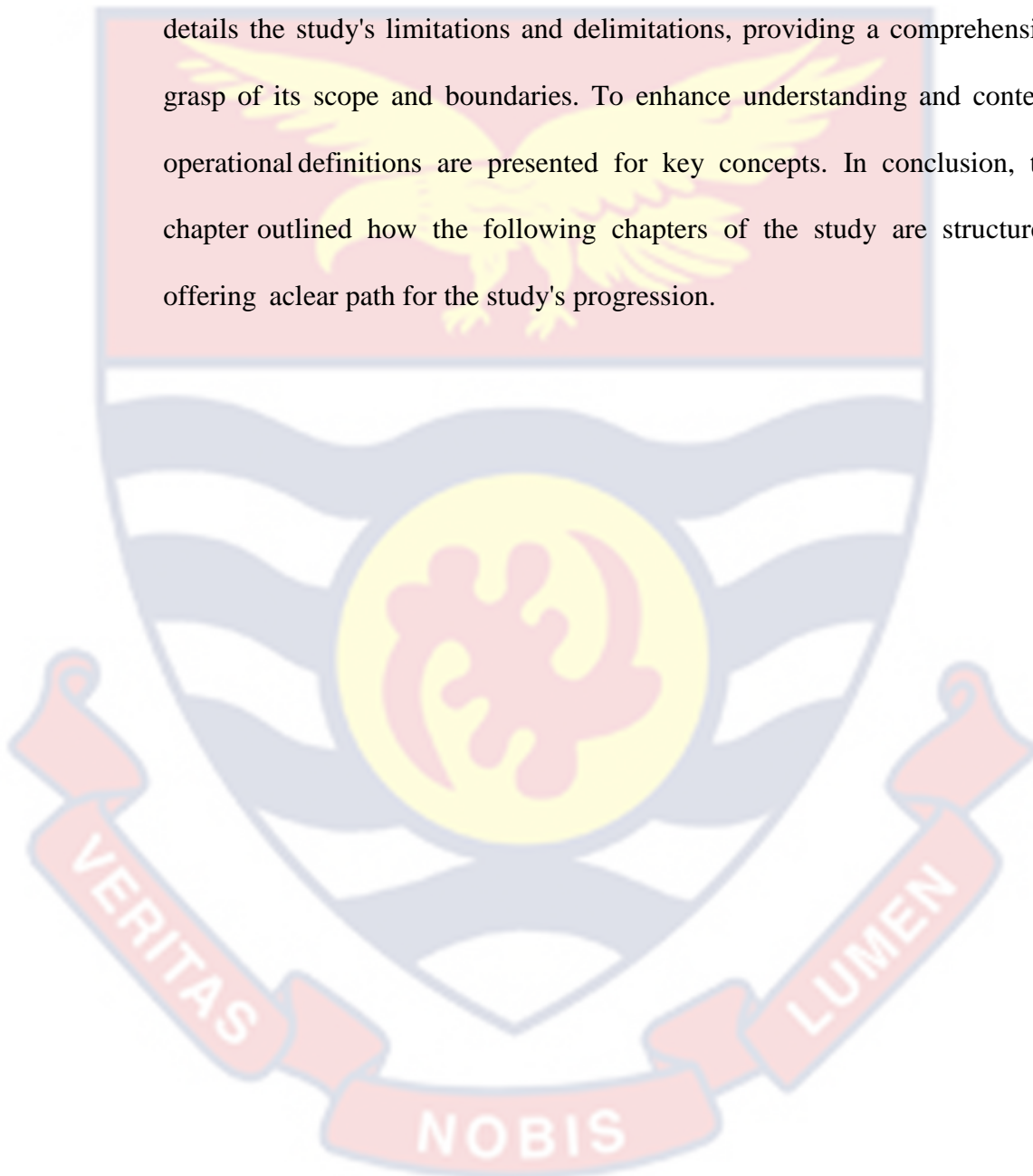
Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into five chapters. The first section presents an introduction focusing on the background, statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the significance of the study, delimitations, and limitations. Chapter two reviews the theoretical underpinnings, concepts, and empirical review, highlighting lessons learnt from the empirical review and presenting the conceptual framework. Chapter three discusses the study's methodology, including the study design, sample and sampling techniques, study area, data collection, and data processing and analysis. Chapter four presents the results and discussion of issues related to childcare choices among female street vendors in Mankessim. Finally, the fifth chapter presents the summary, conclusion, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

Chapter Summary

The introductory chapter offered a detailed discussion of the background of the study, which introduced the research context, highlighting the global childcare crisis and the specific challenges faced by women in low-income categories. It discussed the historical evolution of childcare studies, the influence of neoliberalism on childcare provision, and the unique

circumstances of female street vendors in Ghana's informal economy. The research problem and study objectives, along with their corresponding research questions, were formulated. The significance of this study was delineated, emphasizing its developmental importance. The chapter also details the study's limitations and delimitations, providing a comprehensive grasp of its scope and boundaries. To enhance understanding and context, operational definitions are presented for key concepts. In conclusion, the chapter outlined how the following chapters of the study are structured, offering a clear path for the study's progression.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter is based on a review of the literature on discussions of childcare choices. The chapter focuses on a review of the theory underpinning the study, the concepts of interest to the study, a section of empirical literature reviewed, and the conceptual framework guiding the study. The Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) is the main theory reviewed in this chapter. This review covers the assumptions of the theory and how relevant it is in understanding the childcare choices of female street vendors. Similar to the theory, the concepts discussed in this chapter are also critical for understanding the rationale and purpose of this study. The conceptual framework helped shape the focus of the study and guided the collection of relevant data for analysis. Empirical evidence in the area of the study is reviewed to provide insights into what exists and does not and the possible methodology to be adopted.

Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

Substantial theories and theoretical models have been used to explain childcare decision-making and selection processes among caregivers, especially among mothers. These are Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, attachment theory, social learning theory, and economic theory of human capital (Becker, 1981). These theories provide the basis for understanding the issues surrounding childcare choices and the factors informing these selections. However, the present study is grounded in the Marxist Feminist theoretical perspective on SRT. This is because, compared to other theories, SRT offers a distinct lens that centres on broader social and economic

structures in societies to understand issues surrounding childcare choices.

SRT has been used in a wide range of contexts and disciplines including sociology, education, cultural studies, and feminist studies. In all these areas, the theory provides a critical lens for understanding society's continuity over time, and thus, how social class is perpetuated and reinforced through structural and cultural factors. SRT further allows for an understanding of the value of care and unpaid work as part of the production of social wealth.

It is important, however, to note that the current popularity of Marxist feminist perspectives on social reproduction theory has been hampered by confusion over the multiple meanings of reproduction. This misunderstanding is attributed to the use of the term social reproduction outside of Marxist scholarships (Munro, 2021), such as the infusion of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's social reproduction theory which examines social reproduction through the lens of cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1973; Munro 2021).

The Bourdieuan perspective again argues that society is reproduced through the intergenerational transmission of status and emphasises the role of education, cultural norms, and social networks in reproducing social hierarchies. In contrast to the Bourdieuan SRT, the Marxist Feminist SRT broadly provides an understanding of the connection between labour production and labour reproduction (Vogel, 2017). It focuses on the intersection of gender, class, and capitalism to understand social reproduction, particularly through the lens of unpaid reproductive work. It analyses how gendered roles and expectations within capitalist societies contribute to

reproduction and further critiques the exploitation of women's labour within the private sphere and how women's reproductive work is undervalued in the capitalist system (Bhattacharya 2017; Fraser, 2016).

Social reproduction is referred to as the set of activities and relationships that reproduce, nurture, and maintain life both daily and generationally to ultimately produce labour power in capitalist societies (Batzell, 2016; Bhattacharya, 2017; Hester, 2018). SRT broadly divides reproductive labour into two forms: daily reproductive labour and intergenerational reproductive labour that occur in households, schools, and hospitals (Bhattacharya, 2017).

The daily reproductive activities are the daily, weekly, or annual processes of survival and maintenance of life (Fraser, 2017). These processes include daily family or household-based activities, such as cleaning, ironing, childcare, shopping, food preparation, sleeping, and eating, to maintain health and daily life in conditions of physical and mental health that allow the individual to carry on with daily activities (Fraser, 2017). Intergenerational reproductive labour includes activities done specifically to replace the human workforce or population in each generation, and this involves raising, training, and educating children and regenerating and maintaining workers and the elderly (Fraser, 2017).

According to Bhattacharya (2017), SRT offers a deeper understanding of everyday life under capitalism by going beyond political economy approaches which concentrate on the capital-wage labour relationship to analyse how social reproduction, including unpaid domestic and care work, adds to the generation of societal wealth and reproduces and maintains social

inequalities.

The underlying assumption of SRT rests on the recognition that workers have an existence beyond their workplace and that their existence outside the workplace is crucial to the thriving and survival of capitalism. Given this, feminist scholars since the late 1860s and the early 1970s have advanced the concept of social reproduction, which is concerned with the various social processes, material products, institutions, and agents involved in sustaining and reproducing individuals, families, communities, and societies over time (Zonani, 2023).

Research have shown that the argument on social reproduction began with an emphasis on the role of housework, the household, and patriarchy under capitalism (Dalla Costa & James, 2017; Federici, 2004; Arruzza, 2016). Then, during the emergence of neoliberalism, it expanded to incorporate changes in capitalist governance and broader modifications in social reproduction structures (Bakker, 2007; Bakker & Gill, 2019; Fraser, 2014). It is further argued that the neoliberal phase of capitalism led to the reconfiguration and commodification of reproductive work. According to Coe (2023), the commodification of social reproduction implies that the practice previously provided through non-market means, especially through kinship obligations, is moving into the privatised market sphere, indicating a key sign of the spread of global capitalism.

As mentioned earlier, Nancy Fraser outlined changes in capitalist governance and broader modifications in social reproduction structures through three historical regimes of accumulation. The regimes she calls liberal competitive capitalism, state-managed capitalism, and financialised neoliberal

capitalism. According to Fraser (2016), during the 19th century, under liberal competitive capitalism, workers were primarily reproducing themselves within communal households without any form of monetised value and support from the state.

The second regime, state-managed capitalism, witnessed in the 20th century, saw a share of social reproductive responsibilities between the state and corporate world. In this era, states and firms have paid more attention to the social welfare of workers. This regime brought about the idea of family wages, where families were paid enough to enable them to cater to their needs. Some examples include the provision of subsidised and state-provided care homes and parks to offer support and share the burden and cost of social reproduction.

Current financial neoliberal capitalism is the third regime of social reproduction-cum-economic production. According to Fraser (2016), the outcome of the financialised neoliberal capitalism regime is explained through five main features: the movement of production to low-wage areas, the recruitment of women into paid employment, while no significant provision is being made to support social reproduction, and the state's retreat from its social welfare functions. The need for adult family members to work harder to make ends meet, while women increasingly face the double burden of paid and reproductive work

Fraser's (2016) discussions of SRT elaborate on how responsibilities for care, including childcare, have been distributed among the three main actors over the years. Aside from the three main actors, consisting of the state, capital, or market, and the household or the family, Adam (2010) and

Bhattacharya (2017) included not-for-profit organisations and communities as the three main actors of care. Responsibility for care falls more on women within the family as one of the main actors. Women's roles as primary care providers are a social imposition reinforced by patriarchal structures and norms that assign value and importance to traditionally masculine roles, and devalue care or domestic work. (Batzell 2016; Fraser 2016; Hester 2018; Schling 2014).

Capitalism as a system does not have a mechanism for guaranteeing the reproduction and maintenance of the labour power it needs (Katz, 2001), however, capitalism's drive to accumulate surplus value usually involves the act of undermining the ability of the household or family's engagement in social reproduction while passing on the cost of social reproduction on families and women (Frederici, 2014).

Critics of the commodification of social reproduction highlight that care is commodified in a way that serves the interests of already privileged individuals or groups while systematically excluding those that are underprivileged, such as single mothers or precariously employed parents who cannot find or afford childcare (Vandenbroeck et al., 2022). The analysis of Marxist feminist perspectives critiques the neoliberal policies that perpetuate inequalities in care provision. It emphasises the role of the state in providing affordable and accessible childcare services, recognising that public investment in childcare infrastructure is critical (Mezzadri, 2022).

Scholars have argued that the state's recognition of social reproduction responsibilities, such as childcare, has diminished owing to the influence of neoliberalism and globalisation. Similarly, according to Fraser (2016),

globalisation and neoliberalism account for why capital and the corporate world are distant from social reproductive labour. This phenomenon disproportionately affects women who often find themselves shouldering the heavy burden of providing or delegating care.

Bhattacharya (2017) further contends that social reproduction is not solely a private matter but is deeply intertwined with larger structures of power, including the state and other institutions such as family and market. One way the state is involved in social reproduction is through the provision of public services, such as education, healthcare, and social welfare programs. These services help ensure that individuals access the resources they need to maintain their lives and those of their dependents, thereby supporting society's ongoing reproduction. The state's role in social reproduction is also shaped by broader economic and political structures that can produce inequalities and injustices which can result in some individuals relying more on their resources to reproduce themselves, while others can rely more on state support.

Parents from less privileged backgrounds may not have the same opportunities to make choices about childcare that align with their values and preferences. They may rely only on more affordable or lower-quality childcare options or may make choices that prioritise their work and economic needs over their childcare preferences. This leads to a cycle of inequality, as children from less-privileged backgrounds may not have the same opportunities for education and development as those from more privileged backgrounds. This has implications for overall development as the majority of people who are usually affected are poor. In the context of this study, social reproduction theory operates at both individual and collective levels. At the individual level,

the theory emphasises how the gendered division of labour and the commodification of care work affect the experiences and childcare choices of individual women and families. At the collective level, the theory posits that childcare is shaped by broader social and economic structures, highlighting the need for social and collective responsibility for care, including childcare. This theory advocates policies that recognise the value of childcare and promote gender equality.

Conceptual Issues

Understanding the Concept of Childcare

Childcare as a concept has been examined from several disciplinary perspectives, mainly through feminist and non-feminist approaches (Folbre & Nelson, 2000; Fraser, 2017; Bhattacharya, 2017). Researchers have delved into different aspects of care, including the activities involved in providing childcare, childcare providers themselves, and various forms of childcare available within societies. These studies have provided insights into the prevailing care practices in societies, highlighting policy gaps and other pertinent care-related issues.

Childcare involves a set of activities that meet the physical, social, economic, and developmental needs of children. According to Hester (2018), these activities ensure the maintenance and reproduction of human life, both daily and over generations. This process encompasses not only nurturing and caregiving but also broader societal structures, policies, and support systems that contribute to the well-being of children within a given society.

Childhood as a concept is a social construct shaped by sociological and developmental perspectives. Typically, childhood is categorised into three

distinct stages of development, each corresponding to the unique needs and specific developmental phase of children (Blades et al., 2011). These stages are early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence. Children under the early childhood phase are considered from birth to six years, children under the middle childhood phase are between six and twelve years while children under the adolescent phase are from twelve to eighteen years. The boundaries of these stages are malleable because society's ideas about childhood change over time (Qvortrup, 2009).

Most international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, define a child as a human being below the age of 18. Similarly, in Ghana, the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560, Section 1) and the 1992 Constitution (Section 29) also define a child as an individual below 18 years of age. These legal frameworks emphasise the protection of children's rights and well-being, underscoring the role of society and its actors in safeguarding these rights and how children are cared for.

A society's approach to childcare is influenced by cultural norms, governmental policies, and economic ideologies, which significantly impact both children and their caregivers (Ulybina, 2022). The two primary perspectives on childcare are capitalism and the welfare state. Capitalism emphasises that the nuclear or extended family takes responsibility for childcare, which often leads to gender and economic disparities. On the other hand, the welfare state promotes accessibility, affordability, and state-supported childcare as shared public responsibility (Harbach, 2019). These divergent viewpoints serve as a foundation for understanding the allocation of

childcare responsibilities among various childcare actors.

The organisation and distribution of childcare responsibilities within societies are influenced by households, the state, and the market. Among these three actors, the family plays a central role as the primary provider of childcare, and caregiving responsibilities have traditionally been assigned as “women’s work”. Research has consistently emphasised that this unequal distribution of child caregiving responsibilities within the household reinforces traditional gender roles, exacerbates gender inequality, and implies women’s economic and social status (Aarntzen et al, 2023; Moussié, 2021).

Marxist feminists contend that women being predominantly assigned to unpaid child caregiving roles within the household serves the interest of capitalism by ensuring a stable workforce and reproducing the labour force through the socialisation and care of future workers. Fraser (2016) argues further that the sustenance of society is contingent on the preservation and support of childcare, however, in the present context, the new form of capitalist society which she termed as financialised capitalism is actively undermining the provision of care in general and has far-reaching consequences on economic functioning and societal well-being.

The neglect of childcare has led to a significant crisis of care, placing immense strain on women’s ability to provide adequate care and undermining the well-being of children. As women face increasing demands and responsibilities for childcare, inadequate support and resources exacerbate the challenges encountered in providing care. This crisis was driven, in part, by the influence of the capitalist system and neoliberal ideologies, especially the commodification of childcare services, resulting in the proliferation of for-

profit childcare centres and services.

The state's role in providing childcare services and support varies considerably among different countries and is influenced by factors such as the child's stage of development, prevailing cultural norms, and specific policies in place within each society. These childcare policies and approaches can range from market-based solutions with minimal state intervention to comprehensive government-supported systems that prioritise early childhood education and development. The diversity of approaches reflects the complex interplay between economic, social, and political factors that shape a nation's approach to childcare, and highlights the importance of understanding these dynamics within specific cultural and societal contexts.

In Ghana, early childhood care has historically been provided through traditional approaches (Agbenyga 2018). However, over the past two decades, there has been a notable shift towards a more formalised system of care and education services for young children, guided by the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policy framework. This framework recognises the crucial link between care and education in the early years of a child's development. Under the ECEC programs, Crèche, Daycare, Nursery, and Kindergarten (KG) have been set up by the government to offer both care and education to young children. However, it is important to note that only KG for children aged 4 and 5 years is free and compulsory for all children attending public early childhood centres and schools in Ghana.

Children in the age group of zero to three years are considered to be under the traditional school-going age, as they are still in the early stages of their development (Asmah et al., 2022). However, despite the significance of

these formative years, the state does not provide care and support to children within this age range. Instead, the responsibility for non-familial childcare is largely left to the market, while the state plays a regulatory role in overseeing the quality and standards of these early childhood care and education centres.

The DSWCD ensures that market-based childcare services meet the standards of safety, health, and educational quality for young children.

The absence of state support for children aged zero to three years places additional burdens on parents, particularly mothers, who often bear the primary responsibility for childcare within households. This is because children in this category are vulnerable and largely depend on adults' survival. They require primary caregivers to perform both active (feeding, bathing, changing diapers, etc.) and passive tasks (socialisation and keeping watch over them) to guarantee total protection for the child both inside and outside the home (Badasu, 2014).

Contemporary scholarships on childcare highlight the fact that childcare has become an issue of public concern particularly due to the rising number of mothers in the paid workforce outside the home (Bousselin, 2022). Given these changing dynamics, parents, especially mothers with children aged zero to three years, are compelled to find alternative avenues to ensure the necessary care for their young children. Parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds have opted for different childcare arrangements between market-and-non-market-based provisions as a result (Bousselin, 2022).

Childcare Delivery System

The concept of the childcare delivery system in this study encompasses the institutions, policies, and regulations that collectively shape the provision of childcare and related services (Herczog, 2021). In this context, the social reproduction theory offers a valuable perspective by highlighting the intricate interplay between the family, the state, and the market in influencing how childcare is provided and used. This theory underscores the interconnectedness of these three entities and how their actions collectively contribute to the dynamics of childcare and its impact on gender roles and inequalities (Osman, 2014). It emphasizes the need to consider not only individual decisions but also the broader structural factors that influence childcare choices and outcomes.

Historically, how care has been organised has undergone some transitions. Linking childcare to the imperatives of capitalism, Nancy Fraser corresponds to childcare provision to different historical periods and changing dynamics of capitalism, each with its unique approach to organising childcare and other reproductive tasks. The first regime, prevalent in the 19th century, was characterised by liberal capitalism. During this period, care provision relied on kinship networks. The state played a limited role in childcare, presenting it as the responsibility of women within the family.

Particularly during the mid-20th century, a second regime, called state-managed capitalism, emerged. This phase reflected a shift towards state-supported childcare provisioning. Recognising the significance of childcare and other reproductive tasks for the functioning of the economy, several countries introduced welfare policies. State welfare interventions aimed to

address social inequalities and provide various forms of childcare support. While these interventions represented progress in recognising care as a public responsibility, Fraser (2017) argued that the gendered division of labour persisted as women continued to bear the burden of care within the family.

The current regime of neoliberal capitalism is characterised by a push towards the commodification of childcare (Fraser, 2017). The state's role in providing childcare has reduced, shifting its responsibility to individual families and the market. However, this transfer of responsibilities is accompanied by a decline in families' capacity to effectively manage childcare due to reduced income and the disappearance of secure income opportunities (Fraser, 2017). This global shift towards neoliberal capitalism has had a substantial influence on the childcare policies of countries in both the Global North and South. The commodification of childcare services, where profit is prioritised, raises concerns about equity, accessibility, and the well-being of children and families in the long run.

Childcare policies reflect societal sharing of care responsibilities and obligations. Studies suggest that access to childcare is an outcome of government decisions, and the failure of childcare policy forces parents to craft their own solutions, leaving many disadvantaged (Javornik & Ingold 2015). The collective impact of the development of policies has been both to reform how the work of daily and generational social reproduction is done, and to reshape the social reproduction of gendered society.

Depending on a country's level of liberalisation, the state offers either public structures or subsidies for childcare services (Palier et al., 2022). Countries with a more comprehensive welfare state tradition and commitment

to social services may choose to directly provide public structures for childcare and operate childcare centres (Leira, 2020). These services are often funded through taxation or other public sources, and aim to offer affordable or free childcare options to families. In countries with a more market-oriented approach, the state may not directly operate childcare facilities, but instead may provide subsidies or financial assistance to parents to help cover the costs of private childcare services (Leira, 2020). In all this, there are regulations and institutional arrangements for ensuring adherence.

Countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom, which use liberal welfare regimes, emphasise individual responsibility and market mechanisms for childcare provision, where parents primarily rely on paid services. Countries, such as Germany and France, typically have mixed public and private childcare provisions. Childcare is often subsidised or partially funded by governments. Countries that use social democratic welfare models, such as Sweden and Norway, offer universal access to high-quality childcare, with a strong emphasis on early childhood education (Privalko, 2019).

In Ghana, care for children below three years is provided solely by the market with the government providing regulatory oversight serving. The desire to support childcare was eliminated by the implementation of Structural Adjustment policies in the 1980s and the 1990s. Adjustment policies have diverse implications for the economy, notably, the reduction in government spending on social services. This intensified the challenges faced by women, as a considerable share of the financial responsibility for these services falls on individuals and families (Terry, 2019).

The implementation of neoliberal policies also led to a cutback in public employment and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, leading to the layoff of a large number of formal sector employees and civil servants, resulting in the subsequent growth of the informal economy. The increased informal economy is said to have been a part of a coping mechanism for those who had lost formal sector employment due to privatisation, public sector cutbacks, and unemployed individuals (Boateng & Ampratwum, 2011).

The majority of Ghanaian women are found in the informal economy operating outside protective labour legislation and contending with occupational sex segregation which affects their income and working conditions (Britwum, 2022). Consequently, this shift to informal work meant that women were not only engaging in income-generating activities, but also continued to bear the brunt of unpaid care work within their households (Del Boca et al., 2020).

To ensure the survival, growth, development, and protection of young children, Ghana implemented the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) policy in 2004 (Government of Ghana (ECCE), 2004). The policy implemented a program to ensure that parents could go about their economic activities while children were provided with care and education services. The program is organised for children from birth to eight years; however, the state's official provisioning of childcare services targets children aged four to five through a two-year compulsory early childhood education program (Government of Ghana (ECCE), 2004).

There is no publicly funded childcare service provision in Ghana for children aged zero to three years, a group considered to be children below the

traditional school-going age. Consequently, the responsibility for providing childcare services for this group largely falls upon the household and the market, while the government, through the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, plays a regulatory role.

Critics of the commodification of childcare, as shaped by neoliberalism, have argued that childcare is commodified in a way that serves the interests of already privileged individuals while systematically excluding lower socio-economic groups (Coe, 2023). They maintain that childcare policies have become an important element of social reform in childcare delivery but remain socially unequal. Thus, they argue that the commodification of childcare or care, in general, is a driver of inequality (Weaver, 2022). Marxist feminists argue that state financial provision of childcare encourages the idea of public responsibility for childcare, making childcare more valuable and visible.

Childcare Needs of Parents

Parents and caregivers fundamentally shape the lives of children and their everyday experiences which further impact their future growth and development (Bornstein, 2019). Parents' childcare needs are conceptualised in this study as the caring activities and conditions that predisposes parents in making childcare choices (Saraceno 2011). These childcare needs can vary based on individual conditions, including demographic characteristics, family structure, and socioeconomic status, and are also influenced by the childcare delivery system of a country, such as the absence and content of state childcare provision (Saraceno, 2018).

The involvement of parents, particularly women, in economic activities to sustain their families coupled with the absence of comprehensive childcare support systems often compels women to make difficult decisions (Gromada et al., 2020). These decisions include bringing children to their workplaces, even under less-than-ideal conditions. The strain of balancing economic activities and childcare duties can adversely affect parents' physical and emotional well-being, ultimately impacting their ability to contribute effectively to the economy.

The dynamics of modern life have redefined traditional family structures, intensifying the need for efficient childcare solutions. Atta-Asiedu (2020), highlights how women's involvement in economic activities, urbanisation, and modernisation has disintegrated African family systems, values and support structures. This disintegration particularly affects the traditional safety net of kinship relations for childcare. Additionally, single-parent households resulting from marital dissolution and the economic separation of parents have further contributed to the transformation of family structures (Akinyemi & Wandera, 2020). These changes underscore the assistance that parents require for childcare.

Access to affordable childcare is a major barrier for low-income parents who want to engage in informal economic activities. Britwum (2022) asserts that most Ghanaian women, often constrained by domestic responsibilities and low educational attainment, find employment in an informal economy. This sector typically offers lower remuneration and exposes workers, especially those who trade perishable goods, to investment-related risk. Consequently, low-income parents without access to childcare

support are frequently compelled to resort to low-quality or unsafe childcare options (Currimjee et al., 2022). This underscores the fact that childcare assistance is a vital public investment that can increase the sustainability of employment for low-income parents and provide stability to parents struggling to gain economic security.

Typologies of Childcare

Childcare has been categorised in various ways by researchers, taking into account different factors such as the caregivers involved, the location of care, the level of structure and institutionalisation, and the extent of commodification. One significant classification is parental care, which encompasses care provided by the child's parents or guardians, whether at home or within workplace environments (Breiner, 2016). Another category involves kinship relations, such as grandparents, aunts, and female siblings providing care either at the child's residence or the caregiver's own home (Leonard, 2022). Additionally, home-based care refers to non-relatives who provide care away from the child's home. Nanny or babysitter care involves care provided by non-relatives within the child's home, typically involving payments. Lastly, centre-based care is provided by trained care attendants in structured settings, licenced, regulated, and monitored by a state institution.

In most studies, the categorisation of childcare is generally explained to fit two main contexts: formal and informal childcare (Abel & Nelson, 1990). Informal childcare per its characteristics finds itself primarily underpinned by familial connections, encompassing parents, kinship relations, friends, and neighbours. These arrangements tend to be unpaid and unstructured. In contrast, formal childcare is underpinned by structured settings, such as daycare centres,

crèches, and nurseries. Formal childcare is paid and predominantly involves professionals with specialised training and skills in childcare (Pinto et al., 2021).

A review of what is meant by informal childcare is not straightforward; the concept lacks a precise definition, and its meaning tends to shift based on context. The definitions do not solely revolve around the individuals involved in providing childcare; sometimes, the regularity of the arrangement is another factor. Common to most definitions is the fact that informal childcare is provided by family members, friends, and other social networks, with much emphasis on the role played by grandmothers, given their importance and active involvement in childcare.

Broadly, in contrast to formal childcare which in most countries is government-regulated and is usually paid for by parents with or without government subsidies or support, informal childcare is considered unregulated childcare and usually unpaid for. Some perspectives highlight that informal childcare does not necessarily equate to unpaid childcare exclusively, as it can involve both monetary and reciprocal payments, such as care provided by babysitters or unregistered nannies and child-minders (Bryson et al., 2012).

Irrespective of the fact that paid caregivers provide care in unstructured settings, such as a child's residence, some operate within the framework of formal childcare arrangements. This is because such nannies, babysitters, and child-minders are recruited from state-regulated agencies, receive training, and adhere to specific guidelines set by the agency, similar to caregivers in formal childcare settings.

There is a blurred boundary and ambiguity surrounding the conceptualisation of formal and informal childcare, as some arrangements exhibit characteristics of both categories. In social reproduction theory, childcare is based on a level of commodification, highlighting the extent to which childcare is subjected to market forces and profit maximisation under current neoliberal capitalism (Fraser, 2017). This study categorises childcare types as market- and non-market-based childcare arrangements. Social reproduction theory recognises the commodification of childcare services, leading to unequal access, affordability challenges, and reinforcing social inequalities (Lombardozi, 2020).

Non-market-based Childcare

Care is considered non-market-based when it is embedded in family ties and social networks, provided through non-profit means or without any monetary compensation (Coe, 2023). In other words, non-market-based childcare refers to the provision of care for children by parents, relatives, friends or another informal caregiver through unpaid labour in unstructured and unregulated settings. In this arrangement, caregiving responsibilities are often provided by female members of the household such as elder daughters, grandmothers, aunts, and friends (Dagkouli–Kyriakoglou, 2022).

As much as non-market childcare involves no monetary compensation, Coe, (2023) argue that sometimes non-market caregivers are rewarded in kind and gifts to make up for the time they had spent in providing care for the child. Often the significance of the use of gift- giving and in-kind payment is that they are moral acts and symbols which convey meaning and operate to sustain an alliance.

Non-market-based childcare underscores the significance of family and community networks and their contribution to the intergenerational transmission of values, skills, and culture. This was particularly pronounced in grandparental childcare arrangements. Research has consistently reported that maternal grandmothers are generally more involved in grandparental childcare (Danielsbacka et al., 2011) because women are predominantly in charge of childcare, and more often, women are comfortable with their mothers helping out with childcare.

Nonmarket-based childcare is an important component of the social and economic well-being of families and societies. It enables parents, particularly women, to balance their caregiving responsibilities with other pursuits while ensuring the health, safety, and development of children, leading to increased workforce participation and potentially reducing the gender wage gap in society's participation in the labour market, education, or other activities.

Marxist feminists have argued that non-market-based childcare plays a critical role in the reproduction of labour and the perpetuation of capitalist structures, as it serves as a crucial pillar of capitalist accumulation. However, non-market-based childcare arrangements are undervalued and unrecognised in official statistics and policies as they are not captured by conventional measures of market production and income (Elson, 2012). This has resulted in inadequate support and recognition for caregivers who are disproportionately women, and a disregard for the quality and availability of non-market childcare services.

Childcare is being moved out of the households and into the privatised market sphere. According to Lutz (2018), kinship systems are no longer a reliable source of support, because households are experiencing fragmentations

where more domestic services including childcare are being outsourced as more women participate in productive activities in the market. Women's participation in the labour force is usually conditional on the presence of a childcare support system.

Studies on non-market-based childcare argue that families working non-standard or atypical hours usually make use of non-market-based childcare because they have limited options for market-based childcare thus, the only option usually available to them is to turn to their family, friends and neighbours or provide the care themselves (Baxter & Sweid, 2016).

Market-based Childcare

Bhattacharya (2017), highlights a notable trend in contemporary households, where social reproductive tasks, including childcare, are increasingly being commodified and sought from the market. Commodification signifies the monetary exchange of care practices which were previously provided through non-market means by kin and other social networks for profit (Coe, 2017). Under market-based childcare, the provision of childcare is by private, for-profit individuals or organisations through market models, where childcare is considered a commodity to be purchased by parents and guardians as consumers.

Scholarly works on capitalism and Marxist feminists argue that the commodification of childcare and other reproductive tasks stands as a significant indicator of the widespread influence of capitalism (Ferragina, 2019). It is argued that the commodification of care is not limited to a specific geographic or cultural context. It has become pervasive and a normalised feature of all societies where the incorporation of market-driven values into

the way care is provided and perceived, has become an acceptable aspect of modern life (Coe, 2023). This perpetuates inequalities within the society.

In the literature, there is growing evidence suggesting that commodifying childcare tends to favour and empower already privileged individuals or groups from high-income households, while systematically excluding and disempowering the underprivileged from lower-income households (Gromanda et al., 2021). Furthermore, heightened regulatory standards within the childcare market can yield improved quality outcomes. Nevertheless, these enhanced standards also bring about additional expenses, rendering market-based childcare even less accessible to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. This exacerbates the deep-rooted social inequalities that persist within our societies (Horwood et al., 2021).

The study conducted sheds light on the impact of market-based childcare on family choices and highlights the disparities that exist based on socioeconomic backgrounds (Horowitz et al., 2022). According to the findings, children from relatively advantaged socio-economic backgrounds tend to have better access to market-based childcare options (Horowitz et al., 2022). However, for many families, the cost of such childcare services becomes a significant barrier. The market rate for childcare can be prohibitively high for most families, especially those with lower incomes. Without subsidies, low-income families spend a larger portion of their income on childcare compared to high-income families. Finally, the affordability of childcare influences parents, particularly mothers' decisions regarding their workforce participation.

In addition to the influence of capitalist commodification of childcare, alternative perspectives posit that the phenomenon of out-migration, a product

of capitalism, particularly among women, alters family structures or kinship relations. When women migrate for work or other reasons, their childcare responsibilities shift to other family members, often older women or elderly family members. In instances where adult family members are occupied with productive activities, alternative childcare arrangements such as hiring paid caregivers or using institutionalised childcare services, tend to influence the growing reliance on market-based childcare solutions.

The phenomenon of female global migration, where the majority of women from the Global South, migrate to the Global North as carers by abandoning their unpaid care responsibilities for others has been studied. In the context of Ghana, Coe (2017) argues that female global migration has resulted in changes in gender relations where responsibilities of care have shifted from female kin to poorer women who are socially distant. Mostly, wealthier women from the global north hire caregivers from the global South, often immigrants and racialised women, to provide childcare for their children. This practice leads to relations of domination and subordination among women, highlighting the complexities of power dynamics that transcend geographical boundaries.

The market dynamics of childcare are embedded in both the formal and informal arrangements of childcare. This classification is dependent on the level of structure and institutionalisation. Market formal childcare settings reflect structured and regulated care services provided by licensed operators made to follow established guidelines and standards. Such services include daycare centres, preschools or nurseries, home-based childcare, nannies and child-minders. The cost associated with commodified childcare varies on

factors such as the quality of care, hours of operation, location as well and additional services offered.

Market-informal childcare refers to a caregiving arrangement where parents directly employ paid caregivers like nannies or babysitters, without the intermediary involvement of agencies. Additionally, this category includes home-based childcare centres, which are typically located in either the caregiver's or child's home. In such arrangements, a more personalized and direct approach to childcare is adopted, often characterised by a close working relationship between caregivers and families. The cost associated with market formal and informal childcare care varies depending on factors such as the quality of care, hours of operation, location as well and additional services offered. Parents as consumers have choices and can make decisions based on factors such as cost, quality and convenience. As well as the childcare delivery system present in the society in which they find themselves.

Childcare Arrangement

Childcare arrangement encompasses the various strategies parents employ to ensure the well-being and care of their children (Ryser & Heers, 2023). Research highlights that parent today, facing increasing demands linked to both their work and family responsibilities, employ a diverse approach to childcare arrangements (Mousié, 2021). They draw from a range of available childcare options, mainly categorised into non-market-based support from social networks like relatives and non-relatives, as well as market-based childcare alternatives, including daycare centres, home-based childcare, child-minders, and hiring nannies. Reflecting the dynamic needs of contemporary families, parents select from a combination of options, which is termed in

research as "mixed childcare" (Craig & Churchill, 2018). This pragmatic strategy signifies the practicality and adaptability of parents in addressing the modern complexities of life (Arpino & Luppi, 2020).

Previous studies underscored the significant role of grandparental childcare. This form of childcare involves grandparents providing care and support to their grandchildren, often playing a crucial role in the upbringing and nurturing of younger generations within a family. Studies have revealed that grandparents frequently contribute their time, knowledge, and care, playing an essential role in supporting working parents and assisting in childcare responsibilities. This dynamic has been recognised as a fundamental and often relied-upon form of family support in various societies and cultures worldwide (Del Boca et al., 2018; Di Gessa et al., 2022).

Studies further suggest that mothers make use of childcare arrangements that meet their needs for quality, location, flexibility, and affordability (Arpino & Luppi, 2020). Parents with high educational backgrounds and socioeconomic status can prioritise and afford their children's education and development and may be more likely to seek out quality childcare services for their children, such as daycare centres and private nannies with specialised training and experience. They can also pay for childcare services that are flexible and accommodate their schedules (Gromanda, 2021).

Low-income families are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to meeting the cost of engaging a child minder or even low-cost childcare services, because it implies a large proportion of their income. Although not all informal workers are poor, informal work is characterised by a high risk of

poverty. In both rural and urban areas, women in the informal economy are said to be concentrated in the lowest-earning and the most vulnerable forms of employment (Ulrichs, 2016; Mapumulo, 2021).

Moussié (2018) argues that women in the informal economy, such as home-based workers, street vendors, market traders, and waste pickers, have key barriers when it comes to childcare provision and are confronted with pressing childcare needs. The childcare needs of street vendors include access to facilities for napping, quality affordable childcare in marketplaces and close to principal streets where vending takes place, free provision of childcare by the state, and availability of reliable social networks to provide care (Horwood, 2019).

Studies have shown that when childcare services are available, the main constraint identified by female informal workers, such as street vendors, is the high cost of the services (Moussié, 2021). Their low and irregular earnings make it difficult to pay their daily, weekly, or monthly user fees. In instances where there are cheaper childcare centres, they are usually unregistered and of a low quality. A study in South Africa found that most women street vendors and waste pickers use unregistered home-based childcare services, as they are usually close to their homes and affordable compared to registered centre-based childcare (Currinjee et al., 2022).

Childcare Choices

Childcare choices are conceptualised in the study as decisions about childcare that parents make out of the options available to them. According to Grundman (2016), childcare choices are among the most important decisions parents make on their children's behalf. Identifying the key conditions and

considerations that influence mothers' choices regarding childcare is a central concern of researchers. Social reproduction theory asserts that these choices are linked to social structures and economic systems, which shape reproductive labour and childcare choices. Thus, women's childcare choices are not solely determined by individual needs, but are profoundly influenced by broader economic and social structures, encompassing the gendered division of labour and class-based inequalities.

Much of the research on childcare choices in contemporary times has focused on the outcomes of parental childcare decision making, revealing important associations between certain family characteristics and childcare use patterns. Family, household composition, and income are strongly associated with childcare use (Afrifa, 2018; Hinson, 2021). Unlike single-parent households, where options may be limited, two-parent households have options for sharing childcare responsibilities. Similarly, there may be more opportunities for shared childcare responsibilities in households with multiple adults, such as extended families. However, many depend on the extent of the gendered dimension of labour in the household which is usually shaped by cultural and economic factors (Chung et al., 2022; Pinto et al., 2021).

The age of the child is strongly associated with the type of childcare parent use. Studies show that infants and toddlers are left in the care of non-market childcare arrangements, while children around age three are usually left in market childcare arrangements (Pinto et al., 2021; Twintoh et al., 2021). Furthermore, some key indicators of a parent's socioeconomic status and resources, such as parents' level of education, employment status, and income, are associated with the type of childcare arrangements parents use. To be more

specific, it was revealed in studies conducted that a higher level of a mother's educational attainment is associated with greater use of formal childcare (Crosnoe et al, 2021). Higher- income families are also observed to make use of more expensive types of care such as formal centre childcare thus as family income rises, families make greater use of market-based childcare (Biegel & Neel, 2021)

Researchers have focused on childcare choices based on the unique needs of children with special needs, health problems, and their experiences in care. It has been revealed that parents of children with special needs face additional constraints and difficulties in finding childcare providers with specific health concerns. Thus, many require specific and complex caregiving arrangements (Shapiro & Stanton, 2022).

Childcare choices are made within the broader context of parental employment and the childcare market or supply of childcare which further facilitates or constrains parents' choices (Del Boca, 2015 Weber, 2011; Heinrich, 2014). Low-income working parents, particularly those with non-standard work hours, face several challenges in finding suitable childcare options that align with their schedules. Mothers in these situations are left with the choice of providing childcare while working, exclusively relying on non-market care providers, or market-based arrangements (Ojaambo, 2015; Haley, 2022; Beasley, 2022).

Street Vending

As argued earlier, the implication of neoliberal ideologies in the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) led to massive

retrenchment and created high unemployment levels, forcing the majority to join the informal economy across developing countries (Odotayo, 2015). This has resulted in the informal economy growing bigger, as it accommodates individuals who lose their jobs or do not have the opportunity to work in the formal sector. This phenomenon has also led to an increase in trading where street vendors occupy a vast portion of the urban informal sector in the developing world (Muiruri, 2010)

Street vending constitutes an important economic and livelihood strategy in the informal economies of many urban dwellers in developing countries (Lara-Hernandez et al., 2018). In recent decades, street vending has not been considered an economic activity typical of developing countries, but a growing phenomenon affecting both developed and developing countries (Recchi, 2021). According to Agyemang (2021), street vending is the activity of producing and selling legal commodities or goods and services in urban public spaces, especially sidewalk streets, and in non-permanent structures, usually without official legal regulation. By extension, a street vendor can be broadly defined as a person who offers goods and services to the public in an open-air spaces, transport junctions and construction sites without having a permanent built-up structure in which they sell (Bhowmik, 2005).

Street vending is considered a livelihood strategy for poor or supplementary activities, where individuals in the formal economy employ it as a coping strategy when the formal economy is not doing well. It is characterised by low earnings, unsafe working conditions, no social protection, and poor job security. Street vendors are usually made up of individuals with low levels of education and techniques who find small-scale businesses as a means of living

(Igudia, 2020).

Spire & Choplin (2018) points out that street vendors sell unprocessed and processed foods; ready-to-eat foods such as rice, beverages, fruits, and vegetables; and non-food goods such as textiles, auto-part dealers, medicines, books, newspapers, and magazines. Street vendors also engage in services consisting of various activities such as barbering and hairdressing. Street vending provides an important source of earnings for unemployed individuals in urban areas and serves as a source of relatively inexpensive goods and services that are readily available to city residents.

Research studies on street vending, however, show that in most countries, it is perceived as an illegal activity that undermines the healthy functioning of the formal economy. Street vendors are considered to be creating problems for residents, pedestrians, formal retailers, and public authorities, and causing mishaps that potentially lead to violence (Tonda & Kepe, 2016). This attitude has overshadowed its importance and contribution to national economies, resulting in it being unaccounted for and unrecognised in national economic statistics.

According to Vanek et al., (2014), in the informal economy, street vendors are largely invisible in official statistics. Obtaining accurate data on the size of the street vending population in any given city can be challenging. The main statistical challenge is not so much about classifying street vendors as employed in the informal economy, but rather about identifying the category of work in which they are engaged. Vanek et al., (2014) further noted that there is no “place of work” question in population censuses and labour surveys. In cases where there is the “place of work” question, it may not have appropriate

response categories to allow data analysts to identify street vendors. Even when official statistics do capture street vendors, they are likely to undercount the total number of street vendors, as mobile vendors frequently changing their location.

In addition, street vendors in many societies often operate without regulations and licences (Recchi, 2021). Consequently, some street vendors feel uncomfortable to disclose their occupation in government surveys due to the risk associated with working in public spaces, such as the possibility of taxation, harassment and the confiscation of goods, among others concerns (Vanek et al., 2014). Street vendors encounter many challenges in their daily activities, as national regulatory bodies impose various restrictions on them. . Failure to comply with these regulations may result in the confiscation of their goods or the imposition of penalties.

Studies show countries often enact laws and policies affecting street vendors' livelihoods without adequately consulting them. To be more specific, the laws in Thailand do not require local authorities to consult street vendors when making decisions. However, cases in South Africa and India are different. India's Street Vendors Protection of Livelihood and Regulation Act, 2014, requires that each local authority establish a town vending committee whose membership must comprise government officials, NGOs, and at least forty per cent elected street vendors, of which a third must be women. In South Africa, policies provide for consultation and some by-laws expressly require local authorities to consult street vendor associations when adopting a plan to ensure and allow street vendors to voice their concerns before decisions that affect them are made (Recchi, 2021).

Types of Street Vending

Studies have explored street vending types based on certain criteria such as mobility and proximity to public or private interfaces (Kamalipour & Peimani, 2019). Other studies categorise street vendors based on location, use of technology, nationality of vendors, commodities being sold, activity type (food and beverages, retail, goods, and services), and structure or settings (pavement, main street, back alleys, and five-foot) (Suryanto et al., 2020). However, street vending is generally categorised into two main groups, with a primary focus on mobility and location or settings (Recchi, 2021). These are static or stationary street vending and mobile street vending (Bhatt & Jariwala, 2018).

Mobile Street vendors use easy-to-carry trading materials such as carts, pushcarts, and trolleys to sell their goods or move from one place to another. It has been argued that women street vendors are more likely to be involved in mobile street vending than their male counterparts, who may occupy fixed stalls or footpaths. Stationary or static street vendors operate from fixed locations such as organised marketplaces. They return daily to the same spot to sell their goods in temporary stalls, kiosks, and sometimes on blankets laid on the ground. These street vendors operate from strategic locations at all hours of the day and night. Consensus in studies on street vendors points to the fact that street vendors prioritise proximity to the streets to maximise access to potential customers (Matamanda et al., 2023).

The Gendered Dynamics of Street Vending

Street vending is considered a female-dominated occupation in the informal economy (Ko Ko et al., 2020). Women have been largely involved in the informal sector as street vendors, predominantly to secure the financial security of their households. Some female street vendors are single mothers who have seen vending as their primary survival strategy. Unemployed youth, specifically women, joined street vending after the completion of their studies.

According to Mitullah (2004), women dominate street vending because it requires limited skills and capital. Moreover, street vending has a special appeal for women owing to its flexibility in combining street vending with other household duties, including childcare. According to Baah-Boateng & Vanek, (2020), women outnumber men in the informal economy, especially in street vending in Ghana. They further argue that street vending represents about three to four percent of women's employment throughout Ghana, mainly in terms of street food sales. Among men, street vending represents one per cent or even less of employment (Baah-Boateng & Vanek, 2020).

Studies have suggested that even though street vending is traditionally perceived as a female job, changing socioeconomic conditions have made men challenge this gender-based occupation by engaging in the street vending business (Abukari & Abukari, 2022). In the context of Ghana, studies have shown that unemployment conditions make food vending a business a source of livelihood for men in patriarchal societies such as Dagbon (Abukari & Odai, 2018). Furthermore, a study to ascertain the plights of male street vendors in Kumasi found that male vendors have not only faced ridicule from their female

counterparts, but male vendors have also battled social scorns from fellow men (Forkuor et al.,2016).

Street Vending and Childcare

Research points to the fact that urban plans that set aside spaces for primary and secondary education tend to neglect the setup of childcare services for children under the age of three (Moussié, 2021). As a result of this developmental challenge, it is particularly difficult for female informal workers, especially female street vendors, to access institutionalised childcare services for children below the age of four. This is an issue of concern to childcare researchers because they acknowledge that work environments such as streets and public spaces are unsafe and inappropriate for caring for young children.

Discourses on women's economic empowerment are being looked at from the point of encouraging the establishment of public and affordable care services that partially relieve women and girls who are responsible for caring for young children (McCarthy, 2017). Without state provision for childcare, mothers have to take time off work to provide care, or girls sacrifice their education to help at home.

Empirical Review

In this section, studies conducted by researchers on childcare and childcare choices are reviewed. According to Paul and Criado (2020), an empirical review is a critical examination and synthesis of existing empirical studies or data related to a specific research question or topic. An empirical review helps to establish the current state of knowledge in the area of interest, highlighting gaps and unanswered questions. It also informs the research design,

offers guidelines for the analysis of data collected, and validates the findings of the study (Sajeevanie, 2021). Researchers studying the reproduction of children and childcare choices have looked at it from various perspectives. This review was chronologically ordered, beginning with the most recent research and progressing to earlier studies, allowing for an understanding of how the research landscape has evolved.

Navarro-Cruz, Dvila, Amaya and Orozco-Barajas (2023) explored the childcare choices made by student parents for their children, aged zero to five years while pursuing higher education in a university in the Western United States. The study was underpinned by the accommodation model as a framework for guiding the research. The accommodation model as a theoretical approach helps understand how individuals balance their roles and responsibilities when faced with competing demands. In the context of the study, the accommodation model allowed for a deeper understanding of the process and outcomes of childcare decision-making, exploring how student parents adjust their childcare choices and arrangements to make their educational goals feasible.

Navarro-Cruz et al., (2023) employed a qualitative study approach and conducted in-depth interviews with 36 undergraduate student parents attending a 4-year university in the Western United States. The findings revealed that student parents relied on a combination of childcare arrangements, including partners, family, and on-campus centre-based care, and highlighted the diverse childcare needs of student parents, which were influenced by factors such as family priorities, financial resources, personal beliefs, aspirations, community environment, and social networks. The study concludes that student parents' childcare needs and choices are complex, and thus the special needs that student

parents face result in them choosing to combine various forms of care to meet their work and school demands (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2023). The study recommended that institutions of higher education, policymakers, and researchers support the educational pursuits of student parents and provide childcare that best suits their needs and desires (Navarro-Cruz et al. 2023).

Horwood, Hinton, Haskins, Luthuli, Mapumulo and Rollins (2021) explored how informal working mothers balance the requirements of livelihood and safe childcare in South Africa. Unlike Navarro-Cruz et al., (2023), Horwood et al., (2021) employed a mixed-methods research approach in conducting a longitudinal cohort study among informal women workers in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa between July 2018 and August 2019. Twenty-four participants were recruited for the study. All participants were followed from late pregnancy until they had to return to work.

The study findings suggest that because of the financial responsibilities of the mothers to provide for their household and their babies, they return to work soon after childbirth. Women in an informal economy had limited childcare choices, and the most preferred childcare arrangement was care provided by family members at home. This is because childcare provided by family members is the most convenient and low-cost option. In the findings of the study, mothers raised concerns about the reliability of caregivers and the safety of the caring environment.

It was revealed that the flexibility of informal work allowed some mothers the opportunity to adapt their work to care for their children. However, those who left their children in the care of unsuitable carers to avoid losing paid work were frequently anxious about the safety of their children, but reported

having had no choice because they needed to work (Horwood et al., 2021). The study concluded that mothers in the informal economy generally have limited childcare options, and children are exposed to unsafe poor-quality care. The study recommended that maternity protection for informal workers would support mothers to stay home longer to provide adequate care for their toddlers.

A study was conducted by Hinson (2021) to examine the factors that influence parents' decisions on the choice of daycare centres for children in peri-urban Communities in Ghana. The study revealed that the environment or neighbourhood dominated the influential factors for the selection of day-care centres, followed by parents' preferences, including educated or trained childcare attendants, the number of children-teacher ratios, the availability of adequate and appropriate teaching learning and play material, the centre's ability to operate within hours that fits the schedule of mothers, and also how trustworthy child care attendants are.

The study further established that there was an average and statistically significant influence of social contracts on parents in the selection of daycare centres. Additionally, the study found that parents focused on the development of their children rather than the cost of childcare and family income. The study revealed that even though parents believed that family structure was a factor influencing their decisions in the selection of childcare, it is not as important as the structural quality of the childcare facility. The study recommends that market-based childcare authorities should improve the environment in which their daycare centres are situated by making use of available resources. Evidence shows that parents are more concerned about the quality of the environment in which their children spend most of their time. However, it is important to

recognise that enhancing childcare quality should not be solely driven by market competition. Quality childcare should be a fundamental goal based on children's well-being, development, and health.

Muller and Jaen (2020) conducted a qualitative study that focused on the demand for childcare services in Mexico City. This study aims to improve the understanding of the barriers and enabling factors influencing the demand for childcare among parents with children aged zero to six in Mexico City. The study is based on focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews with mothers and fathers

The findings of this study suggest that parents in Mexico City make childcare decisions based on several factors, including women's aspirations, the role of work in their lives, and the level of support available to them. These decisions are also influenced by parents' perceptions of available childcare options, considering factors such as convenience, overall quality, opportunities for positive child development, and associated financial and non-financial costs. The study's findings reveal that there is a difference in childcare decisions between women with higher education and those with lower levels of education and from different socioeconomic backgrounds living in different parts of the city. The observed differences were due to variations in their ability to make informed choices, their aspirations and employment opportunities and their ability to adapt to the available childcare options

Mbulayi, Makuyana and Kang'ethe (2020) conducted a qualitative study in Zimbabwe that explored the perception of street vending mothers on the psychosocial implication of concurrent street vending and childcare activities. This study adopted an exploratory research design to gain an understanding of

the psychosocial effects of simultaneous street vending and childcare activities. One striking finding of this study was that university degree holders were engaged in street vending and were also involved in simultaneous street vending with childcare. This finding presents a contrary conventional outlook of female street vendors as having no formal education or with a low level of educational attainment. Vending mothers generally have a negative perception of simultaneous vending and childcare. Other findings revealed that simultaneous street vending and childcare practices had detrimental effects on child nurturing, exposing children to risks such as traffic accidents, child trafficking, and increased vulnerability to disease.

Afrifa, (2018) employed a qualitative research approach that applied the lens of Social Capital and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory to investigate the dynamics and continuity of childcare practices in Ghana. It focuses on examining childcare arrangements in three geographical clusters within Accra. This study aimed to describe the actors influencing parental choices regarding childcare, the commodification of childcare, and the challenges associated with childcare provision. The study revealed four types of childcare arrangements within urban households: formal, informal, institutionalised, and community-based. The study findings again highlighted the elements of commercialisation across these arrangements. It also discussed challenges related to childcare, including issues with relying on unknown caregivers in socialising children, recruiting processes, and the unreliability of caregivers. The study recommends the need for policymakers to see childcare provision as an issue of great importance, since the future of a country relies on its ability to properly socialise its young ones.

Lessons from Review

It emerged from the reviewed studies that, as a result of the theoretical perspectives researchers used in studying childcare and childcare choices, the focus was based mostly on individuals' choices, preferences, and immediate environmental factors influencing parents' childcare decisions. Less attention has been given to the devaluation of childcare as care work and its association with women's primary responsibilities. The studies do not examine how systematic factors, including economic and social structures, and informs childcare choices. In addition, the studies predominantly framed the language of choice as a matter of women's personal preferences and decisions, aligning with the neoliberal values of freedom, independence, and individualism. This perspective often overlooks the significant structural barriers that limit women's options in childcare and work.

Framing childcare as women's personal decisions aligned with neoliberal values can limit the recognition of structural barriers, reinforce gender norms, and lead to inadequate policy responses, potentially exacerbating gender inequality and hindering progress toward more inclusive and equitable societies. The gaps in these previous studies were the focus of this study. To address this gap, this study employs social reproduction theory as the guiding framework to unpack the broader economic and social structures that influence women's childcare decisions.

Conceptual Framework

To understand the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim, social reproduction theory was used to unpack issues related to

childcare choices from a broader perspective. The study adopted concepts from social reproduction theory. The concepts used in the study are childcare delivery systems, childcare needs, childcare arrangements, and childcare choices. The conceptual framework highlights how all concepts of interest in the study come together to describe ways in which childcare choices are made.

Childcare delivery systems encompass the structural, policy, and institutional elements that shape the provision and accessibility of childcare services within society. Childcare delivery systems are notably influenced by capitalist ideologies, particularly by neoliberal economic principles. The variables of the childcare delivery system include policy framework, cost of childcare, and quality standards.

The policy framework includes laws and regulations that define the overall structure and objectives of the childcare provision. The cost of childcare is operationalised as the financial mechanisms by which childcare services are funded, whether through state-provided models or market-oriented approaches. This economic dimension significantly impacts families, particularly mothers, and their ability to access affordable high-quality childcare services. These effects are further shaped by the background characteristics of mothers and the composition of their households.

Household composition, including the presence of the child's father, other children, and relatives, plays a significant role in shaping the childcare needs of mothers. Additionally, a mother's socioeconomic status, educational level, and employment status influence specific childcare needs or requirements. These contextual factors intersect the childcare system's

policies and structures, with a neoliberal-aligned system often through market-driven solutions, potentially disadvantaging economically challenged families.

Childcare needs, operationalised in this study, encompass the caring activities and conditions that predisposes parents to make childcare choices.

These needs are highly contingent on the mothers' background characteristics and household composition. Eminent in the childcare literature is the idea that the background of parents plays a significant role in shaping their childcare needs and furthering their childcare choices. The childcare delivery system also serves as the mechanism or framework through which parents' childcare needs are met. Thus, the effectiveness of the childcare system is gauged by its ability to adequately address and contribute to the overall well-being and development of children, with long-term benefits for families and society as a whole.

The childcare delivery system influences the accessibility and availability of support mothers can receive. Social reproduction theory asserts that the childcare system does this by regulating and providing policy support to shape or influence the availability of care providers as well as social norms surrounding the provisioning of childcare in both market and non-market childcare settings.

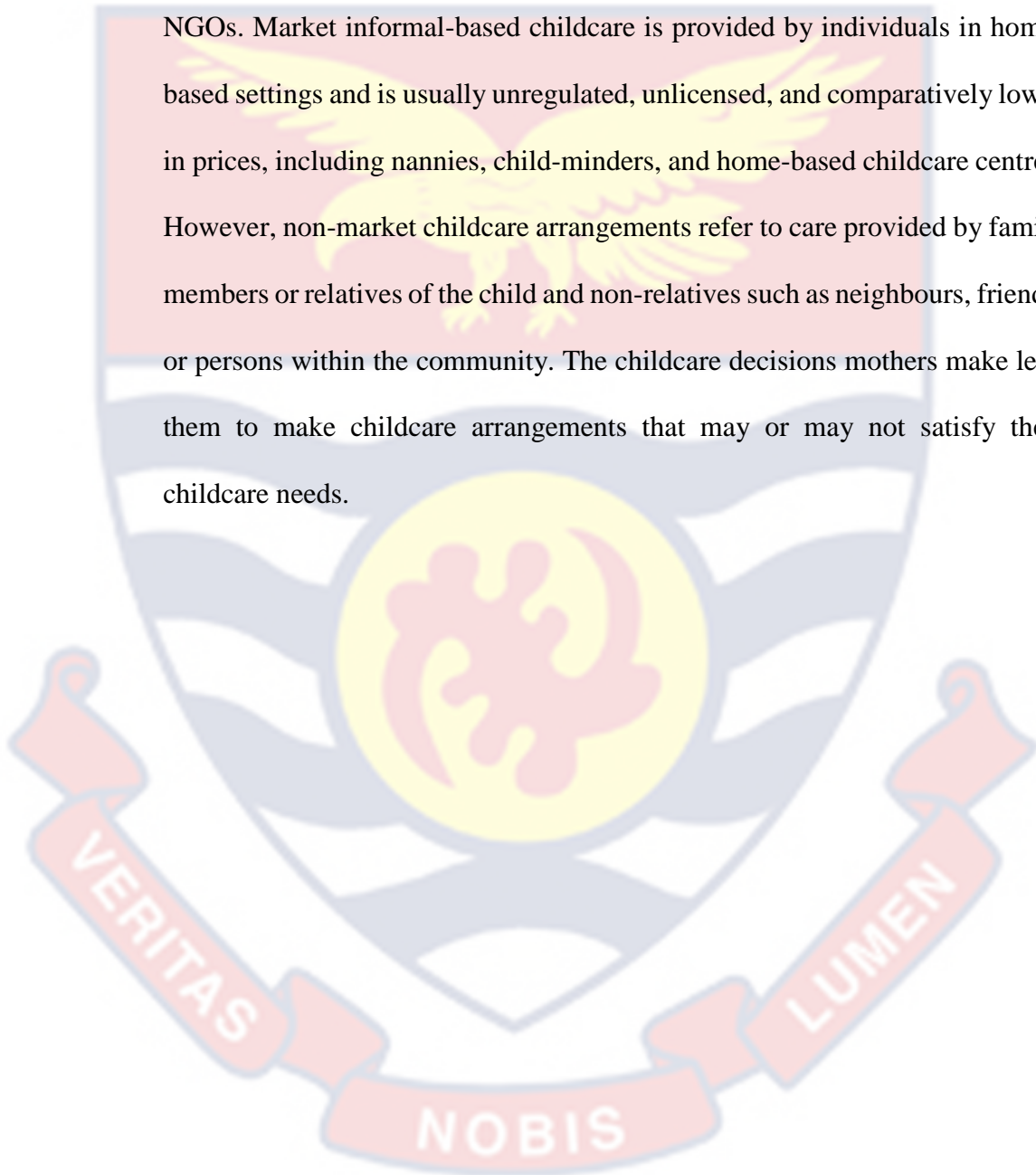
The childcare delivery system further influences childcare arrangements. Childcare arrangements are operationalised in this study as the various ways in which mothers organise care and supervise their children. The various variables in these concepts include relative and non-relative childcare, and institutionalised and home-based childcare. Relative childcare refers to extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins,

who provide care and support to children. Non-relative care refers to the engagement of individuals outside the immediate family circle in childcare provision. Non-relative childcare providers include individuals who are not linked by blood ties, such as friends, neighbours, or acquaintances. Institutionalised care comprises registered and regulated childcare facilities, such as daycare centres and crèches, while home-based care encompasses care support provided by individuals in the caregiver's home or the child's home. It is often unregistered and operates without a licence from a regulatory body.

The preference for a particular childcare arrangement is influenced by the childcare systems in that society. In other words, the nature of a country's childcare delivery system has a significant impact on the various forms of childcare arrangements available to parents. In instances where countries have well-developed childcare delivery systems, parents may have access to a range of childcare arrangements and greater flexibility in terms of their work. However, in instances where the childcare delivery system is less developed, parents are left to deal with the burden of childcare, especially if they are unable to find suitable non-market-based childcare arrangements.

Childcare systems further influence parents' childcare choices. Childcare choices are operationalised as decisions parents make regarding the types of care arrangements available. These childcare choices come in various forms; however, in this study, these have been categorised into two main forms. These forms, based on social reproduction theory, come in market- and non-market-based arrangements. Market-based childcare can be further categorised as formal or informal.

Market formal childcare refers to licenced facilities or services that are officially recognised as spaces where childcare can be provided and are market-oriented or paid for (Majola et al., 2023). These include daycare centres and crèches provided by private individuals, religious bodies, or NGOs. Market informal-based childcare is provided by individuals in home-based settings and is usually unregulated, unlicensed, and comparatively lower in prices, including nannies, child-minders, and home-based childcare centres. However, non-market childcare arrangements refer to care provided by family members or relatives of the child and non-relatives such as neighbours, friends, or persons within the community. The childcare decisions mothers make lead them to make childcare arrangements that may or may not satisfy their childcare needs.



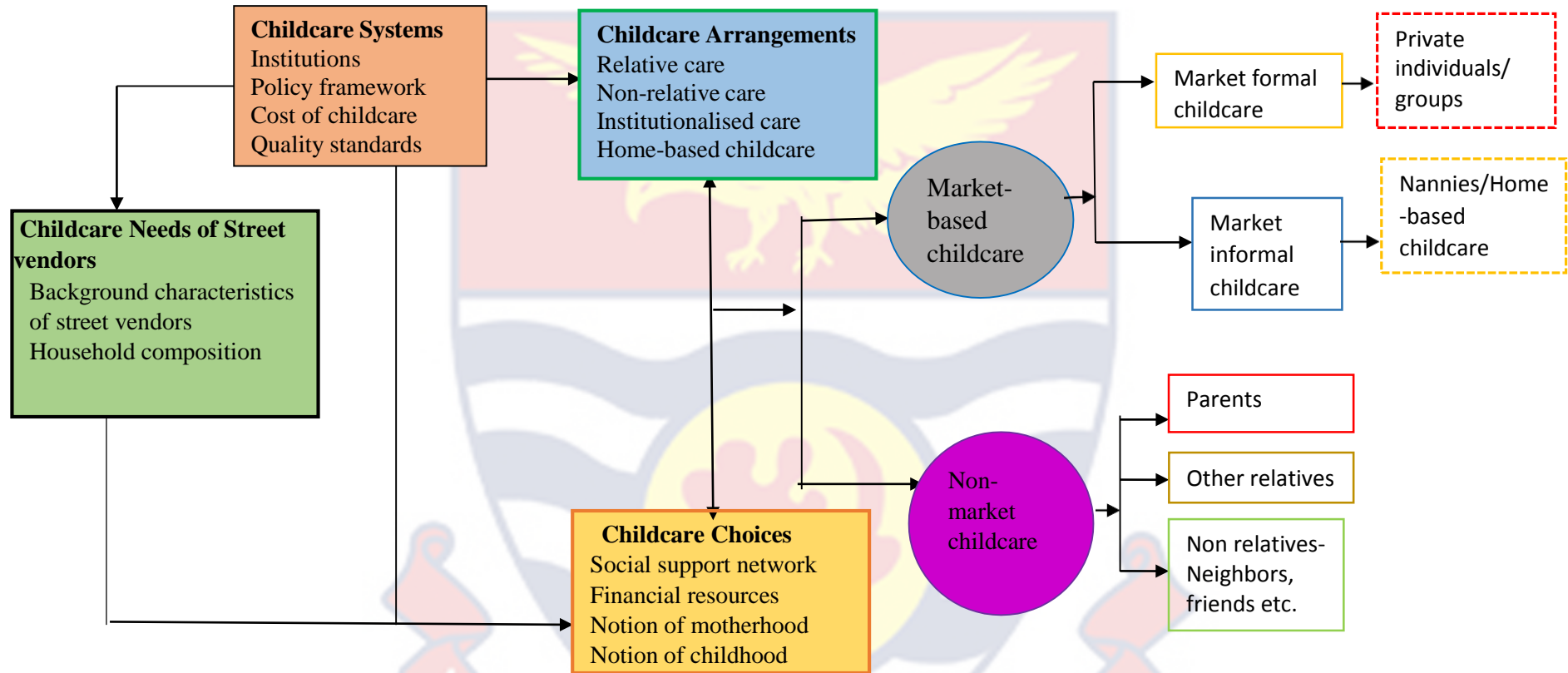
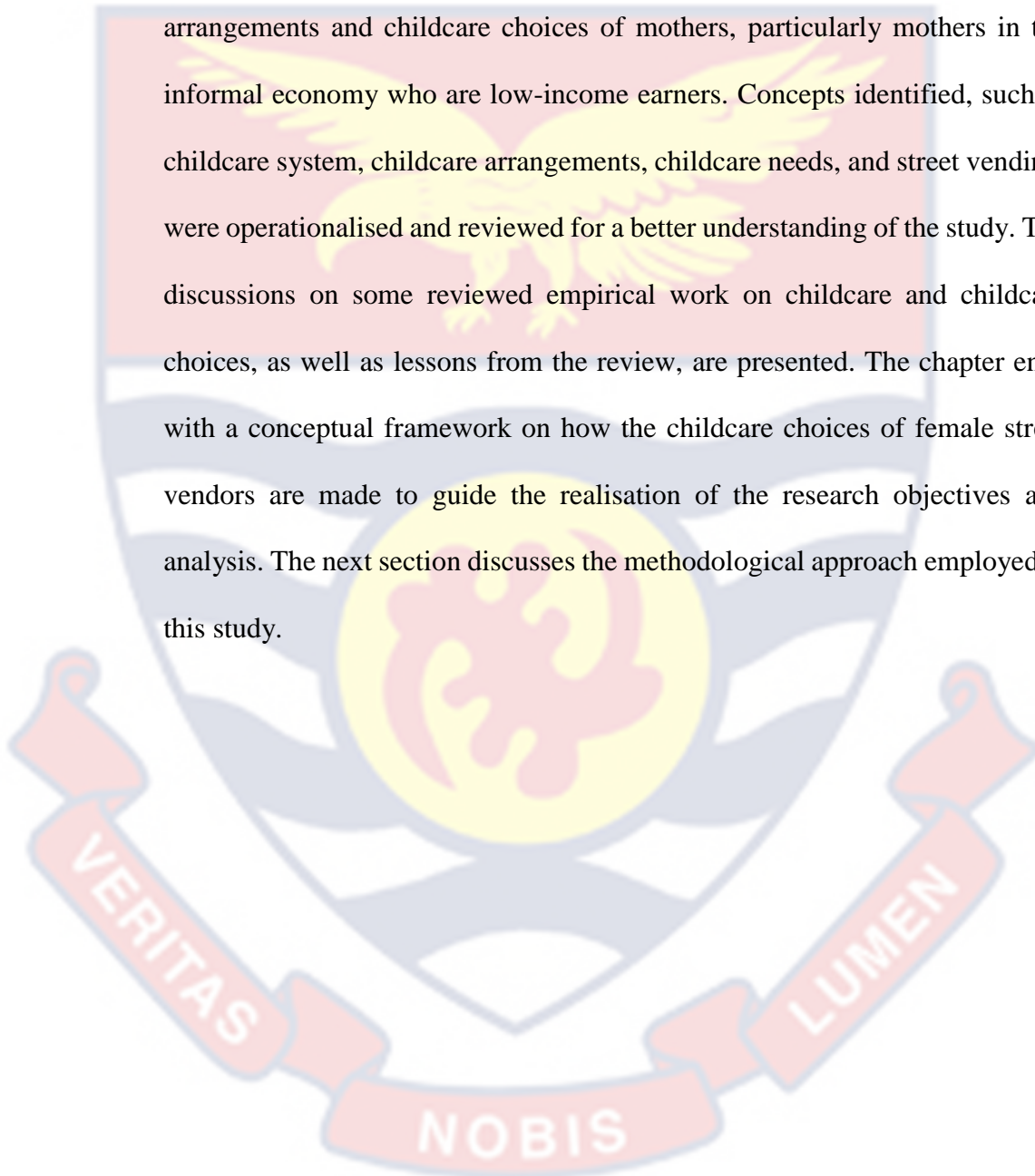


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Understanding the Childcare Choices of Female Street Vendors.

Source: Bhattacharya (2017) and Fraser (2016)

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter reviewed the relevant and related literature on childcare and childcare choices among mothers. The study was underpinned by the social reproduction theory to unpack the issues surrounding childcare arrangements and childcare choices of mothers, particularly mothers in the informal economy who are low-income earners. Concepts identified, such as childcare system, childcare arrangements, childcare needs, and street vending, were operationalised and reviewed for a better understanding of the study. The discussions on some reviewed empirical work on childcare and childcare choices, as well as lessons from the review, are presented. The chapter ends with a conceptual framework on how the childcare choices of female street vendors are made to guide the realisation of the research objectives and analysis. The next section discusses the methodological approach employed in this study.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The research methodology is primarily the overall systematic approach or strategy used to conduct the study. In this chapter, the research methodology and methods adopted to explore the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim in the central region of Ghana are discussed. A detailed account of the research design, study area, study population, sampling procedure, data source, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and data processing and analysis is provided.

Research Design

A research design connotes the overall plan, structure, and strategy of a study, outlining the framework for data collection, measurement, and analysis (Rezigalla, 2020). It specifies the data and methods required to accomplish the research objective and addresses the research questions. Research designs are shaped by underlying philosophical orientations or paradigms, such as positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism, which guide researchers' approaches to enquiry (Mohajan, 2018).

This study adopts an interpretivist philosophical position, emphasising the socially constructed nature of reality. Interpretivism underscores the significance of interpreting and understanding lived human experiences and social phenomena in research processes (Chowdhury, 2014). Within this paradigm, the researcher interprets data, and as such, objectivity is unattainable because the studied reality is mediated by the researcher. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on contextualising environments and acknowledges the subjectivity of knowledge and reality.

Research paradigms form the foundation for research approaches, in which researchers develop research designs from a chosen paradigm. In this field of childcare, researchers have used quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research approaches based on their study's aims and the nature of the information required. These approaches yield different research designs owing to their varying theoretical structures and ontological and epistemological foundations (Cuthbertson, 2020).

Of the three research approaches, this study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore childcare choices among female street vendors in Mankessim. The qualitative approach aligns with the interpretivist philosophical position, recognising that reality is socially constructed. This study focuses on understanding the lived experiences of female street vendors when making childcare decisions. Using a qualitative approach, this study gained insights into the unique perspectives, challenges, and constraints that influence the childcare decision processes of female street vendors.

While qualitative studies are often criticised for their research legitimacy and the challenge of generalising their findings, this study adopted a contextual approach. This recognized that childcare provision and choices vary across countries and their respective welfare policies. The primary aim of the study was not to generalise the findings to all female street vendors, but to deepen the understanding of childcare choices among female street vendors in Mankessim, potentially influencing similar studies and raising the awareness of childcare issues from the lens of social reproduction theory.

Within the qualitative research approach, this study adopted an exploratory research design. According to Reiter (2017), an exploratory design

is a comprehensive and purposeful approach that aims to uncover new insights and connections in a specific area, revealing previously unsuspected connections and causal mechanisms that contribute to a deeper understanding of social phenomena. The study's research questions underscore its exploratory nature, concentrating on capturing the participants' everyday interactions and comprehending how female street vendors constructed meaning to shape their childcare choices. This was accomplished by immersing them in their daily lives, conversing with them, and observing their interactions in the market and non-market-based arrangements they employed in Mankessim.

The exploratory design allowed for an understanding of childcare choices in the context of neoliberal capitalism, recognising the interplay between gender roles, informal labour, and childcare practices. It provides insights into the childcare needs, arrangements, and choices of female street vendors, recognising the broader socio-economic structures impacting their childcare needs, arrangements, and choices.

An exploratory study is conducted to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon where little prior research exists, beginning with explicit theory (Reiter, 2017). Given this, an exploration of childcare choices among female street vendors within a pre-existing theory, specifically social reproduction theory, was conducted. The exploratory study design provided a structured framework for the study, allowing the formulation of research questions and identifying key areas of enquiry, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of childcare choices, and utilising concepts from the chosen theory to direct data gathering.

Study Area

This study was conducted in Mankessim in the Central Region of Ghana (see Figure 2). Mankessim is a town in the Mfantseman Municipal Assembly, one of the twenty-two administrative districts in the Central Region of Ghana. It is located approximately 85 kilometres west of Accra on the main road to Sekondi-Takoradi. Mankessim is the largest township in the municipality bordered to the south by a coastal town of Saltpond to the east by Ekumfi communities to the West by Nkwanta and Krofu communities, and to the north by Enyan Maim and Ajumako communities (see Figure 2). According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC), Mankessim has a population of 47,747 in 2021 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Among these, 25,783 were female, representing 54 per cent of the entire population, and 21,964 were male, representing 46 per cent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

Mankessim is the largest commercial town in the Mfantseman municipality and is an important location because it hosts one of the largest markets in Ghana (Boadi-Kusi et al., 2016). The Mankessim road along the Accra- Cape Coast highway is one of the busiest routes characterised by the concentration of commercial activities, vendors, and intermittent traffic time and crowded bus stops that provides a very attractive space for street vendors to ply their trade. Studies that have looked childcare practices of women informal economy workers are mostly studies in Accra and Kumasi. So there was the need to consider the dynamics in the central region. The market is active throughout the week except on Sundays. Traditionally, Wednesdays and Saturdays are market days and serve as a hub for a variety of food crops,

vegetables, fruits, and fish (Esia-Donkor & Abane, 2011).

The majority of the women in Mankessim are informal economy workers, such as domestic workers, subsistence farmers, seasonal agricultural workers, market traders, and street vendors. With these characteristics, the town attracts traders and buyers from different parts of the country, with diverse backgrounds and ethnic groups. Street vending is a common informal economic activity in Mankessim. The bustling commercial activity and the presence of local markets and shops attract vendors to set up their stalls or move around to reach potential customers with their goods.

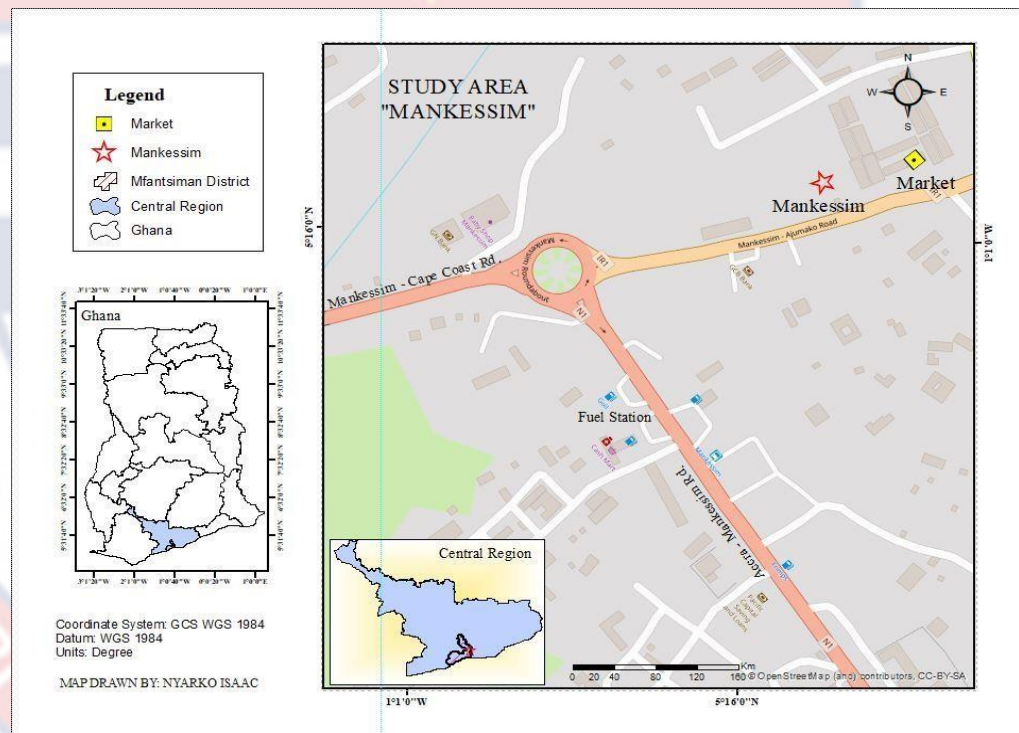


Figure 2: A Map of Ghana Showing Mankessim in the Central Region of Ghana.

Source: Department of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Cape Coast, (2023).

Study Population

The study population comprised key players in childcare provision for children between zero and three years of age in Mankessim in the Central region of Ghana. These included regulatory institutions, such as the Municipal Assembly, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, market-based childcare institutions, and caregivers.

Street vending is an important informal economic activity in Mankessim. It has two forms: stationary and mobile street vending. Stationary street vendors establish their selling points in fixed locations and offer goods or services from these spots. Mobile street vendors move around and offer products or services in various areas within Mankessim. Municipal assemblies play a significant role in overseeing street vending activities, which include issuing permits, regulating vending locations, and ensuring compliance with set guidelines and standards. The municipal assembly also creates and implements policies, addresses infrastructure, and enforces regulations to maintain order and safety in the vending area.

The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development is the primary regulatory institution responsible for overseeing and regulating childcare provisions within Mankessim. The regulatory body is responsible for implementing and monitoring childcare-related policies and ensuring the welfare and safety of children in formal and informal settings. Their involvement includes assessing, licencing, and monitoring the operations of formal childcare institutions to ensure that they adhere to safety, health, and educational standards. Their oversight is crucial in safeguarding the well-being and maintaining quality care within formal childcare setups.

In Mankessim, childcare arrangements occur in two ways: market- and non-market-based. Market-based childcare institutions are childcare setups which operate within the market framework, offering structured and professional childcare services to mothers at a fee. Market-based childcare institutions adhere to specific guidelines and standards set by regulatory bodies, providing a formal environment for children's care and early education. Their roles include ensuring structured learning activities for children under care. Non-market-based childcare comprises informal arrangements that involve care provided by family members, neighbours, or other informal settings.

The rationale for focusing on female street vendors with children below the age of four was based on the recognition that childcare options for children of this age are often highly commodified. Furthermore, the absence of state-provided childcare services in Ghana places the responsibility of meeting the caregiving needs of such children on mothers, who must juggle this role alongside their economic activities.

Given the differences in the types of street vending, this study engaged both mobile and stationary vendors to gain a deeper understanding of the childcare choices made by female street vendors within the context of different vending practices. Furthermore, the study took an interest in the childcare system in Mankessim, as well as the childcare arrangements used by female street vendors. To achieve this, caregivers and care operators of both market- and non-market-based children who provided care support to Female Street vendors were involved. The heads of market-based childcare facilities, the head of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development in the municipality, and the municipal coordinating director at the Mfantseman

Municipal Assembly were engaged. The selection of the participants for the study was guided by their knowledge and expertise concerning childcare delivery systems in Mankessim.

Sampling Procedure

The study employed a non-probability sampling technique to select female street vendors and other key actors in the childcare system in Mankessim. A non-probability sampling technique was considered because it offered a valuable and appropriate approach to identifying study participants among diverse and dynamic populations. The specific types of nonprobability sampling techniques used in this study were purposive and snowball sampling. Various types of purposive sampling exist, such as criterion sampling, typical case, maximum variation, expert and theoretical sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). Within the purposive sampling, maximum variation and expert sampling techniques were employed to select female street vendors and other key persons.

The maximum variation sampling technique ensured that the sample represented a wide range of variation within a population. Female street vendors come from various backgrounds, experiences, and socioeconomic statuses. The maximum variation sampling ensured that the sample included vendors from different demographic locations. In addition, maximum variation ensured that vendors from different types of street vending setup, including stationary and mobile vendors, were captured. The maximum variation sampling technique also allowed vendors to be sampled based on the diverse range of products.

By employing the maximum variation technique, this study captured a comprehensive range of experiences and perspectives that reflect the diverse realities within this group. The study again captured a broad cross-section of vendors, recognising that the distinct nature and context of their vending activities significantly impact their childcare needs, decisions, and challenges. At the end of the data gathering, 21 female street vendors, 12 mobile street vendors, and 9 stationary street vendors were included.

According to Etikan and Bala (2017), the expert sampling technique, a type of purposive sampling, is used when the study requires specific insights or knowledge from key persons with expertise in a particular field or area. The selection of key persons for the study was guided by their knowledge and expertise regarding the childcare delivery system in Mankessim. The key persons selected for the study were the head of the DSW, the municipal coordinating director at the Mfantseman municipal assembly, and heads of market-based childcare arrangements. This diverse group of key persons provides valuable insights into the nature of childcare services and the challenges and opportunities of childcare within the Mankessim community.

The snowball sampling technique which involves selecting participants based on referrals from other participants, was then used to engage other female street vendors with children between the ages of zero and three for the study as well as the market and non-market caregivers. The snowball sampling technique was important because it enabled the study to gather in-depth understanding and quality information on the childcare system in Mankessim through diverse sources of information from key players in the childcare economy.

The sample size for female street vendors, non-market-child caregivers, and market formal and informal child caregivers was based on the concept of saturation, as discussed by Bryman (2012). This means that data were collected from participants to a point where no new insights emerged, and no new themes were obtained. Saturation was reached by 38 participants who were interviewed for the study. The 38 participants included 21 female street vendors, three non-market-based child caregivers, four market-based child caregivers, ten key persons encompassing eight heads of market-based childcare centres, and two persons from the regulatory authorities.

Table 1: Key Persons Covered and their Institutional Locations

Key persons	Institutional Locations
Head of market-based childcare	Various childcare centres, home-based childcare centre
Head DSW&CD	Department of Social Welfare and Community Development
Municipal Coordinator	Mfantsiman Municipal Assembly

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The study engaged ten key persons in expert interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the existing childcare system in Mankessim. These individuals and organisations play vital roles in shaping and overseeing the childcare delivery system, ensuring the welfare and development of children in Mankessim. Among the ten key persons interviewed, seven were heads of institutionalised market childcare centres and one was a home-based childcare centre. The key person from the regulatory body covered in the study was the

head of the DSWCD and the coordinator of the Municipal Assembly.

Market-based childcare encompasses a variety of day care centres, crèches, and preschools, both registered and unregistered, that provide care for children for a fee. The heads of childcare centres are responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of these facilities. Their roles involve ensuring that the centres meet regulatory standards, maintain a safe and nurturing environment for children, and employ qualified staff. Their decisions and actions directly impact the quality of care that children receive while their parents engage in economic activities.

The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development has a pivotal position in childcare delivery systems. This state department is tasked with regulating and supervising childcare facilities in Mankessim. The head of this department is responsible for implementing childcare policies, granting licences to childcare providers, and conducting inspections to ensure compliance with the established standards. They also oversee training and capacity-building programs for childcare attendants. By doing so, they contribute significantly to the quality and safety of the childcare services provided in the region.

The Mfantseman Municipal Assembly played a crucial role in shaping the childcare landscape in Mankessim. As the coordinating body for various municipal services, it often influences the allocation of resources and the development of infrastructure, including childcare centres. The coordinator of the Municipal Assembly is responsible for planning, strategising, and executing initiatives related to childcare facilities and services. This role aligns with broader community development goals and contributes to the well-being

of children and families in Mankesism.

Table 2: Summary of Female Street Vendors

Categorisations	Frequency (N=21)	Percentage (%)
Type of Street Vending		
Stationary	9	43
Mobile	12	57
Items sold		
Fruits and Vegetables	6	28
Cooked Foods	11	52
Water & Drinks	2	10
Footwear	1	5
Towels	1	5

Source: Field Survey (2023)

A total of 21 female street vendors were covered. All participants primarily engaged in street vending as their main economic activity. Among these participants, there were nine (43%) stationary street vendors and 12 (57%) mobile street vendors. In terms of the types of products sold, 11 (52%) participants sold cooked foods, six (28%) vended fruits and vegetables, two (10%) per cent offered water and drinks for sale, only one (5%) female street vendor was selling footwear, and another one female street vendor vended towels (see Table 1).

Data Source

This study used both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were acquired through interviews and observations with female street vendors, non-market caregivers, heads of market-based formal and informal childcare facilities, and officers at the Department of Social Welfare and the Mfantseman

Municipal Assembly. Secondary data were obtained from documents of target organisations or institutions, including policies, regulations, and project reports on childcare, such as the Children's Act, 1998.

Data Collection Instruments

The study used both unstructured interviews and non-participant observation as its data collection method; therefore, the instruments used were the interview guides and observation checklists (see Appendices A to H). The interview guides consisted of key questions that defined the various themes the research sought to explore. These included the background conditions of female street vendors, their childcare needs, childcare arrangements, and the factors influencing their childcare choices. One important reason the study employed an unstructured interview guide was that the instrument allowed for probing and clarity and offered respondents time to open up about issues. It also allowed the study to pursue ideas and responses that emerged during the interview session.

The study employed unstructured interview guides tailored to various participant categories, such as female street vendors, both non-market and market-based childcare providers, the Head of the Department of Social Welfare, and the Coordinator at the Mfantseman Municipal Assembly. The interview guides were crafted based on insights derived from a comprehensive literature review, direct observations, and informal interviews. The interview guide for female street vendors (see Appendix D) encompassed inquiries regarding their background details, primary economic activities, and challenges within their work, the impact of their work conditions on their childcare responsibilities, family support received, childcare arrangements,

and determinants of these arrangements. In comparison, the interview guide for childcare providers covered the caregivers' backgrounds, childcare routines they undertake, the advantages and difficulties encountered while providing childcare, and their overall experiences in childcare provision.

The interviews with heads of market-based childcare facilities (see Appendix F) covered the background information of the school, the number of staff and children, support from regulatory bodies, and the challenges they face. In addition, the cost of childcare services and their relationships with regulatory bodies must be considered. The interview with the head of the DSWCD (see Appendix B) covered policies guiding childcare, the role of the DSWCD in registering childcare centres, the challenges the department faced in executing its mandate, the measures to address those challenges, and the registered and unregistered childcare facilities in Mankessin. The interview with the municipal coordinator at Mfantseman (see Appendix C) covered the regulations and policies governing street vending, the specific rules and guidelines for street vendors, measures for compliance, support for street vendors, childcare support from the municipal assembly, and future plans for street vending and childcare.

An observation guide (see Appendix H) was adopted to record events and facilities within childcare centres. The observation guide was structured around the childcare activities provided by market-based and non-market-based child caregivers to understand the arrangements chosen by female street vendors due to their socioeconomic conditions. The observation guide was used to record details about the specific childcare activities being provided to children at various childcare centres. Caregiver behaviour and caregiver-child

interactions. The physical facilities, such as the layout of the childcare centre, including the classrooms, play areas, and other spaces, how children were fed, safety measures and supervision protocols including the staff-to-child ratio, and safety and sanitation of facilities. The non-participant observation presented the opportunity to validate some of the responses of the respondents and helped in making a facility audit.

Data Collection Procedures

Fieldwork in Mankessim and Saltpond was conducted from 1st June to 30 June 2023. Before the fieldwork, an introductory letter from the Department of Integrated Development Studies to present the research and the purpose of the study was submitted to the Department of Social Welfare and the Mfantseman municipal assembly in Saltpond. Subsequently, introductory letters were presented to the heads of market formal childcare institutions within the Mankessim community so that a convenient time for actual data collection could be scheduled.

During the main data-gathering process, two key persons from the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development and the Mfantseman Municipal Assembly were interviewed first. This was because the information gathered about the policies and regulations related to street vending and childcare in Mankessim was necessary to provide a strong foundation for this research study. It further offered a contextual understanding and the opportunity to access documents related to childcare.

Heads of market-based formal childcare centres were interviewed next to provide insights into the types of services they offer, including hours of operation, fees, and facilities. This information was crucial for understanding

the practical options that female street vendors had to consider. Female street vendors were interviewed next, followed by non-market-based child caregivers.

Participants were mainly approached at their places of work in public spaces, where vending activities took place. Each participant in the study was informed of the purpose of the research before participating in the interviews. The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder for key persons. For the recorded interviews, permission was sought before the interview; however, where permission was denied, notes of the interviews were taken. Interviews with female street vendors were not recorded because the street environment and marketplaces were very noisy and not suitable for recording; however, detailed notes of the interviews were taken to aid analysis.

The unstructured interview guide was used to solicit information on the background of female street vendors with children between the ages of zero and three, their childcare needs, childcare arrangements, and the factors that inform their childcare choices. Interviews with female street vendors and non-market-based childcare attendants were conducted in the local language of the community, Fante. However, interviews with the heads of formal childcare institutions and officers at the Department of Social Welfare and Mfantseman Municipal Assembly were conducted in English.

The data collection process also involved non-participant observations conducted during the interviews to closely examine the child caregiving tasks performed by both market and non-market child caregivers. This method of non-participant observation was utilised to overcome the research limitation associated with social desirability bias, ensuring that participants did not just offer socially acceptable responses, but rather conveyed their genuine

situations. By integrating non-participant observations, the research gained depth and context, offering a comprehensive understanding of real caregiving tasks and activities. This approach significantly aided in interpreting the responses accurately and further enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Data Processing and Analysis

The main objective of this study was to explore childcare choices among female street vendors in Mankessim. To achieve the study objective, data analysis was performed simultaneously with the research-gathering process. At the end of each day, the audio-recorded responses were transcribed verbatim. This was to ensure familiarisation of data so that processed and analysed data would be a true representation of the data gathered from the field. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted, where necessary, to seek further clarity on issues to prevent reporting inaccurate information.

After close reading of the transcripts, data coding was performed in three stages. In the first or open coding phase, the data gathered were analysed line-by-line systematically looking for specific concepts such as childcare needs, childcare arrangements, and childcare choices. At the axial coding stage, codes generated at the open coding stage were carefully examined to identify relationships, similarities, and differences in the coded data to ensure consistency among the data sources.

In the final stage, selective coding was performed to create categories for the analysis. Discussions of the findings were prepared around the following themes: childcare needs, childcare arrangements, childcare systems, and childcare choices. The themes were then evaluated and reviewed to ensure

that each theme had sufficient data and was distinct. Finally, several direct quotes from participants were used to support the findings of the study.

Ethical Consideration

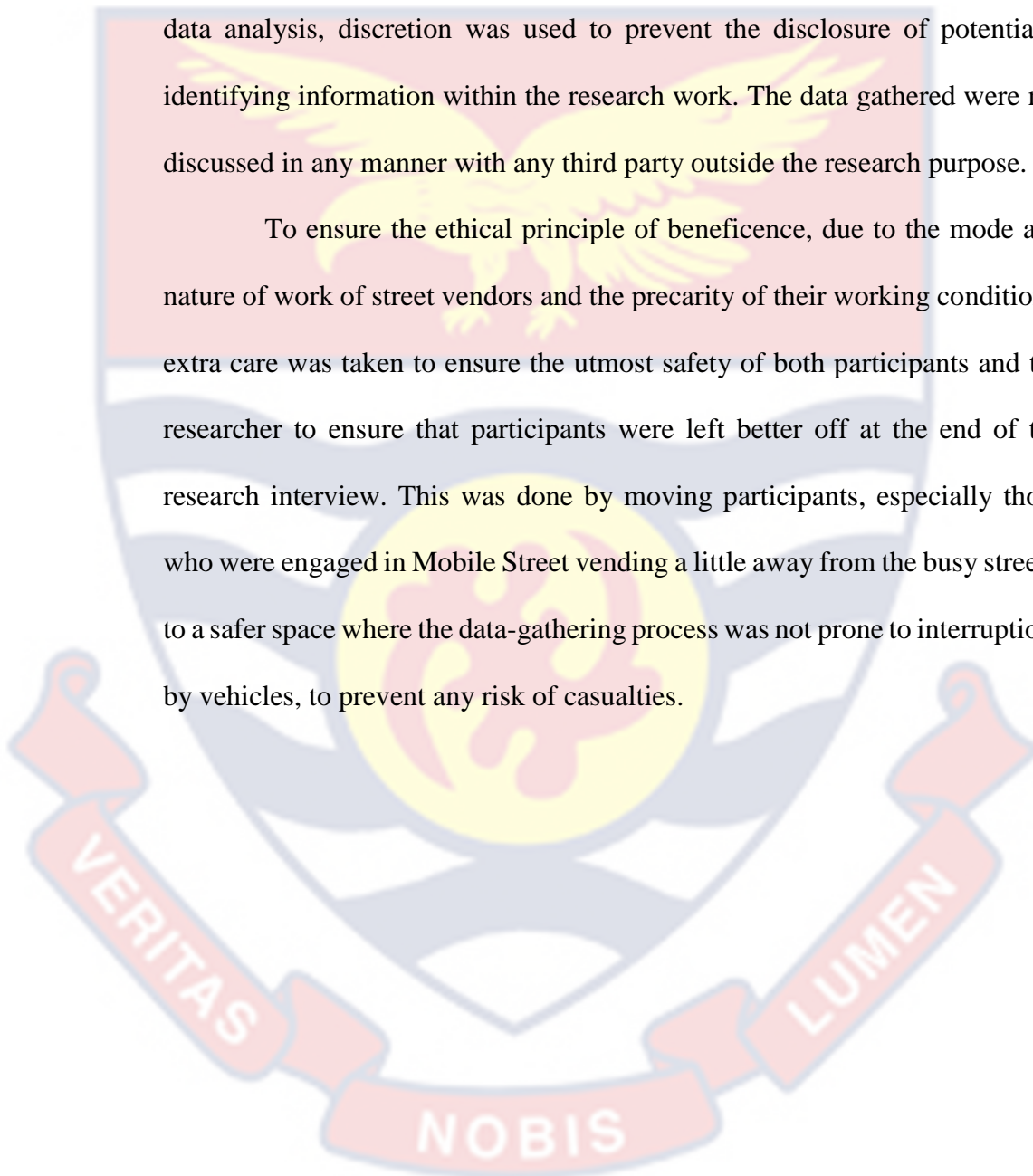
To ensure that the ethical principle of respect for respondents and the community was satisfied, an introductory letter was served to the heads of the various market-based childcare centres, the head of the Department of Social Welfare, and the Municipal Coordinating Director at the Mfantseman Municipal Assembly to notify them before the actual data collection process and also serve as a confirmation of the genuineness of the research and the researcher. Community entry was also conducted to acquire preliminary information for this study. As part of community entry, some enquiries relating to the number of associations among street vendors in Mankessim were made to ensure that due protocols were followed. Community entry was conducted to obtain information on the rules or guidelines governing research in the community.

To ensure that the ethical principle of informed consent was satisfied, participants' approval was sought before the research was conducted. The research participants were introduced to the overall intent, purpose, and scope of the study, which allowed respondents to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study. Respondents were informed about the fact that the study was voluntary and did not involve any monetary gains or rewards and their right to withdraw at any point in the interview process were respected.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, research participants who voluntarily consented to participate in the study were assured of being kept anonymous and confidential throughout the research process. Participants'

permission was sought for discussions to be recorded electronically, and for those who preferred not to be recorded, comprehensive notes were taken during the interviews. The thesis refrained from providing specific identifying details about the participants; instead, general descriptions were used. During data analysis, discretion was used to prevent the disclosure of potentially identifying information within the research work. The data gathered were not discussed in any manner with any third party outside the research purpose.

To ensure the ethical principle of beneficence, due to the mode and nature of work of street vendors and the precarity of their working conditions, extra care was taken to ensure the utmost safety of both participants and the researcher to ensure that participants were left better off at the end of the research interview. This was done by moving participants, especially those who were engaged in Mobile Street vending a little away from the busy streets, to a safer space where the data-gathering process was not prone to interruptions by vehicles, to prevent any risk of casualties.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings that provide an understanding of the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim. The findings are presented in four broad sections in line with the specific objectives of the study. The chapter begins with a profile of the childcare delivery system in Mankessim. The second section provides an overview of the background characteristics of female street vendors in Mankessim. Subsequently, the childcare needs of female street vendors are examined, considering the extent to which their background characteristics shape their childcare needs. The childcare arrangements adopted by female street vendors are described in the third section. Finally, the fourth section determines the influencing factors that influence the childcare choices made by female street vendors.

The Childcare Delivery System in Mankessim

The first objective of this study was to profile the childcare delivery system in Mankessim. From the conceptual framework, the childcare delivery system is operationalised as various structures, institutions, policies, and regulatory frameworks that shape and facilitate the provision of childcare within a society. As explained by social reproduction theory, inherent in the childcare system are structures and institutional frameworks influenced by capitalist ideologies such as neoliberal reforms, shaping childcare provisioning, and women's childcare experiences within a given society. This information serves as a foundation for understanding childcare delivery and

choices among female street vendors in Mankessim. In this study, the childcare delivery system in Mankessim was profiled through variables such as policy and regulatory frameworks, the cost of childcare, quality standards, and capacity building of childcare attendants. Through these variables, an overview of the nature of childcare services in Mankessim was provided.

Policy Frameworks

As stated earlier, although Ghana's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) framework strives to offer care and education for children from birth to eight years, the state's provision of childcare service targets children aged four to five through a compulsory two-year early childhood education program (ECCE, 2004). Childcare for children aged zero to three years is largely provided by kinship relations and other social networks, with market-driven services supervised and coordinated by the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development.

In Ghana, childcare for children aged zero to three is governed by policy frameworks such as the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) Section 115, and the Child and Family Welfare Policy (2015). These legal frameworks serve as the foundation for safeguarding the welfare and protection of children in Ghana by providing a structured approach to childcare and parental support. The Child and Family Welfare Policy aligned with the 1998 Children's Act recognises that a child is an integral part of the family, and as such, a child's welfare cannot be separated from that of the family. The Child and Family Welfare Policy is concerned with all activities, services, and norms which support a child in the context of his or her wider family setting. The policy underpins a child protection system that safeguards and responds to children

and their families when needed and provides support for vulnerable families (Ghana's Children's Act, 1998).

The Children's Act 1998 (Act 560), Section 115 to 120, empowers the Department of Social Welfare (DSWCD) to both facilitate and regulate the establishment of market-based childcare centres tailored for children aged zero to three years, who are not at traditional school age. The department's mandate is to ensure the registration, supervision, coordination, and maintenance of the standards of all childcare market-based childcare institutions operating under their jurisdiction. The goal is to ensure that market childcare arrangements adhere to and meet the government's standards for safety, health, and quality care (Ghana's Children's Act, 1998).

The Children and Family Welfare Policy (2015) aims to help formulate child welfare programs and activities to ensure the protection of children in homes and communities from all forms of violence, abuse, and neglect. The policy aims to implement various programs and activities to effectively safeguard the rights and well-being of children and ensure that perpetrators of child abuse and neglect in the community are punished.

At the local level, the Department of Social Welfare in Mankessim aligns with the national policy framework for regulating and monitoring the provision of childcare services. The Department of Social Welfare is tasked with implementing and enforcing policies and guidelines related to childcare services, as stipulated in the Children's Act of 1998. This is mostly evident for market-based childcare arrangements, such as crèches, daycare centres, and pre-schools, or childcare provided in home-based settings, such as private child minders, nannies, and home-based childcare facilities.

Expert interviews revealed that the Children's Act of 1998 stipulates a set of rules and regulations that govern the operations and provisions of childcare in Mankessim. Specific obligatory procedures must be followed by individuals or groups aiming to establish childcare services in Mankessim. The initial step involves submitting an application form to the DSW for a permit to operate a market-based childcare facility, accompanied by a fee, as prescribed by the Children's Act. Subsequently, the department evaluates the proposed childcare centre to ensure alignment with the required standards. Upon meeting the stipulated criteria, the application is granted approval, and a permit is issued upon payment of a designated permit fee by bye-law provisions.

Additional discussions revealed that the Children's Act explicitly states that market-based childcare centres that operate without a DSW permit should be given a warning from the department. This notice requires the operators of unlicensed centres to initiate the application process and ensure compliance with the prescribed regulations. Should the operators of these unlicensed centres fail to comply within a stipulated fourteen-day warning, the centre must cease operation and subsequently close down.

Expert interviews revealed that the Children's Act emphasises that regular inspections should be organised to ensure the efficient management of market childcare centres, primarily for the well-being and benefit of the children. As part of this inspection, the books, accounts, and records maintained by market childcare centres are expected to be thoroughly reviewed at least once every six months. In instances where any of these centres fail to meet the stipulated regulations, their permits are likely to be temporarily suspended and promptly directed to rectify any shortcomings

within a specific timeframe. Failure to comply with these corrective measures ultimately results in the revocation of previously granted permits.

Expert interviews revealed that the DSW also holds the responsibility of overseeing childcare provisions within non-market childcare arrangements.

Aligned with their mandates, the department is guided by the Children and Family Welfare Policy (2015) to protect children in homes and communities from all forms of violence, abuse, and neglect. They must implement various programs and activities to effectively safeguard the rights and well-being of children and ensure that perpetrators of child abuse and neglect in the community are punished.

Childcare System in Mankessim

In Mankessim, childcare system operates through a diverse array of arrangements. These arrangements encompass a spectrum of approaches, each with distinct characteristics and functionalities. It comprises structured institutionalised forms and informal setups. These childcare types are categorised as market-based and non-market-based depending on the level of commodification and structure or institutionalisation.

Non-market-based childcare is embedded in family and social ties. It includes the use of both relatives and non-relatives, including aunts, grandmothers, older female siblings, neighbours' friends, or colleagues in the provision of childcare, usually in the child's house or the caregiver's house. Market-based childcare which signifies the provision of childcare services within a market-driven framework treats childcare as a commodity sold and bought in institutionalised structures such as crèches, daycare centres, and pre-schools are also present in Mankessim. Additionally, an informal childcare

arrangement exists, operating within the market framework but in a home setting. This arrangement, conceptualised in the literature as home-based childcare, is unlicensed and unregulated by the governing body responsible for childcare regulation and supervision.

An expert interview revealed that there are approximately 34 market-based childcare centres in Mankessim. These market-based centres comprised both registered and non-registered facilities. Of the 34 market-based childcare arrangements identified in Mankessim, 71 per cent (24) were not registered, whereas only 29 per cent (10) were registered. At the time of data gathering for this study, the childcare facilities covered who had registered with the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development were yet to renew their licences for the year.

Reiterating the need to enforce regulatory compliance in Mankessim, the expert interview emphasised that measures were being implemented to ensure that market-based childcare facilities strictly adhere to the prescribed childcare guidelines and obtain the necessary licences for operation. Expert interviews further disclosed that a systematic inspection process to monitor compliance and the regular provision of care will soon be rolled out. This would involve conducting routine visits to childcare facilities to assess adherence to safety standards, hygiene practices, and proper care provision. It was further highlighted that the department sought to maintain an open line of discussion with owners of market childcare facilities in Mankessim to create a shared understanding of the critical role that childcare arrangements play in the overall well-being of children and the community as a whole.

The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development uses

a grading system to assess compliance of licenced and registered market-based childcare facilities with established standards and regulations. The established standards for care facilities include criteria related to safety, hygiene, staff-to-child ratios, caregiver qualifications, health and nutrition, curriculum and activities, physical environment, record keeping, and overall child development.

Expert interviews revealed that childcare institutions are categorised into grades A, B, or C based on their level of compliance with DSWCD's established standards. To categorise a childcare facility as grade A, the facility must have a secure physical environment with adequate safety measures in place to prevent accidents and injuries. Spacious and well-ventilated playrooms that are age-appropriate and equipped with toys that cannot be swallowed are required. Additionally, the facility must maintain a fully stocked first aid kit. The facility must maintain high standards of hygiene, including clean and well-maintained premises, proper waste disposal, and access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Moreover, mats for napping must be placed at least 20 cm apart.

It is essential for the facility to maintain an appropriate staff-to-child ratio, with at least one caregiver for every 15 children per class, to ensure adequate supervision and care for the children. The facility must also provide a comprehensive programme to support children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language development. The facility must have a health and nutrition programme in place, including proper feeding and meal preparation, to ensure that the children's nutritional needs are met through a balanced and varied diet. Each child must receive one hot meal at the centre. Finally, daycare

facilities must also have a programme that supports children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language development.

Childcare facilities undergo annual reviews and re-grading to ensure adherence to established standards and promote continuous improvement in the care they offer to children. At the time of this study, a review of the list of registered childcare institutions in Mankessim revealed that out of the 10 registered institutions, approximately 80 per cent were categorised into grade C, while 20 per cent were categorised in grade B.

The study revealed that none of the facilities in Mankessim met the standards for the topmost grade, A. This distribution of grade categories highlighted significant quality concerns within childcare facilities in Mankessim. Childcare facilities in Mankessim cited financial issues as the primary reason for their inability to comply with the requirement for grade A status. The financial issues reported by childcare facilities underscored the economic constraints they operated within, and this is often linked to the socio-economic factors affecting the parents who utilise these care services. Inadequate financial challenges hinder their capacity to invest in infrastructure, staff training, and other essential components that are necessary to meeting regulatory standards.

The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, as part of its mandate, is tasked with providing training opportunities and certification for childcare attendants in market-based childcare facilities. The funding for these training programmes primarily comes from childcare institutions or caregiver trainees themselves. This programme equips these caregiver trainees with skills and knowledge to fulfil the developmental

requirements of children and follow a planned curriculum that includes age-appropriate activities for learning and playing based on the DSWCD standard.

Cost of Childcare Facilities

The financial burden of childcare is the sole responsibility of families. Childcare facilities established by individuals and organisations are responsible for funding and setting the cost of their services to mothers who have the financial means to afford such care. The heads of the various day-care centres interviewed reported that the specific conditions under which fees are typically determined are not explicitly laid out in any of the regulations provided by the government; however, individual facilities based on the services they render, as well as the materials and equipment they use in providing these services, come up with fees to keep them in business.

The cost of childcare in Mankessim varies depending on factors such as quality, type of services offered, hours of operation, staff-to-child ratio, childcare provider experience and qualification, and the age of the child. The tuition fees collected in daycare centres in Mankessim range between 130GHC to 500GHC per term (11.42 USD to 35.13 USD), and a term is made up of four months. This amount is different from the fees charged during the admission of children into day care centres. Some childcare facilities offer parents the flexibility of making daily payments of fees typically ranging from 4.50GHC to 10GHC (0.38 USD to 0.84 USD).

Parents, such as female street vendors who earn an irregular and daily income, find the daily payment option more affordable, as they pay lower amounts that fit their means. This option also allows them to align their childcare expenses with their daily income stream, enabling parents to pay

only for the days their children attend daycare instead of committing to a fixed term-based fee. However, while the daily payment option may seem more affordable in the short term, it may result in higher overall costs over time compared with a termly based fee.

While some childcare institutions in Mankessim include both the cost of services rendered and necessary supplies in their fees, other facilities charge lower fees and request parents to provide essential materials, such as bowls, brooms, mats, toiletries, and first aid kits. This cost strategy appears to offer a more affordable childcare option to parents; however, in the long run, due to hidden costs, it contributes to a higher overall cost of childcare. It is important, however, to add that all daycare centres who participated in the study emphasised that, due to the current economic situation in the country, they were considering raising their fees to keep them in business.

Given the presence of a home-based childcare arrangement in Mankessim, an interview was conducted to gain insight into their funding approach. Caregivers revealed that home-based childcare was established in 2020 to assist in the care of children under the official school-going age in the community, while their mothers went about their economic duties or other commitments. Initially, care was provided to a few children without charges, and parents only had to provide money for their feeding. This led to an increase in the number of children enrolled in care services. However, the increase in enrolment coupled with the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a collapse of the arrangement. After starting again in 2022, she introduced a fee structure of 50GHC fees per term which consisted of four months, along with an admission fee of 100GHC. This decision was influenced

by losses incurred during previous operations. However, caregivers encounter difficulties because of the parents' challenges in paying fees promptly. The owner described the situation in this way:

Few parents are committed to paying the 50 GHC fee on time. I can say less than 50 per cent of the children here have made payments. Others have promised to pay this week, but I know that they will come with different stories. Some do not pay at all but bring the children every day. They know I will not sack them. (home-based childcare provider, 14th June 2023).

Despite facing numerous challenges, the owner of the home-based childcare arrangement remains steady in her determination to improve over time.

Quality of childcare services in Mankessim

Quality childcare is critical for the development of young children and for supporting parents' productive labour. In Mankessim, despite the presence of regulatory frameworks and standards governing market childcare arrangements, the study revealed were issue of both structural and process quality concerns in childcare facilities. The findings are based on the state's regulatory framework, criteria, and safety standards to ensure that institutionalised childcare facilities meet high-quality standards.

The ensuing table offers an overview of market-based childcare facilities offering childcare services in Mankessim, highlighting their registration status and grading according to the regulatory standards.

Table 3: Market-based childcare facilities providing childcare services in Mankessim

Registration Status	Frequency (N)	Percentages (%)
Unregistered	24	71
Registered	10	29
Total	34	100
Categorisation of Registered Centres		
Category B	2	20
Category C	8	80
Total	10	100

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The findings suggest that, as of the time of data gathering, a substantial majority 71 per cent (24) of market-based childcare facilities in Mankessim were operating without official registration or oversight. However, 29 per cent (10) of the facilities were registered. This finding indicates a gap in the regulation of childcare facilities in Mankessim. The study results on the categorisations of the registered facilities revealed that there were no childcare facilities in Category A which is the highest grade reflecting the highest level of compliance with established standards. The data revealed that the majority 80 per cent (8) of registered facilities fell into Category C, whereas the remaining registered facilities 20 per cent (2) were classified under Category B. The absence of Category A facilities, low representation in Category B, and the prevalence of unregistered facilities in Mankessim raise questions about the extent to which existing childcare arrangements meet the desired quality and safety standards set by the nation's regulatory institution.

Table 4: Category of market-based childcare facilities and fees

Categories of schools	Fees charged	Duration
B	GHC 300 – GHC 500	Per term
C	GHC 130 – GHC 300	Per term
Unregistered	GHC 130 – GHC 300	Per term
	GHC 4.50 – GHC 10	Daily

Source: Field Survey (2023)

There was a notable disparity in the quality of childcare services provided in Mankessim, and these differences were often associated with the fees charged by various childcare facilities. Observation revealed that the level of fees varied depending on the range of facilities provided by each category of childcare centre. Facilities offering a wider range of facilities, such as spacious classrooms, well-ventilated rooms, play areas, learning materials, tended to charge higher fees, while childcare centres with fewer facilities and less trained staff typically charged lower fees. The study revealed that childcare facilities in category B charged fees ranging from GHC 300 to GHC 500, while those in category C charged fees between GHC 130 to GHC 300. Unregistered facilities charged fees below that GHC 130 and others also charged daily fees between GHC 4.5 and GHC 10 daily.

Childcare facilities that charge lower fees tend to have smaller and less spacious classrooms, which limits the space available for children to engage in various activities. Additionally, concerns related to ensuring a clean, hygienic, and safe environment conducive to child development are more prevalent in lower-fee childcare centres in category C and unregistered facilities. Observation revealed that issues such as improper waste disposal, worn-out facilities, overcrowded rooms, inadequate ventilation in classrooms, and use of shared drinking cups contribute to these challenges. In contrast, childcare facilities usually that charged comparatively higher fees around GHC

500 were better equipped to provide higher quality childcare services. These facilities typically have more spacious classrooms that allow for a more comfortable and engaging environment for children. Higher-fee childcare centres often employed trained staff with a better understanding of child development and could provide more effective care and supervision. These facilities placed greater emphasis on maintaining a clean and safe environment and reducing potential health and safety risks for children.

Table 5: Categories of market-based childcare centres and facilities provided

Categories of schools	Facilities provided
B	Spacious classrooms, ventilated rooms, playground, toys, relatively clean physical environment.
C	overcrowded rooms, inadequate ventilation in classrooms
Unregistered	Worn-out facilities, overcrowded rooms, inadequate ventilation, use of shared cups, improper waste disposal

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The quality of childcare facilities based on the categorisation of centres and the facilities provided insights into the varying standards of infrastructure and resources available for providing care for children. In this context, observation revealed that grade B centres were characterized by relatively favourable conditions, including spacious classrooms, well ventilated rooms, first aid kits play area and access to toys. However, category C and many unregistered centres had inadequate facilities and resources with overcrowded classrooms and inadequate ventilation. Study revealed that these conditions pose challenge to effective teaching, learning and over-all development of children.

The study further revealed that a relatively small number of caregivers held university degrees in Early Childhood Education, raising concerns about specialised training among individuals responsible for children's care in these childcare facilities. Additionally, interviews with caregivers in childcare institutions revealed that none had received any training from the DSWCD, which raises questions about the skills of these caregivers in child development. Some childcare centres mentioned that they undertake the responsibility of sponsoring their caregivers' education with the intention that the caregivers would repay the costs at a later time. Those who did not have the financial means to take part in the training missed out, as their institutions were not ready to take up the cost involved in the training. This situation implies that the overall quality of childcare services is provided by Mankessim.

Challenges faced by Market Based Childcare Providers in Mankessim

Market-based childcare providers in Mankessim further expressed concern regarding the multiple fees imposed on them by various regulatory bodies, including NASIA, GES and DSWCD. These fees, while intended to ensure the quality and compliance of educational services, have significantly increased the operational costs for market childcare providers. According to the participants, while charging fees for licencing and oversight, these regulatory bodies do not offer adequate support or guidance to improve the quality of childcare and other educational services. They believed that the fees charged merely served as a financial drain without corresponding benefits. A market-based childcare provider expressed this sentiment in this way:

There is also the issue of too many levies and taxes from regulatory bodies. For example, every year, we have to register

the entire school with the NASIA. It is a new organisation that regulates private schools; they do not do anything for us; they only come and take our money. If all these payments are taken away, then we will be able to pay our teachers well (head, market-based childcare centre, 18th June 2023)

In addition to the fees charged by regulatory bodies, market-based childcare facilities reported that they face additional operational challenges that contribute to the cost of fees charged for childcare services. These include utility expenses such as electricity and water, which are essential for the day-to-day functioning of childcare institutions. These fees associated with utilities further compounded the financial burden on providers as the operational cost of the service provided increased, resulting in higher fees for parents seeking childcare services.

In conclusion, the childcare system in Mankessim exhibits a diverse range of arrangements, encompassing both market and non-market-based forms. However, there are significant quality concerns that require further attention. The data illustrates a regulatory gap, with the majority of market-based childcare facilities operating without registration. Furthermore, none of the registered facilities attained the highest level of compliance, raising questions regarding the quality of care provided. In addition, disparities in childcare quality were associated with fee charges, with lower-fee facilities facing limitations in resources and trained staff. Market-based childcare providers are burdened by the multiple fees imposed by regulatory bodies without corresponding support for delivering their services. Additionally, utility costs at commercial rates add to the operational expenses of childcare

facilities, further influencing the fees charged to parents.

Study further revealed that the irregular payment of fees and the accumulation of outstanding fees by parents posed challenges for providers of childcare in the market-based facilities. This challenge does not only disrupt the regular flow of income for childcare centres, but it impedes their capacity to maintain quality services and cover operational expenses. The act of parents taking their children out of childcare centres while still owing fees exacerbates the challenges faced by childcare centres in Mankessim.

Looking ahead, an expert interview at the municipal assembly revealed that plans are in progress to construct a new market in Mankessim, with the potential inclusion of a childcare centre specifically catering to the childcare needs of parents, particularly mothers involved in the informal economy. This development signifies a step towards improving the accessibility and quality of childcare services in Mankessim, which could help mitigate some of the existing challenges and quality concerns faced by childcare providers and parents. However, the timing of the execution remains uncertain.

Childcare Needs of Female Street Vendors in Mankessim

This section provides finding on the childcare needs of female street vendors. Childcare needs are operationalised as the caregiving activities and the conditions that predisposes parents especially mothers to make childcare choices. Social reproduction theory emphasises that the unique characteristics of women which are shaped by broader social and economic structures present in society preconditions the decision they make regarding how to balance the double burden of work and reproductive responsibilities. This study, focused on the background characteristics of female street vendors such as their age,

level of education, marital status, and household composition (Table 6).

Table 6: Background Characteristics of Female Street Vendors

Variables	Frequency (N=21)	Percentages (%)
Age		
19 – 24	6	29
25 – 30	7	33
31 – 36	4	19
37 – 42	4	19
Level of Education Attainment		
Upper Primary	2	10
J.H.S	10	47
S.H.S	10	43
Marital Status		
Never married	16	76
Married	5	24

Source: Field Survey (2023)

J.H.S = Junior High School, S.H.S = Senior High School

The background characteristics of female street vendors revealed a diverse range of ages, educational levels, and marital status (Table 6). The study participants ranged from 19 to 41 years. This distribution of ages among female street vendors was important because it provided insights into the different life stages of the vendors and their resulting childcare need. Different age groups of participants faced distinct caregiving responsibilities based on the developmental stages of their children aged zero to three years. The study revealed that younger vendors, typically those aged between 19 to 24 and 25 to 30 age groups, had infants aged between zero to one and one to two years, while older vendors, between 31 to 36 and 37 to 42, had toddlers, aged between two to three years old.

The study further revealed that the age differences among children within the zero to three-year age resulted in different care requirements with different level of attention, supervision, and care support. Responses from the participants underscored the need to categorise children within the zero to three-year age bracket into three groups. Those aged zero to one year, one to two years and those aged two to three years.

The study revealed that children between zero to one year and those between one and two years demanded intensive care and constant supervision due to their vulnerabilities and dependencies on their mothers or caregivers. The female street vendors with children below age two mentioned that they had to be available around the clock to ensure that the basic needs of their children were met. This need for constant attention was particularly pronounced among participants whose children were below one-year-old, still breastfeeding, and not yet capable of walking independently.

According to the study participants with children below one year, the care demands of their children were around feeding, diaper change, physical contact such as holding and cuddling for bonding and comforting infants as well as ensuring the health and safety of the children. These demands meant that for participants to be able to provide care for their children, they usually had to adjust their work schedule which always led to the time they started and close from work being affected.

A female street vendor with a one-year-old child expressed this perspective in the following way:

The best trading times in Mankessim are in the early morning and late afternoon. This is because by 6:00 am, many people will be

on their way to work and school and also in the afternoons, these people will be returning from work, so if you want to make sales you have to prioritise these times but, in my case, these are the times I am providing childcare. All this together really affects how much I can make in a day (Female Street vendor, Mankessim, 19th June 2023)

Study participants who had children aged two to three years also emphasised the caregiving requirements for their children. These caregiving demands were primarily around meeting basic needs, such as feeding and assisting children with toilet use, particularly for those children who have transitioned from diaper use, and other child developmental needs such as socialisation by encouraging social skills and interactions with their peers. Additionally, ensuring the safety and health needs of children is a major concern, especially as they are more mobile at this age. The demand for safety was highlighted by mothers who were involved in simultaneously providing care while going about their vending activities. According to such mothers, they closely supervise their children's play activities to ensure the safety of their children in the streets, considering the risks of their work environment.

Female street vendors with two and three-year-old children expressed that fulfilling their children's caregiving responsibilities demanded substantial amount of their time and attention. This, in turn, affected their capacity to actively engage in vending work as they find it challenging to maintain consistent working hours because of their caregiving commitments. Consequently, income is compromised. The study participants also revealed that the income they earn daily is primarily allocated to covering the essential

daily expenses of their households, including house rents and providing meals and clothing for the family.

Another two-year-old female street vendor confirmed this by saying that:

The market was already bad due to the economic situation. Because of my child, I am unable to work early. My child determines the time I can come to work and also close from work. Even at work, he wants to be everywhere playing and moving about, but this place is not safe for children to play, so I have to always carry him on my back to prevent him from moving about. Even that is a challenge because he will be crying and worrying me to release him to move freely. All this impacts my ability focus and productivity (female street vendor, 6th June 2023).

Female street vendors, particularly those with children aged two to three based on caring demands, expressed the childcare need for affordable childcare provision tailored to the specific age and requirements of their children in the market area which is close to their vending site. They added that this was going to ensure that their children received appropriate care and support while engaging in street vending activities with peace of mind.

You see the way children around my child's age with their mothers while they are selling. If there were an affordable childcare service, we would all take them there. At least, these children are quite old, and so can be cared for. The existing childcare options available are expensive, which is why we have no choice but to bring them to work with us. So yes, we require a childcare option we can afford and also here in the market so we can check on our

children from time to time (Female Street vendor, 20th June 2023)

The household composition of female street vendors which the living arrangement of female street vendors was taken into consideration as it indicated the level of support available to female street vendors regarding childcare. It also reflected the economic resources available to them and strain on the economic resources especially when there was the presence of other children in the household.

Table 6: Household Composition of Female Street Vendors in Mankessim

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Other children	17	81
Other relatives	10	48
Father of child	8	38
Lived alone	5	24

Source: Field Study (2023)

The household composition of female street vendors in Mankessim was diverse, encompassing living arrangements with their partners, other children, other relatives and those who lived alone. The other relative female street vendors lived with included extended family members such as parents, aunts, siblings, nieces, nephews, and cousins. Of the 21 female street vendors who participated in the study, the majority 80 per cent (17) participants revealed that they lived with other children. Additionally, 48 per cent (10) participants mentioned living with other relatives, which encompassed a wide range of extended family members. Eight participants reported living with the father of their children, whereas five participants reported living alone.

The study revealed that the presence of other children influenced the childcare needs of study participants. Participants emphasised that the presence of other children in the household compounded their financial

situation, as they not only had to care for their younger children aged zero to three but also had the added responsibility of providing for the basic and educational needs of their older children. This included paying school fees and providing educational material.

A female street vendor expressing this perspective was recounted.

I have to buy pampers every day for my baby, in addition from what he will eat and drink during the day. I have two other children, and they have to eat and buy school items. The money is not sufficient, and at the end of the day, you use the little money you earn. We are only managing (Female Street vendor, 16th June 2023)

The nature of caregiving burden for children of different age groups, and its resultant effect on incomes, study participants expressed childcare needs around affordable childcare services. Study participants revealed that the presence of childcare services alone was not enough, but its affordability matters, reiterating the pressing need for affordable childcare provision.

The study found that participants who lived with relatives other than their partners and children shared their living spaces with various family members including parents, aunts, uncles, siblings, nieces, nephews, and cousins. Specifically, eight participants lived with the fathers of their children, six with nieces and nephews, five with grandparents of their children, and four with siblings. However, participants residing with partners and other relatives faced limitations in receiving childcare support from these networks due to their economic activities and responsibilities these relatives had. One female street vendor highlighted this constraint, stating that their relatives had

obligations and could not fully assist with childcare.

Nowadays, most family members and friends who are in the position of helping with my childcare have other things to do, so they are not always available. You cannot also expect them to leave their work to provide childcare for your child (female street vendor, 19th June 2023)

The results of the study revealed that the presence of fathers of children, other relatives, and other social networks did not guarantee reliable childcare support. This was because most adult relatives were also actively engaged in economic activities outside the home, and the younger ones among them were students, and so had to go to school. These social networks provided childcare support only when their schedule allowed them.

Apart from study participants living with their relatives, they also lived in compound houses where there was the presence of co-tenants, from which they could tap into their support for childcare. However, study participants reported having a preference for leaving their children with relatives and close social networks other than neighbours. These reservations bordered on trust issues that parents had about allowing individuals who were not family members to provide care for their children.

In the study, some respondents, particularly those who lived in compound houses, remarked that they were always reluctant to leave their children in the care of co-tenants because they worried about their children's safety and how best care would be provided to them. This childcare need is expressed by a female street vendor in this way:

We live in a compound house; I could leave my son with a co-

tenant who works from home, but I doubt she will take proper care of my son, as I would want her to. My son can sometimes be very troublesome, and I prefer to handle him myself than to leave him with someone to mistreat him (Female Street vendor, 17th June 2023).

In conclusion, female street vendors have concerns for safe, reliable, and affordable childcare services. These concerns were preconditioned by the diverse background characteristics of female street vendors and further influenced their childcare choices.

Childcare arrangements among Female Street Vendors in Mankessim

The third objective was to examine the childcare arrangements of female street vendors in Mankessim. From the conceptual framework, childcare arrangement is operationalised as the various ways in which mothers organise care for their children aged zero to three while they go about their economic activities or are otherwise occupied. To achieve this objective on childcare arrangements, participants were asked about the various ways they organised care for their children to enable them to go about their vending activities. The results showed that female street vendors employ a diverse portfolio of childcare arrangements to meet the unique needs of their children while engaging in street vending. They make use of the market- and non-market-based childcare types available to them. However, in situations where participants could not make arrangements for the market-based and non-market-based childcare types, they provided childcare themselves in the working environment, thus concurrently providing childcare while vending.

Non-market Based Childcare Arrangement

As mentioned, non-market childcare arrangements are embedded in family and social support networks. Female street vendors reported that they relied on family members such as the father of the child, grandparents of the child, older siblings of the child, aunts of the child, uncles of a child, and cousins of the child. Aside from family members, participants again reported that they used their social networks, such as friends and colleague street vendors, to meet the caregiving needs of their children. The non-market based childcare arrangement female street vendors made is represented in figure: 3

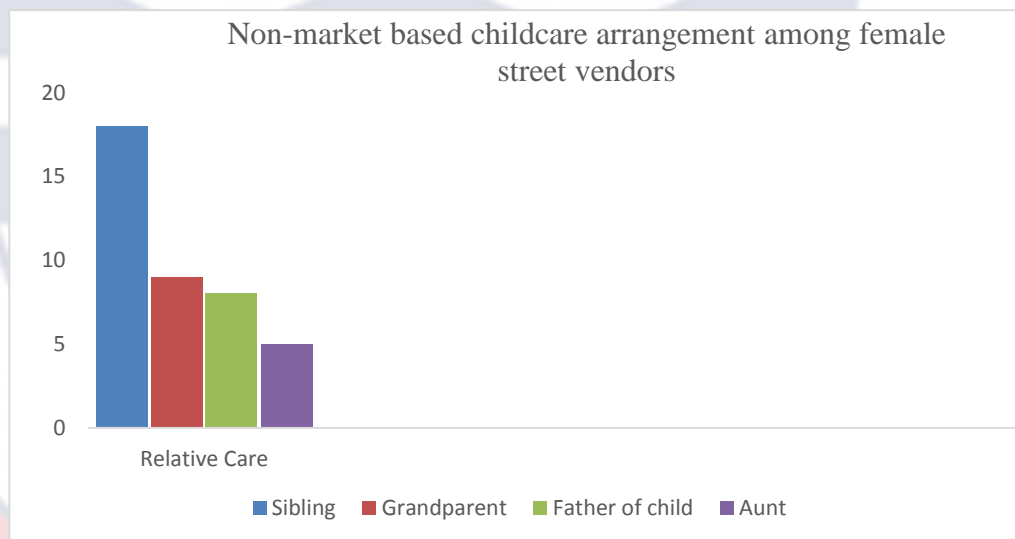


Figure 3: Non-market based childcare arrangement among female street vendors.

Source: Field data (2023)

As mentioned earlier, non-market childcare arrangements involve the use of family members and other social networks to provide care for children without monetary compensation. Female street vendors who reported using non-market childcare arrangements primarily relied on the siblings of the child

especially older sisters, grandparents, father of the child, aunts, friends and colleague's female street vendors for childcare support.

Father support

The household compositions of female street vendors revealed that eight participants shared their living arrangements with their husbands or partners, the fathers of their children. These eight participants disclosed that they received some form of childcare support from their partners. However, the extent of this support was heavily contingent on the availability of fathers, which was often influenced by their work commitments. Participants indicated that fathers typically assist with active caregiving tasks beyond financial contributions, such as feeding, bathing, and watching over the children during weekends, especially on Sundays. This pattern arises because most fathers are engaged in economic activities in the informal economy and are typically present at home on Sundays. One participant emphasised this perspective by saying:

My partner is not always around to help with childcare he goes to work all the time. He is only around usually on weekends, particularly on Sundays. When he is around, he helps in feeding, bathing and looking after the child while I do other things (female street vendors, 11th June 2023)

This is what another female street vendor had to say:

My husband works during the weekdays, so he is not able to help much of the time. But on weekends, he takes care of the children while income to sell. On Saturdays, I usually come to work late because I do my washing in the mornings and close early around 4 pm to go and

continue with some other domestic chores (female street vendor with a 2-year-old, Mankessim, 11th June 2023)

Among the participants who reported having fathers involved in childcare activities, one story stood out. This participant revealed that she received continuous childcare support from the father of the child even at work because the husband operates an electrical shop conveniently located close to her temporary vending shed creating an ideal arrangement for shared caregiving duties.

My husband's shop is right opposite my shed so I'm able to leave the child in his care when I'm working. When it's time to breastfeed, he brings him and takes him back. When he is also busy, I go for the child so he can get time to work. Sometimes he even comes to sit by me to support me. His assistance has been invaluable, especially during the child's nap time (Female Street vendor with a one-year child, Mankessim, 17th June 2023)

The narratives revealed that childcare provided by husbands or partners often depends on their work commitments and is linked to their work schedules. Fathers are often absent on weekdays, dedicating their time to their livelihoods. This absence limits their direct participation in caregiving tasks during those days. Moreover, in some exceptional cases, fathers operating businesses near the mothers' vending locations have the advantage of being readily available for childcare support, even during weekdays.

Sibling Care

Throughout the study, a prominent form of non-market-based childcare arrangement that emerged was the practice of older siblings providing care to

their younger siblings, often referred to as “sibling care” in other research. Among female street vendors with other children, particularly older female children, it was common for participants to rely on older children for care support. Children as young as eight years old were entrusted with the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings, while their mothers engaged in street vending. They took on the task of collecting their younger siblings from their mothers’ vending location or daycare after school ended in the afternoons. A female street vendor who used sibling care was recounted:

I live with my children and their father; my first daughter is eight years old but can cater for her brother when I am absent. When she closes from school, she comes to pick him home and take care of him until I come back. She is really helpful (Female Street vendor, 15th June 2023)

It was also the case that on weekends and national holidays, female street vendors often relied on their older female children for care support. They entrusted the care of their younger children, especially those aged two and three years, to their older female siblings while they went to work. Another female street vendor recounted:

My child’s big sister comes for him when she closes from school so I can continue selling. She is doing well with helping me out with childcare. Even on weekends on days she doesn’t go to Saturday classes, I leave her little brother in her care and come to work. (Female street vendor, 27th June 2023).

The study participants further revealed that sibling care is dependent on the age of the children care recipients. Participants with younger children,

particularly those under the age of six, were less likely to entrust the care of their younger siblings to that of their older siblings. The practice of sibling care among female street vendors in Mankessim is dependent on the age of the children involved. An interesting observation from the study was that participants with younger children, particularly those below the age of six, were less likely to entrust the care of children care recipients to that of children caregivers. Participants tended to rely on older children, typically eight years and older, who were perceived to be capable of assuming caregiving responsibilities.

My older child is only six years old, he cannot single-handedly provide care support for year year-old younger brother without supervision. I prefer to provide the care myself to ensure my child's safety. But when I am around the six-year-old can play with the younger one while I do other things (Female street vendor with a one-year-old, Mankessim, 19th June 2023)

From the narratives shared by the participants, it becomes evident that sibling care plays a pivotal role in the lives of female street vendors. Sibling care extends from regular school days to weekends and national holidays. In essence, the practice of sibling care is tailored to the age and developmental stages of both younger and older children. This reflects mothers' commitment to ensuring that caregiving arrangements are appropriate and safe. Female children caregivers make sacrifices to the well-being of their younger siblings. This was expressed through their non-attendance of weekend classes to take up caregiving roles at the expense of their education to support their mothers in their economic activities.

Grandparental Care

Grandparental care in this context involves the care provided not only by biological parents but also by the aunts of study participants. The practice of grandparental care has emerged as a common and valuable childcare arrangement among female street vendors who resided with their parents or aunts within extended family setups. In this context, it was often grandmothers and grandaunts who assumed the role of caregivers. However, it is essential to note that the extent of care support that these grandmothers could provide was dependent on their availability, as many of them were also actively engaged in their economic activities. In many cases, these grandmothers, while willing to assist with childcare, faced challenges in fully dedicating themselves to this role, as their capacity to provide continuous and comprehensive childcare was often limited by their economic engagement. A female street vendor made this disclosure:

I live with my parents, siblings and other relatives in a family house. When I am busy preparing to come to work, my mother steps in to provide my child with care. She baths and feeds him most of the time and also put her to sleep when I am not around. This is not very regular because my mum also sells. She sells fresh fish in the market so sometimes she is not around but anytime she is, she supports (Female Street Vendor, Mankessim, 15th June 2023)

Among female street vendors who received grandparental care support, only one who lived with her partner and his family revealed she regularly received childcare support from her child's paternal grandmother. This was because the

grandmother was a home-based trader and was often home.

I live with my partner and his parents so my child's paternal grandmother is always available to provide care support anytime, especially because I am a first-time mum. She is of great help to me. However, because I breastfeed, I most of the time bring my baby to work so I can breastfeed her (female street vendor with five months old child, 17th June 2023).

In addition to the practice of grandparental care, some female street vendors reported that the mere presence or availability of their parents, especially their mothers did not guarantee their ability to provide childcare. This limitation often stemmed from the age and health conditions of the grandmothers, which constrained their capacity to actively engage in caregiving. This variation within the grandparental care dynamic was best encapsulated by one street vendor's perspective:

My mother is here with me, but she is quite old and not in the best of health. While she wants to help with the children, her physical condition doesn't allow her to actively care for them. It's a challenge because, despite her presence, I still need to find alternative childcare arrangements (Female Street vendor, Mankessim, 17th June 2023)

Grand-aunts also contributed to the childcare provision. Female street vendors who resided with their aunts reported relying on their aunts for childcare support even though just like the grandmothers, grand-aunts were also occupied with economic activities.

My aunt sells food at home so I rely on her for the provision of childcare when I am coming to work. She supports my childcare provision most of the time because of the nature of the work but she is also a busy person and so is not always available to provide care all the time (Female Street Vendors, 14th June 2023)

To have a deeper understanding of the role grandparents play in childcare support, a grandmother who provides childcare support to her daughter who is a street vendor was interviewed. This grandmother expressed a sense of obligation and responsibility towards her grandchild. She revealed her willingness to provide care support to her daughter, who works as a female street vendor, to allow her daughter to focus on her economic activities. The grandmother emphasised that selling bags of sachet water in front of her house, enabled her to provide this care support, however, if she were to be working far from home, she would not have been able to offer the same level of support and care that she currently provides to her grandchild. She expressed this sentiment in this way:

Today everybody is striving to survive economically because of the economic situation so everybody is working and cannot sacrifice their time to care for their child, I don't think if I had worked far away from home I could have had the time to care for my grandchild like I am doing unless my children decide to take care of me while I care for their children but it cannot be so because they are also trying their best to make ends meet so they can care for their children (non-market childcare provider, 18th June 2023).

Past studies have shown the critical role of grandmothers and grand-aunts in the support of childcare (Del Boca et al., 2018; Di Gessa et al., 2022). However, in this study, the frequency and intensity of the care provided was a concern for most of the female street vendors who made use of grandparental childcare. This implies that the socio-economic context of grandparents in Mankessim affects their availability to provide the needed support for childcare. Also, physical limitations due to age and health conditions posed significant constraints on the ability of grandmothers to provide care for their grandchildren.

Aunt care

Among the study participants who shared living arrangements with their siblings, a recurring theme was their vital role played by these siblings in providing childcare support. This sibling support was particularly pronounced during the early morning hours, a critical time for street vendors to prepare for their daily economic activity. Participants consistently highlighted that their siblings, often sisters, assumed essential caregiving responsibilities, including bathing and feeding their younger children in the mornings before the mothers embarked on their workdays. However, it is important to acknowledge that the extent of care provision by siblings was subject to their commitments, primarily in terms of economic and academic pursuits. In cases where siblings, especially sisters, were engaged in economic activities or attending school, their availability for childcare support was contingent on their schedules.

In the morning while I am preparing my plantain chips to sell, my sisters usually assist in bathing and feeding my child before they either go to work or school. That way I do not spend too much time

at home before going to work. The support is usually limited because they also have their commitments (Female Street vendor, Mankessim, 17th June 2023)

Participants with siblings who were engaged in street vending themselves received support from their siblings while they were at work.

One female street vendor recounted this perspective in this way:

My sister is also a street vendor like me, she helps me provide childcare when I come to the street to work. She sells vegetables in the market so when I come in the morning, I send my baby to her so I can go and sell. She has a shed so it is easy for her to take care of my daughter. I only make sure I provide her food, diapers and clothes. When I close around 6 pm I go for her then we go home. I'm always thankful to her because it would have been very difficult for me (Female Street vendor, 26th June 2023)

In conclusion, aunt care has emerged as a crucial and adaptive childcare arrangement within the lives of female street vendors in Mankessim. The contributions of siblings of participants, often sisters, extend beyond mere familial ties; they play an instrumental role in enabling mothers to engage in street vending, while ensuring the welfare of their children. These siblings actively participate in caregiving tasks, particularly during the morning hours, assisting with essential activities such as bathing and feeding. However, the availability and extent of sibling support are not without limitations as they hinge on their commitments, including economic activities.

Cousin Care

Cousin care represents another noteworthy childcare arrangement among female street vendors in Mankessim especially among participants who lived with their extended family members. Within the fabric of their familial networks, some participants reported relying on the assistance of their nieces and nephews in caring for their children while they engaged in street vending. This form of support usually involved older nieces and nephews who were old enough to assume caregiving responsibilities. Participants shared those nieces and nephews often played a role in attending to their younger cousins, particularly during the morning hours and after school hours. Their assistance encompassed tasks like bathing, feeding, and keeping a watchful eye on the younger children. However, similar to the dynamics of sibling care, the availability of nieces and nephews for childcare support was contingent on their commitments, such as school attendance or other responsibilities within the family.

Some female street vendors recounted that:

I take my baby to work and when my sister's daughter closes from school at 3 pm, she comes to take him home and provide care for him until I come back from work in the evening around 6 pm. Also on Saturdays, I leave the baby with my other siblings at home
(Female Street Vendor, 23rd June 2017)

Non-relative Care

The study further revealed another group of non-market childcare providers who were instrumental in assisting female street vendors. These were the participants' fellow female street vendors. The support provided by

these colleagues demonstrated a sense of unity within the working environment. When one of these female street vendors was interviewed, she mentioned that she was caring for her colleague's child.

I believe no human is an island, we are here for each other so if a sister needs help with caring for her child whilst selling, and I am in the position to help, it is prudent to offer my help when necessary (Female Street vendor, 22nd June 2023).

This statement highlights the mutual understanding and support among female street vendors in Mankessim. They collaborate to address their colleagues' childcare needs, demonstrating a collective effort to navigate the demands of their work and parental responsibilities.

Female street vendors acknowledged the role of non-market child caregivers in their childcare responsibilities. However, it is important to mention that all female street vendors who made use of these non-market caregivers as their childcare support systems reported that this childcare arrangement was not always available, as family members had their work and academic demands for those who were students. Some participants indicated that they had no choice but to concurrently provide childcare and vending services irrespective of the challenges they faced while combining their economic activities with childcare responsibilities.

Market-based Childcare Arrangement

In addition to female street vendors' reliance on family members and other social networks, some participants also reported using market-based childcare arrangements as a supplementary approach to childcare to complement the care provided by relatives while they actively engaged in their

vending activities. The care provided by the family was in the form of daily activities, such as bathing and feeding, which proved beneficial in reducing the workload of female street vendors and allowing them to shorten housework time to work early. However, the challenge they faced was the absence of care supervision while their mothers worked. To address this supervision gap, female street vendors resorted to day care centres and home-based childcare options.

Of the 21 female street vendors who participated in the study, a significant proportion, comprising 10 participants, disclosed that they relied on market-based childcare arrangements to provide care for their children aged zero to three. According to these participants, the demands of street vending work and the nature of care of other family members can necessitate their use of a market-based approach to childcare, which predominantly takes the form of either daycare centres or home-based facilities. However, within the group, a distinction emerged regarding the type of market-based childcare arrangements employed. Six participants turned to home-based childcare services, while the remaining four used institutional childcare services.

Home-based Childcare Arrangement

Home-based childcare arrangements provide paid childcare services to a group of children in a caregiver's home. This childcare facility operates without being registered or licenced by the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development. According to the owner, she initially attempted to follow the laid down procedures to obtain the necessary licence, but when officials from the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development inspected the premises, they found the conditions unsatisfactory and declined

to register for the facility. Notwithstanding this, the facility is in full operation at the hindsight of the regulatory body. The six female street vendors who relied on this arrangement recounted that the primary reason they made use of home-based childcare was because it turned out to be the cheapest paid childcare facility in Mankessim, where parents paid 50GHC for a term which consisted of four months. A female street vendor recounted:

The cost involved is low and affordable for me. Even during the days, when I do not have enough money to pay madam understands and allows my child to stay in school (Female Street Vendors, 21st 2023).

Aside from the cost involved, all female street vendors were particularly interested in the fact that home-based arrangements served their needs as women who work non-standard hours. According to them, because care is provided at the caregiver's home, they can come for their children in the evening after they are done with work. They are at ease knowing that their children are in safe spaces for which they can be cared. The following extracts provide insights into how mothers and guardians expressed these perspectives.

I decided to bring my child here because of her motherly love towards the children. I don't close early enough but anytime I get here in the evening around 6 pm or sometimes 7 pm the child is already bathed and fed waiting to be picked up. It is not like that in other places (Female Street vendor, 18th June 2023).

Another female street vendor had this to say:

Truth be told, I am very much content with the care my child receives. I'm able to bring him as early as 7 am and come for him

as late as 7 pm. Madam has a lot of patience with them and treats them like her own. I wish she had primary classes; I would have allowed my child to continue his primary education here (Female street vendor, 18th June 2023)

The study revealed that home-based childcare emerged as a popular choice among female street vendors in Mankessim. Despite lacking formal registration and licencing, this arrangement gained the trust and reliance of these vendors owing to its affordability and flexibility in service provision. Notably, this home-based arrangement differed not only in its flexibility but also in its low levels of commodification. The provider invests more than the actual cost and consistently accepts children, even when mothers are unable to pay for her services, displaying a dedication that goes beyond conventional business practices. In addition, just like formal market-based childcare arrangements, female street vendors who used this arrangement made use of non-market care arrangements when necessary.

Daycare Childcare Arrangement

As mentioned earlier, there are market-based institutions in Mankessim that provide childcare to parents who require such services. Childcare services vary in terms of cost, structure, and quality. Among study participants who made use of market-based childcare, four participants revealed that they relied on day care centres within the community to provide care for their children while they engaged in their vending activities. Participants, faced with the demanding nature of street vending work and minimal family support for childcare, primarily relied on daycare centres providing care until approximately 3 p.m. Following the closure of these facilities, older female

family members, often siblings or nieces, would step in to pick up the children and assume caregiving duties until the mothers return from work. This is in contrast to the home-based care arrangement, where the owner went beyond, offering a more flexible and extended schedule, accommodating mothers who work nonstandard hours.

A female street vendor who used daycare childcare services recounted her experience:

Looking at the nature of my work, it is evident that having my child with me while I sell is going to be very challenging. When he was a baby, I was teaching so I used to take him to school, it was not easy but it cannot be compared to bringing him as a toddler to the streets and chasing cars to sell. It is even risky because this place is very busy, I cannot concentrate on selling while my child is with me. At least when I know he is in school I can concentrate and sell. When they close my niece goes for him (Female Street vendor, 16th June 2023).

The study revealed that participants had a preference for daycare centres located within their vicinities, which are accessible and therefore convenient to use. This proximity ensured that mothers could easily drop off their children before starting their workday. Another female street vendor recounted:

My child is in the crèche. She is two years old. I used to bring her to work with me before taking her to school. I realised it was affecting my productivity and income. She wouldn't sit quietly but would want to go everywhere. This environment is also not safe so I decided to enrol her in one crèche close by. Most of the children

in my house attend that school so she doesn't feel lonely at all.

When my older child closes, she goes to pick her up (Female street vendor with a two-year-old, 13th June 2023)

None of the four female street vendors who made use of market-based formal childcare arrangements as their main choice used the arrangement in isolation; they also made use of non-market arrangements at a point. The reason they gave was that, because institutionalised childcare arrangements offered their services during standard working hours, the restricted childcare hours were challenging for many of these female street vendors, as they work non-standard hours. As a result of the fixed working hours of the day care centres that were unsuitable for their working hours, they added alternative care arrangements.

In conclusion, female street vendors in Mankessim have made childcare arrangements between the two main forms. All female street vendors relied on nonmarket-based childcare arrangements. However, since non-market-based arrangement options alone were not always sufficient, female street vendors made up for the shortfalls by simultaneously providing care themselves while at work or employing the assistance of market-based childcare solutions. Despite these various childcare arrangements, the combination of forms of childcare arrangements still fell short of fully meeting the childcare needs of female street vendors.

Factors Informing the Childcare Choices of Female Street Vendors

The fourth objective of this study was to examine the factors that informed the childcare choices female street vendors made in Mankessim. The study found that, based on the background of Female Street vendors and their

socioeconomic status, different care arrangements were chosen based on diverse factors. Furthermore, the childcare system and the various childcare arrangement options available to female street vendors also played a significant role in influencing the childcare choices of the study participants.

Table 7: Factors Influencing Childcare Choices of Female Street Vendors in Mankessim

Factors	Frequency (No. 21)
Cost of childcare	21
The notion of proper Motherhood	11
The notion of proper childhood	6
Support from relatives and non-relatives	21

Source: Field Study (2023)

The study participants reported that the cost of childcare was a significant barrier to their childcare choices. Female street vendors who made use of only non-market childcare arrangements pointed out that the cost of market-based childcare services was informing their decisions about using non-market-based arrangements, and in situations where they could not get support from their family members, they provided care themselves. These female street vendors prioritised earning money to support their families rather than spending their limited financial resources and unstable income on market-based childcare arrangements. Instead, they were resolute by relying on non-market childcare arrangements when available or by providing childcare simultaneously with their work activities. The above perspective was expressed by female street vendors in this manner:

I don't make enough from what I sell, being able to provide my child with food and shelter and clothes is my topmost priority. Market-based childcare, I cannot afford for now so I will manage

with the strategy I am using now so that when my child turns four years old, he can start school (Female Street vendor, 20th June 2023)

Another female street vendor who shared the same position recounted:

This small boy will go and sleep the whole day for me to pay GHC 200. It is not possible madam. The money can go into feeding the family and other things. I prefer to look after him myself, so when he is ready for school, he will go but for now, I don't even have enough to feed the family (female street vendor, 21st June 2023)

Consequently, the six female street vendors who rely on home-based care and the four who used daycare centres, all market childcare arrangements, also pointed out the cost of market-based childcare arrangements as an informing factor in making childcare decisions. These female street vendors used a common selection approach to compare the costs of various childcare facilities and select the most affordable option for their childcare needs. The costs comprise charges for fees and supplies. This informed the particular market arrangement that they had decided on.

A female street vendor who shared this perspective recounted;

Sometimes after struggling to find money for the fee, the childcare centre begins to interfere with additional charges for childcare supplies. I further asked around to find the centres that require few supplies in making my decision. It's not easy (Female, street vendor, 20th June, 2023)

In addition to considering the cost of market-based childcare as an

informing factor, some female street vendors preferred the use of home-based childcare to daycare centres. This was because home-based childcare offered a more affordable option than other market formal childcare facilities; thus, it was financially beneficial to them. In addition, the fact that home-based childcare arrangements allowed them the opportunity to negotiate flexible payment terms or agree on lower fees made it more economical.

Truth be told, I am very happy with the arrangement I have made because it is very cost-efficient, madam even allows us some time to pay the fees. She is a mother who understands our challenges. Even on days, when I don't have enough to pay for my child's feeding, and she feeds her I pay later when I have enough money. I like how flexible she is with us (Female Street vendor, 20th June 2023)

The narratives above underscore how the economic circumstances and limited financial resources of female street vendors significantly informed their childcare choices. This corroborates with several studies which also found that financial constraints are among the main deciding factors for childcare arrangements especially among low-income families (Carlin et al., 2019; Mapumulo, 2021; Navarro-Cruz et al., 2023)

The study revealed that while some market-based childcare service providers combine their fees to cover both service charges and necessary supplies, other market-based childcare providers employ a different strategy by reducing upfront fees and asking parents to provide childcare materials such as toiletries, mats, play items, and first aid kits. Although the use of a hidden

cost strategy may appear cost-efficient initially, it ends up making childcare services more expensive in the long term

In the course of the study, it became evident that the understanding and construction of motherhood by female street vendors played a vital role in shaping the extent and nature of their childcare arrangements out of the range of choices available to them. These women held highly individualised and subjective notions of motherhood, encompassing what it entailed to be a mother and their perceptions of what constituted a “good” mother. This notion of motherhood was particularly prominent among participants who juggled childcare responsibilities with vending activities. For these participants, being a mother meant that they bore the primary responsibility for their children’s care so much that they expected people who would provide care support would do so just as they would. Female street vendors considered this role to be an essential aspect of their identity as mothers. Consequently, prioritising their children’s well-being and providing childcare while engaging in vending activities were seen as demonstrations of their commitment as mothers.

Female street vendors who shared their perspective on motherhood were of the view that their involvement in their children’s lives is crucial, and as a result, they felt reluctant to rely on external childcare arrangements, especially market-based options. They emphasised a preference for trusted social networks to support them with childcare. This theme was expressed more frequently by mothers with children aged zero–one than those with children aged two–three.

A female street vendor recounted this assertion in this way:

Oh actually, as a mother I feel this sense of responsibility and duty towards my child's well-being because I brought him to the world. I do not have to relegate this role to anyone, especially at his age. It is not easy juggling work alongside childcare but I want to be there for him at every step of the way until he is old enough to start school. Those mothers who take their children to school as early as six months, I don't see them as good mothers. I would feel so guilty if I should even consider such an option of childcare (Female Street vendor with an eleven-month-old, 22nd June 2023).

Another female street vendor shared a similar sentiment in this manner:

I must work to support my husband in taking care of the family but if I have to stay home and take care of the child until he is old enough to go to school, it is a good decision, it is my responsibility as the mother, and my child should be my priority. I'm on the street to sell because I also believe I don't have to leave all the financial responsibilities to my husband, I should have money of my own too. Since I decided to work it is only proper and expected that I bring my child to work and care for him here, I do not subscribe to using market childcare services (Female Street vendor with a year old, 21st June, 2023)

The narratives revealed that female street vendors' notion of motherhood informed their childcare choices of using social networks as caregivers or juggling childcare, irrespective of the struggle and challenges this choice comes with. However, while the individual values of motherhood are

central to these decisions, these values are culturally shaped by structures and processes in society. The childcare choices of these mothers are not solely personal decisions made in a vacuum, but are significantly shaped and constrained by broader social, economic, and structural factors. Female street vendors find themselves in a unique dilemma, as they not only bear the responsibilities of motherhood but must also actively contribute to their household's well-being.

The childcare choices of female street vendors were informed by their notion of childhood and their beliefs about what children should have or experience. Female street vendors, particularly those with children aged two and three years disclosed that they had specific aspirations for their children's education and prospects. These aspirations influenced the decisions of female street vendors who made choices of market-based options to support their children's early childhood development and education.

The cognitive and social development of children influenced the participants' decision to seek alternative childcare arrangements that aligned with their notion of childhood, thus prioritising institutions that offer educational activities, even if they were informal, such as home-based childcare solutions, because they align with their economic constraints.

Participants who shared this perspective recounted:

I want my child to have a better future than me. I may not have had many opportunities, but I believe my child can. That's why I prefer to put him in a place where he can learn something, even when I'm working. I don't want him just to grow up on the streets; I want him to have an education. So, I found this home-based

childcare where madam has patience and they teach the kids some basics. It's not much, but it's a start (female street vendor with a three-year-old child, 18th June 2023)

Another female street vendor shared this perspective saying:

I sell in the market to support my family, but I also sell so my child can have a better life. I don't want her to struggle. Even though it's tough juggling work and childcare, I found a daycare centre that focuses on early education. I believe this will give her a good start, and I'm willing to make sacrifices for it. Nowadays when she comes home, she sings the rhymes and says the letters it sharpens her mind and it shows she is learning something (female street vendor with a two-year-old, 18th June 2023)

The narratives highlight the fact that childcare choices made by female street vendors in Mankessim reflect not only their roles as mothers but also their notions of childhood and the deep-seated aspirations for their children's education and prospects. The benefits they believed their children would gain from market-based childcare options, particularly home-based options, contributed to their decision or choice irrespective of the challenging socio-economic circumstances they faced.

Female street vendors in Mankessim again recounted that the presence of available and reliable support for social networks emerged as another important factor that informed the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim. As described in the background characteristics, female street vendors revealed that differences in household composition and parenting situations informed their childcare choices.

Almost all respondents attested to the fact that non-market childcare arrangements which involve the use of family members, friends, and neighbours in the provision of childcare without any kind of monetary payment are the first consideration, as far as their childcare arrangements are concerned.

Their preference for non-market childcare arrangements was driven by trust and cultural norms. Study participants acknowledged that the presence of social support structures at home significantly contributed to their choice to use market or non-market arrangements. This is well-captured when one female street vendor who made use of non-market arrangements had this to say:

My mother and sometimes my big sister support me with childcare. Even though they are not always available, their presence and willingness to support influence my choice of non-market childcare options at least when they are around and less busy, I do not worry about my care responsibilities (Female Street vendor, 21st June 2023)

The narrative underscores the pivotal role of social networks in shaping childcare decisions, particularly among low-income women in the informal sector.

Conclusion

The childcare choices of female street vendors are informed by an interplay of factors. The findings reveal that the economic realities of female street vendors greatly inform their childcare choices. The cost of childcare emerged as a consistent informing factor with respondents relying on both market and non-market childcare arrangements due to financial constraints.

The notion of motherhood was also a factor that informed the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim. Some female street vendors showed a strong inclination to be directly involved in their children's care and supervision, emphasising the crucial role of maternal responsibilities and nurturing. The presence of social networks and support structures also serves as a noteworthy factor that guides childcare choices. Non-market childcare arrangements involving family, friends, and neighbours were crucial for female street vendors in Mankessim.

From these findings, it can be deduced that the various childcare choices made by female street vendors were not just personal decisions. Economic positions of female street vendors as informal economy workers. Irrespective of their earnings, the nature of their work, working hours, and the nature of their earnings make it difficult for female street vendors to access quality childcare services. At the same time, the notion of motherhood and how others construct what goes into mothering informs the strategies they decide to go with. As a result, women are made to choose between their childcare responsibilities and work, which further contributes to the perpetuation of gender and social inequalities.

Chapter Summary

The first section of the chapter profiled the childcare delivery system in Mankessim, and found that childcare in Mankessim comes in two main forms; market and non-market-based childcare arrangements. Non-market-based childcare is provided by family and friends while market arrangements are provided by private individuals at a cost in the form of daycare centres and home-based childcare centres. The Children's Act (1998) and the Children

and Family Welfare Policy are the policy frameworks governing both market and non-market arrangements in Mankessim.

The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development regulates childcare provisioning in Mankessim while the Mfantseman municipal assembly oversee the activities of street vendors in Mankessim.

Market-based childcare operators and individual households are responsible for funding childcare provision and services in Mankessim respectively. Market-based childcare arrangements in Mankessim do not belong to category A which was the highest grade but fell between the B and C categories with most facilities unable to meet the standards set for registration.

The numerous unregistered market-based facilities in Mankessim and the inability of the regulatory body to live up to its role of providing constant oversight reiterates the challenge within the market-based childcare system. This challenge lies in the necessity of market-based childcare to pass on operational costs to the users while their earnings might not meet the financial demands for upholding state-mandated standards. If the regulatory body strictly enforces these standards, it could potentially result in the closure of numerous daycare centres in Mankessim. This scenario poses a critical dilemma, while stringent enforcement of standards ensures adherence to regulation, it also presents the risk of eliminating accessible childcare of market-based childcare services due to financial constraints faced by prospective users.

Regular monitoring is essential to address issues to uphold safety and quality standards. However, the pursuit of safety and quality in childcare often

leads to increased commodification, as market-based providers must invest in resources, infrastructure, and well-trained staff to meet the regulatory standards. This, in turn, results in higher operational costs which will lead to increased fees for female street vendors

The second section determined the childcare needs of female street vendors in Mankessim based on the background characteristics and some challenges they faced with their work. The background characteristics included age of other children, marital status, residency and household composition. Female street vendors expressed childcare needs around safety and reliable care. They explained that they prioritise the safety of their children and expressed the need for reliable caregivers who can assist them with childcare while they work. Furthermore, respondents also emphasised the need for affordable childcare considering their financial challenges and work demands.

The third section described the childcare arrangements of Female Street vendors in Mankessim. The data revealed that female street vendors made use of different combinations of childcare arrangements out of the options available to them. They relied on non-market arrangements as their primary arrangements. However, in the absence of non-market-based childcare options they resorted to providing care while going about their vending activities. Other female street vendors also relied on market-based childcare arrangements as primary arrangements for providing care for their children. Among those who used market-based childcare arrangements, 60 per cent used informal market arrangements, particularly home-based arrangements, while 40 per cent relied on formal arrangements in the form of

daycare centres. Female street vendors who used market arrangements often combined them with non-market childcare arrangements. This implies that while children were in daycare or home-based facilities during the day usually between 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, family member's usually older siblings took over childcare until the mothers returned from work.

The fourth section analysed the factors that informed the childcare choices of the female street vendors in Mankessim. It was found that the financial circumstances of female street vendors informed the sort of childcare arrangements they made. Also, the notion of motherhood and childhood as well as the presence of family and other social networks shaped the childcare decisions female street vendors made in Mankessim.

The findings of this study resonate with existing literature on childcare choices, particularly among the informal economy in developing countries. The factor of economic circumstances impacting childcare choices is well-documented. Previous studies have emphasised that limited financial resources often lead working mothers, to opt for informal, non-market-based childcare arrangements or to provide childcare themselves. The economic challenges faced by female street vendors in Mankessim mirror the broader pattern seen in many developing regions, underlining the universal importance of this factor in childcare decisions (Clark et al., 2019; Arpino & Luppi, 2020).

The influence of support systems, represented by extended family members, friends, or neighbours, on childcare decisions is a recurring and prominent theme in research. As captured by Radey & McWey, (2019), the pivotal role of these informal networks, particularly in low-income or poor

settings though limited cannot be underestimated. The profound impact of social network support for childcare aligns with the established findings in this study. In this study, the findings reveal that the childcare support female street vendors receive from their social support structures significantly alleviates their childcare responsibilities to an extent especially in the mornings while they prepare for work.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations from the study. The summary of the study is presented in the first section. The second section discusses the conclusion drawn from the findings of the study. The final section of the chapter presents recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Summary of the Study

The overall goal of this study was to explore childcare choices among female street vendors in Mankessim in the Central Region of Ghana. To achieve this goal, the study sought to answer the following research questions: How is the childcare delivery system structured in Mankessim? What are the childcare needs of female street vendors in Mankessim? What childcare arrangements do female street vendors in Mankessim make? What factors inform childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim?

This study used a qualitative research method and an exploratory research design. Data were collected from female street vendors in Mankessim with children aged zero to three years and non-market-based childcare providers. In addition, key informants, including the heads of market-based childcare centres. The head of the DSWCD and the Coordinator at the Mfantseman Municipal Assembly in Saltpond were participants in the study. Data were collected through individual and key-person interviews using unstructured interview guides. Non-participant observation was used to gather data. Narratives from the interviews were

manually organised into four themes and discussed based on the research questions that guided the study.

Key Findings

The general objective of this study was to explore the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim. Specifically, the findings of this study answer the research questions set for the study. The research questions were on the childcare needs of female street vendors in Mankessim, childcare arrangements female street vendors in Mankessim make, and factors informing their childcare choices.

The study's findings revealed that the childcare delivery system in Mankessim consisted of diverse arrangements with both market and non-market-based childcare options. Market-based childcare centres face challenges related to regulatory compliance, and a significant proportion of these centres operated without registration with the regulatory body DSWCD with oversight responsibility over all childcare arrangements, and are mandated to ensure quality standards of childcare provision in Mankessim. At the time of data gathering, no market-based childcare facilities met the highest grade (grade A) in adhering to the established standards. Disparities in the quality of childcare services were frequently associated with the fees charged by market-based childcare operators. Facilities that charged lower fees faced resource limitations, as multiple fees imposed by regulatory bodies further increased the operational costs for childcare providers.

Findings on childcare needs of female street vendors from the study revealed that based on their background characteristics including age of participants and their household composition. Participants expressed childcare

needs around safe, reliable, and affordable childcare services. Furthermore, female street vendors prioritise the safety of their children and express the need for reliable caregivers who can assist while working. Some female street vendors reported that they often hesitated to leave their children with neighbours due to concerns about their children's safety and the quality of care provided. Others also expressed fear of maltreatment in market-based formal childcare settings. Affordable childcare services are another significant childcare need for female street vendors in Mankessim. Participants reported that, due to their low and irregular incomes, they struggle to afford market-based childcare services. The cost of fees, as well as additional expenses such as childcare materials required by these market-based childcare centres, poses a financial challenge for them.

The study findings on the childcare arrangements of female street vendors revealed that Female Street vendors covered in the study employed a dual approach to childcare arrangements, striking a balance between non-market and market-based childcare options. Participants who employed non-market-based childcare arrangements relied on family members including fathers, siblings, and other extended family members. The study revealed that fathers' participation in childcare tasks was contingent on their availability and often influenced by their work commitments, with more active involvement typically occurring on weekends. Sibling care, especially by older female siblings, played a pivotal role in supporting mothers, particularly during the critical morning and weekend periods. Grandparents, such as grandmothers and grandaunts, were essential caregivers, but their ability to provide continuous care was constrained by

their own economic engagement and health conditions. Older female children and other extended family members, such as nieces and nephews, also played vital roles in childcare support.

Additionally, there were collaborative acts of care support among female street vendors, which emphasised a sense of mutual support and solidarity. It is crucial, however, to recognise that the extent to which this non-market-based childcare provider could provide care support was limited, especially during the work hours of participants. This posed a challenge for participants, leading many to simultaneously juggle their caregiving and vending responsibilities, highlighting the challenges they faced in balancing their economic activities with childcare. Alternatively, other participants also complemented their non-market-based arrangements with market-based childcare options, primarily daycare centres or home-based childcare services. Home-based childcare was preferred because of its affordability and flexibility, accommodating the non-standard hours of street vending. Despite this combination of childcare arrangements, this study revealed that female street vendors still grapple with unmet childcare needs.

The study results on factors that inform childcare choices revealed that factors such as economic circumstances, notions of motherhood, notions of childhood, and the presence of social networks shaped the childcare decisions of female street vendors in Mankessim. The cost of childcare consistently emerged as a significant factor influencing choices. Many female street vendors driven by limited financial arrangements prioritised earning income to support their families, overspending their limited financial resources on market-based childcare arrangements. Rather they preferred to rely on non-

market childcare arrangements when available or provide childcare themselves

Another factor that influenced the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim was the notion of motherhood. Some female street vendors felt compelled to prioritise their roles as mothers, thus avoiding external childcare options in the form of market childcare. They viewed their active involvement in their children's lives as a vital duty demonstrating their commitment. Maternal notions of childhood and beliefs about what children should have or experience also informed the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim. The desire of participants for their children, particularly those aged two and three, to have a better life and access to opportunities was a driving force behind their childcare choices. This perspective among participants influenced their use of market-based options, and the presence of support structures at home, such as extended family members, friends, or neighbours, contributed to the choice of female street vendors using either market or non-market-based childcare arrangements. However, the limitations faced by childcare actors among non-market-based arrangements highlighted the challenge of relying solely on non-market caregivers for childcare provision.

Conclusion

The childcare delivery system in Mankessim is characterised by market and non-market-based childcare arrangements, each with its own set of challenges and benefits. Notably, a significant proportion of market-based childcare centres in Mankessim operate without registration. Among the registered categories, the majority typically fall within categories B and C.

Although regulatory attempts have been made to establish quality standards, there is inadequate consistent oversight by the regulatory body. This insufficient oversight, alongside compliance challenges among market-based childcare operators significantly impacts overall quality standards.

Considering the background characteristics of female street vendors, which include their financial constraints and the nature of their work, participants had childcare needs around safe, reliable, and affordable childcare services that were adaptable to their unique work schedule. In response to these needs, female street vendors in Mankessim have employed different combinations of childcare arrangements. They rely on both relatives and non-relatives for childcare support. When non-market-based arrangements are unavailable, they find themselves simultaneously providing childcare in their workplace environments while actively participating in their economic activities.

Other participants also made use of market-based childcare arrangements, with the majority opting for home-based childcare arrangements. The remaining participants used daycare centres that they deemed affordable. No childcare arrangements were used in isolation. Many participants who used market-based options complemented their arrangements with non-market-based arrangements. Furthermore, the cost of market-based childcare services in Mankessim, the notion of appropriate motherhood and childhood, and the presence of social network support structures shape female street vendors in Mankessim.

This study's findings, spanning from the childcare needs of female street vendors to the decisions they make regarding childcare, shed light on crucial observations. This observation revolves around the notion of "choice" within the discourse on balancing work and family responsibilities, particularly in contemporary times. The commodification of childcare places pressure on women as caregivers, necessitating the pursuit of income, while at the same time breaking down the communal support system for childcare, since everyone needs to earn income to survive. The concept of choice, as expressed among female street vendors and in most studies, tends to suggest that women's ability to combine work and family obligations, including childcare, is predominantly a matter of personal choice. Consequently, individuals are left to navigate and juggle productive and reproductive activities on their own, and often feel guilty when the juggling act does not align as smoothly as they had hoped.

Just as Marxist feminists have argued, contemporary notions of choice align with the neoliberal ideals of autonomy, self-reliance, and individualism. Marxist feminists have proposed structural changes to address childcare problems by fundamentally challenging the existing capitalist economic and social systems that contribute to childcare issues. Their proposed solution involves the establishment of publicly funded childcare services that are universally accessible, aiming to distribute caregiving responsibilities collectively, and eliminating the disproportionate burden placed on women. This will increase women's participation and foster a more equitable and inclusive society.

The scope of the study did not include female street vendors in other commercial towns in and outside the central region, because the focus of the study was on issues faced by female street vendors in Mankessim to provide valuable insight into the broader issues faced by female street vendors in similar settings. Thus, based on the study's findings and available resources, subsequent studies could include more locations for a holistic understanding of the childcare delivery system and the choices mothers' especially female street vendors are left to make.

Recommendation

The study's findings on the childcare delivery system in Mankessim show that policies alone may not be sufficient, thus a broader and transformative approach to a better childcare delivery system will be beneficial. The efforts to promote equitable access to childcare services should be intensified. Given this, it is recommended that the municipal assembly expedite its initiative to construct a publicly funded childcare facility in the central business area in Mankessim, and subsequently expand the construction of childcare facilities to other communities within Mankessim. The planned childcare facility, when constructed, should be purposefully designed to cater to the unique needs of female street vendors, with special consideration given to their nonstandard working hours. This will help to improve the productivity and income of female street vendors in Mankessim. The timely implementation of this initiative should be a priority to ensure that the financial burden on low-income families and social inequality concerns are addressed.

To effectively solve the issue of unregistered childcare facilities and enhance the quality of childcare services in Mankessim, it is evident that striking a balance between ensuring safety and quality while keeping services affordable is a challenge hence this study recommends a shift in approach. Instead of solely emphasising stringent regulations and standards, there is a need for state subsidies and a reduction in levies, taxes, and utility costs for market-based childcare institutions. This approach aims not only to prevent the further commodification of childcare services by market-based childcare operators, considering the economic limitations of female street vendors, but also to encourage and facilitate the registration of these facilities. By reducing financial strain, it becomes more feasible for childcare facilities to meet regulatory standards while offering more affordable and accessible services aligning with the economic realities of Mankessim.

To improve the accessibility of training and capacity-building programmes for childcare attendants in market-based childcare centres, there is a need for the DSWCD to offer these programmes at subsidised or even no cost, thus eliminating the financial barriers that currently hinder childcare attendants' participation. The findings revealed the significant challenge posed by the financial burden associated with such training, indicating that its alleviation could encourage more participation from childcare attendants. To address the economic constraints faced by female street vendors, the municipal assembly could organise regular skill development and training programmes aimed at enhancing the entrepreneurial and business management of these vendors. This initiative will increase their earnings and enhance their business management capabilities, consequently making it more viable for

them to afford subsidised childcare services. Additionally, to financially support female street vendors, the state considers offering soft loans, to informal economy workers in general to provide an additional avenue for female street vendors to enhance their businesses and ease the cost burden of childcare. The municipal assembly could organise periodic skill development and training programmes to enhance the entrepreneurial and business skills of female street vendors. This initiative would boost income and improve business management, making it more feasible for them to afford subsidised childcare services.

The DSWCD takes proactive steps to make training and capacity-building programmes more accessible to childcare attendants in market-based childcare centres. This could be achieved by offering these programmes at a subsidised or even no cost, removing the financial constraints that currently hinder childcare attendants' participation. The study findings revealed that the financial burden associated with such training is a substantial barrier, and by alleviating this constraint, more childcare attendants will be encouraged to participate. In addition, periodic skill development and training programmes to enhance the entrepreneurial and business skills of female street vendors can be organised by the municipal assembly to help improve their income and business management, making it easier for them to afford subsidised childcare services.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study explored the childcare choices of female street vendors in Mankessim; however, the scope of the study did not consider the notion of fatherhood on childcare arrangements and childcare choices. In addition, an

extended study exploring the childcare choices of women in other informal sectors, such as domestic workers, will provide a broader understanding of childcare challenges across various informal occupations. Further research could also explore the dwindling family-based support for childcare and also the emerging social network support system for childcare.



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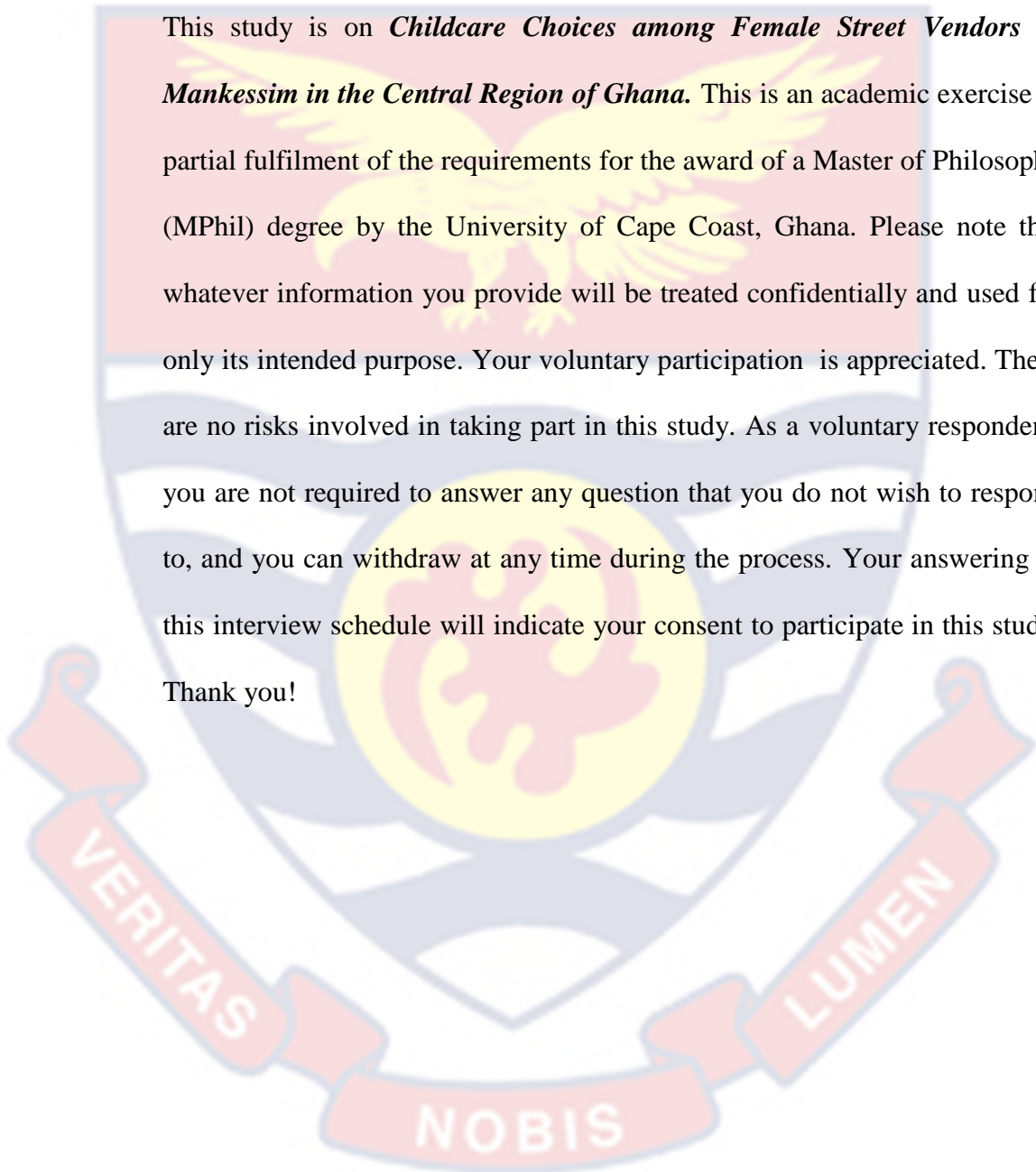
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A (CONSENT FORM)

Dear Cherished Respondent,

This study is on *Childcare Choices among Female Street Vendors in Mankessim in the Central Region of Ghana*. This is an academic exercise in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree by the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Please note that whatever information you provide will be treated confidentially and used for only its intended purpose. Your voluntary participation is appreciated. There are no risks involved in taking part in this study. As a voluntary respondent, you are not required to answer any question that you do not wish to respond to, and you can withdraw at any time during the process. Your answering of this interview schedule will indicate your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you!



APPENDIX B**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR OFFICER AT THE DEPT. OF SOCIAL
WELFARE**

Date of interview.....

Start Time.....

End Time.....

1. What role do you play in registering Childcare centres?
2. What registration process do childcare centres go through?
3. Are childcare centres in Mankessim graded? How are they graded?
4. What kind of support does the department offer to these childcare centres?
5. What oversight responsibilities does the department have over alternative private agencies that recruit nannies for households?
6. What in your view are some of the challenges of formal childcare arrangements?
7. What are some of the steps being taken to address the challenges of these formal childcare centres?
8. What oversight responsibilities does the department have over recruitment agents or agencies that recruit house help or nannies for households?
9. Is there any policy framework guiding the recruitment and patronage of paid caregivers in households?
10. What are your last words to address issues that may be missing?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COORDINATING DIRECTOR AT
MFANTSEMAN MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY.

Date of interview.....

Start Time.....

End Time.....

1. What are the existing regulations or policies governing street vending in Mankessim?
2. What are the specific rules or guidelines street vendors in Mankessim must adhere to?
3. What measures are in place to ensure compliance and address any violations?
4. What types of support or assistance does the Municipal Assembly offer to street vendors in Mankessim?
5. Are there any government-funded or subsidised childcare services available in Mankessim?
6. Is there any childcare support or assistance the Municipal Assembly offers female street vendors?
7. Are there any specific regulations in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children in street vending environments?
8. What are the plans or initiatives by the Municipal Assembly to promote and regulate street vending and childcare in Mankessim?

APPENDIX D**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FEMALE STREET VENDORS**

Date of interview.....

Time of interview.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF FEMALE STREET VENDORS

1. Age
2. Highest educational level attained
3. Place of birth
4. Place of residence
5. Marital status
6. Number of children
7. Age of children
8. What is your household composition/ family structure?
9. Father's involvement in childcare/fatherhood
10. What is your main income-earning activity?
11. Why the choice of street vending as income income-earning activity?
12. What are some of the challenges of your work?
13. What number of items do you sell in a day?
14. How much do you make in a day?

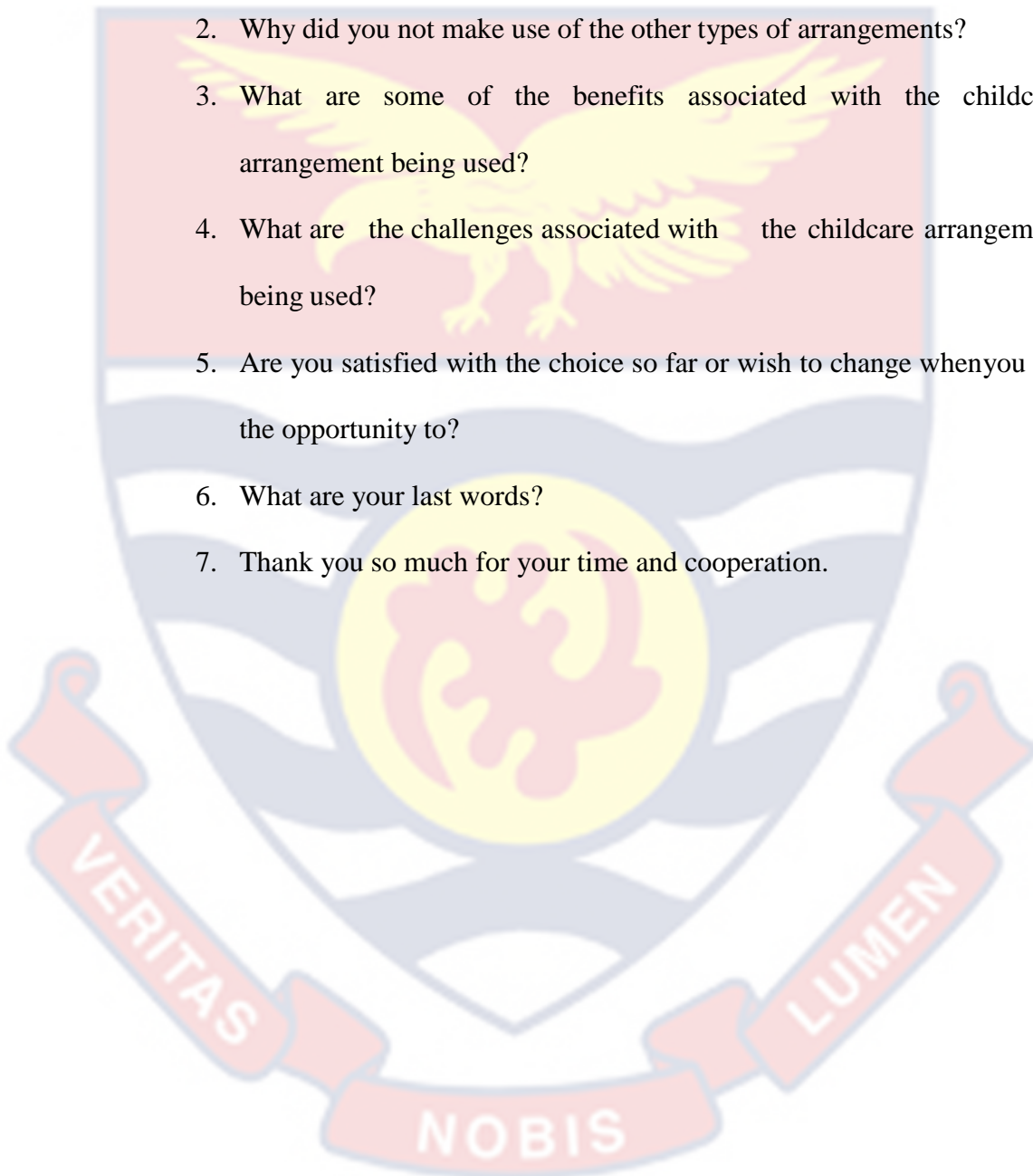
EXAMINING CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS OF FEMALE STREET VENDORS

1. What child caregiving roles do they perform?
2. How do you arrange for childcare in the early morning?
3. How do you arrange for childcare in the morning?
4. How do you arrange for childcare in the afternoon?
5. How do you arrange for childcare in the early evening?
6. How do you arrange for childcare at night?
7. How does your working condition affect your child's caring role?
8. How has your family been involved in providing care for your child?

9. Who takes up most of your childcare activities in your absence? (ask to interview the person)
10. What do you consider the best arrangement for your child?
11. What are some of the benefits of the childcare arrangement you prefer over the others? (Probe further)
12. What is your level of satisfaction with the performance of child caregiving activities by informal?
13. Market-based childcare arrangement
14. How did you decide on this form of childcare?
15. What is the cost involved (fee, time)
16. What is your level of satisfaction with the performance of caregiving activities by formal caregivers?
17. Do you have any fears or doubts about formal childcare?(probe on Cultural values)
18. In your opinion how can the caregiving activities provided by formal childcare providers be improved?
19. Who do you think should carry this responsibility?
20. What do you like most about this arrangement?
21. What do you least like about this arrangement?

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILD CARE CHOICES OF FEMALE STREET VENDORS

1. What influenced the type of arrangement you have chosen?(probe further)
2. Why did you not make use of the other types of arrangements?
3. What are some of the benefits associated with the childcare arrangement being used?
4. What are the challenges associated with the childcare arrangement being used?
5. Are you satisfied with the choice so far or wish to change when you get the opportunity to?
6. What are your last words?
7. Thank you so much for your time and cooperation.



APPENDIX E**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHILD CAREGIVERS IN NON-MARKET
CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS**

Date of interview.....

Start time.....

End time

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

1. Sex

2. Age

3. What is your educational level?

4. What are your main income-earning activities?

5. What is your relationship with the female Street Vendor?

6. How long have you been providing childcare?

CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS

7. What does a typical day providing care for the child look like?

8. How do you typically provide childcare for the child?

9. Please describe the caring activities you provide.

10. What is the duration or frequency of childcare sessions you provide? Is it on a full-time basis or only during specific hours?

11. What motivated you to offer childcare services to the child?

12. Do you feel obligated to provide childcare and why?

13. Tell me about your experiences of childcare.

14. What are some of the difficulties associated with caring for the child?

15. How do you deal with difficulties?

16. What do you find fulfilling or rewarding about being a childcare giver?

17. What are your last words?

Thank you so much for your time and cooperation.



APPENDIX F

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MARKET-BASED FORMAL CHILDCARE
ARRANGEMENTS**

Date of interview.....

Start time.....

End time

1. What kind of caregiving services do you offer?
 2. When was the facility set up?
 3. How was it set up?
 4. Why was it set up?
 5. Elaborate on the application process to register the crèche.
 6. What requirements did you need to meet to be registered?
 7. What kind of support do you receive from the state or any organisation?
 8. What kind of support do you receive from the Department of Social Welfare?
 9. What is the cost of the childcare provided? (In terms of fees, time resources)
 10. How would you describe your relationship with the Department of Social Welfare?
- Thank you so much for your time and cooperation.

APPENDIX G

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MARKET-BASED INFORMAL
CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS (HOME-BASED CHILDCARE)**

Date of interview.....

Start Time.....

End time

1. How long has this institution or organisation been in operation?
2. Are you registered?
3. Give a little background information about your office (when you started operation).
4. What kind of services do you offer?
5. What is the socio-economic background of parents who patronise your services?
6. What are the terms and conditions of the services you give to parents (written or verbal contracts)?
7. What oversight responsibility does the Department of Social Welfare have over this organisation?
8. What challenges do you face in providing childcare activities?
9. What are your last words that will help address issues that may be missing?

Thank you so much for your time and cooperation.

APPENDIX H**OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLIST**

1. Typical day in the daycare
2. How childcare givers relate to children when performing child caregiving activities

3. How childcare givers relate to parents of children they provide care to.
4. Facility Audit based on the Day Care Inspection Criteria

Baseline Day Care Inspection Criteria**1 Base Line Criteria**

Directional sign to the centre

Admission book

Log book (Being Utilized)

Purchase Book (Being Utilized)

Visitors Book (Being Utilized)

Personal files of children containing

- Medical Records (Vaccination)
- Photocopy of birth certification
- Admission form with picture of child

2. Playroom inspection

Spacious, well ventilated playrooms

Fully stocked first aid kit including: guaze bandage

Cotton wool

3. Each child should eat one hot meal at the centre

4. Expected criteria

Age appropriate toys that cannot be swallowed available at all times

Mats for napping available to each child and placed at least 20cm apart

At least one caregiver per room that has completed DSW Caregivers Training

Three rooms divided by appropriate age categories.

Outdoor play equipment available to the children.

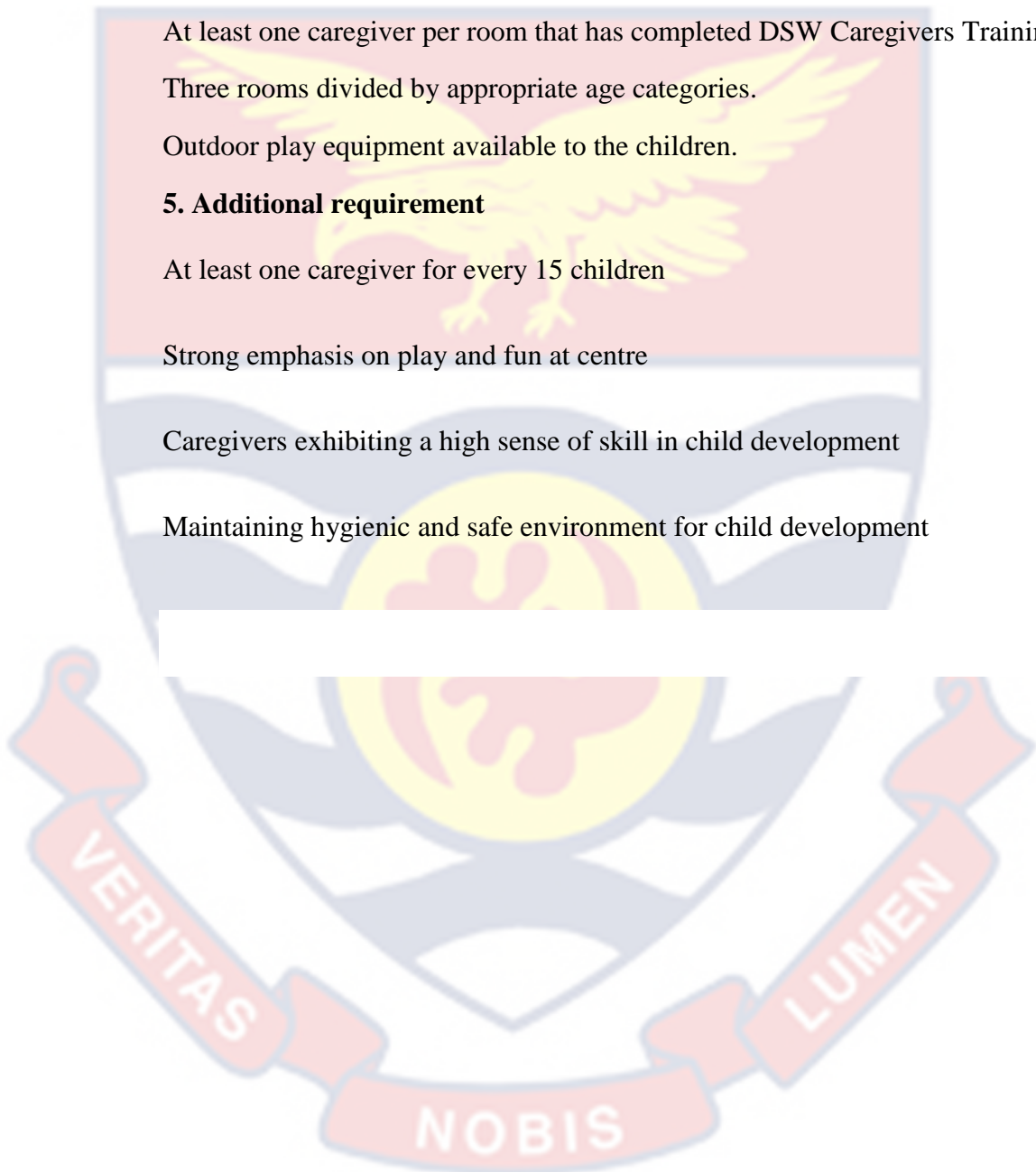
5. Additional requirement

At least one caregiver for every 15 children

Strong emphasis on play and fun at centre

Caregivers exhibiting a high sense of skill in child development

Maintaining hygienic and safe environment for child development



APPENDIX J

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SECRETARIAT

TEL: 0558093143 / 0508878309

E-MAIL: irb@ucc.edu.gh

OUR REF: IRB/C3/Vol.1/0161

YOUR REF:

OMB NO: 0990-0279

IORG #: IORG0011497

22ND MAY 2023

Ms Abigail Appiah

Department of Integrated Development Studies

University of Cape Coast

Dear Ms Appiah,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CHLS/2023/10)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research on **Childcare Choices among Female Street Vendors in Mankessim in the Central Region of Ghana**. This approval is valid from **22nd May 2023 to 21st May 2024**. You may apply for a renewal subject to the submission of all the required documents that will be prescribed by the UCCIRB.

Please note that any modification to the project must be submitted to the UCCIRB for review and approval before its implementation. You are required to submit a periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kofi F. Amuquandoh'.

Kofi F. Amuquandoh

Ag. AdministratorADMINISTRATOR
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST