



**INCOME LEVELS AND CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICES IN SELECTED  
COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE BOLGATANGA MUNICIPALITY**

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AWARD OF MPhil HOME SCIENCE DEGREE**

**BY  
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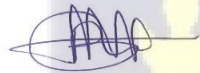
**OCTOBER, 2025**

**DECLARATION**

I, Bernice Akwele Sowah, hereby declare that this work was produced from research undertaken under supervision and except for the references which have been duly cited, the work in this thesis “Income Levels and Child Protection Practices in Selected Communities within the Bolgatanga Municipality” was done entirely by me in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, College of Basic and Applied Sciences, University of Ghana, Legon. This work has never been presented either in whole or in part for any other degree in this University or elsewhere.

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**DEDICATION**

My husband Harold Martin Awinzeligo, mother Mrs Patience Edeki Sowah and my siblings Samuel Sowah, Beatrice Sowah and Blessing Sowah are all honoured in this work for their encouragement and financial support.



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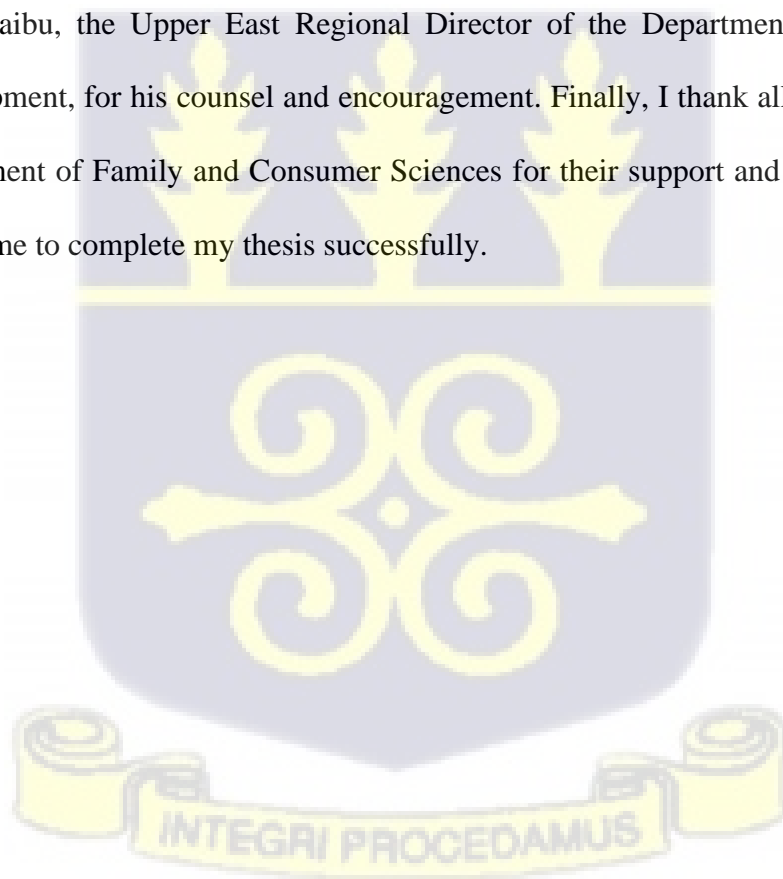
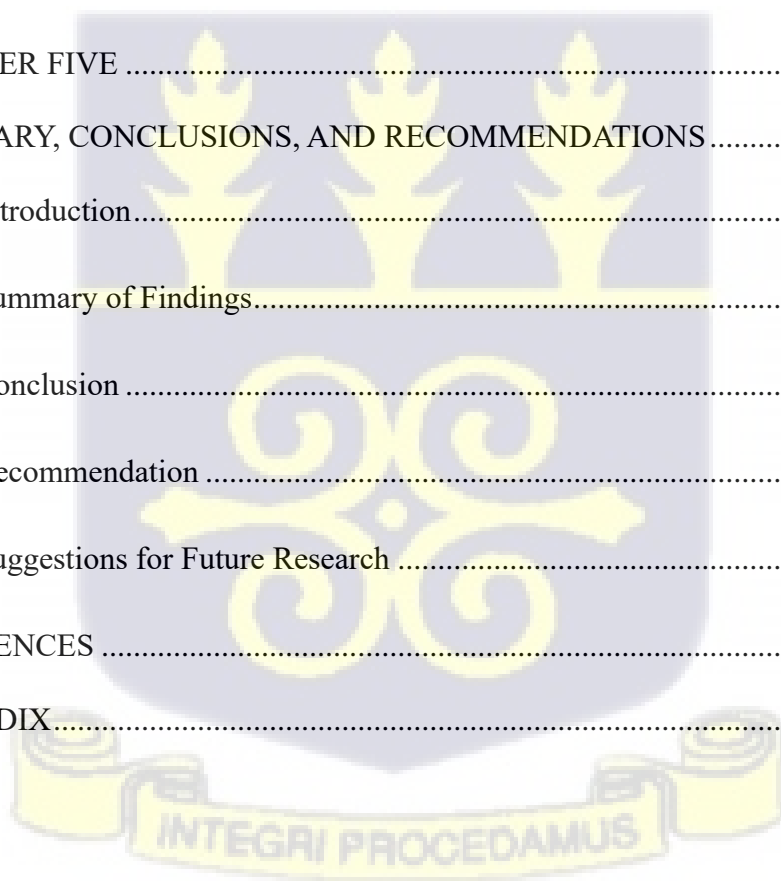


TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background Information.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3 Aim of the Study .....	5
1.4 Objectives .....	5
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	5
1.7 Organisation of the Study .....	6
CHAPTER TWO .....	7
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Conceptual Review .....	7
2.3 Theoretical Literature Review .....	14
2.3.1 Social Stratification Theory .....	14
2.3.2 Family Stress Theory .....	16

2.3.3 Cultural Capital Theory .....	18
2.5 Conceptual Framework.....	29
CHAPTER THREE .....	31
METHODOLOGY .....	31
3.1 Introduction.....	31
3.2 Research Paradigm.....	31
3.3 Research Approach .....	32
3.4 Research Design.....	34
3.5 Study Area.....	35
3.6 Research Population.....	36
3.7 Sample Size and Sampling Technique .....	36
3.8 Source of Data.....	38
3.9 Data Collection Instrument.....	38
3.10 Data Collection Procedure .....	40
3.11 Reliability and Validity .....	42
3.12 Data Analysis .....	43
3.13 Ethical Consideration.....	44
3.14 Chapter Summary .....	45
CHAPTER FOUR.....	46
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	46
4.1 Introduction.....	46
4.2 Respondent Characteristics.....	46

4.3 Assess Community Members' Knowledge of Child Protection .....	47
4.4 Child Protection Practices Implemented in Selected Communities of Bolgatanga Municipality.....	55
4.5 How Income Levels Affect Child Protection Practices in Selected Communities .....	68
4.6 Discussion of the Findings.....	74
4.7 Theoretical Implication.....	80
4.8 Practical Implications.....	82
4.9 Chapter Summary .....	82
CHAPTER FIVE .....	84
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	84
5.1 Introduction.....	84
5.2 Summary of Findings.....	84
5.3 Conclusion .....	87
5.4 Recommendation .....	87
5.5 Suggestions for Future Research .....	89
REFERENCES .....	90
APPENDIX.....	102



**LIST OF TABLES**

<b>Table 4. 1 Respondent Characteristics .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Table 4. 2 Summary of Themes for Objective One .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Table 4. 3 Summary Themes of Objective Two .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Table 4. 4 Summary of Themes of Objective Three.....</b>	<b>68</b>



**LIST OF FIGURES**

**Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework .....29**



**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ECBAS - Ethics Committee of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

GNI - Gross National Income

GNP - Gross National Income

HDI - Human Development Index

ICWA - Indian Child Welfare Act

IPL - International Poverty Line

LEAP - Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

PAPCP - Poverty-Aware Paradigm for Child Protection

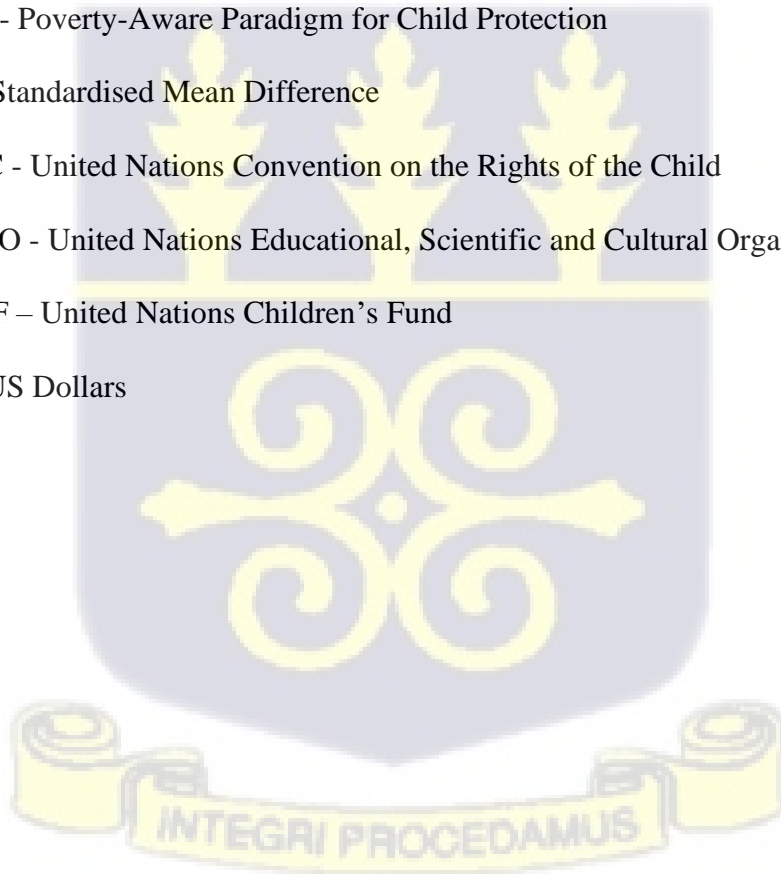
SMD - Standardised Mean Difference

UNCRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

USD - US Dollars



## ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate the relationship between child protection practices and income levels in the Bolgatanga Municipality using qualitative methods and an interpretive paradigm. The study employed purposive sampling with 11 respondents; data saturation was achieved after the 11<sup>th</sup> respondent. The study utilised both structured interviews for the data collection; the interview was done using a hybrid approach, thus both in-person and online, to ensure open participation. After the data collection, the study employed thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data obtained. The findings revealed that community members' knowledge of child protection practices in Bolgatanga Municipality varies, with some individuals exhibiting an in-depth understanding while others lack basic knowledge. Disparities exist in comprehending reporting mechanisms, preventive measures, and roles in child protection. Socioeconomic status affects awareness levels, and challenges in recognising abuse signs are linked to family stress. Child protection practices in the area are community-driven and collaborative, involving various stakeholders. These practices encompass awareness campaigns, support services, and child empowerment initiatives. Furthermore, income levels play a significant role in impacting participation in these child protection practices, with low-income households accessing support services more frequently, middle-income households actively engaging in awareness and empowerment efforts, and high-income households contributing significantly to child protection initiatives. The study's recommendation involves reinforcing community engagement, tailoring interventions for economically disadvantaged families, and fostering enhanced stakeholder collaboration to bolster effective child protection practices. By focusing on addressing family stressors and providing targeted support, this study contributes to advancing child well-being within the researched communities.



**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background Information**

Child protection is of global concern, with high prevalence rates of abuse, neglect, and maltreatment reported in self-report studies worldwide (Massullo et al., 2023; Walsh et al., 2022). In response, various policies, laws, studies, and justifications are being developed worldwide to improve the treatment and protection of children. Child protection practices refer to actions aimed at safeguarding children from harm, including abuse, neglect, and exploitation (Jesse, 2023). Save the Children, an international non-governmental organisation focused on improving the lives of children worldwide, defines child protection as procedures and systems that prevent and respond to child maltreatment, neglect, exploitation, and violence (Jesse, 2023). The goal of child protection is to ensure that no child ever has to endure the trauma of being subjected to physical, sexual, emotional, or economic exploitation or neglect (Monaha, 2020). Attempts to document, comprehend, and react to differences in child welfare and protection reporting, service patterns, and results are global, extensive, and long-standing (Beatriz & Salhi, 2019). Concerns raised and investigated, the share of children who get help, who make the decisions, who provide the services, and who benefit from them all vary greatly from one system to the next (Pecora et al., 2018).

Some studies have attempted to explore different concerns as they relate to child rights protection both in Ghana and on the global front. For instance, Tetteh (2019) examines the effectiveness of child protection programs on child abuse in the Shai Osudoku district and finds negative relationships between child protection activities and sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. Frimpong-Manso (2014) sought to comprehend the viewpoints of childcare providers on child safety by examining their experiences in a small rural community. Frimpong-Manso's results indicated that awareness and behaviour regarding child protection are strongly influenced by

cultural circumstances. In particular, participating parents viewed physical punishments and certain cultural traditions, such as “dipo” (a puberty rite for girls in some Ghanaian communities), as crucial for child safety (Asubonteng-Manu, 2023). These challenges occurred not only in Ghana.

Previous research has revealed a strong connection between socioeconomic hardship and an increased risk of child abuse. According to Kuskoff et al. (2022), financial hardship may almost quadruple a parent’s likelihood of being investigated for neglect and nearly fivefold the probability of being investigated for physical abuse. Other scholars consider this an incorrect misconception, because obviously, many children living in poverty who are not abused or neglected, and many children from wealthy households are abused or neglected. Hence, poverty is just one element, although it is likely the most ubiquitous (Saar-Heiman & Gupta, 2020). Morris et al. (2018) determine that in England, geographical disadvantage, family poverty, and austerity measures have a substantial effect on the demand and supply of children’s services. When it comes to child maltreatment, Bywaters et al. (2018) find that low-income households have a much higher risk and that poverty is linked to subpar parenting and negative consequences for children. Thus, the research implies that poverty has a direct and indirect effect on parental stress and neighbourhood circumstances (such as employment opportunities and educational opportunities), as well as via the interplay with other variables such as domestic violence, mental health, and drug misuse.

While there is a significant body of evidence indicating a correlation between poverty and child maltreatment, the exact causality and mechanisms by which poverty influences child maltreatment are still unclear. Although some potential indirect pathways have been suggested, further research is needed to fully understand the relationship between poverty and child maltreatment. Rarely do social professionals explore the underlying causes of family problems

and the role of socioeconomic challenges in these issues (Williams et al., 2010). Even when pushed, the emphasis has been on downstream effects (bad housing, schools, and local circumstances) as opposed to a larger examination of structural inequality.

Bolgatanga is one of the poorest municipalities in the Upper East region and is notable for child labour, child marriage, child neglect, teenage pregnancies, and school dropouts, among others (Starrfm.com.gh, 2020). The northern part of Ghana is generally considered to be one of the poorest parts of the country, and a progress report by UNICEF in 2018 revealed that, compared to the southern part, child migration, child trafficking, and child labour are still very prevalent, although there have been some success stories. Estimates from the report revealed that about 33.9% of Ghana's children aged between 5 and 14 years are involved in child labour, including hazardous work such as mining, of which the majority are in the Northern part of Ghana (UNICEF, 2019). The same narrations are true for child marriages, sexual and reproductive health rights, child delinquency, child abuse, and neglect.

Children are especially susceptible to being put in perilous situations as a direct result of poverty, including but not limited to dropping out of school, child labour, and early marriage (Kaur & Byard, 2021; Srivastava, 2019). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) case studies demonstrated that programme interventions that boost livelihood skills and access to loans fostered an environment favourable to more positive child care (Aufseeser et al., 2018). Support in the form of school tuition and resources aided several children in attaining access to education, academic achievement and retention. Several UNESCO reports indicated that social protection programmes are reaching disadvantaged families and children at high risk in the ten investigated areas in northern and southern Ghana. Targeting by the government and non-governmental organisations is required to ensure that marginalised families and single parents living below the poverty line are better aware of countrywide social

protection programmes like Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP), health insurance, and free school uniforms.

LEAP is a social safety net intervention designed to provide cash transfers to extremely poor families, to reduce immediate deprivation and encourage long-term human capital development (Karakara & Ortsin, 2022). LEAP specifically targets the most vulnerable populations by providing regular cash transfers to ultra-poor families, including those caring for orphaned or vulnerable children (Konlan, 2022). By increasing household income, LEAP aims to improve the overall welfare of children and reduce their exposure to protection risks. However, the extent to which such programs translate into improved child protection practices requires careful examination, as increased income alone may not automatically change behaviours or community norms. This study seeks to explore the relationship between income levels and child protection practices.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The issue of child protection practices is a growing concern globally and in Africa (Aufseeser et al., 2018; Kaur & Byard, 2021). It is a growing concern that children from low-income families may be at a higher risk of experiencing maltreatment (Monahan, 2020; Saar-Heiman & Gupta, 2020). Child protection remains a pressing issue in many Ghanaian communities, particularly where poverty and low-income levels prevail (Deliege et al., 2025). Children in economically disadvantaged households are disproportionately exposed to risks such as neglect, exploitation, and limited access to education and healthcare (Font & Maguire-Jack, 2020). These vulnerabilities are often intensified by the inability of caregivers to provide adequate protection due to financial constraints. Child protection practices are the intentional steps taken by parents and guardians to protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation. For the sake of this study, poverty is defined as low household income that limits access to basic necessities.

Although social protection programs like the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) initiative seek to alleviate poverty by providing cash transfers to vulnerable families, there is limited understanding of how such economic interventions impact child protection practices on the ground. Research on child protection in Ghana has been conducted (Antwi, 2021; Frimpong-Manso, 2014; Tetteh, 2019). However, the existing research on child protection practices in Ghana has primarily focused on individual and household-level factors, neglecting the exploration of structural factors such as income disparities. This gap in the research limits our understanding of how income levels specifically impact child protection practices in different communities, particularly in low-income areas. Given all these, this study seeks to examine income levels and child protection practices in selected communities within the Bolgatanga Municipality.

### **1.3 Aim of the Study**

This research seeks to examine the extent to which a family's income level is related to how children are protected in selected communities in Ghana.

### **1.4 Objectives**

1. Assess community members' knowledge of child protection.
2. Identify child protection practices implemented in selected communities.
3. Examine how income levels affect child protection practices in selected communities.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research is relevant because it examined the relationship between family income levels and child safety behaviours. The findings of this evaluation will prompt policymakers, government, and non-government agencies to contribute to a dialogue about the need for collective participation in the execution of child protection operations. Organisations are attentive to

allocating resources to problem-solving, but also assess their results periodically; when the outcome deviates from the target, new tactics are necessary.

This study also establishes an empirical framework that serves as a reliable external evidence base for both scholarly and societal discourse surrounding the crucial domain of child protection. This study also attempts to address the issue of whether the resources devoted to the battle against child abuse and violence have yielded any results that are delivered to the stakeholders.

The research helps to identify the specific child protection practices that are most effective in selected communities, and how these practices are improved or scaled up to other communities within the Bolgatanga Municipality. The findings also inform the community sensitisation programs and capacity-building activities of non-governmental organisations, enabling them to tailor their interventions to the specific needs and challenges of the communities they serve.

### **1.7 Organisation of the Study**

The study is structured into five chapters: Chapter One provides an introductory overview of the study, including the backdrop, problem statement, study objectives, study significance, and study organisation. Chapter Two provides an examination of existing research from both empirical and conceptual viewpoints. Chapter Three offers a comprehensive elucidation of the study's approach. The text outlines the research design, study population, sampling technique/procedures, source of data, instrumentation, method of data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four provides an exposition of the findings and analysis of the investigation. Chapter five also provides a concise overview, final thoughts, and suggestions based on the research findings.

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The second chapter of this thesis is divided into four major subheadings. The conceptual review, the theoretical review, the empirical review, and the conceptual framework comprise the content of this chapter. Definitions, operationalisations, and examples of how the constructs are used in this work are provided in the section on conceptual review. The theoretical underpinnings of the work are also included in the theoretical review section. To illustrate the many prepositions presented in this study, a conceptual framework is developed.

### 2.2 Conceptual Review

Definitions, operationalisations, and an explanation of how the ideas are applied in this study are included in this part. The model is split into two sections: child protection practices and income levels. The sections that come after operationalise these structures.

#### 2.2.1 Child Protection Practices

The term child protection practices encompasses a wide range of initiatives aimed at safeguarding the rights, safety, and well-being of children. It involves the collective efforts of individuals, families, communities, organisations, and governments to prevent and address instances of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and various forms of violence perpetrated against children (Muzingili & Chikoko, 2019). These endeavours encompass a multitude of strategies and legal frameworks that are employed to address such issues. The protection and promotion of a child's healthy growth are paramount.

The rights and obligations of children are outlined in laws and regulations, along with standards for child protection, by governments. These frameworks serve as the foundation for addressing issues related to child protection, such as child labour, child marriage, child trafficking, and child

abuse. Additionally, they establish processes for noting, investigating, and penalising children's rights infractions (Palacios et al., 2019). Protecting children from harm and fostering their welfare are the primary objectives of child protection activities. Raising awareness, educating and training children, parents, caregivers, and professionals, encouraging appropriate parenting techniques, and tackling social issues that contribute to children's vulnerabilities are all examples of preventive interventions (Finkelhor, 2019). The goal of child protection practices is to engage children in decisions that may influence their lives because they see children as individuals with rights. This means fostering their involvement in conversations, allowing them the freedom to express their ideas, and ensuring that decisions affect their safety (van Bijleveld et al., 2020).

Child protection includes matters about children's rights, safety, and wellness. These difficulties, which arise in a variety of circumstances, must be recognised and addressed if children are to be kept secure (Ramaswamy & Seshadri, 2020). Any physical, sexual, or mental harm inflicted on children by adults or older people is referred to as child abuse. It may occur in situations including families, communities, workplaces, or online environments. Child abuse has long-term consequences for children's physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Kosher & Ben-Arieh, 2020). Neglect is described as the failure of guardians or responsible adults to give children the necessary care, supervision, and assistance to meet their basic needs. Lack of access to safety, food, shelter, healthcare, and education are only a few examples of this (Ramaswamy & Seshadri, 2020).

The maltreatment, manipulation, or coercion of children for one's own gain or financial gain is known as child exploitation. Examples include child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, using children as troops, and participating in unlawful activities (Arthur & Down, 2019). Children who are exploited are denied their rights, placed in dangerous situations, and frequently suffer bodily and psychological trauma (Arthur & Down, 2019). Child marriage is the marriage

or union of a child under the age of 18. It deprives children of their rights to education, health, and development, frequently resulting in negative repercussions such as reduced prospects, early pregnancy, and greater vulnerability to abuse (Ramaswamy & Seshadri, 2020). Child trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, housing, or reception of minors for exploitation (Dewi, 2020). It involves forced labour, sexual exploitation, child soldiering, and other sorts of abuse. Children who are trafficked face physical violence, mental distress, and denial of their rights (Brubacher et al., 2021).

Child protection issues also include abuses of children's rights as defined in international agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Morrison et al., 2020). These breaches might vary from denial of access to education, healthcare, and proper nourishment to discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or disability (Salman & Bhatti, 2022). Addressing child protection concerns necessitates a holistic strategy that includes laws and regulations, preventative initiatives, awareness campaigns, professional capacity building, community participation, and access to appropriate assistance for child victims (Lonne et al., 2019). Collaboration between government agencies, civil society groups, communities, and families is critical for effectively protecting children from harm and ensuring their rights are protected (Russell et al., 2020).

The safety, development, and well-being of children depend heavily on child outcomes. Child safety and protection from exploitation, abuse, and neglect are the main objectives of child protection initiatives (Crea et al., 2022). This entails creating a safe environment, preventing harm, and quickly and effectively responding to instances of abuse or risk (Burton & Montauban, 2021). Enhancing children's physical and emotional well-being is a goal of child protection. This involves ensuring that kids who have experienced trauma or abuse have access to healthcare, food, and appropriate medical and psychological support. Improved physical health, decreased

mental distress, and better resiliency are all benefits of child protection (Sami, 2022). Programs for child protection aim to support children's academic and overall development. This entails guaranteeing access to a high standard of education, reducing obstacles to learning, and fostering opportunities for social, emotional, and cognitive development. Positive outcomes include enhanced living skills, higher academic success, and increased school attendance (Mia et al., 2022).

The effects of child protection are connected and reinforce one another. Governments, civil society organisations, communities, families, and individuals must collaborate to provide a safe environment for children to achieve positive results (Sharma et al., 2022). Children who are in danger of harm must be identified, according to child protection guidelines. Experts from a range of sectors, including health, education, social services, and law enforcement, find indicators of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. They are responsible for informing the appropriate child protection authorities of any concerns or incidents so that they may look into them and offer support (Dettlaff & Boyd, 2020). Responding promptly and correctly to children who have been abused or who are in danger is a key component of child protection measures. This might involve counselling, legal assistance, medical and psychological treatment, and safe housing. To protect children and help them recover from trauma, prompt and effective treatments are essential (Ramaswamy & Seshadri, 2020). Collaboration and coordination among multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations, community-based groups, and the broader society, are required for child protection procedures.

These partnerships strive to exchange information, skills, and resources to provide a complete and holistic approach to child safety (Parton, 2020). Regular monitoring and evaluation of child protection activities is required to assess intervention efficacy and identify areas for improvement (Lines et al., 2020). Monitoring may entail gathering, analysing, and reporting data

on child protection indicators, whereas evaluation seeks to examine the outcomes and impact of specific programs or policies. Monitoring and evaluation are crucial in measuring these results and directing evidence-based practice for continual improvement in child protection activities (Ramaswamy & Seshadri, 2020).

### **2.2.2 Income Levels**

To classify individuals or households according to their earnings or income, income levels are used as a framework. Analysing income levels is crucial for assessing social welfare, analysing economic disparities, and creating strategies to end poverty and spur economic progress (Cooper & Stewart, 2021). By country, region, career, degree of education, and personal circumstances, income levels vary substantially. It is difficult to determine particular revenue amounts in the absence of additional information. It is a strategy for categorising people based on their financial resources (Hinata et al., 2021). According to Kinge et al. (2019), there are many income groups of people. It is a system of classifying people according to their available financial resources. The study of economic disparities, determining eligibility for social programs or benefits, and analysing purchasing power and consumer behaviour are just a few of the many purposes for which income levels are regularly utilised. Cantillo-Garca et al. (2019) found that historical and relative income levels fluctuate throughout time. Inflation, economic conditions, and changes in income distribution patterns are just a few of the variables that might affect how income levels are classified (Arachchi & Managi, 2022). Due to variations in economic development, cost of living, and income distribution, income levels vary between nations. According to Zhang and Posso (2019), a country with a unique economic history designates a high-income level as middle-class or even impoverished.

The world's economies are categorised by the World Bank as low, lower-middle, middle-income, and high-income. Every year on July 1st, the categories are revised depending on the

Gross National Product (GNP) per capita for the previous year (2021). Atlas conversion factors are used to create GNP figures, which are displayed in US dollars (USD) (Maldonado & Olivo, 2022). The classification depends on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, which is calculated by dividing the total income of a nation's economy by the number of people living there (Wang et al., 2023). Although certain nations' national income categories may not match the World Bank's, they are nevertheless significant by international standards. According to Gomez et al. (2019), the World Bank's income categories offer a framework for assessing income levels and performing cross-national and cross-regional comparisons.

According to the "International Poverty Line (IPL)" or "International Poverty Threshold," the World Bank classifies low-income countries. In many countries and regions, this standard is used to assess poverty. To account for alterations in prices and living standards, the World Bank regularly adjusts the IPL's specific value (Donnelly, 2022). As of September 2021, the International Poverty Line, established by the World Bank, is set at \$1.90 per day in purchasing power parity (PPP) currencies. Individuals living below this income level are considered to be in severe poverty (Jolliffe et al., 2022). According to the World Bank, nations in the low-income category have a GNI per capita that is less than a certain level. Low-income families may have significant financial difficulties, making it difficult to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education (Tetteh-Baah et al., 2022).

They have limited financial resources and may struggle to acquire high-quality services and opportunities. Poverty, unemployment, restricted access to quality schools, greater dropout rates, and financial restraints are all characteristics of low-income households (Cooper & Stewart, 2021). Inadequate medical treatment and increased health hazards result from limited access to healthcare services. Nutritional deficiencies lead to malnutrition or food insecurity (Dedehouanou & McPeak, 2020). Lack of essential utilities such as clean water, sanitation, and

power. For these families, affordable and safe housing alternatives are frequently restricted. Furthermore, low-income households may rely largely on government or non-profit social assistance programs to cover their necessities. Food aid, healthcare subsidies, and cash transfer programs are examples of such programs (Debesai, 2020). The educational achievement of lower-middle-income households may be superior to that of low-income families. Although basic education may now be more broadly accessible, higher education and specialised training may still be challenging to get because of financial limitations or a lack of educational facilities.

The affordability of housing, however, continues to be a problem, especially in urban areas. Low- and middle-income households have different access to healthcare services. While some people may have easy access to the facilities and services they need for their healthcare, others may face challenges, including limited healthcare coverage, high out-of-pocket costs, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. Consequently, these traits may affect the outcomes of their general health according to Charalampakis et al. (2022).

The World Bank (2015) states that households are classified into many income brackets depending on their Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, with upper-middle income being one of them. It has a larger income than lower-middle-income households but is still below the high-income level. They usually have a higher level of industrialisation, better access to resources and services, and higher living standards (Phua et al., 2022). Countries in the upper-middle income category have a GNI per capita that is greater than the lower-middle income criterion but lower than the high-income threshold (Cooper & Stewart, 2021). Members of upper-middle-income households are more likely than members of lower-income households to have steady and formal work. They may have access to a broader selection of work possibilities and benefit from higher salaries, benefits, and career chances (Guta et al., 2022). However, there may still be discrepancies in work quality and income distribution within this group. Educational

attainment is higher in upper-middle-income households than in lower-income ones. Members of these families may have access to high-quality education, including advanced degrees and specialised training. This greater access to education may lead to better career opportunities and higher earning potential (Templin et al., 2019). Upper-middle-income households have access to better housing circumstances than lower-income households.

They may live in quality homes with enhanced utilities such as running water, power, sanitation, and more spacious living quarters. However, housing affordability and access remain a challenge, particularly in metropolitan areas with growing property costs (Fink et al., 2020). Upper-middle-income households frequently have better access to healthcare services. They may have more access to a more complete healthcare system, which includes public and private healthcare facilities, health insurance coverage, and a broader selection of medical treatments (Cakouros & Reynolds, 2022). However, healthcare quality and pricing within this income bracket might still differ. In all, upper-middle-income households have a better level of financial stability. They have greater chances for saving, investing, and building money. They may also have easier access to credit and financial services, which help with economic stability and living standards (Emerson & Llewellyn, 2022).

### **2.3 Theoretical Literature Review**

The researcher aimed to explain the theoretical concepts employed in the study.

#### **2.3.1 Social Stratification Theory**

Social Stratification Theory was notably developed and elaborated by sociologists like Pitirim A. Sorokin in 1930, who contributed foundational ideas on the concept. Sorokin defined social stratification as the differentiation of a population into hierarchically superposed classes or layers, characterised by an unequal distribution of rights, privileges, duties, responsibilities, social values, power, and influence among members of society (Oyekola & Oyeyipo, 2020).

Social Stratification Theory explains how societies systematically rank people into layers or strata based on various socioeconomic factors such as wealth, income, education, occupation, and social status (Saunders, 2006). These layers affect individuals' life chances, access to resources, and social mobility, resulting in persistent social inequalities. The theory emphasises that stratification is a structural feature of society rather than merely the outcome of individual differences, and it is maintained through social, economic, and political mechanisms (McLeod, 2012). Different sociological perspectives, including functionalist and conflict theories, offer explanations for why stratification exists and its effects on social order and inequality.

Social stratification theory investigates how civilisations are formed into hierarchical structures based on social class, money, and power (Marx, 2019). Understanding the link between economic levels and child safety procedures is one area where this theory is very useful (Ishizuka, 2019). Income disparity has a substantial impact on the resources and opportunities accessible to people and families (Shih et al., 2019). Children from lower-income homes are more likely to encounter undesirable conditions such as poverty, restricted access to healthcare and education, and greater rates of child maltreatment in cultures with high levels of economic disparity. This is because low-income families frequently struggle to satisfy their fundamental necessities, which leads to increased stress and impaired parenting capacity (Fong, 2020). Children from higher-income homes, on the other hand, often have access to a broader range of resources and support networks, such as better healthcare, education, and a safe home environment. As a result, social stratification theory exposes differences in child protection procedures depending on economic levels, with children from lower-income households being more likely to experience neglect or abuse (Zhou et al., 2021).

Furthermore, according to social stratification theory, socioeconomic levels determine not just the quality of child protection practices but also the reaction of child protection institutions. In

income-inequitable cultures, there is frequently a lack of proper support and resources for lower-income families, making it more difficult for them to navigate the child protection system (Feely et al., 2020). Access to legal counsel, social workers, and other support specialists increases the difficulties that impoverished families confront when addressing child safety problems (Kalil & Ryan, 2020). Furthermore, the effect of money and power within a stratified society further alters the reaction of child protection organisations, with higher-income families' interests and demands possibly receiving greater attention and resources (Parra-Cardona, 2019). As a result, social stratification theory emphasises the intricate connection between income levels and child protection practices, providing light on socioeconomic discrepancies in both the prevention and reaction to child abuse and neglect (Parton, 2020).

### **2.3.2 Family Stress Theory**

Family Stress Theory was developed by sociologist Reuben Hill in 1949. It emerged from studies of how families coped with the disruptive experiences brought on by World War II, particularly the stress caused by prolonged separations and reunions of family members. The theory focuses on understanding why some families manage to adapt and function effectively during crises, while others experience significant difficulties such as domestic violence, substance abuse, or other dysfunctions (Walsh, 1996). At its core, Family Stress Theory explains how families respond to stressful events through the interaction of several factors, formulated initially in Hill's ABC-X model. This model examines the stressor event (A), the family's resources or strengths to cope (B), and the family's perception or definition of the event (C), which together influence whether the event results in a crisis (X). Later expansions, such as the Double ABC-X model, integrated additional stressors and coping processes, providing a more comprehensive understanding of family resilience.

Family stress theory investigates the effects of stress on family functioning and well-being (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2019). Examining the link between income levels and child protection practices through the perspective of family stress theory reveals that income plays a critical role in generating family stress and, as a result, affects child protection practices (Wu & Xu, 2020). Lower-income families frequently endure persistent financial stress, restricted resources, and increased stress as a result of covering basic requirements such as shelter, food, and healthcare (Crouch et al., 2019). These pressures have a major impact on parental capacity and family dynamics, raising the likelihood of child maltreatment. Lower-income families may suffer increased levels of irritation, tension, and conflict, which produce an atmosphere susceptible to neglect or abuse (Kalil & Ryan, 2020).

Families with higher income levels, on the other hand, have greater resources, financial stability, and access to support networks, which buffer against stresses and improve child safety practices (Bullinger et al., 2020). Furthermore, economic levels determine the availability of support services and community resources, which are critical for stressed-out families. Higher-income families frequently have better access to mental health treatments, parenting programs, and social support networks, all of which reduce the impact of stress and promote healthy family functioning (Li et al., 2020). Lower-income families, on the other hand, may experience hurdles to accessing such assistance, heightening their stress and decreasing their capacity to effectively handle child protection problems (Jones et al., 2021). Family stress theory emphasises the necessity of taking income levels into account when analysing child protection practices, highlighting how economic circumstances may add to family stress, affecting parenting quality and, ultimately, increasing the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

### 2.3.3 Cultural Capital Theory

Cultural Capital Theory was developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the 1970s. Bourdieu introduced the concept to explain how cultural assets such as knowledge, skills, education, style of speech, and tastes function as a form of capital that can significantly affect social mobility and success within a stratified society. Cultural capital is distinct from economic capital but is deeply interconnected, as it helps individuals navigate social institutions and gain advantages in education and employment (Musoba & Baez, 2009).

Cultural capital theory, created by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, focuses on how cultural knowledge, skills, and practices contribute to social stratification (Stahl & Mu, 2022). When evaluating the link between income levels and child protection practices through the lens of cultural capital theory, it becomes clear that income plays a key role in determining the cultural resources accessible to families, which in turn affects child protection practices (Mollborn et al., 2021). Higher-income households frequently have more cultural capital, such as access to high-quality education, cultural activities, and social networks. These materials equip parents with the information, skills, and social connections they need to effectively navigate the child welfare system (Saar-Heiman & Gupta, 2020).

Some families may be better at understanding child safety measures, asking for help when needed, and standing up for their children's well-being (Stahl & Mu, 2022). Lower-income families, on the other hand, may have insufficient cultural capital, which creates challenges to obtaining information, knowing their rights, and participating with child protection agencies, potentially leading to discrepancies in child protection practice quality (He & van Heugten, 2020). Furthermore, the cultural capital theory emphasises how financial position affects cultural values and practices connected to child raising (Saar-Heiman & Gupta, 2020).

Higher-income families may have access to cultural resources emphasising child-centred parenting, constructive discipline techniques, and an emphasis on caring and child development (Mollborn et al., 2021). Lower-income families, on the other hand, may be subjected to cultural norms that emphasise survival and urgent needs above long-term investment in children's well-being (Stahl & Mu, 2022). Cultural variations affect parenting practices and shape how child safety issues are seen and treated across socioeconomic levels. As a result, cultural capital theory sheds light on the link between income levels and child protection practices by stressing the significance of cultural resources, knowledge, and values in moulding parental behaviours and influencing child protection issues.

## **2.4 Empirical Review**

In this section, the reviewed studies are conducted on the objective of the study. This includes studies conducted on income levels and child protection practices in selected communities within the Bolgatanga municipality.

### **2.4.1 Community Members' Knowledge of Child Protection**

Mpairwe et al. (2023) investigate the information the members of the community had regarding child protection services in Sheema District and Mbarara City in the South Western part of Uganda. The study interviewed 22 key informants, who included government and civil society officials. The selection of all the participants was done purposely, and the data were gathered with the help of an interview guide. They discovered that community members had little information about child protection services that had five broad themes, including awareness of child risks and protection issues, child protection laws, and where to get redress, child birth registration, and the existing child welfare programs. It was found in the study that the community members were unaware of the child protection services in the communities they

resided in. This was meant to generate awareness of the available child protection services to the community members.

McLaughlin et al. (2017) investigated how social workers' practices as child welfare professionals relate to their sense of their ethical duty to strive for social justice. Representing two Canadian provinces, 25 social workers with at least six months of experience working directly with children are questioned. The results indicated that skilled employees are better able to connect their practice with an awareness of social justice. As a result, inexperienced workers who are focused on comprehending and following rules and procedures are less competent. McLaughlin et al. (2017) on social workers' practices related to ethical duties and social justice highlight a gap in how social workers translate their ethical commitment into practice consistently and the challenges in balancing wider societal goals with day-to-day child welfare interactions. There is a need for more empirical investigation into how these ethical duties influence decision-making and outcomes in diverse practice contexts.

Munyima et al. (2025) focused on the knowledge children in Munali Constituency have on child protection and explored the sources of this knowledge in Zambia. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The study involved 328 pupils selected through systematic random sampling and four key informants purposively chosen. Data were collected using questionnaires, Key informant interviews and three focus group discussions. The findings revealed that children primarily received their knowledge of child protection from schools. However, this knowledge was largely inadequate to provide a clear understanding of child protection. Many children had limited knowledge of what child protection meant, including who to report abuse to, where to seek safety, and how to protect themselves from harm. The study indicated that children lack comprehensive knowledge of child protection and access to practical resources for reporting and addressing abuse.

According to an investigation made by Chenot et al. (2019) on the views of child welfare employees on ethnic matching in the provision of child protection services, the study offers direct feedback from frontline staff and supervisors by using qualitative interviews with child welfare professionals who have presently or recently begun working in public child protection agencies in 2 states in the USA. Findings from a grounded theory examination of answers provided by participants show the complexity of ethnic matching (which refers to the practice of matching the ethnicity of the child welfare professional with the ethnicity of the child and family they are serving). The findings of the study viewed ethnic matching as advantageous for clients, and problems that occur when there is a disconnect between client and worker ethnicities are articulated. Chenot et al. (2019) on child welfare employees' views on ethnic matching reveal a research gap regarding the practical challenges of implementing ethnic matching and its actual impact on reducing disproportionality in child welfare services. More research is needed to explore worker attitudes toward ethnic matching and how these perceptions affect service delivery and client outcomes in diverse settings.

Gwanyemba et al. (2017) investigated the helpfulness of formal and informal community-based child protection systems in rural settings in Tanzania using four World Vision Tanzania Projects. Specifically, the study aimed at establishing the proportion of children who are living free from harmful practices; examining the operations of the formal and informal community-based child protection mechanisms and assessing community mechanisms for reporting of child abuse cases. A total of 1,873 respondents, including parents or caregivers, children aged 12-18 years, community members and duty bearers, were involved in the study. Data were collected using a questionnaire, semi-structured interview, focus group discussions, documentary review and field observations. Study findings showed that both formal and informal community-based child protection mechanisms exist, but are not effective and efficient. This implies that children in

rural areas are not adequately protected, and as such, they might be easily abused, exploited and molested.

#### **2.4.2 Child Protection Practices Implemented**

Francis et al. (2023) looked at the efficiency and/or implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The findings of the study present a mixed picture. On the positive side, adherence to the ICWA when placing children with family or tribe members and proactive measures to keep families together indicate successful aspects of the Act's implementation. However, the lack of tracking systems, the need for competent specialists, issues with tribal interaction, and identification practices for American Indian children highlight areas for improvement. Additionally, advances in cultural training are promising, but the inadequate funding and capacity for many ICWA programs pose significant challenges. These findings suggest that while some progress has been made, there are still substantial obstacles to overcome in the effective implementation of the ICWA. These findings underscore the importance of comprehensive evaluation mechanisms, adequate resourcing, and the need for skilled professionals in the successful implementation of child protection programs. Francis et al. (2023) on the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) identify gaps in the consistent implementation and compliance with ICWA provisions due to varying interpretations and a lack of federal oversight. Despite the Act's intent to reduce Native children's disproportionate removal from families, disparities persist, indicating a need for more research on barriers to implementation, as well as the effectiveness of ICWA in improving foster care outcomes for Native children.

Abdullah et al. (2018) reported on findings from a qualitative study into the barriers to children's participation in child protection practice in Ghana. The study was based on qualitative interviews with 15 child protection practitioners. Intimidation, parental influence, communication problems, and confidentiality were identified as barriers to promoting participatory practices for

children in the child protection process. The study findings indicate that engaging with children in separate rooms or spaces, away from the presence of parents and other adults, could help practitioners promote children's participation. It is recommended that practitioners should upgrade their skills for working with children by taking part in in-service training, workshops, and seminars to help address issues with communication.

Similarly, Walsh et al. (2022) determined the efficiency of training intended to improve professional reports of child abuse and neglect and to look into potential elements of efficient training interventions. Up until June 4th, 2021, the research examined Central, Medline, Embase, 18 other databases, and one trial registration and used data from 9 of the 11 trials in the quantitative synthesis and comprised 11 tests (1484 people). Tests with qualified specialists are conducted in high-income nations like the USA, Canada, and the Netherlands. Three (3) research investigations used respondents' self-reports of real occurrences that were reported three months following training to calculate the number of instances of child abuse and neglect. The research's findings, which had 42 individuals, favoured the intervention over the waitlist, but the data are of extremely low certainty (standardised mean difference (SMD) 0.81, 95% confidence interval (CI) 0.18 to 1.43). Walsh et al. (2022) on training efficiency for improving professional reporting of child abuse and neglect reveal that understanding which specific components or contextual factors of training interventions drive sustained improvements in practice. There is also limited evidence on how training outcomes translate into real-world child welfare impact and long-term changes in reporting behaviour.

Kuyini and Mahama (2009) examined the implementation of Ghana's child rights legislation (Children's Act 560) in four districts in respect of the establishment of prescribed administrative and institutional structures, the service delivery procedures, and challenges. The results showed that the established administrative and institutional structures did not provide the type and quality

of services for which they were established. Conflicts between the requirements of the legislation and some traditional values and practices, the quality of personnel training, resources for service delivery, stakeholder collaboration, and community knowledge of the legislation remain formidable challenges. It is argued that in the context of Ghana's socio-cultural, political, and economic environment the implementation of the legislation may remain a demanding proposition; unless substantive resources are directed at supporting the work of implementing agencies, law enforcement, strengthening institutional collaboration and changing community attitudes.

A study conducted by Keddell et al. (2018) examined ideas of an inequality viewpoint outlined along with how they relate to child protection disparities in Aotearoa New Zealand. This draws on previous research, demonstrating that whilst there is data showing connections among poverty, racial or location, and system contact, a more comprehensive study agenda shaped by an inequalities viewpoint helps to comprehend the social determinants of contact with the child protection system better.

Teng-Zeng and Nsubuga (2025) use relevant secondary data from international treaties, conventions, legislation, and policies on children's rights, with a special reference to Ghana, using the regime theory. The study reveals that Ghana has signed and ratified 10 United Nations treaties and eight International Labour Organisation conventions to protect and support children's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In addition, there are national legislations, policies and programmes. These include the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the Courts Act 1993 (Act 456) as amended, the Children's Act of 1998, and the National Cybersecurity Act 2020 (Act 1038), aspects of Child Online Protection. The study indicates that there are major threats and risks to children's rights and recommends national and international

measures to address these imminent dangers and ensure children's safety online and offline participation in the era of increasing scientific and technological advances.

A case study to examine the factors within child welfare practice that contributed to a decline in the number of black children in foster care was conducted by Pryce et al. (2019). The study focused on two counties in New York State that demonstrated a gradual decrease in the population of black children in foster care. By analysing these specific cases, the researchers aimed to identify the key features of child welfare practice that are instrumental in achieving this outcome. In-depth interviews, focus groups, and document evaluation are all used in the case study to gather information. Using a grounded theory method for content structure and analysis, several themes are apparent. Preventative services and resources, neighbourhood partnerships, case development, family gatherings, diversity among employees, the judicial system, and the most distinctive are some of the themes that stood out the most. The themes identified in this research offer promising methods to help lessen racial disparities in child welfare removal judgments. Pryce et al. (2019) on factors contributing to the decline of Black children in foster care highlight the need to explore the complex systemic, community, and practice-level interactions behind the decline. More research is needed on the role of culturally responsive interventions and policy shifts that directly influence this trend.

In another vein, Flemington et al. (2022) provided an overview of the process of creating a care model that integrates cultural safety for Aboriginal children into pediatric hospital settings. The proof base for the model is created through a survey of academic literature and grey literature, qualitative interviews with Aboriginal health practitioners, and rounds of evaluation for clinical applicability and cultural appropriateness. It is advised to use clinical yarning and a culturally relevant version of ISBAR (a mnemonic for identifying Situation, Background, Evaluation, and Solution) for interprofessional interactions with children and their families. Flemington et al.

(2022) on integrating cultural safety for Aboriginal children in pediatric care model development expose a gap in empirical evaluations of how culturally safe care models affect health outcomes. There is also a need for participatory research that centres Indigenous voices in model design and implementation.

Namamba (2022) conducted a study examining the child protection programs available in Makole Ward, Dodoma Council of the Dodoma Region in Tanzania. The research aimed to investigate the roles played by community members in these programs and identify the challenges they encountered while supporting child protection initiatives in Makole Ward. The study comprised a sample size of thirty participants, including 17 females and 13 males. It is important to note that this research is influenced by system theory, as it sought to achieve the specific objectives mentioned above while recognising the interconnectedness of various elements within the system. To capture qualitative data, the study used a descriptive research approach. The results showed that, among other things, a notable element that contributed significantly to the rise in child abuse and violence is a lack of understanding of the child protection system. Namamba (2022) on child protection programs in Makole Ward, Tanzania shows evidence regarding program effectiveness, scalability, and how local sociocultural factors influence child protection outcomes in Tanzanian contexts.

Furthermore, the PAPCP or Poverty-Aware Paradigm for Child Protection was introduced by Saar-Heiman and Gupta (2020). The study established a direct, useful, and usable connection between critical theories and common child protection practice by addressing the ontological, epistemological, and axiological issues underlying the formation of danger and the techniques used to cope with it. The PAPCP is set against the backdrop of the risk-focused paradigm that now rules both Israel's and England's child protection systems. The Poverty-Aware Paradigm for Child Protection (PAPCP) introduced by Saar-Heiman and Gupta (2020) lacks extensive

empirical research assessing its practical application and impact in various child protection systems, especially in low-income settings. More studies are needed to verify its effectiveness in addressing poverty as a systemic factor in child protection interventions.

### **2.4.3 Income Levels Affect Child Protection Practices**

Cooper and Stewart (2021) investigated how household income influences children's outcomes. The researchers conducted a comprehensive evaluation of research that used methodologies that allow for causal interpretation. Studies have to employ Randomised Controlled Trials, quasi-experiments, or fixed effect-style procedures on longitudinal data to be included. The findings provide significant support for the notion that family income has a positive causal influence on children's outcomes, including cognitive and social-behavioural development and health, particularly in low-income homes. Saar-Heiman and Gupta's (2020) Poverty-Aware Paradigm for Child Protection (PAPCP) invites further empirical studies on how poverty-aware approaches can be operationalised in diverse welfare systems and their impact on child protection outcomes.

Saar-Heiman (2021) addresses these gaps by conducting a critical, in-depth inquiry into the perspectives of parents and practitioners on the links and pathways between poverty and child maltreatment. The study is based on 30 qualitative interviews with practitioners and families who took part in two child protection programs in Israel. Based on critical poverty theories, the analysis suggested the child protection-poverty matrix, which relates to both the multidimensionality of poverty and how all the dimensions of poverty influence parents, children, and their relationships with one another in their daily lives. The matrix illustrates the manifestation of neoliberal child protection policy in the lives of families and outlines how this social context might lead to child maltreatment and child protection involvement.

Similarly, Goode and Mavromaras (2014) investigated the influence of household income on child health. Using data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey. The study detected a strong

child health/family income gradient. The study discovered that parental health consciousness, household sanitary conditions, and nutrition intake are the mechanisms via which family income influences child health. The study discovered that children from poorer households in China are not only more likely to suffer from many sorts of chronic diseases, but they are also less likely to receive adequate treatment for specific health concerns. The income gradient is shown to be quite diverse, having a higher impact on children with poorer health, girls, and children in rural areas.

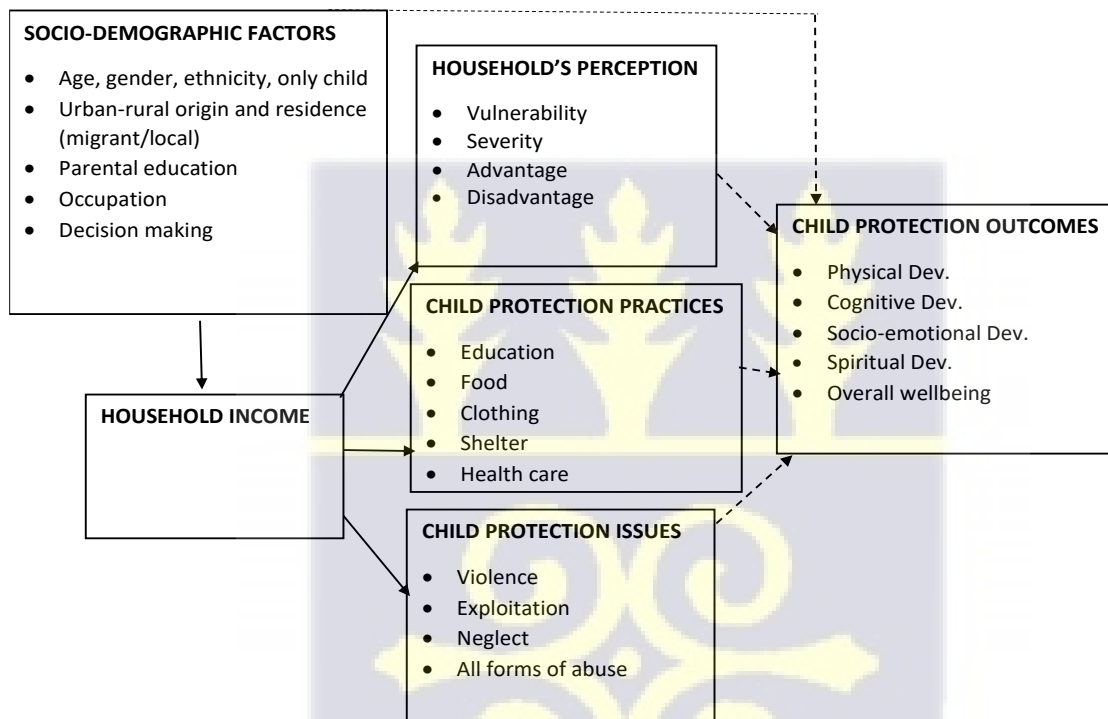
Bywaters et al. (2018) focus on the relationship between economic inequality and out-of-home care and child protection interventions. The work scales up a pilot study in the West Midlands to an all-England sample, representative of English regions and different levels of deprivation at a local authority (LA) level. The analysis evidences a strong relationship between deprivation and intervention rates and large inequalities between ethnic categories. There is further evidence of the inverse intervention law for any given level of neighbourhood deprivation; higher rates of child welfare interventions are found in LAs which are less deprived overall. These patterns are taking place in the context of cuts in spending on English children's services between 2010-11 and 2014-15 that have been greatest in more deprived LAs.

Toikko et al. (2024) explored in the Finnish context whether additional income support for economically insecure households reduces the demand for child protection services at the municipality level. The data were retrieved from the Official Statistics of Finland from 294 municipalities in 2017–2019. Mediation and moderation analyses were used for testing the hypotheses. According to the results, household economic insecurity was associated with the demand for child protection services. The more economically insecure households there were in a municipality, the greater the demand for child protection services. On the other hand, additional income support has a buffering effect between household economic insecurity and the demand

for child protection services. However, the effect of additional income support depends on the proportion of economically insecure households in a municipality. The degree of buffering effect increased when the proportion of household economic insecurity also increased.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

The section explains the conceptual framework and underlying assumptions that relate to income levels and child protection practices in selected communities within the Bolgatanga municipality.



**Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework**  
*Source: Author's Construct (2025)*



## 2.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter begins with a conceptual review, which provides an explanation of the main concepts and how they relate to the study. It then describes the theoretical framework, drawing on the social stratification theory, family stress theory and Cultural capital theory. The empirical literature and the hypothesis development section critically appraise earlier studies. Lastly, the chapter presents a conceptual model which graphically describes the core variables and how they interact, underpinning the analytical approach in the study.



## CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

To examine the extent to which a family's income level affects how children are protected in selected communities in Ghana, a thorough methodology has been employed to ensure a comprehensive investigation. This section outlines the research paradigm, design, approach, population, sampling technique, sample size, data collection, data analysis technique, ethical considerations, and the summary of the methodology employed.

### 3.2 Research Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm, which is also referred to as constructivism or interpretivism, is a philosophical research approach that emphasises the interpretation of subjective meanings given to experiences to comprehend social phenomena (Monaha, 2020). In contrast to positivism, interpretivism acknowledges the influence of social context on individuals' perceptions and interpretations of reality and the complexity of human behaviour, as opposed to the quest for objective truths through empirical observation and measurement (Beatriz & Salhi, 2019). Within the framework of this study, the utilisation of an interpretive paradigm signifies that the researcher shall not merely amass numerical data about child protection practices and income levels; rather, they shall endeavour to further explore the subjective viewpoints and lived realities of individuals within the community. This approach recognises the diversity of influences that shape the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals, encompassing cultural conventions, societal demands, and individual values. Through an examination of the viewpoints held by members of the community, the researcher acquires valuable knowledge regarding the motivations and justifications that underlie their behaviours regarding child protection practices. Emphasis on meaning and context is one of the interpretive paradigm's most significant strengths (Monaha, 2020). Through the utilisation of qualitative research methods, including interviews

and ethnographic observation, researchers reveal the complex structure of interpretations that participants give to their own experiences. This facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the societal dynamics in operation and may yield significant observations that guide policy-making and implementation in the field of child protection. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm promotes reflexivity and recognises the researcher's responsibility in influencing the research process and interpreting the results. Researchers should engage in introspection regarding their personal biases, presumptions, and preconceptions, and contemplate the potential impact that such factors have on their engagements with subjects and their analysis of the data (Saar-Heiman & Gupta, 2020). By fostering self-awareness and transparency, this reflexivity improves the rigour and validity of the research.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The qualitative approach employed in the study was selected to investigate the complex perceptions and actual experiences of community members about child protection practices and income levels within their unique sociocultural contexts. In contrast to quantitative methods, which emphasise numerical data and statistical generalisation, qualitative research enables a comprehensive examination of intricate social phenomena, rendering it particularly well-suited for comprehending the subtleties of human behaviour and experiences in this context (Beatriz & Salhi, 2019).

The objective of the study was to directly engage with the personal narratives of participants to capture the subjective realities of the participants, thereby providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. The primary data collection methods employed in this qualitative approach were participant observation and open-ended interviews. To enable a thorough examination of the way community members interpret and navigate issues related to child protection and income levels in their daily lives, these methods were chosen. For example, participant observation allowed the researcher to fully engage with the community, observing

behaviours and interactions in their natural environment. This provided valuable context to the verbal data collected through interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The data was further enhanced by focus groups, which facilitated collective discussions and enabled participants to reflect on and convey their experiences in a communal setting. This process revealed shared beliefs and communal dynamics that individual interviews may not have been able to capture (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Participants were able to express their experiences, concerns, and viewpoints in their own terms, without the limitation of predefined categories or scales, which was particularly effective with open-ended interviews. This method facilitated the development of detailed, complex narratives that offered profound insights into how social dynamics, cultural norms, and structural inequalities influence the practices and attitudes of community members towards child protection and income (Charmaz, 2014). For instance, participants engaged in conversations regarding sensitive subjects, including the influence of income disparities on their capacity to safeguard their children, in a manner that was both contextually pertinent and personal.

The qualitative methodology also provided the study with a substantial degree of adaptability and flexibility in data collection. This adaptability was essential in addressing the unanticipated insights and themes that emerged during the research process. For example, the influence of local cultural practices on child protection strategies was not initially anticipated but was subsequently emphasised by numerous participants during the interviews. This theme was subsequently central to the study's findings. The study was able to capture a more comprehensive and accurate representation of the phenomena under investigation by allowing the research design to evolve in response to such emergent data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, this method emphasised the significance of reflexivity, a fundamental concept in qualitative research that necessitates researchers to critically evaluate their assumptions, biases, and positions of

authority, considering their study subjects (Srivastava, 2019). Reflexivity was preserved by the researcher's ongoing self-reflection on the potential impact of their background, beliefs, and potential biases on the data collection, interpretation, and presentation of findings throughout the research process. This reflexive practice not only improved the ethical integrity of the study but also facilitated a more authentic and nuanced comprehension of the available data.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The study employed a combination of case studies and phenomenological designs to deeply explore the relationship between income levels and child protection practices within the Bolgatanga Municipality. The case study design was specifically chosen to focus on communities within the municipality, allowing for an in-depth examination of the unique characteristics, socioeconomic complexities, and cultural contexts that influence child protection and income generation practices in these communities. By selecting Bolgatanga Municipality as the case study, the research was able to concentrate on real-world settings, gathering rich, contextualised data that reflects the lived realities of the people in this area (Yin, 2018).

In practice, the case study approach involved using data collection methods, such as interviews, to gather detailed information from parents, caregivers, and social service providers. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the local challenges and dynamics affecting child welfare and income disparities, highlighting specific issues relevant to the Bolgatanga Municipality. The data collected was directly tied to the research questions, ensuring that the findings were grounded in the specific context of the communities under study (Kaur & Byard, 2021). Complementing the case study approach, the phenomenological design was employed to delve into the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals regarding child protection and income levels. This design was integral to understanding how the people within the community personally interpret and navigate their economic circumstances and child welfare

practices. By conducting in-depth interviews, the study captured personal narratives that revealed the underlying meanings, beliefs, and attitudes that shape individual behaviours and decisions related to child protection and income generation. This phenomenological approach provided a deeper insight into the lived experiences of the participants, uncovering the motivations and factors that drive their actions in the context of economic adversity and child welfare (Srivastava, 2019).

The integration of both the case study and phenomenological designs enabled the research to offer a holistic understanding of the complex interplay between income levels and child protection practices in the Bolgatanga Municipality. While the case study provided a broad, contextual analysis of the communities, the phenomenological approach offered a closer, more personal view of the experiences of individuals within those communities. Together, these designs allowed the study to address the research questions with both depth and breadth, offering valuable insights into the relationship between economic conditions and child welfare outcomes in this specific locale.

### **3.5 Study Area**

The study was conducted in the Bolgatanga Municipal Assembly. The Municipality is situated in the heart of the Upper East Region and serves as its capital. It is bordered to the north by the Bongo District, to the south and east by the Talensi and Nabdam Districts, and to the west by the Kassena and Nankana East and West Districts. The municipality has a population of 139,864 (PHC, 2021), composed of 66,607 Males and 73,249 Females. This location was chosen for the study because the region is one of the poorest regions in the country, and this has impacted the literacy rate in the area. Approximately 41% of the population is literate, which means that more than half of the population is illiterate. The Upper East region is also known to have high records of child labour, child marriage, and many other acts that do not particularly favour children. In

addition, Bolgatanga Municipality is an urban area with a diverse population, and it is likely to have a range of child protection practices and income levels that are relevant to the research objectives. Therefore, studying child protection practices in this context would help to generate insights that apply to other urban areas in Ghana.

### **3.6 Research Population**

The population is defined as all individuals or objects with a common feature that one intends to study (Aufseeser et al., 2018). It consists of data whose features are supposed to be analysed within a particular research context (Srivastava, 2019). The target population includes all stakeholders in the municipality. Particularly, the study targeted parents and staff of Social Welfare service providers in the municipality. Parents or caregivers play a critical role in ensuring the well-being and protection of children. As such, understanding their knowledge of child protection and the practices they use to protect their children is essential for developing effective child protection policies and interventions. Also, Social Welfare service providers, including social workers and child protection officers, are responsible for ensuring the welfare and protection of children. These professionals are often at the forefront of identifying and responding to cases of child abuse or neglect. As such, their perspectives and experiences in implementing child protection practices are valuable for understanding the challenges and opportunities in the child protection system.

### **3.7 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The study utilised a purposive sampling technique to select a total of eleven respondents for interviews, ensuring that participants with relevant expertise and experience in income generation and child protection practices were included. Purposive sampling was specifically chosen for its ability to allow the deliberate selection of individuals whose roles, knowledge, and perspectives are most pertinent to the research objectives (Beatriz & Salhi, 2019). This approach

was instrumental in capturing the nuanced interplay between income levels and child protection practices within the community. In this study, the sample comprised eleven participants, carefully selected based on their active involvement in income-generating activities and their influential roles in community child protection practices. The sample included a diverse group of respondents: six males and five females, representing various roles such as fathers, mothers, an uncle, a grandfather, and social welfare providers. This diversity ensured that a wide array of perspectives was captured, reflecting the different dimensions of how income levels intersect with child protection practices in the community.

The selection process was guided by the principle of data saturation, which refers to the point at which no new information or themes emerge from additional interviews (Srivastava, 2019). Achieving data saturation is crucial in qualitative research as it ensures that the research fully explores the topic, capturing the complete range of relevant perspectives rather than merely aiming for statistical representation (Aufseeser et al., 2018). In this study, interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached, meaning that no new insights emerged from additional interviews. This confirmed that a sample size of eleven respondents was sufficient to meet the research objectives. These eleven participants were carefully selected for their ability to provide rich and detailed information relevant to the study's focus, ensuring the depth and quality of the data collected. Such an approach aligns with qualitative research best practices, where sample size adequacy is determined by the completeness and richness of the data rather than the number of respondents alone. Fathers, mothers, an uncle, a grandfather, and social welfare providers were included to ensure that the study explores the intersections of familial roles and professional responsibilities with child protection and income generation practices. The selection of these participants was not arbitrary but was based on their direct involvement in the community's socio-economic activities and child welfare efforts.

### **3.8 Source of Data**

The main source of data is through interviews with respondents, which entails the direct collection of information from members of the chosen communities, thereby guaranteeing that the insights acquired are authentic and first-hand. Through the active involvement of community members, the research obtains first-hand accounts of their perceptions, behaviours, and lived experiences regarding child protection practices and income levels. This methodology enables a deeper understanding of the details of these phenomena, as individuals involved contribute substantial contextual data that might be impossible through secondary sources. By employing methodologies such as interviews, the researcher fosters substantive discourse with participants, thereby facilitating the examination of a wide range of perspectives and the identification of fundamental elements that influence income dynamics and efforts related to child protection.

### **3.9 Data Collection Instrument**

The data collection process for this study utilised structured interview guides, carefully designed to ensure a systematic exploration of key themes related to child protection practices and income levels in the selected communities. These interview guides were meticulously crafted to align with the research objectives, which included assessing community members' knowledge of child protection, identifying child protection practices implemented in the communities, and examining how income levels influence these practices. The use of structured interview guides allowed for consistency across all interviews while also providing the flexibility needed for participants to give detailed and nuanced responses. This method ensured that the data collected was both comprehensive and relevant to the study's aims.

The interview guides were comprised of a series of pre-established questions, each designed to elicit detailed information relevant to the research objectives. For instance, questions posed to parents focused on their understanding and implementation of child protection practices, the challenges they faced due to income constraints, and their perceptions of the community's role

in safeguarding children. Specific examples of these questions included: “What measures do you take to ensure the safety and well-being of children in your household?” and “How do financial challenges impact your ability to provide adequate care and protection for your children?” These questions were designed to uncover the practical aspects of child protection as experienced by parents, highlighting both the protective measures they employ and the obstacles they encounter.

For social welfare officers, the interview guides included questions designed to gather insights into the broader community and governmental efforts to protect children, the effectiveness of these initiatives, and how income disparities impacted their work. Questions such as “What child protection programs are currently implemented in this community?” and “How do you address cases where income levels limit the ability of families to protect their children?” were used to obtain comprehensive views from these professionals. These questions aimed to capture the systemic and organisational perspectives on child protection, providing a broader understanding of how policies and programs are implemented at the community level and the challenges faced by social welfare officers in their roles.

The questions for parents and social welfare officers were distinct but complementary, reflecting their different roles and perspectives on child protection. This differentiation ensured that the data collected provided a holistic understanding of the issues from both the individual and institutional perspectives (Aufseeser et al., 2018). For example, while parents provided insights into the day-to-day practices and challenges of protecting children, social welfare officers offered a macro-level view of the effectiveness of child protection programs and the impact of income levels on these initiatives. This comprehensive approach allowed the researcher to cross-reference and triangulate the data, ensuring a robust analysis of the interplay between child protection initiatives and income dynamics.

The interview guides were developed specifically for this study, rather than being adapted from other sources. This development process involved aligning the questions with the study's objectives and considering the socio-cultural context of the communities involved. The tailored design of the interview guides ensured that the questions were relevant and sensitive to the participants' circumstances and experiences, as specified in previous studies (Srivastava, 2019; Adonteng-Kissi, 2018; Srivastava, 2019). By grounding the questions in the local context and research objectives, the researcher ensured that the data collected was both meaningful and actionable.

By employing structured interviews, the researcher was able to gather data in a comprehensive manner that encompassed a wide range of viewpoints, enhancing their understanding of the interplay between child protection initiatives and income dynamics within the communities under investigation. The structured interviews provided a rich dataset that reflected the complexities of child protection practices and the influence of income levels, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and detailed analysis of the research questions (Aufseeser et al., 2018). This method also allowed for the identification of patterns and themes across different respondents, facilitating a deeper exploration of the factors influencing child protection in the selected communities.

### **3.10 Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection procedure for this study employed a hybrid approach, integrating both face-to-face and digital techniques to ensure a comprehensive and flexible methodology. The process began with an initial visit to the selected communities in Bolgatanga Municipality, where the researcher conducted in-person interviews and engaged directly with community members. This initial phase allowed the researcher to develop rapport with participants, establish trust, and gain firsthand insight into the local environment and cultural dynamics. The purposive sampling for

parents was conducted through consultations with community leaders and local organisations, who identified individuals actively involved in child protection and income-generation activities. These parents were approached based on their relevant experiences, ensuring that the sample included a diverse range of perspectives on the intersection of income levels and child protection practices.

For the social welfare officers, purposive sampling was similarly employed, targeting individuals holding positions of authority and responsibility in community child protection efforts. These officers were selected from both government and non-governmental organisations operating within the municipality, ensuring a broad representation of professional insights. The selection process involved direct communication with the organisations to identify officers who were most familiar with the child protection challenges and income-related issues faced by the communities. The interviews, on average, lasted between 45 minutes and an hour, providing ample time for participants to share their experiences and insights in-depth, as recommended by previous studies (Bowen, 2009; Aufseeser et al., 2018). The hybrid approach allowed for flexibility in scheduling and conducting these interviews. Of the eleven interviews conducted, seven were face-to-face, taking place during the researcher's initial visits to the communities.

These in-person interviews were essential for capturing non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and body language, which added depth to the participants' responses. The remaining four interviews were conducted online via Zoom, offering flexibility and convenience to participants who were unable to participate in face-to-face interviews due to logistical challenges or time constraints. These online interviews allowed the inclusion of participants from various parts of the municipality, ensuring that geographical barriers did not hinder their participation in the study. The data collected from the interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and integrity of participants' responses. The transcription process involved careful

listening to audio recordings of the interviews, followed by detailed documentation of each response in its entirety. This was done to preserve the nuances of language, tone, and emotion conveyed during the interviews. To ensure accuracy, transcripts were reviewed multiple times to identify and correct any potential errors or omissions. Additionally, a sample of the transcripts was cross-checked with participants to validate the transcription and ensure that the recorded information reflected their views accurately. This process was essential in maintaining the authenticity of the data and providing a reliable foundation for the subsequent analysis.

### **3.11 Reliability and Validity**

To enhance the credibility of the research outcomes, a triangulation strategy was employed, incorporating multiple data sources and methodologies to validate and corroborate the findings. Triangulation, by comparing data from various sources, including interviews, bolsters the credibility and reliability of the results (Aufseeser et al., 2018; Kaur & Byard, 2021). This multi-faceted approach ensures that the research findings are not solely dependent on a single method or perspective but are instead supported by converging evidence from different angles, thereby strengthening the study's overall validity.

In addition to triangulation, member verification was implemented as a critical step in the research process. Member verification involves presenting the collected data back to the participants, allowing them to review and confirm the accuracy of the information. This iterative process goes beyond simply validating the factual accuracy of the data; it also ensures that the interpretations and conclusions drawn from participants' responses genuinely reflect their intended meanings and experiences (Aufseeser et al., 2018). By involving participants in this way, the research fosters a more collaborative relationship, where participants actively contribute to shaping the final narrative. This not only enhances the authenticity of the data but also empowers participants by acknowledging their authority over their own experiences. Member

verification thus serves as a safeguard against misinterpretation, ensuring that the findings are grounded in the realities of those directly involved in the study.

In addition, peer debriefing sessions are implemented to facilitate critical introspection and solicit input from colleagues in the research community or domain authorities. Peer debriefings play a crucial role in quality control by providing researchers with an opportunity to critically examine their methods, interpretations, and conclusions within a collaborative environment (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018; Srivastava, 2019). Through the application of external scrutiny to both the research process and findings, the study fortifies its methodological rigour and mitigates the risk of potential biases or oversights. By implementing these severe validation protocols, the research aims to maintain the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of its results, thus enhancing the overall rigour and dependability of the study.

### **3.12 Data Analysis**

The study employed thematic analysis, which allows the researcher to identify patterns, significance, and themes within the narratives of participants when examining qualitative data (Saar-Heiman & Gupta, 2020). In this research, the thematic analysis followed the iterative procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), beginning with familiarisation with the data, followed by generating preliminary codes, exploring for themes, reviewing, defining, and naming themes, and culminating in the final analysis. Some interviews were originally conducted in local languages and required translation into English by the researcher to ensure accurate representation of participants' perspectives. Initial coding generated several themes, which were systematically examined and refined by merging overlapping or related themes to form a coherent thematic structure. The final themes emerged directly from the interview data rather than being predetermined by existing literature, allowing for an authentic capture of participants' experiences and viewpoints. The presence of quotes that read like expert statements may be

attributed to the translation process, where the researcher carefully interpreted and translated local expressions into clear English while preserving their original meaning and context. This approach helped maintain the richness and originality of the data while ensuring the credibility and validity of the findings through reflexivity and triangulation with other data sources.

Reflexivity in qualitative research involves the researcher's continuous self-awareness and critical reflection on their own biases, perspectives, and influence on the research process. It requires actively examining how one's beliefs, background, and interactions with participants may shape data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Practical application of reflexivity in this study includes maintaining reflective journals, documenting decision-making processes, and acknowledging researcher positionality transparently. Although the study acknowledges reflexivity, detailing these concrete steps would enhance the transparency and credibility of the research by showing how potential biases were managed and how the researcher's influence was critically accounted for during the investigation.

### **3.13 Ethical Consideration**

In this study, ethical clearance was sought from the Ethics Committee of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences (ECBAS) of the University of Ghana and was strictly adhered to. Before the commencement of the study, all participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits. They were allowed to ask questions they had before deciding whether or not to participate. Participants' consent was obtained, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence. Another important ethical consideration is the protection of confidentiality. All data collected from the participants were kept strictly confidential and anonymous. The participant's personal information was kept separate from their responses, and all data were stored securely. Only the researcher involved in the study had access to the data, and they ensured that the data was only used for the study.

### 3.14 Chapter Summary

The study employed qualitative methods and an interpretive paradigm. This study investigates the relationship between child protection practices and income levels in the Bolgatanga Municipality. Through an incorporation of case study and phenomenological methodologies, the research investigates the interplay between income generation and child protection by emphasising subjective interpretations and personal experiences. For the sake of accessibility, data collection consists of structured interviews conducted both in-person and online. Strict protocols, which incorporate standardisation, triangulation, and reflexivity, guarantee validity and reliability. Thematic analysis provides valuable insights into the viewpoints of communities, thereby enhancing the nuanced comprehension of child welfare. Ethical considerations were employed, which give precedence to confidentiality, informed consent, and participant respect.



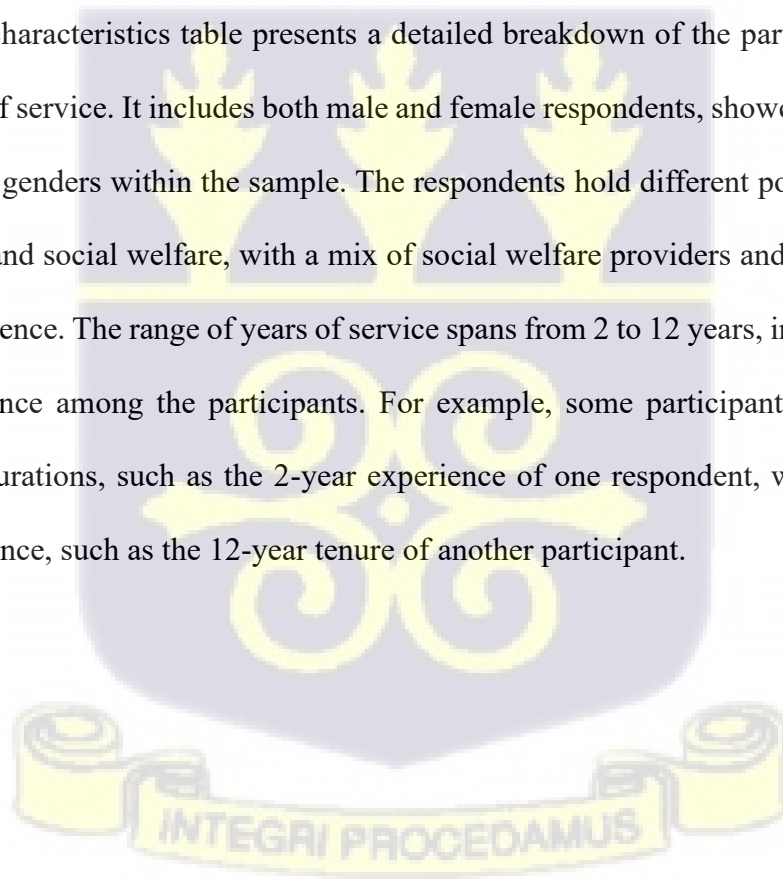
## CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present and interpret the findings of the research, which focuses on assessing community members' knowledge of child protection, identifying child protection practices implemented in selected communities, and examining how income levels affect child protection practices in selected communities. By delving into these areas of inquiry, this research provides valuable insights into the extent to which a family's income level affects how children are protected in selected communities in Ghana.

### 4.2 Respondent Characteristics

The respondent characteristics table presents a detailed breakdown of the participants' gender, roles, and years of service. It includes both male and female respondents, showcasing a balanced representation of genders within the sample. The respondents hold different positions related to child protection and social welfare, with a mix of social welfare providers and individuals with caregiving experience. The range of years of service spans from 2 to 12 years, indicating varying levels of experience among the participants. For example, some participants have relatively shorter service durations, such as the 2-year experience of one respondent, while others have extensive experience, such as the 12-year tenure of another participant.



**Table 4. 1 Respondent Characteristics**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>of Position</b>	<b>Years of Service/ caregiving</b>
1	Male	Father	8
2	Female	Mother	6
3	Male	Uncle	2
4	Female	Mother	10
5	Male	Father	4
6	Female	Mother	5
7	Male	Grandfather	12
8	Male	Social Welfare Provider	6
9	Female	Social Welfare Provider	8
10	Male	Social Welfare Provider	4
11	Female	Social Welfare Provider	5

*Source: Field Interview (2023)*

This diversity in experience allows for a broad range of perspectives, capturing both newer insights and more seasoned viewpoints on child protection practices. The varied years of service also help in understanding the evolution of child protection efforts and how different levels of experience influence the application of these practices within the community. This mix of gender and experience ensures that the study reflects a well-rounded cross-section of individuals actively engaged in child protection efforts, providing a richer understanding of the challenges and opportunities present in the field.

#### **4.3 Assess Community Members' Knowledge of Child Protection**

The assessment of community members' knowledge of child protection policies, laws, and regulations revealed varying levels of awareness. Some respondents showed a detailed understanding, while others had limited knowledge. Recognition of child abuse and protection risks varied among interviewees, with some demonstrating keen awareness and prompt identification, while others struggled to recognise signs of abuse. Knowledge of reporting mechanisms, such as helplines and authorities, varied, emphasising the need for wider dissemination of information. Understanding of preventive measures varied, with some awareness of community-based programs and parental guidance, while others lacked knowledge.

Perceptions of roles and responsibilities differed; some believed child protection was solely the parents’ duty, while others recognised the importance of collective efforts. Targeted education and community-wide initiatives are essential to enhance child protection awareness and support within the community.

**Table 4. 2 Summary of Themes for Objective One**

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequency
Community Knowledge of Child Protection	Awareness of Child Protection Policies and Laws	6
	Identification of Child Abuse and Protection Risks	4
	Knowledge of Reporting Mechanisms	8
	Understanding of Preventive Measures	6
	Perception of Roles and Responsibilities	9

*Source: Field Interview (2023)*

The study identified five themes for this objective from the respondents, including (1) Awareness of Child Protection Policies and Laws, (2) Identification of Child Abuse and Protection Risks, (3) Knowledge of Reporting Mechanisms, (4) Understanding of Preventive Measures, and (5) Perception of Roles and Responsibilities.

#### **4.3.1 Awareness of Child Protection Policies and Laws**

In the course of this research, community members were asked about the knowledge and understanding of child protection policies and regulations. The responses revealed a mix of awareness levels and insights into the existing legal frameworks meant to ensure the well-being and safety of children within their community. Six (6) of the respondents displayed a comprehensive understanding of child protection policies, citing specific laws and regulations that are in place to safeguard children’s rights. For example, one respondent highlighted the importance of the Child Rights Act in the country, stating,

“A law that guards against child abuse and exploitation is the Child Rights Act. Assuring their access to healthcare, education, and other necessities creates a nurturing atmosphere free of child labour, human trafficking, and early

marriages. By supporting a society that appreciates and safeguards its youngest members, this law aids in the development and success of children” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

On the other hand, several community members exhibited a limited awareness of specific policies and regulations. Some acknowledged the existence of child protection measures but lacked in-depth knowledge of the legal details. A respondent expressed,

“Indeed, there exist laws aimed at fostering a secure and supportive atmosphere to safeguard children. Though I can’t give details of these laws, I know they exist to protect children from injury, abuse, and exploitation while also guaranteeing their access to healthcare, education, and other necessities” (Respondent 5, Mother, 2023).

The level of understanding also seemed to vary based on the respondents’ roles and positions within the community. Parents and caregivers appeared more acquainted with child protection policies, as they related them to their caregiving responsibilities. One mother stated,

“I consider it my vital responsibility as a committed parent to ensure my kids’ safety and well-being. I attentively heed the government’s and reliable organisations’ guidance because I love them. I do everything in my power to provide a safe, loving atmosphere, paying close attention to their physical and mental well-being and according to safety regulations. My goal is to provide my kids with the tools they need to overcome obstacles in life by seeking guidance from professionals and enlisting the aid of the community. I strive to provide kids with a loving, safe, and bright future with every decision I make” (Respondent 4, mother, 2023).

Social service providers exhibited a more comprehensive knowledge of child protection policies, as expected due to their professional roles. One social welfare provider remarked,

“I am an expert in my field and am well-versed in the laws about child protection. With this information, we can collaborate with the authorities to create a solid support network for kids in our neighbourhood. By working together, we can guarantee that no kid is harmed or exploited and that their rights are upheld. Together, we can establish an atmosphere that fosters their success and well-being. It is a privilege to help ensure that our kids have a safer and more promising future” (Respondent 8, Social Welfare Provider, 2023).

However, even among social welfare service providers, there were varying degrees of familiarity with specific policies, depending on the years of service. Those with more experience demonstrated a deeper understanding of the legal frameworks, while newer providers showed enthusiasm to learn and improve their knowledge.

Also, the findings highlight the importance of ongoing awareness campaigns and education on child protection policies within the community. Enhancing the understanding of these regulations among community members, especially parents, caregivers, and social welfare providers, leads to better implementation and enforcement of child protection measures.

#### **4.3.2 Identification of Child Abuse and Protection Risks**

This explores the community members' ability to recognise signs of child abuse and their awareness of potential risks and vulnerabilities that children may face within the community. Their responses provided valuable insights into their awareness and understanding of the potential risks and vulnerabilities faced by children within the community. Four (4) demonstrated a strong grasp of recognising signs of child abuse. They were able to identify physical indicators, such as unexplained injuries, bruises, or changes in a child's behaviour. One respondent remarked,

“As a concerned parent, I am aware that behavioural shifts in my kid, such as withdrawal or anxiety, may indicate a problem. I make an effort to be alert and sympathetic during these times, promoting candid conversation to learn about their thoughts and feelings. To be able to assist them with love and understanding, I want to establish a secure and encouraging space where they can open up to me about their feelings” (Respondent 5, Father, 2023).

Moreover, community members displayed awareness of other forms of abuse, such as emotional and psychological abuse. They acknowledged the importance of paying attention to children's emotions and interactions with others to detect potential issues. A respondent said,

“My background as a social welfare practitioner enables me to recognise indicators of emotional abuse, such as persistent humiliation or demeaning

treatment. It is important to be aware of these indicators since emotional abuse can have a long-term negative psychological impact. My commitment lies in being perceptive and accommodating, establishing a secure environment where individuals can open up about their experiences, and offering the assistance and guidance required to flee abuse. By identifying and resolving emotional abuse, we hope to create a community that respects and safeguards the emotional health of all members.” (Respondent 11, Social Welfare Provider, 2023)

However, some respondents expressed uncertainty in identifying signs of abuse beyond physical indicators. They recognised the need for more education and training to enhance their ability to detect less obvious signs of abuse or neglect. In terms of recognising potential risks and vulnerabilities, community members displayed varying levels of awareness. Social welfare providers seemed more informed about the specific risks that children may face, given their professional background. Additionally, community members acknowledged the role of the broader community in ensuring child protection. They emphasised the significance of collective responsibility and the need to report concerns promptly. A respondent shared,

“Everyone in the community has a shared obligation to protect children. We establish a safe atmosphere where children can grow in safety, with their rights respected and their voices heard, by raising awareness and providing support. By uniting to combat risks to their well-being, we enable them to thrive in a compassionate and encouraging environment” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

#### **4.3.3 Knowledge of Reporting Mechanisms**

This delves into the community members’ awareness of proper channels and procedures for reporting suspected child abuse or protection concerns. Eight (8) responses revealed a range of understanding and awareness among the participants regarding the available channels and procedures for reporting such cases. Several respondents displayed a clear understanding of reporting mechanisms, including helplines and local authorities. They mentioned being aware of hotlines that they call to report suspected child abuse or seek assistance. A respondent stated,

“I am aware of the crucial hotlines for reporting abuse of children. Because we are aware of the sensitivity of the situation, our training equips us to support

people in reporting similar incidents. Our goal is to give callers a secure and understanding space to voice their worries. We make sure that children in need get the care and assistance they need by encouraging those who call out.” (Respondent 8, social welfare provider, 2023)

Parents and caregivers also demonstrated knowledge of reporting mechanisms, particularly those who had received information through community programs or government initiatives. They mentioned being informed about child protection organisations and the steps to take when encountering child abuse concerns. However, some community members acknowledged limited awareness of the proper reporting channels. They expressed uncertainty about whom to approach or how to report suspected cases of child abuse. A respondent said,

“It’s normal to be unsure of who to report child abuse incidents to. Information that is both easily accessible and thorough is essential for assisting people in these circumstances. People are better able to take decisive action and safeguard children who are at risk when there are clear instructions and greater knowledge of reporting procedures. Improved information sharing promotes a watchful, supportive community and encourages a group effort to keep kids safe.” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023)

Furthermore, respondents highlighted the need for accessible and user-friendly reporting mechanisms. They emphasised the importance of making information readily available to all community members, regardless of their educational background or technological proficiency. This involves distributing flyers, conducting awareness campaigns, or setting up community centres with resources on child protection. A respondent mentioned,

“It is crucial to provide simple information on how to report child abuse. Given that not everyone has access to the internet, printed materials are a highly useful tool for expanding your audience. By disseminating these resources, we make sure that important information reaches every corner of the community and encourages people to take action if they witness abuse. Concerned citizens can actively contribute to the protection of children by following clear, understandable instructions. Prioritising print materials in addition to digital resources fosters a more comprehensive strategy for protecting the most vulnerable” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

The findings underscore the significance of continuous efforts to educate and inform community members about reporting mechanisms for child abuse and protection concerns. Training

programs and awareness initiatives bridge the knowledge gap and empower individuals to take swift action when they suspect child abuse. Collaborations between child protection organisations, local authorities, and community leaders play a vital role in disseminating information and establishing effective reporting channels.

#### **4.3.4 Understanding of Preventive Measures**

This delves into the community members' knowledge of preventive measures and strategies aimed at creating a safe environment for children. Their responses provided valuable insights into the community's awareness of various initiatives and programs focused on child protection. Several respondents (6) demonstrated a good understanding of preventive measures. They mentioned community-based initiatives that promote child protection, such as neighbourhood watch groups and community patrols. One respondent shared,

“The neighbourhood watch programs in our community that are devoted to the safety of children give me peace of mind as a loving grandfather. By working together, we can build a network of support that safeguards and nurtures our children, enabling them to flourish in a loving environment” (Respondent 7, Grandfather, 2023).

Moreover, community members acknowledged the importance of educational programs that teach children about personal safety and awareness. They mentioned schools and community centres that offer workshops on child protection and self-defence. Parents and caregivers highlighted the significance of parental guidance in protecting children from potential risks. They emphasised the role of open communication and trust-building in creating a safe environment for children to share their concerns. One mother said,

“I think that honest dialogue about risks and safety is important as a parent. My kids confide in me when they have concerns because we have established trust and encouraged transparency. I establish a solid connection with them by paying close attention to what they have to say and giving them sympathetic support. As a result, their emotional health and general development are promoted, and their safety awareness is increased, and a relationship where they can seek guidance is fostered.” (Respondent 2, Mother, 2023)

However, some respondents expressed a need for more accessible and widespread educational programs on child protection. They mentioned that not all community members were aware of such initiatives and suggested expanding awareness campaigns. A respondent mentioned,

“Raising knowledge of child protection resources requires expanding outreach initiatives to include every home. Through the provision of knowledge and education, these programs seek to fortify the community’s vigilance in the protection of children.” (Respondent 11, Social Welfare Provider, 2023)

The findings highlight the importance of continuous efforts to promote preventive measures within the community. Educational programs and community-based initiatives play a vital role in creating a safe and supportive environment for children. Collaborations between schools, community organisations, and child protection agencies strengthen preventive strategies and increase community members’ awareness of available resources.

#### **4.3.5 Perception of Roles and Responsibilities**

This explores the perspectives of community members regarding their roles and responsibilities in the context of child protection. Nine (9) of the respondents' responses align with this theme, where one respondent indicates that.

“Child protection is not just the responsibility of parents; it’s a collective effort that involves schools, community organisations, and local authorities. As a Social Welfare Provider, I believe we play a crucial role in ensuring children’s safety and well-being, working hand-in-hand with parents and other stakeholders” (Respondent 9, Social Welfare Provider, 2023).

Among the community members interviewed, diverse perceptions of roles and responsibilities in child protection emerged. The quote from a Social Welfare Provider exemplifies a recognition of the collective effort needed to protect children. The respondent highlighted the involvement of schools, community organisations, and local authorities in ensuring children’s safety, emphasising that it is not solely the parents’ duty. This understanding reflects the crucial role of professionals like Social Welfare Providers in contributing to child protection alongside parents

and other stakeholders. Conversely, some parents and relatives may perceive child protection as primarily falling under their domain. They might see it as a family-oriented responsibility, with parents bearing the primary burden of ensuring their children's safety and well-being. This perspective is influenced by cultural norms and traditional beliefs, which often emphasise parental responsibility for child care.

During the interviews, community members have shown varying levels of awareness regarding the involvement of schools, community organisations, and local authorities in child protection efforts. Some respondents might not be fully aware of the vital contributions these entities make in creating a protective environment for children. This knowledge gap underscores the importance of education and awareness initiatives to foster a more comprehensive understanding of child protection roles within the community.

#### **4.4 Child Protection Practices Implemented in Selected Communities of Bolgatanga Municipality**

In the Bolgatanga Municipality, child protection practices are multifaceted and community-driven. Residents, NGOs, and religious organisations spearhead various initiatives tailored to address specific child protection needs within the area. Collaborative efforts between community members and local authorities, such as the police and social welfare departments, strengthen child protection measures and ensure timely responses to concerns. Child protection awareness campaigns and education programs play a vital role in empowering the community to safeguard children's rights and report potential abuse. Support services encompass counselling, healthcare, education, and material aid for vulnerable children and families. Notably, child participation and empowerment initiatives actively involve children in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership in their protection and well-being. The combination of these efforts underscores a comprehensive approach to creating a protective environment for children's safety and growth.

**Table 4. 3 Summary Themes of Objective Two**

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequency
Child Protection Practices	Community-based Child Protection Initiatives	3
	Collaborative Efforts with Local Authorities	5
	Awareness and Education Programs	7
	Support Services for Vulnerable Children and Families	8
	Child Participation and Empowerment	7

*Source: Field Interview (2023)*

The five themes identified by the respondent for this objective include (1) Community-Based Child Protection Initiatives, (2) Collaborative Efforts with Local Authorities, (3) Awareness and Education Programs, (4) Support Services for Vulnerable Children and Families, and (5) Child Participation and Empowerment.

#### **4.4.1 Community-Based Child Protection Initiatives**

Community-Based Child Protection Initiatives play a pivotal role in shielding children from the dangers of abuse, exploitation, and neglect. These initiatives, crafted to meet the unique needs of local communities, are typically led by community members, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), religious institutions, and local government agencies. Through these efforts, communities develop protective environments that prioritise child safety and well-being. However, while the title of this theme suggests an exploration of specific initiatives in the Bolgatanga Municipality, the quotes from respondents provide insight into the personal commitment and readiness of individuals to engage in child protection activities within their communities. These individuals express a deep sense of responsibility and highlight their active roles in ensuring the safety and development of children, but do not specifically name or describe the existing initiatives. For example, a father, reflecting on his personal experiences, shares his motivation for involvement in child protection campaigns, stating:

“Having a child of my own has inspired me to take part in campaigns to safeguard our kids. I’m devoted to providing a secure atmosphere that protects kids from danger, encourages their development, and fulfils their potential. I support policies that guarantee

their security so that their aspirations and joy can come true.” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This statement underscores the emotional connection between parenthood and a commitment to protecting children, yet it does not describe the specific programs or community-based initiatives in place. A mother, actively engaged in child protection efforts for six years, expands on this sense of responsibility, noting the collective efforts of women in her community:

“Being a mother has made me more sympathetic to any child who is in need. The women in my community are bound together by our maternal instincts, and we collaborate to safeguard every child in our community. We are committed to being steadfast protectors by establishing a secure atmosphere free from hardship where every child can flourish” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

Her words highlight the collective strength of the community, with women working together to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children. However, again, no explicit examples of the initiatives themselves are mentioned. A male uncle, though not a parent, reflects on his broader role within the community:

“I have a great responsibility to look out for and raise all the kids in our neighbourhood as an uncle. Our joint efforts in community projects to establish a haven for every kid are motivated by this obligation. Our dedication unites us to protect and inspire the next generation for a better future, spanning beyond family lines” (Respondent 3, Uncle, 2023).

This statement illustrates the uncle’s view on the community’s collective efforts, but it still lacks specific references to actual programs or initiatives aimed at child protection. Additionally, another mother, who has been an advocate for child protection for a decade, shares the long-term positive impact of community efforts:

“I’ve seen firsthand how our efforts have paid off over time. The kids in our neighbourhood have thrived because they live in a safe space where they can develop fearlessly. With the growth of our joint efforts, these young lives are supported and encouraged to fully realise their potential and confidently follow their aspirations, building a future devoid of fear” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

Her perspective reflects the success of community-driven child protection activities, yet does not name the specific programs or initiatives that have contributed to these outcomes. A father with four years of experience also speaks to the importance of breaking societal norms in protecting children:

“Actively protecting our children helps us as fathers shatter stereotypes. We declare that it is everyone’s responsibility to protect children by defying social conventions through our actions. Our community prioritises the safety of every child, promoting inclusivity and empowerment, and bringing about a revolutionary transition” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This statement emphasises the evolving role of fathers in child protection, advocating for a community-wide, inclusive approach, but again, it doesn’t describe any particular community-based initiative. Further, a female mother contributing to the child protection effort for five years emphasises the collective responsibility:

“Child protection isn’t just a duty; it’s a shared commitment. Mothers like me are working together to ensure our children grow up with love and protection” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

Her statement underscores the collaborative nature of child protection but lacks details on specific community programs or initiatives involved. From a professional perspective, a male social welfare provider with six years of experience shares the broader impact of child protection initiatives:

“I work in social welfare and have witnessed firsthand how these programs change communities. Their influence goes beyond child safety to include community empowerment. These initiatives promote constructive transformation, bolster group spirit, and develop resiliency and cohesion in the face of difficulties” (Respondent 10, Social Welfare Provider, 2023).

His perspective highlights the ripple effects of child protection initiatives but does not describe specific community-based initiatives, such as child protection committees or neighbourhood watch programs that have been instrumental in these changes.

#### 4.4. 2: Collaborative Efforts with Local Authorities

Collaboration between community members and local authorities plays a vital role in strengthening child protection measures. By working together with entities such as the police, social welfare departments, and educational institutions, communities can ensure prompt and effective responses to child protection issues. Such collaborations provide not only timely interventions but also a coordinated approach that maximises resources and expertise for the welfare of children. A father, who has been actively involved in child protection efforts for eight years, illustrates the importance of these collaborations by highlighting a specific initiative:

“Through our partnership with local government authorities, we’ve established a community watch program that helps us monitor children’s safety. This collaboration with the police and social welfare department ensures swift action in case of any threats to children’s well-being. It’s about creating a protective barrier that allows children to grow and thrive in a safe environment, where their futures are prioritised” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This example emphasises how collaboration has led to the creation of structured, community-driven programs that safeguard children. By working alongside local authorities, communities can pool their resources and act more effectively. A mother with six years of active participation in child protection efforts further describes the impact of such collaborations, particularly in the area of coordinated community outreach:

“Together with local law enforcement and schools, we’ve organised workshops and seminars for parents and caregivers to raise awareness about child protection. These joint efforts have allowed us to reach a broader audience, sharing vital information and providing the community with the tools they need to keep children safe. It’s about building an informed community where everyone plays an active role in child protection” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

This mother’s perspective showcases the direct benefits of collaboration between community members and authorities in raising awareness and empowering families to act in safeguarding children. An uncle who has been actively involved for two years in local child protection

initiatives provides another example of how diverse community perspectives contribute to the success of these efforts:

“We’ve worked closely with social services and local police to create a neighbourhood watch that monitors any potential risks to children. This initiative brings together a variety of community members, each bringing unique insights, and helps us create a safer environment for children. Our collective approach has enabled us to identify and address risks more efficiently than we could alone” (Respondent 3, Uncle, 2023).

This statement highlights how collaboration brings different perspectives to the table, helping to craft a more comprehensive and effective child protection strategy. A mother with ten years of dedicated service in child protection reflects on the tangible benefits of her community’s collaboration with local authorities:

“Our partnership with municipal officials has allowed us to implement a child protection hotline, allowing concerned community members to report any cases of abuse or neglect. This collaboration ensures that when issues arise, we can respond immediately, and children are provided with the necessary protection and support without delay” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

Her experience underscores how active collaboration has led to practical solutions, such as a dedicated hotline, providing immediate assistance to children in need. Similarly, a father with four years of experience emphasises the proactive nature of collaboration, highlighting the role of early intervention:

“By working closely with local authorities, we’ve created a task force that conducts regular checks on vulnerable children in our community. This task force includes social workers, law enforcement, and volunteers, ensuring that potential issues are identified and addressed before they escalate. It’s about being proactive and preventing harm before it happens” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This proactive approach highlights the preventive power of collaboration, ensuring that children’s safety is constantly monitored and protected.

#### 4.4.3: Awareness and Education Programs

The theme of Awareness and Education Programs highlights the significant role that child protection initiatives, such as community education campaigns and child rights workshops, play in fostering a greater understanding of child protection issues. These programs are designed to educate community members about child rights, signs of abuse, and how to report cases of neglect or maltreatment. In the selected communities, programs have been implemented by social services, local schools, and non-governmental organisations to ensure that parents, caregivers, and local authorities are equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to safeguard children. A father with eight years of experience in child protection initiatives emphasised the impact of these programs, with seven respondents agreeing on their effectiveness.

“Through the education programs in our community, we have learned what to look for and how to protect our children from harm. I’ve seen firsthand how these programs give parents the knowledge to be vigilant and proactive in addressing any potential risks” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This statement reflects how education programs are transforming the community’s approach to child protection. Parents are becoming more informed about their children’s rights and the steps to take if those rights are at risk. For example, the local workshops organised by the social welfare department have made parents aware of the signs of child abuse and the appropriate legal channels for reporting concerns. A mother, actively engaged for six years, shared her experience:

“Our community’s awareness of child protection has grown through targeted education programs like those held by local schools and NGOs. These programs have fostered a culture where everyone is alert and ready to protect the children, helping us prevent abuse before it even starts” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

This statement highlights how awareness programs help build a collective approach to safeguarding children, making each community member an active participant in child protection. Through such programs, individuals are trained to identify risks early and act decisively to prevent harm. This perspective illustrates how educational initiatives are not just for parents but

also for extended family members, ensuring that all caregivers in the community are prepared to recognise and respond to signs of abuse. By educating a broader group, these programs ensure that the responsibility for child protection is shared across multiple layers of the community. A mother with ten years of involvement further emphasised the transformative effects of these programs:

“Awareness campaigns like the ones conducted by local social services have changed the way we view child protection. They’ve debunked harmful stereotypes and helped us understand our role in creating a safe environment for all children” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

This insight emphasises that education programs are crucial not only for raising awareness but also for challenging long-standing misconceptions. By offering factual information, these programs empower parents and caregivers to make informed decisions about how best to protect children.

#### **4.4.4: Support Services for Vulnerable Children and Families**

The theme of Support Services for Vulnerable Children and Families emphasises the vital role played by community-based assistance tailored to address the unique needs of families and children facing adversity. These support services encompass a spectrum of child-centred provisions, including counselling, healthcare, educational aid, and material support. A father within the community, with eight years of experience, shared his perspective, with eight (8) of respondents agreeing with the significance of these support services.

“Support services have emerged as lifelines for families navigating challenging circumstances. Through these services, a ray of hope is extended, ensuring that children’s needs are met even during the most trying times” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This sheds light on the pivotal role of support services as not just a safety net, but as lifelines that sustain families in dire straits. The notion of a “ray of hope” emphasises the transformative effect

of these services, providing families with the assurance that even in moments of vulnerability, their children's well-being remains a priority. A mother, dedicated for six years, conveyed,

“The comprehensive nature of support services extends beyond material aid. They weave a tapestry of interconnectedness, fostering a sense of belonging and care that envelops families in times of need” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

This perspective highlights the multifaceted impact of support services, extending beyond mere material assistance. By nurturing a sense of “belonging and care,” these services create an environment where families feel supported not just in practical terms, but also emotionally and socially. A male uncle, new to the role for two years, remarked,

“These services extend a helping hand that reaches beyond immediate family boundaries. They embody the idea that the responsibility of safeguarding children is a collective endeavour, uniting the community in shared guardianship” (Respondent 3, Uncle, 2023).

This quote underscores the inclusive nature of support services, emphasising their capacity to transcend individual family dynamics. The concept of “shared guardianship” highlights how these services promote a collaborative approach to child protection, where the community collectively assumes the role of protector. From a decade-long vantage point, a female mother shared,

“Support services serve as the bedrock of stability, offering families more than just a reprieve. They equip us with the tools to overcome challenges, ensuring a brighter trajectory for our children's future” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

This insight delves into the lasting impact of support services, framing them as catalysts for sustained positive change. By imparting skills and resources to families, these services empower them to navigate challenges effectively, resulting in improved prospects for children's growth and development. A father, engaged for four years, acknowledged,

“Support services are empowering platforms that uplift families, providing the necessary foundation for children’s holistic development. They equip parents with the means to create a nurturing environment.” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This perspective amplifies the transformative nature of support services, positioning them as vehicles for empowerment. By enhancing parental capabilities and resources, these services contribute to cultivating an environment conducive to children’s overall well-being. Similarly, a female mother, contributing for five years, highlighted,

“The impact of these services extends far beyond the tangible. They embody a spirit of community solidarity, assuring families that in times of hardship, they are not alone, assistance is readily available to safeguard our children” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

This underscores the emotional resonance of support services, emphasising the sense of unity and assurance they bring to vulnerable families. By offering concrete assistance, these services also transmit a powerful message of communal support and shared responsibility. With a grandparent’s insight, a male grandfather of twelve years stated,

“Support services bridge generational divides, encapsulating our commitment to preserving a legacy of care. Through these services, our grandchildren inherit not only material aid but also the enduring values of compassion and support” (Respondent 7, Grandparent, 2023).

This respondent’s perspective elevates support services to a legacy-building endeavour. By transmitting not only material support but also deeply rooted values, these services ensure that the legacy of care is perpetuated through generations, creating a lasting impact on the community’s well-being.

#### **4.4.5: Child Participation and Empowerment**

The theme of Child Participation and Empowerment emerges as a catalyst for societal progress, highlighting practices that engage children as active contributors to decision-making processes and agents of change, empowering them to advocate fervently for their rights and safety. This

dynamic approach includes child-led projects, vibrant child clubs, and purposeful activities that involve children in issues affecting their lives. A father within the community expressed his perspective, reflecting the agreement of seven (7) respondents on the importance of empowering children through such initiatives.

“The essence of child participation is the cornerstone upon which a resilient society is built. By welcoming children into the fold of decision-making, we cultivate an intricate tapestry of intergenerational understanding and collaboration” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This penetrates deep into the core of child participation, highlighting its role as a fundamental pillar for societal resilience. The metaphor of an “intricate tapestry” underscores how children’s inclusion enriches the community’s collective wisdom, fostering unity across generations and nurturing harmonious collaboration. A mother indicated that:

“Giving our kids the tools they need to succeed lights a bright spark of confidence that shines through on their journey. Child clubs serve as empowering, loving hubs for self-confidence, enabling them to design their futures” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

This perspective delves into the profound transformation nurtured by empowerment through child clubs. The metaphor of a “radiant spark” signifies how empowerment sets children on a self-assured path, while the notion of them being “empowered architects” emphasises their role in shaping a future they can truly call their own. A male uncle, new to the role for two years, remarked,

“Child-led projects serve as a link between young ambitions and concrete steps. Seeing how passionately my niece participates in defending her rights creates a fire within me, inspiring me to encourage her and foster a supportive environment” (Respondent 7, Uncle, 2023).

This captures the dual impact of child-led initiatives, both on children and caregivers. It illustrates the link between children’s aspirations and actionable steps, while also showcasing

the inspirational cycle where children's fervour kindles motivation in adults to be allies in their advocacy journey. From a decade-long vantage point, a female mother shared,

“Child participation is the key that unlocks the door to a more inclusive society. By nurturing their voices, we plant seeds of equality, fostering the understanding that every perspective matters” (Respondent 4, Mother, 2023).

This insight delves into the transformative potential of child participation in forging a path toward inclusivity. It highlights the pivotal role of involving children in decision-making, which nurtures a sense of equality and reverence for diverse viewpoints from an early age. A father, engaged for four years, acknowledged,

“Empowering children to have a say in their safety reinforces their autonomy. Through child-led safety activities, we mould them into vigilant and proactive agents, cementing an unbreakable shield of protection.” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

This perspective uniquely marries child participation with safety, emphasising its role in enhancing children's agency over their well-being. It underlines how child-led safety activities empower children not only to recognise risks but also to be proactive in ensuring their safety, thereby contributing to the community's overall protective shield. Similarly, a female mother, contributing for five years, highlighted,

“Child clubs are nurturing crucibles where young voices are transformed into instruments of change. These platforms cultivate ownership and engender children as advocates, particularly in issues directly impacting those” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

This quote delves into the nurturing environment created by child clubs, where children's voices evolve into catalysts for change. The emphasis on “ownership” and their role as “advocates” underscores how child clubs empower children to champion causes close to their hearts, fostering a deeper connection between their voices and their community's well-being. With a grandparent's insight, a male grandfather of twelve years stated,

“Participation by children crosses generational gaps and reveals a symphony of communal development. Seeing my grandchildren involved in decision-making is a testament to our common goal of a more promising future” (Respondent 7, Grandparent, 2023).

This respondent’s perspective beautifully captures the harmonious coalescence of generations through child participation. It reflects how children’s involvement in decision-making embodies a communal dedication to shaping a future imbued with promise and progress. A male social welfare provider, serving for six years, conveyed,

“Future leaders are formed in the furnace of child empowerment. By working with child clubs, we help to raise a generation of people who understand their rights and accept the responsibility that comes with them” (Respondent 10, social welfare provider, 2023).

This professional insight delves into the profound implications of child empowerment on future leadership. It underlines how child clubs contribute to nurturing a mindful generation, one that possesses a holistic understanding of both rights and responsibilities. A female social welfare provider, dedicated for eight years, emphasised,

“Child participation serves as a conduit for nurturing empathy and tolerance. As children contribute their unique perspectives, we bear witness to a community that embraces diversity and mutual respect” (Respondent 11, social welfare provider, 2023).

This captures the transformative cultural shift that child participation initiates. It underscores how children’s involvement in decision-making fosters a community characterised by empathy, tolerance, and an openness to diverse viewpoints. A male social welfare provider, contributing for four years, concluded,

“Child-led initiatives carve a path toward a society where every child’s voice resounds with significance. These empowered voices intertwine, forming an unbreakable chain of protection, enshrining a safer, more vibrant community” (Respondent 10, social welfare provider, 2023).

This concluding perspective encapsulates the enduring impact of child-led initiatives. It highlights how empowered voices create a formidable network of protection, weaving together to ensure the safety and vibrancy of the community as a whole.

#### 4.5 How Income Levels Affect Child Protection Practices in Selected Communities

The relationship between community income and child protection practices merits careful examination.

**Table 4. 4 Summary of Themes of Objective Three**

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Frequency
Income Levels Affect Child Protection Practices in Selected Communities	Economic Stressors and Family Dynamics	8
	Access to Quality Services and Resources	7
	Community Support and Social Networks	8
	Policy and Institutional Factors	5

*Source: Field Interview (2023)*

Economic disparities and income inequality can have a substantial effect on the capacity of communities and families to provide adequate care and protection for children. This includes (1) Economic Stressors and Family Dynamics, (2) Access to Quality Services and Resources, (3) Community Support and Social Networks, and (4) Policy and Institutional Factors.

##### 4.5.1 Economic Stressors and Family Dynamics

Low-income households frequently face numerous economic pressures that impact various aspects of their lives, such as unstable financial situations, limited access to essential goods and services, and precarious job prospects. These stressors not only create significant strain within family dynamics but also markedly heighten children’s susceptibility to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. A respondent emphasised these challenges, reflecting the agreement of eight (8) respondents on the heightened vulnerability of children in low-income households to such adversities.

“Child protection frequently takes a backseat when you’re struggling to make ends meet, worrying about where your next meal will come from or how to pay your bills” (Respondent 10, social welfare provider, 2023).

Balancing immediate necessities with the protection and welfare of our children requires an ongoing effort of coordination. The persistent financial constraints experienced by parents in these households often force them to place survival above the allocation of time and resources towards comprehensive child protection measures. As a result, the vulnerabilities of children within these environments are further intensified. Additionally, the potential consequences of economic pressures on family dynamics can intensify the dangers that children residing in low-income households are exposed to. The participants emphasised the detrimental effects of financial instability and unemployment on familial relationships, which manifest as increased tensions, conflicts, and communication disruptions. These tense family relationships may produce environments in which children feel unprotected, unsupported, and neglected, thereby nurturing the conditions that are conducive to a range of maltreatment. The respondent indicated that;

“It felt as though our entire world was collapsing when my husband lost his job. Constant financial disputes and tension prevented us from making ends meet. It was difficult to concentrate on anything, much less guaranteeing the safety and protection of our children” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

Insufficient availability of fundamental resources, including shelter, food, and healthcare, further compounds the difficulties that low-income families encounter in safeguarding their children. The financial constraints that parents face impede their capacity to provide nourishing meals, secure dwellings, and critical healthcare services for their children. As one respondent put it,

“Many families in our neighbourhood struggle to maintain a roof over their heads and put food on the table. Observing children enduring hunger or residing in hazardous, congested conditions evokes profound sorrow. When one is struggling to even make ends meet, allocating resources towards child protection may seem like an unaffordable luxury” (Respondent 7, Grandparent, 2023).

In addition, parents from low-income households are frequently compelled by economic pressures to work multiple jobs or lengthy hours, leaving them with little time or energy to

adequately supervise and care for their children. Consequently, the vulnerability of children to neglect and exploitation may be heightened due to their placement in the care of elder siblings, non-relative carers or unsupervised situations.

#### **4.5.2 Access to Quality Services and Resources**

The influence of income levels on child protection extends beyond financial considerations to include the availability of crucial services and resources necessary for safeguarding children's well-being. Higher-income families often have greater access to a range of high-quality services and resources, such as daycare, healthcare, education, and strong social support networks. One participant highlighted this disparity, reflecting the agreement of seven (7) respondents on the disparities in access to essential services and resources between higher-income and lower-income families.

“Our children are privileged to have access to a variety of recreational opportunities, superior educational institutions, and exceptional healthcare. Without a doubt, having these resources at our disposal to aid in their growth and welfare alleviates a portion of the anxiety. These resources serve to not only improve the capacity of parents to fulfil the fundamental requirements of their children but also furnish them with invaluable resources and support networks to adeptly navigate the intricacies of parenthood” (Respondent 10, social welfare provider, 2023).

On the other hand, families with low income face substantial obstacles when attempting to obtain vital services and resources that are essential for safeguarding children. Their financial constraints frequently impede their capacity to procure high-quality healthcare, education, and caregiving alternatives, thereby rendering them susceptible to deficiencies in support networks.

Furthermore, the exacerbation of pre-existing inequalities in access to critical support services such as mental health services, parental education programmes, and others is possible when income disparities are taken into account. Higher-income families might possess enhanced opportunities to obtain informational resources and enrol in parenting classes, which provide

them with critical competencies and understanding to advocate for the protection and welfare of their children. As a result, low-income families may be incapable of addressing complex issues such as positive parenting techniques and child abuse prevention, due to their limited access to these resources. One respondent indicated that;

“I wish there were more parenting classes or support groups in our community. Parenthood is difficult to navigate on your own, particularly if you are financially poor. However, with access to these resources, we could protect and care for our children differently” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

In addition, disparities in income can hinder the capacity of families to utilise community resources and social support networks, which are vital for advancing child protection. Families with higher socioeconomic status may benefit from informal support networks and community resources, such as youth mentorship initiatives and neighbourhood watch programmes, due to their enhanced social capital and connections. On the contrary, families with low incomes might encounter social isolation and have limited access to supportive communities, which would deprive them of a safety net during critical moments. One participant from a low-income community lamented, “Our local support system is quite limited. Going through difficult times without anyone to turn to for advice or assistance is difficult.”

#### **4.5.3 Community Support and Social Networks**

The impact of income levels on child protection extends beyond individual households to influence the broader community environment, particularly the strength and longevity of social networks. Resilient communities often boast robust social networks comprising parent organisations, neighbourhood associations, and support groups. These networks serve as essential pillars of support for families navigating various challenges. Beyond offering a safety net, they provide ample opportunities for collaboration and access to resources. As voiced by one community member, reflecting the consensus agreement of eight (8) respondents on the vital role of community networks in supporting families.

“Our community is privileged to be close-knit and where all members are concerned for one another. At all times, individuals are inclined to provide assistance or support in any way possible” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

On the other hand, communities with lower incomes may face greater logistical and social support constraints, which can impede families’ ability to obtain aid and navigate intricate child protection matters. Families experiencing financial difficulties may become more susceptible to further vulnerabilities when they lack strong social networks; this can result in their isolation and insufficiency of support systems. A resident from the community remarked,

“It’s difficult to survive without a strong community to rely on. In our vicinity, there are limited resources and organisations that can assist during times of difficulty” (Respondent 1, Father, 2023).

Furthermore, the accessibility and quality of community services and programmes intended to assist families and advance child protection may be adversely affected by income disparities. Families in affluent communities may benefit from an extensive range of services, including counselling services, recreational activities, and parenting courses. These resources can significantly enhance the ability of families to establish a secure and supportive setting for children. On the contrary, communities with lower incomes might encounter scarcities in resources and restricted access to vital services, which could impede their capacity to obtain aid and support. A resident from the community lamented,

“I wish there were more programmes available to assist families like ours. Nearby affordable child care and parenting classes are difficult to find. Our household is perpetually in a state of financial strain, and there is a concern that our children may be deprived of opportunities that their peers are enjoying” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

Moreover, the degree of community engagement and participation in child protection initiatives may be impacted by income levels. There is a possibility that more engaged and active inhabitants of higher-income communities are invested in promoting the safety and well-being of children through advocacy, community organising, and volunteering. In contrast, due to

limited capacity, time, and resources, lower-income communities may encounter obstacles when attempting to mobilise community resources and participation. A respondent indicated that, “The level of volunteerism in the area is quite low. Getting by is difficult for everyone, and it is difficult to find the time to participate in community service projects.”

#### **4.5.4 Policy and Institutional Factors**

The relationship between income levels and child protection practices is intricate, influenced by policy and institutional factors operating at local, national, and international levels. Policies regarding social welfare, child support, housing, employment, and healthcare significantly shape the opportunities and resources available to families, thereby impacting child protection outcomes. Higher-income communities often benefit from robust support systems and comprehensive social welfare policies that enhance child well-being. However, participants from low-income communities frequently express frustration over obstacles in accessing essential services due to deficiencies in social welfare policies. One community member, echoing the sentiments of five (5) respondents, lamented these challenges.

“Our family is further burdened by the difficulty in obtaining affordable housing and healthcare. We feel as though we are perpetually at odds with a system that is designed to work against us” (Respondent 1, Father).

In addition, legal frameworks, child welfare systems, and law enforcement protocols are institutional responses that are indispensable for protecting children and addressing allegations of neglect or abuse. Nevertheless, the sustainability and promptness of these establishments might fluctuate following the socioeconomic setting. Child protection in affluent communities may be enhanced by the presence of responsive law enforcement and adequately financed child welfare agencies. On the other hand, individuals residing in lower-income communities frequently voice apprehensions regarding institutional reactions to child protection matters that are influenced by systemic barriers and biases.

“We feel as though our voices are frequently disregarded when we report concerns about child abuse or neglect. We need institutions that truly understand the challenges we face and are responsive to our needs” (Respondent 6, Mother, 2023).

Advocating for policies that prioritise the rights and well-being of children and addressing structural inequalities are critical measures in advancing community-wide child protection practices that are equitable. Policies that target the underlying factors contributing to income inequality, such as inadequate healthcare access, limited educational opportunities, and unattainable employment, have the potential to foster fairer circumstances for households and mitigate the likelihood of child maltreatment and neglect. Further, institutional responses to child protection are improved, and investments in community-based support services can assist in narrowing the disparity between policy intentions and the actual situation on the ground.

## **4.6 Discussion of the Findings**

### **4.6.1 Assess Community Members’ Knowledge of Child Protection**

The evaluation of community members’ understanding of child protection policies, laws, and regulations has unveiled a spectrum of awareness levels. While some respondents exhibited a detailed grasp of these legal measures, indicating a profound understanding of the framework established to safeguard children from abuse and neglect, others showcased limited knowledge, suggesting a lack of familiarity with existing child protection protocols consistent with (Monaha, 2020). This diversity in awareness is particularly evident in the varying recognition of child abuse and protection risks. Some interviewees demonstrated a heightened sensitivity and proficiency in promptly identifying signs of abuse, underscoring a strong grasp of indicators associated with child maltreatment. Conversely, a subset of participants faced difficulties in identifying these signs, highlighting the need for enhanced educational campaigns and awareness initiatives to equip community members with skills for effectively discerning and responding to potential child protection risks.

The disparities in knowledge concerning reporting mechanisms, such as helplines and relevant authorities, underscore the critical importance of disseminating information more widely. While some individuals exhibited a solid understanding of the channels available for reporting concerns, others displayed limited awareness. This underscores the necessity of ensuring that information about reporting avenues is more broadly accessible, ultimately improving the likelihood that instances of abuse are reported and effectively addressed. The differing levels of understanding of preventive measures against child abuse and neglect point to varying degrees of awareness regarding community-based programs and parental guidance. Some participants were well-informed about and engaged with programs designed to prevent child abuse, indicating an understanding of proactive measures that contribute to ensuring children's safety, aligning with Monaha (2020). Conversely, those with limited knowledge may benefit from improved access to information about preventive initiatives through tailored interventions.

The study also revealed diverse perceptions of roles and responsibilities in child protection within the community. Some participants perceived child protection primarily as the duty of parents or caregivers, reflecting an individualistic perspective. Conversely, others recognised the significance of collective efforts, indicating an awareness of the broader societal and communal structures that contribute to ensuring children's well-being (Crouch et al., 2019). Comparing these findings with previous studies underscores both consistencies and deviations. Like earlier research, disparities in knowledge persist among community members concerning child protection policies and reporting mechanisms (Li et al., 2020). This suggests that previous attempts to raise awareness and disseminate information have not fully addressed these gaps. However, there are positive indications as well. For instance, the acute awareness and prompt identification of child abuse signs demonstrated by certain participants may signify positive outcomes resulting from prior awareness campaigns or educational initiatives (Kalil & Ryan, 2020). From a theoretical perspective, the varied levels of awareness are attributed to social

stratification. Individuals with higher socioeconomic status might have better access to education and information, leading to a more comprehensive understanding (Clark & Smith, 2018). Conversely, those with limited awareness might belong to disadvantaged backgrounds, necessitating targeted interventions to bridge knowledge gaps.

Also, Challenges faced by some participants in recognising signs of abuse are understood through the lens of family stress theory. High levels of stress or familial challenges divert attention from external issues like child protection (Bullinger et al., 2020). Addressing underlying family stressors is crucial for improving a child's well-being.

#### **4.6.2 Child Protection Practices Implemented in Selected Communities of Bolgatanga Municipality**

In the Bolgatanga Municipality, child protection practices are characterised by their multifaceted and community-driven nature, with a range of initiatives led by various stakeholders, including residents, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and religious institutions. Local NGOs organise workshops and training sessions to educate parents and caregivers about child rights and how to identify signs of abuse. Religious institutions also play a significant role by offering moral and educational guidance through community outreach programs. Additionally, community-based child protection committees, formed by residents, collaborate with local authorities to monitor child welfare and respond to cases of abuse or neglect. These efforts create a protective network for vulnerable children. Expanding these initiatives further strengthens community engagement and enhances collaboration between local organisations and governmental bodies, improving overall child protection efforts in the region, as noted by Afum et al. (2023) and Agyei et al. (2020).

This collaborative approach ensures that a wide array of perspectives and resources are brought to the table, enhancing the overall effectiveness of child protection efforts. One notable aspect

of these practices is the strong collaboration between community members and local authorities, such as the police and social welfare departments. This partnership strengthens child protection measures by facilitating timely responses to concerns and enabling swift interventions in cases of potential abuse or neglect. This aligns with the principles of social stratification theory, as it emphasises the role of various societal actors, both from higher and lower socioeconomic strata, coming together to ensure the well-being of children regardless of their background (Kaur & Byard, 2021).

Central to these efforts are child protection awareness campaigns and education programs. These initiatives play a vital role in empowering community members with the knowledge and tools needed to safeguard children's rights and to recognise and report potential instances of abuse (Kaur & Byard, 2021). These programs are seen as strategies aligned with the cultural capital theory, where education and information become a form of cultural capital that can enhance individuals' ability to protect and advocate for their rights and those of others. Support services form another crucial component of the child protection landscape in the municipality.

These services provide a broad array of interventions designed to offer comprehensive support to vulnerable children and their families. For example, counselling services are available to children who have experienced trauma, as well as to parents or caregivers and are typically offered by trained social workers or psychologists at local community centres or healthcare facilities. These counselling sessions focus on helping individuals cope with emotional distress, identify coping strategies, and address any issues related to abuse or neglect. Healthcare services include access to medical care for children in need, particularly those who may have suffered physical harm or neglect and are typically provided at local clinics or hospitals. Educational support is provided through initiatives such as school enrollment programs for children from disadvantaged families, along with tutoring or remedial education services. Material assistance includes the provision of food, clothing, and household goods to families facing economic

hardship, typically distributed through NGOs, local government social services, or religious organisations. These forms of support are particularly targeted at families experiencing poverty or displacement, ensuring that children's basic needs are met while their parents receive the help they need to reduce family stress and improve their capacity to care for their children. Such interventions align with the principles of family stress theory, as they aim to reduce the stressors that families face, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and development of children (Bullinger et al., 2020).

A distinctive feature of child protection practices in this context is the active involvement of children in decision-making processes through child participation and empowerment initiatives. This approach empowers children to have a say in matters that affect them directly, fostering a sense of ownership in their protection and well-being. This resonates with the social stratification theory, as it promotes a more equitable distribution of power and resources within the community. Comparing these results with previous studies (e.g., Aufseeser et al., 2018; Kaur & Byard, 2021), it is evident that the Bolgatanga Municipality's child protection practices demonstrate both continuities and innovations. Similar to prior research, there is a recognition of the importance of community involvement, collaboration between various stakeholders, and the need for awareness and education programs to enhance child protection. However, the emphasis on child participation and empowerment initiatives stands out as a unique approach that highlights the evolving understanding of children's rights and agency in matters concerning their well-being.

#### **4.6.3 How Income Levels Affect Child Protection Practices in Selected Communities**

A thorough analysis of the relationship between community income and child protection practices is necessary, given the significant influence that income inequality and economic disparities have on the ability of families and communities to ensure that children receive appropriate care and protection. Unemployment and financial instability, which are examples of

economic stressors, have the potential to disrupt family dynamics and heighten the likelihood of child maltreatment, neglect, and exploitation. Research conducted by Bywaters et al. (2018) as well as Saar-Heiman and Gupta (2020) has consistently demonstrated that financial difficulties are significant factors in increased family discord and parental anxiety, which in turn increases the probability of child maltreatment. Consistent with this research, this study's findings demonstrate how financial constraints compel parents of low-income households to place survival ahead of comprehensive child protection measures, thereby heightening the vulnerabilities of children residing in such environments. "Child protection often suffers when individuals are financially strapped, uncertain about their ability to pay their bills or where their next meal will come from" (Respondent 10, social welfare provider).

The lack of equitable access to high-quality services and resources exacerbates disparities in child protection practices that are predicated on income. Families with higher incomes frequently enjoy superior access to critical services, including education, healthcare, and child care. These amenities are indispensable in ensuring that children are raised in a secure and nurturing environment. The inequities in child well-being that persist due to the obstacles encountered by children from low-income families in accessing quality healthcare and education are underscored in studies conducted by Saar-Heiman and Gupta (2020) as well as Kuskoff et al. (2022). Consistent with these studies, the results demonstrate that children are disadvantaged when low-income households are unable to acquire necessary resources due to financial constraints. One participant stated,

"It is discouraging to be unable to acquire affordable child care or sufficient healthcare." "As parents, we are consistently faced with the challenge of balancing the financial constraints we face with the expectations of our children" (Respondent 7, Grandparent).

Furthermore, there is a connection between income levels and the robustness and durability of social networks that are integral to the protection of children within communities. For families

encountering difficulties, robust social networks that are prevalent in affluent communities offer emotional comfort, tangible aid, and advocacy. To reduce child maltreatment and neglect, Tetteh (2020) highlight the significance of community support. On the contrary, families in low-income communities frequently experience social isolation and are more prone to additional adversities due to the absence of strong social networks. This study's findings align with the aforementioned research, as they underscore the inequities that exist in social support systems according to one's income. One participant lamented,

“The extent of our local support network is quite restricted.” “It is difficult to endure challenging circumstances in the absence of anyone to whom one can turn for counsel or support” (Respondent 1, Father).

Moreover, at the local, national, and international levels, child protection practices are substantially influenced by policy and institutional factors. Parental leave policies, social welfare policies, and childcare subsidies have the potential to either amplify or diminish the consequences of income inequality on child protection outcomes. Monaha (2020) and Beatriz and Salhi (2019) conducted research that emphasises the significance of collaborative policy frameworks in advancing the welfare of children. Nevertheless, the efficacy of institutional reactions, including child welfare systems and law enforcement protocols, can differ depending on the socioeconomic environment. Consistent with the aforementioned study, these results demonstrate how institutional reactions influenced by systemic obstacles and prejudices can impede activities to safeguard children in low-income communities.

“We feel as though our voices are frequently disregarded when we report concerns regarding child abuse or neglect. Institutes that comprehend our difficulties and are receptive to our requirements are essential” (Respondent 6, Mother).

#### **4.7 Theoretical Implication**

The theoretical implications of the study are underpinned by several key perspectives, shedding light on the relationship between income levels and child protection practices within selected

communities. Social Stratification Theory offers a lens through which to understand the varying levels of awareness and knowledge observed among community members regarding child protection. According to this theory, individuals with higher socioeconomic status often possess better access to education and information, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of child protection policies and practices. This aligns with the findings that some respondents exhibited a detailed grasp of these measures, potentially reflecting their higher access to resources and information (Clark & Smith, 2018). Family Stress Theory provides insight into the challenges faced by certain participants in recognising signs of child abuse. The theory suggests that high levels of stress or familial challenges can divert attention from external issues like child protection. Addressing these underlying family stressors becomes pivotal in improving overall child well-being, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems for families (Bullinger et al., 2020).

Cultural Capital Theory further contributes to our understanding of disparities in knowledge and awareness. Families with higher cultural capital, often associated with higher income, tend to be more informed about available services and are better positioned to advocate for their rights. On the other hand, those with limited cultural capital may face difficulties in accessing crucial information, underlining the importance of equitable access to child protection initiatives (Li et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study's findings align with the principles of collective efforts and societal norms. Diverse perceptions of roles and responsibilities in child protection within the community underscore the evolving societal attitudes. Some participants view child protection as primarily the responsibility of parents or caregivers, while others emphasise the significance of collective community efforts. These diverse perspectives are understood through the lens of cultural capital theory and social stratification theory, emphasising the influence of broader societal norms on shaping child protection practices.

#### **4.8 Practical Implications**

The practical implications derived from the study's findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and community stakeholders, guiding effective child protection strategies within diverse income-level communities. The varying levels of awareness and knowledge surrounding child protection policies, laws, and practices underscore the need for tailored educational campaigns. Policymakers and organisations can focus on developing comprehensive and accessible information materials that cater to different socioeconomic backgrounds. By ensuring the widespread dissemination of information, particularly in low-income communities, the gaps in awareness are bridged, leading to a more informed and vigilant community.

The challenges faced by some participants in recognising signs of child abuse highlight the importance of training and capacity-building programs for community members. Practitioners can organise workshops and training sessions to equip individuals with the skills to identify and respond to potential child protection risks. By addressing these challenges directly, communities can become better equipped to safeguard the well-being of children, especially those facing stressful familial circumstances. The disparities in knowledge concerning reporting mechanisms emphasise the need for accessible reporting avenues. Community stakeholders and policymakers can collaborate to establish user-friendly helplines and support systems that are widely known and easily accessible. This ensures that individuals, regardless of their income levels, can report instances of abuse promptly, leading to swifter interventions.

#### **4.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presents findings concerning community members' knowledge of child protection, child protection practices in selected communities, and the impact of income levels on these practices have been presented and discussed. The assessment of community members' knowledge of child protection policies, laws, and regulations revealed a diverse range of

awareness levels. Some respondents demonstrated a comprehensive understanding, while others exhibited limited knowledge. The varying recognition of child abuse and protection risks further underscored this diversity, with some participants adept at identifying signs of abuse and others requiring additional awareness and education. Discrepancies in the knowledge of reporting mechanisms highlighted the need for broader dissemination of information. Similarly, varying degrees of awareness about preventive measures emphasised the importance of tailored interventions. Diverse perceptions of roles and responsibilities in child protection within the community revealed contrasting viewpoints, reflecting evolving societal norms and attitudes.

In the context of child protection practices implemented in the Bolgatanga Municipality, a community-driven and multifaceted approach emerged. Collaboration between residents, NGOs, religious organisations, and authorities such as the police and social welfare departments formed the foundation of these practices. Child protection awareness campaigns and education programs played a pivotal role in empowering the community, while support services encompassing counselling, healthcare, education, and material aid were instrumental in providing holistic assistance to vulnerable children and families. Notably, child participation and empowerment initiatives actively involved children in decision-making processes, promoting a sense of ownership in their protection. The impact of income levels on child protection practices highlighted several key insights. Social Welfare Service Providers generally perceived their organisations to be adequately prepared for child protection efforts, with targeted support offered to low-income families. The influence of income disparities on child protection practices was acknowledged, and a link between higher income levels and improved outcomes was recognised. However, a concerning trend emerged regarding low-income families' awareness of their rights to access child protection services.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the results and findings of the studies. Subsequently, conclusions for the study were drawn, and recommendations were made. The summary of the study focuses on the overall overview of the study, which includes a short description of the research methods, an overall summary of the study, and a discussion of the findings.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

The study sought to examine how income levels affect child protection practices in the Bolgatanga Municipality using qualitative methods and an interpretive paradigm. The study employed purposive sampling with 11 respondents; data saturation was achieved with the 11<sup>th</sup> respondent. The study utilised structured interviews for the data collection; the interview was done using a hybrid approach, thus both in-person and online, to ensure open participation. After the data collection, the study employed thematic analysis to provide a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data obtained.

##### 5.2.1 Assess Community Members' Knowledge of Child Protection

The assessment of community members' knowledge of child protection policies, laws, and regulations reveals a varied spectrum of awareness levels. Some individuals demonstrate a profound understanding of legal measures, effectively recognising and responding to child abuse indicators. However, others exhibit limited knowledge, necessitating enhanced educational campaigns. Disparities exist in comprehending reporting mechanisms, highlighting the need for broader dissemination of information. While some grasp preventive measures against child abuse, others lack awareness, suggesting that tailored interventions are crucial. Diverse perceptions of roles and responsibilities emerge, with some emphasising parental duty and others recognising collective societal efforts. Comparing previous research shows persistent knowledge

gaps, although certain participants' acute awareness indicates positive impacts of prior initiatives. Socioeconomic status influences awareness levels, potentially explaining disparities. Challenges in recognising abuse signs link to family stress, underlining the importance of addressing underlying stressors for child well-being.

### **5.2.2 Child Protection Practices Implemented in Selected Communities of Bolgatanga Municipality**

Child protection practices in Bolgatanga Municipality are marked by a multifaceted, community-driven approach involving various stakeholders like residents, NGOs, and religious institutions. Collaborative efforts enhance child protection by incorporating diverse perspectives and resources. Notably, community members collaborate closely with authorities like police and social welfare departments, enabling swift responses to potential abuse cases. Child protection awareness campaigns and education programs empower individuals with the knowledge to safeguard children's rights and report abuse. Support services encompass counselling, healthcare, and material assistance, aligning with family stress theory by addressing stressors affecting vulnerable families. The distinctive involvement of children in decision-making through empowerment initiatives fosters ownership and aligns with social stratification theory's emphasis on equitable power distribution. These practices exhibit continuities with previous research while uniquely emphasising child participation, reflecting an evolving understanding of children's rights and well-being agency.

### **5.2.3 How Income Levels Affect Child Protection Practices in Selected Communities**

An in-depth analysis of the relationship between income levels and child protection practices demonstrates that economic disparities have far-reaching consequences for communities and families. Economic pressures, including unemployment and financial instability, have a detrimental impact on family dynamics and heighten the likelihood of child maltreatment,

neglect, and exploitation. This is consistent with prior studies that have demonstrated the substantial influence of financial challenges in intensifying familial discord and parental anxiety, which ultimately endangers the welfare of children. Disparities in child protection practices are exacerbated by unequal access to vital resources and services. Families belonging to higher-income brackets generally have more favourable circumstances regarding critical services such as healthcare, education, and child care. Conversely, low-income households encounter difficulties in obtaining essential resources, thereby perpetuating inequities in the well-being of children. Child protection efforts are influenced by the strength of social networks within communities, which differ according to income levels. Wealthy communities possess strong social networks that offer tangible assistance, advocacy, and emotional support, thereby reducing the occurrence of child maltreatment and neglect.

Conversely, low-income communities are characterised by social isolation and increased vulnerabilities, which is attributed to the lack of robust social networks. Child protection practices at different levels are significantly impacted by policy and institutional factors. However, the efficacy of these practices is compromised by socioeconomic factors. While collaborative policy frameworks and supportive institutional responses are vital for promoting child welfare, institutional reactions that are influenced by systemic barriers and biases may hinder efforts to safeguard children in low-income communities. This is supported by testimonies that underscore the difficulty of addressing this issue. To promote equitable child protection practices and safeguard the welfare of all children, irrespective of socioeconomic status, it is imperative to facilitate concerted actions across various spheres, including policy reform, community support initiatives, and institutional responsiveness to address the intricate dynamics between income levels and child protection practices.

### 5.3 Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of child protection practices in the selected communities of Bolgatanga Municipality. The assessment of community members' knowledge of child protection policies reveals a range of awareness levels, highlighting the need for targeted educational campaigns and enhanced dissemination of information. The multifaceted and community-driven nature of child protection practices underscores the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, resulting in a comprehensive and effective approach. The active involvement of children in decision-making processes through empowerment initiatives showcases a progressive and inclusive perspective. The study also sheds light on the significant influence of income levels on child protection practices. Social Welfare Service Providers demonstrate a positive perception of their organisations' readiness, with accessible resources and training contributing to their confidence. However, the awareness gaps among low-income families regarding their rights to access child protection services call for urgent attention to bridge these disparities.

### 5.4 Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study on the dynamics of child protection practices in the selected communities of Bolgatanga Municipality, several recommendations are made to improve the current system.

1. Enhanced Community Awareness and Education Programs: The study's findings emphasise the need for targeted and comprehensive community awareness and education programs on child protection. Given the varied spectrum of awareness levels among community members, it is imperative to design and implement campaigns that effectively convey information about child protection policies, laws, reporting mechanisms, and preventive measures. These initiatives should utilise diverse communication channels, including workshops, seminars, community meetings, and digital platforms, to reach a

wider audience. Collaborative efforts involving NGOs, religious institutions, and local authorities can help maximise the impact of these programs. By enhancing community members' understanding of child protection, these initiatives can empower individuals to recognise and respond to potential abuse cases, bridging existing knowledge gaps.

2. **Strengthening Support Services for Vulnerable Families:** To address the barriers faced by low-income families in accessing child protection services, there is a critical need to strengthen and expand support services. Organisations should focus on providing targeted assistance to vulnerable families, including counselling, healthcare, and material support. Efforts should be directed at alleviating family stressors and addressing the socio-economic challenges that can contribute to child abuse and neglect. Collaboration between Social Welfare Service Providers, NGOs, and relevant government agencies can enhance the availability and accessibility of these services. Additionally, awareness campaigns specifically tailored to low-income families can inform them about available support systems, empowering them to seek assistance when needed.
3. **Promoting Child Participation and Empowerment:** The study's recognition of the value of child participation and empowerment initiatives presents an opportunity to further amplify children's voices and agency in matters concerning their well-being. Schools, community organisations, and local authorities should collaborate to create platforms for meaningful engagement of children in decision-making processes related to child protection. These initiatives can include child advisory councils, workshops, and awareness campaigns designed to promote children's rights and encourage their active involvement. By fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among children, communities can create a more inclusive and responsive child protection environment.

### 5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should delve deeper into exploring the nuanced factors that contribute to the disparities in community members' awareness and understanding of child protection policies and practices. Investigating the impact of targeted educational interventions on closing knowledge gaps among different socioeconomic groups provides valuable insights for designing more effective awareness campaigns. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term outcomes of child participation initiatives and support services on child well-being and protection offers a more comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness over time. Further research also explores the influence of cultural norms and values on parenting strategies and their implications for child protection, contributing to a more culturally sensitive approach to safeguarding children's rights and safety.



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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR THE STUDY



**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**  
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCES (ECBAS)

*P. O. Box LG 1195, Legon, Accra, Ghana*

Ref. No: ECBAS 067/22-23

14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023

Miss Bernice Akwele Sowah  
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences  
University of Ghana  
Legon, Accra

Dear Miss Sowah,

**ECBAS 067/22-23: INCOME LEVELS AND CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICES IN  
SELECTED COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE BOLGATANGA MUNICIPALITY**

This is to inform you that the above referenced study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for Basic and Applied Sciences for a full board review and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

**Expiry Date:** 11/08/2024  
**On Agenda for:** Initial Submission  
**Date of Submission:** 12/06/2023  
**ECBAS Action:** Approved  
**Reporting:** Annually

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dorcas Osei-Safo  
ECBAS Chairperson



INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

**APPENDIX B**

**PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA



Official Use Only  
Protocol number

COLLEGE OF BASIC AND APPLIED

SCIENCES

**Ethics Committee for Basic and Applied Sciences (ECBAS)**

**PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM**

Section A- BACKGROUND  
INFORMATION

Title of Study:	Income Levels and Child Protection Practices in Selected Communities within the Bolgatanga Municipality
Student Investigator:	Bernice Akwele Sowah
Certified Protocol Number	ECBAS 067/22-23

Section B- CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**General Information about Research**

I am an MPhil Home Science student from the University of Ghana, undertaking a study on Income Levels and Child Protection Practices, and I would like you to participate.

This study seeks to examine the extent to which a family's income level can affect how children are protected in selected communities in the Bolgatanga Municipality. The study will involve parents and staff of Social Welfare service providers in the municipality. Participants must be 18 years and above and should have a basic understanding of the English language. The study will use an interview guide and questionnaire to gather data from participants. The estimated time for data collection will be 30 to 45 minutes. Generally, participants are to answer questions based on their views on child protection, the various child protection practices they implement, and how their income levels affect how their children are protected.

### **Benefits of the study**

The findings of this study will prompt policymakers, government, and non-government agencies to contribute to a dialogue about the need for collective participation in the execution of child protection operations. Again, this study will give an external evidence base for society and academics to resort to when discussing child protection. The findings could also inform the community sensitisation programs and capacity-building activities of Non-governmental organisations such as Courage Community, enabling them to tailor their interventions to the specific needs and challenges of the communities they serve.

### **Risk of the study**

This study does not pose any risk to participants in any way; however, some questions might seem intrusive. If you feel uncomfortable sharing such information during the interview or while filling out the questionnaire, you are free to opt out of the study.

### **Confidentiality**

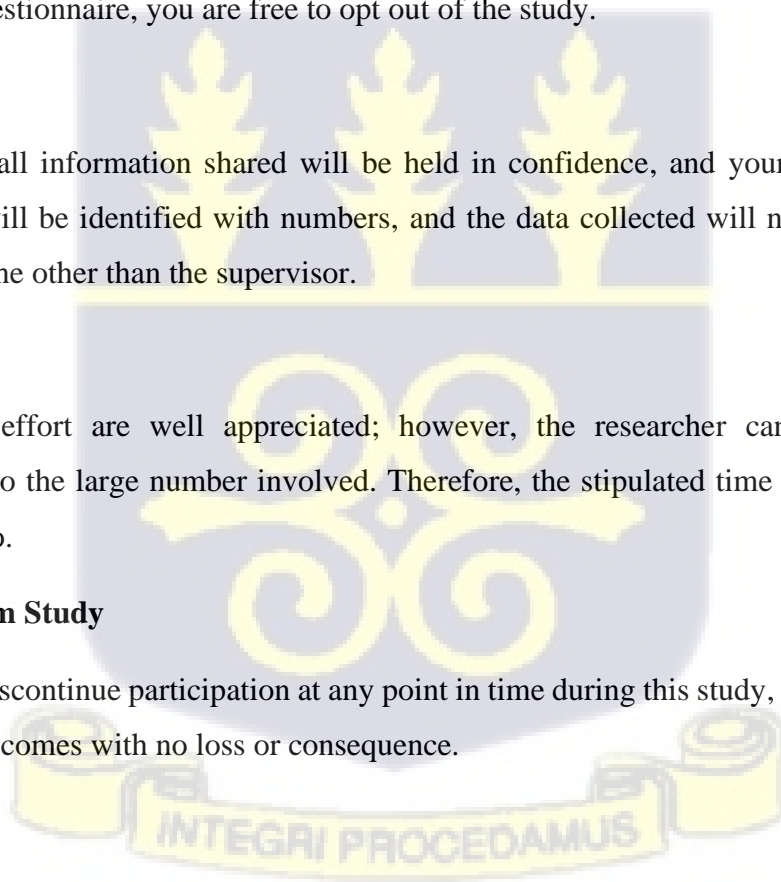
Please note that all information shared will be held in confidence, and your identity will be protected. You will be identified with numbers, and the data collected will not be misused or shared with anyone other than the supervisor.

### **Compensation**

Your time and effort are well appreciated; however, the researcher cannot compensate participants due to the large number involved. Therefore, the stipulated time for the interview will be adhered to.

### **Withdrawal from Study**

You are free to discontinue participation at any point in time during this study, as it is voluntary. Your withdrawal comes with no loss or consequence.



**Contact for Additional Information**

For further information and clarification, kindly contact the following persons:

Bernice Akwele Sowah (Student Investigator)

BSc. Home Science

P.O. Box 306, Bolga

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

Phone number: +233 54 152 3885

Email: [basowah011@st.ug.edu.gh](mailto:basowah011@st.ug.edu.gh), [sowahbernice@gmail.com](mailto:sowahbernice@gmail.com)

Dr Vivian Tackie-Ofosu (Supervisor)

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

P.O. Box LG 91, Legon, Accra

Phone number: +233 24 450 6608

Email: [vtackie-ofosu@ug.edu.gh](mailto:vtackie-ofosu@ug.edu.gh)

- If you have any issues with your rights as a participant, you can contact the address below:

**Administrator, Ethics Committee for Basic and Applied Sciences**

**College of Basic and Applied Sciences**

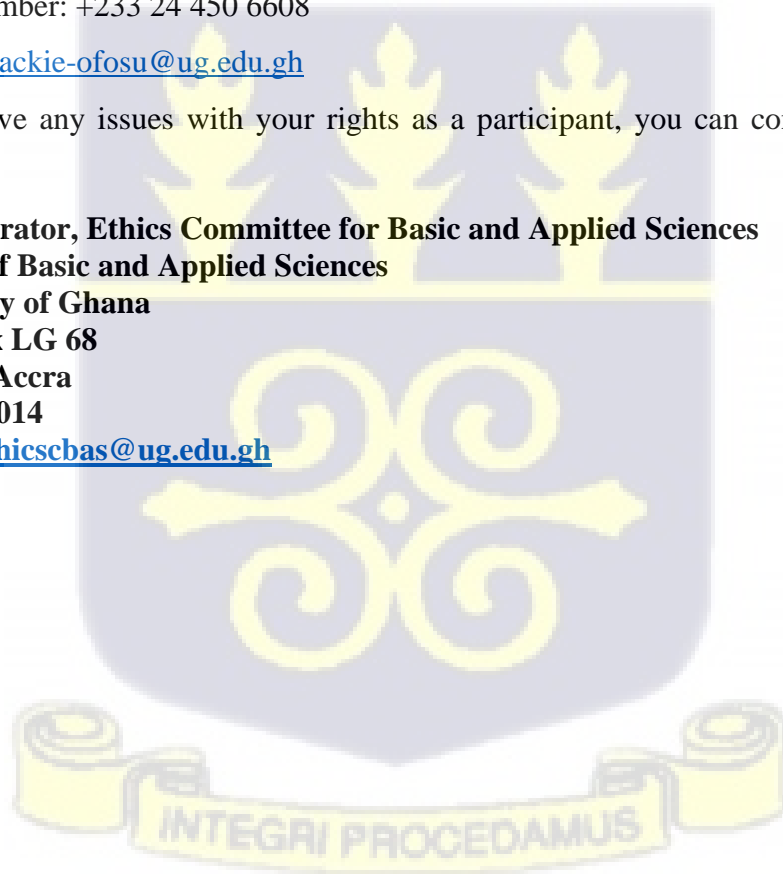
**University of Ghana**

**P. O. Box LG 68**

**Legon – Accra**

**IP No.: 3014**

**Email: [ethicscbas@ug.edu.gh](mailto:ethicscbas@ug.edu.gh)**



Section C- VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

**“I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and I am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward to participate in this study. I have not waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records.”**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature or mark of volunteer

Date

**If volunteers cannot read the form themselves, a witness must sign here:**

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered, and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of witness

Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person who obtained Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person who obtained Consent

Date

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

#### Section A: Background Information

- i. Community name:
- ii. Gender of respondent:
- iii. Number of children:
- iv. Relationship with child(ren):
- v. Years of caregiving:
- vi. Monthly income level (Amount GHC):

#### Section B: Assess Community Members' Knowledge of Child Protection

1. How do you understand the term “child protection”?
2. Are you aware of any laws, policies, or programs related to child protection in your community?
3. In your opinion, what are the signs that a child is being abused or mistreated?
4. What actions would you take if you suspect a child in your community is being mistreated?
5. Have you or anyone you know ever reported a suspected case of child maltreatment? If yes, can you describe what happened?
6. What resources do you know are available in your community to help children who have been mistreated?

**Section C: Identify Child Protection Practices Implemented in Selected Communities**

1. In your opinion, what are the most effective ways to protect children in your community from harm?
2. What are some common child protection practices that are implemented in your community?
3. Who is responsible for implementing child protection practices in your community?
4. Are there any challenges or barriers to implementing child protection practices in your community? If yes, what are they?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving child protection practices in your community?

**SECTION D: Income Levels**

1. In what ways do you think income levels can impact a family's ability to provide adequate care and protection for their children?
2. Do you think families with higher income levels generally have better child protection outcomes than those with lower income levels? Why or why not?
3. In your opinion, how can poverty and financial stress affect parenting behaviours and attitudes towards child protection?
4. Do you believe that families with higher income levels are more likely to seek help or support when they suspect a child is being mistreated? Why or why not?
5. Can you describe any instances where financial stress has affected you or a family's ability to provide adequate care and protection for their children?
6. Do you think any child protection practices are more challenging for families with lower income levels to implement? Can you explain why?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICE PROVIDERS

**Section A: Background Information**

- i. Community:
- ii. Gender of staff:
- iii. Role:
- iv. Years of working

**Section B: Assess Staff Members' Knowledge of Child Protection**

1. Can you describe your understanding of the term “child protection”?
2. What laws, policies, or programs related to child protection are you familiar with in your community?
3. What are the signs that a child is being abused or mistreated?
4. What steps would you take if you suspect a child in your community is being mistreated?
5. Have you ever handled a case of suspected child maltreatment? If yes, can you describe what happened?
6. What resources are available in your organisation to help children who have been mistreated?

**Section C: Identify Child Protection Practices Implemented in Selected Communities**

1. In your opinion, what are the most effective ways to protect children in your community from harm?
2. What are some common child protection practices that are implemented in your organisation?
3. Who is responsible for implementing child protection practices in your organisation?

4. Are there any challenges or barriers to implementing child protection practices in your organisation? If yes, what are they?
5. What suggestions do you have for improving child protection practices in your organisation?

**Section D: Income Levels and Child Protection Services**

1. How would you describe the income levels of families in your community?
2. In your opinion, how does income level affect child protection practices in your community?
3. Can you share any examples of how income level has affected child protection practices in your community?
4. Describe your opinion on whether low-income families face more barriers to accessing child protection services than high-income families.
5. What suggestions do you have for improving child protection practices in low-income communities?
6. Can you share any success stories of child protection practices being implemented in low-income communities?
7. How can organisations and community members work together to improve child protection practices in low-income communities?

