

Phenomenology of Child Labour in Estates, Farms and Plantations in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Analysis of Tanganda and Eastern Highlands Tea Estates

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Abstract : The global efforts to end child labour have been increasingly challenged by adages of global capitalism, inequalities and poverty affecting the global south. In the face the of rising inequalities whose origin can be explained from historical and political economy analysis between the poor and the rich countries, child labour is also on the rise particularly on the global south. The socio-economic and political context of Zimbabwe has undergone serious transition from colonial times through the post-independence normally referred to as the transition period up to the present day. These transitions have aided companies and entities in the business and agriculture sector to exploit child labour while country provided conditions that enhance child labour due to vulnerability of children and anomic child welfare system that plagued the country. Children from marginalised communities dominated by plantations and farms are affected most. This paper explores the experiences and perceptions of children working in tea estates, plantations and farms, and the adults who formerly worked in these plantations during their childhood to share their experiences and perceptions on child labour in Zimbabwe. Childhood theories that view children as apprentices and a human rights perspectives were employed to interrogate the concept of childhood, child labour and poverty alleviation strategies. Phenomenological research design was adopted to describe the experiences of children working in plantations and interpret the meanings they have on their work and livelihoods. The paper drew form 30 children from two plantations through semi-structured interviews and 15 key informant interviews from civil society organisations, international labour organisation, adults who formerly worked in the plantations and the personnel of the plantations. The findings of the study revealed that children work on the farms as an alternative model for survival against economic challenges while the majority cited that poverty compel them to work and get their fees and food paid for. Civil society organisations were of the view that child rights are violated and the welfare system of the country is malfunctional. The perceptions of the majority of the children interviewed are that the system on the plantations is better and this confirmed the socio-constructivist theory that views children as apprentices. The study recommended child sensitive policies and welfare regime that protects children from exploitation together with policing and legal measures that secure child rights.

Keywords : child labour, child rights, phenomenology, poverty reduction

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