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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### CHILDREN AT WORK IN THE ARTISANAL FABRICS OF CHARCOAL WOOD IN TIASSALE, IVORY COAST

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on child labor in artisanal coal factories, with the aim of contributing to a better knowledge of children at risk by presenting the working conditions of children in artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé. This research work was based on a sample of 90 respondents and was determined using the reasoned choice method. Four (4) modes of data collection were retained: documentary research, observation, questionnaire, and interview. As for the analysis of the data, the mode of treatment is qualitative and quantitative. At the outcome level, it was noted that the activities carried out by the children include the collection of the stems of wood, the participation in the construction of the kiln, the maintenance of the furnace, the collection of the charcoal, and the transport of the bags of charcoal. Concerning the working conditions, it was noted that the children carried out a dangerous work because of its arduousness and the long hours devoted to the activities. Also, the environment in which this work is carried out, namely the bush, exposes them to accidents of all kinds. Finally, it was an unpaid work for majority of them. As explanatory factors of child labor, the study shows that poverty, the desire to teach children a trade, and the trafficking and exploitation of these children are the causes of their daily involvement in the activities of artisanal coal factories in Tiassalé.

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## INTRODUCTION

As part of the commemoration of the twenty-sixth (26th) anniversary of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CIDE, 2015), international opinion continues to mobilize to ensure that children's rights are respected. And among the rights to live as a family, that of being respected in their integrity, to go to school, to be cared for, to play, to laugh, to give their opinion..., to live like a child (International Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990). This mobilization also seeks to curb the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of economic exploitation and in particular child labour.

**Child labour, a global phenomenon:** Child labour is a global phenomenon that has taken on considerable proportions over the centuries (Allamine, 2010). It is in focus, with particular attention to extreme forms of child exploitation. According to the International Labour Organization, 168 million children are in work situations worldwide. Africa is the continent most affected by child labour and the one for which progress is slowest (OIT, 2015).

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According to IPEC (2010), 65 million children are engaged in an activity to be prohibited in sub-Saharan Africa, or one in four children. In the Arab States, there are 12 million child workers. Asia Pacific is also not spared, with 113 million children still working, or one in eight children. In Europe, it is countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine where children are forced to work. Latin America and the Caribbean are the regions that have made the most progress: 14 million children work there, or one in ten. Child labour is thus a universal social fact that is perceived by some as a threat to children's rights (BIT, 2006,a). The OIT (Id), claims that 86 million of them are in dangerous jobs: they work in mines, factories... or use chemicals without protection. As a result, child labour is currently a major concern (OIT, Id). Aware of its scale, international organizations, public authorities and legislators have shown their common will to combat it (CIDE, Id). The legal arsenal has thus been greatly expanded, both at the national and international levels. However, due to the images, stories of working children that are omnipresent in the media, scientific publications have been devoted to researching the determinants of child labour.

**Multidisciplinary approaches to the etiology of child labour:** Several authors have made assumptions about the employment of children in the labour market.

To this end, Abega (2007) points out that the cultural diversities, the socio-economic context and the traditional organisation specific to certain regions, would constitute a pillar of motivation for choosing child labour. Thus, for the author, a strongly established custom in cultures is to entrust his child to a close relative to take care of his education. This fact corresponds to what demographers call "trust". In the same vein, Pilon (1995) points to the negative consequences inherent in fostering. Indeed, for Pilon, fostering is not without risk of "psychological suffering" for the child; everything will depend on the nature of the emotional relationship established with the various members of the foster family and the personality of each one. In general, foster care does not protect the children concerned from abuse, ill-treatment and other forms of exploitation.

In addition, Boursin (2002) states that the phenomenon of impoverishment of populations and the search for survival strategies encourage children to remain in care. But the greed of some adults has generated a "diversion" of these traditional practices to give rise to abuses of which children are the first victims. These approaches show that fostering is more economically than educationally motivated. In addition, families unable to afford the cost of educating their offspring force their children to approach and experiment with other alternatives, including work. Manier (2003), which is abundant in this sense, attests that child labour is perceived as a social learning experience that is not the same in different cultures. It seems to be accepted in many developing countries where parents have not been to school. Thus, child labour, far from being seen as a "scourge", is valued because it allows learning while the education system does not necessarily lead to good employment; this conception is often that of the poor. Children's perceptions of it also vary: there are those who suffer from their condition but others who are proud to help their families or learn a skill (BIT, 2002b). As we can see with these authors, the most commonly mentioned factor, and therefore the most controversial, refers to household poverty. Poverty is, according to Brisset (2000), "undoubtedly the first of all causes of child labour". Children work because their parents are too poor to attend school (Bonnet, 1992; Grootaert 1998; Basu & Van, 1998).

At the same time, households in financial difficulty cannot do without the economic contribution of their children. Many children are then forced to work to help their families meet the daily needs of the household. Survival strategies are put in place to avoid or minimize the risk of impoverishment or to ensure the family's subsistence. Therefore, the lower the income, the greater the probability that the child will work. Empirically, several facts seem to confirm the predominant aspect of poverty. First, at the macroeconomic level, the various data on the incidence of child labour and the standard of living suggest a strong correlation between the two. Child labour declines significantly as the family's standard of living improves (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005). While child labour is important in low-income countries, such as most sub-Saharan African countries, the number of child workers is lower for countries with higher incomes. We note with Bhalotra (2000) that when labour supply is low in relation to demand, children's market wages are high. Poor households with insufficient income are encouraged to send more children into the labour market (Basu, 1999). This results in a decrease in child wages in the market.

To this end, Manier (Op. Cit.) concludes by stating that child labour is one of the survival strategies of populations. In view of the above, can we say that the deterioration in household living conditions explains the use of child labour? In the face of the difficult economic situation characterized by a drastic drop in household incomes, heads of households in general are called upon to deploy survival strategies. One of them is to increase the sources of income in households by sometimes using child labour. Faced with this imbroglio, households select alternatives to fight poverty. One of these alternatives is to solicit children's contributions to the economic life of the household through their increasing involvement in the labour market. This alternative is mainly aimed at sectors that do not require a particular qualification. Child labour is therefore on the rise. The aim is that each child should contribute productively to the expansion of the family base. In short, it should be noted that the explanation for child labour remains multifactorial.

**Measures to combat child labour:** In order to combat this phenomenon, efforts have been made at the level of States and international organizations. Indeed, several international and national legal texts have been adopted to condemn or regulate child labour in view of its negative effects on the child's intellectual, moral and emotional development and future. Among these measures is the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). This international programme set up by the OIT (1992) aimed to abolish child labour, giving priority to the worst forms of labour. In addition, we have the Anti-Slavery International programme, which aims to abolish child slavery, and ECPAT to combat the sexual exploitation of children, etc. In 2006, governments, workers' and employers' organizations committed themselves to eliminating the worst forms of child labour, including hazardous work, by 2016. As a result, in 2010 the international community adopted a roadmap for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016. At the national level, Côte d'Ivoire has adopted a set of regulations, decrees, ordinances and orders for the elimination of child labour and the protection of children and adolescents. However, despite these many legislative and social measures taken to combat child labour, the phenomenon is growing in scope and extends to several sectors of activity (OIT, 2010). Children are increasingly engaged in the labour market.

**The research question and objectives:** Why, despite these efforts, are children at work in many parts of the world and in Côte d'Ivoire? It is to answer this question that we are conducting this research. The study is therefore part of the "cause of children in difficulty", in particular that of childhood in danger, through the problem of the use of their labour force in charcoal factories in Tiassalé. The objective of this research is to contribute to a better knowledge of children at risk by explaining the working conditions of children in artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé. Specifically, it aims to present the socio-demographic characteristics of children and their families, the activities carried out by children and their working conditions in artisanal charcoal factories, and to describe and identify the factors that explain child labour in artisanal charcoal factories.

**The hypothesis and theoretical reference framework:** To achieve these objectives, the following research hypothesis will be tested: the socio-economic and cultural difficulties of parents explain child labour in artisanal charcoal factories in

Tiassalé. To account for the subject under study, we chose Cohen & Felson's (1979) theory of criminal opportunity. Indeed, this theory indicates that the social environment provides offenders with opportunities to exploit vulnerabilities that arise to commit a crime. Thus, the reaction of the social environment seems to reinforce them and the absence of reaction or the laxity of social regulatory institutions seems to be similar to opportunities for action. The theory of criminal opportunities seems fundamental in explaining the subject of study. It will shed light on whether the emergence of child labour in Tiassalé can be seen as the result of criminal and rational behaviour that exploits the vulnerability of children because of their physical and moral characteristics. The vulnerability that offenders exploit in the case of child labour is reflected in a range of situations such as proximity to the victim, lack of remuneration, lack of qualifications of children and the availability of an abundant labour force. This theory establishes a causal relationship between these opportunities for vulnerability and child labour. Moreover, the exploitation of these vulnerabilities is made possible by the relative impact of policies, the action of social defence and child labour institutions, and the absence of family control.

## METHODOLOGY

**The study site:** Presented as one of the first historic cities in Côte d'Ivoire after Grand-Bassam, Bingerville, Abidjan and Dabou, Tiassalé enjoys a very strategic geographical location: it is located at equal distance from the two capitals (120 km from Abidjan and Yamoussoukro). The geographical coordinates of Tiassalé are 5°53'54" N and 4°49'42" W in DMS (degrees, minutes, seconds) or 5.89833 and -4.82833 (in decimal degrees). The municipality is crossed by major national roads that give it access to all regions of Côte d'Ivoire and neighbouring countries. Tiassalé's history is partly confused with that of the colonization of Côte d'Ivoire. Built in 1893 as a subdivision, Tiassalé was for a long time the most important commercial crossroads where all colonial trade took place. French explorers were travelling up the Bandama River via Grand Lahou to reach the Tiassalé trading post. Built as a municipality since 1985, Tiassalé is now one of the municipalities that, despite their many assets, have not really been able to take off for development. Consequently, Tiassalé needs to open up to other municipalities both in Côte d'Ivoire and abroad, in order to establish trade relations that can be mutually enriching. The Tiassalé Department is part of the Lagoon Region. It essentially comprises two Sub-Prefectures and two municipalities, namely the municipality of Tiassalé, which is the capital, and the municipality of Taabo. The population is estimated at more than 160,000 indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants. The municipality of Tiassalé has many economic assets that support a dense and varied set of activities (Source: jumelage.africa-web.org). Moreover, Tiassalé is today a city wounded by the effects of the previous socio-political crises that shook the nation. The population is confronted with fears symbolized by delinquency, drug and alcohol addiction, AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), prostitution, violence and precariousness. The majority of families in Tiassalé live below the extreme poverty line. According to the ETSC<sup>1</sup> (2005), 50% of the inhabitants of

Tiassalé live below the poverty line. According to the same report, 51% of households in urban areas (12.3%) and 39.7% in rural areas (39.7%) live below the poverty line. This poverty profile shows that precariousness has become the daily life commonly shared by many families in Tiassalé. This unfavourable situation has had significant consequences. The above-mentioned report states that "the economic crisis, marked by unemployment and a decline in purchasing power, has considerably reduced paternal authority to the benefit of women, who are more active in this context". Agriculture is one of the best alternatives for coping with household poverty. Thus, for the survival needs of households, several children are put to work in the workplace, particularly in banana, pineapple, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, rubber trees, avocado, papaya, and artisanal charcoal factories (Source: jumelage.africa-web.org).

**The target population and study sample:** The choice of the study population was made with a view to diversifying data sources. Thus, this choice focused on studying a fraction of the population with the same characteristics as the total population. As a result, we conducted a sampling. For the selection of the sample, the sampling method known as the reasoned choice method was used. It gives the researcher the freedom to interview people with the characteristics required for the survey. A total of 90 people from different social categories as mentioned below were interviewed:

**Data collection instruments:** Four (4) data collection techniques were used in this study: literature research, observation, questionnaire and interview. These research techniques made it possible to gather rich and varied information on the subject under study. The literature search consisted of consulting literature closely related to child labour in several sectors such as trade, agriculture, etc. The contribution of these documentary sources has been invaluable, allowing us to see the importance and challenge of our research. However, it is important to note that the documentary research on this subject was very difficult because the literature in this field is very extensive and not specific to an area of activity such as artisanal charcoal factories. Nevertheless, we were first able to consult magazines, books and archives dealing with the phenomenon of child labour.

These documentary sources were consulted in some institutions such as: the Centre de Recherches et d'Actions pour la Paix, the French cultural centre, the library of the Embassy of the United States of America. Then, theses, dissertations, scientific articles were consulted on the Internet. Finally, we used reports from some national or international institutions and ONG (OIT, BIT, IPEC, UNICEF, etc.) on the Internet. As for the observation, it was direct and indirect. These two approaches were used in our investigations. Indeed, the indirect approach was the subject of a questionnaire. With regard to direct observation, we visited several sites of artisanal charcoal factories, where we were able to take part in the life of the phenomenon studied and influence it. This technique made it possible to see the difference between what is said and the reality of the phenomenon, in order to better understand it in all its contours and dimensions. Thus, we were able to gather information on their realities, opinions and listen to the recommendations they made to understand the phenomenon. It is also important to note that this step lasted three (3) months. Then, the questionnaire made it possible to ask the study sample a series of questions by means of questionnaires, relating to the subject of the study in order to

<sup>1</sup>The Technical Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (ETSC) for the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) published a report in September 2005 on household poverty in Tiassalé based on participatory evaluations among the populations of the said commune.

collect information on child labour in artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé. The choice and number of questions respond to a need to take into account the specificities of the survey population. Questions relating to several specific aspects of the subject have made it possible to identify the social logics that explain this phenomenon and their consequences for children in order to propose effective solutions to combat it. Finally, we used the exploratory interviews, which were useful, particularly for the first steps in the field of investigation and in the construction of the problem. The semi-directive interview was used to allow interviewees to express themselves freely by refocusing the questions on the research objectives. An interview guide was sent to members of ONG (Save the Children, Mouvement du Nid, BICE (Bureau International Catholique pour l'Enfance)), etc. They were invited to express their perceptions and their contribution to the fight against this phenomenon. The interviews also focused on specific issues of child vulnerability, causes and consequences, and solutions to mitigate it.

**Data analysis methods:** To analyze the data collected, we used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative analysis made it possible to analyse the ideas expressed by the respondents in order to better understand the logic of the actors. The emphasis was therefore placed on the experience of individuals in relation to the phenomenon studied. This use of the qualitative approach has been a means of constructing the social situations revealed by the questions whose better analysis can help to understand and explain the subject of study. The quantitative analysis made it possible to process the information collected on child labour issues. The aim was to exploit the data in terms of figures (frequency or data distribution) and the quantitative distribution of factors and the statistical processing of certain data. Thus, we obtained orders of magnitude that made it possible to report on the subject under study. These data were processed using Excel software.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The results are presented in three (3) main areas, including the socio-demographic characteristics of children and their families, the activities carried out by children and their working conditions in artisanal charcoal factories, and the factors that explain child labour in artisanal charcoal factories.

**Socio-demographic characteristics of children and their families:** This part of the study is devoted to describing, on the one hand, the characteristics of children working in artisanal charcoal factories in order to know their age, level of education, nationality, ethnic group, and religion. And on the other hand, to describe the family environment of these children.

**Table 1. Distribution of the sample of the study population**

	Social categories interviewed						Total
	Adult coal workers	Customers of coalmines	Children	ONG	Population	Police	
Tiassalé	20	10	35	5	12	8	90

Source: Surveys, 2017

### Age and education level of children

**Age of children:** The descriptive analysis of the data in Table 2 shows that, of 35 children interviewed working in artisanal charcoal factories, their age is mainly in three groups, namely [10-14[years, 14-16[years and 16-18[years].

The first category cited represents 25.72% of the target population. The second age group represents 28.57% of the target population. Finally, the last age category, 45.71% of the target population. The average age is 13 years. Overall, these data show that children aged 16-18 years represent the largest segment of the population of children involved in the work of artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé. We therefore note that among the young respondents, they are characterized by their young age, the age of secondary school. It is also the age at which many children leave the Ivorian school system. Thus, we are dealing with young children and adolescents who are on the margins of the normal socialization process. This age group also represents the period of the best strengths of these children.

**Educational level of children:** The results of the descriptive analysis of the data in Table 3 show that of the 35 children interviewed working in artisanal charcoal factories, none of them have reached tertiary level, and 5.71 per cent have reached secondary level. Only 28.57% have reached the primary level. Better still, 65.72% of children have not attended school, which could constitute a handicap to their social integration. The educational level of the children in our study is very low. Indeed, analysis of these data shows that the majority of children are illiterate or have been withdrawn from school very early (cumulative percentage of out-of-school and primary level is 94.29%). Through the interviews, we found that this low level of education is mainly due to parental poverty. Thus, these illiterate minors are forced to work in order to take care of themselves.

### Religion and nationality of children

**Children's religion:** The results of the descriptive analysis of the data in Table 4 show that, of the 35 children interviewed working in artisanal charcoal factories, they belong to a religious community: Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Muslim, and Animist. The most represented religions are respectively: the Muslim religion 42.85%, Animist 20%, Catholic 14.29%, Evangelical 8.57%, or 80%. Such a high cumulative percentage could indicate the presence of strong religious influence among working children in artisanal charcoal factories.

**Nationality of children:** The results of the descriptive analysis of the data in Table 5 show that of the 35 children interviewed who work in artisanal charcoal factories, 71.43 per cent of these children are ECOWAS nationals. However, it should be noted that a significant proportion, 28.57% of the children interviewed, are Ivorians. Ivorians are less represented than ECOWAS nationals. This less significant presence of Ivorians compared to ECOWAS nationals is explained by the fact that in the past, according to the respondents, foreigners were the only ones working in artisanal charcoal factories.

**Children's family environment:** The field surveys made it possible to observe the families of children working in artisanal charcoal factories. These observations focused on the size of families and their ability to support themselves.

**Size of families:** The socio-demographic status of the families of these children is the best indicator for understanding their

**Table 2. Distribution of children by age**

Ages	Numbers	Percentages (%)
[10-14]	9	25,72
[14-16]	10	28,57
[16-18]	16	45,71
Total	35	100

Source: Surveys, 2017

**Table 3. Distribution of children by level of education**

Educational level	Numbers	Percentages (%)
Not in school	23	65,72
Primary	10	28,57
Secondary	2	5,71
Superior	00	00
Total	35	100

Source: Surveys, 2017

**Table 4. Distribution of children by religion**

Religions	Numbers	Percentages (%)
Catholic	5	14,29
Protestant	5	14,29
Evangelical	3	8,57
Muslim	15	42,85
Animist	7	20
Total	35	100

Source: Surveys, 2017

**Table 5. Distribution of children by nationality**

Nationalities	Numbers	Percentages (%)
Ivoirians	10	28,57
ECOWAS citizens	25	71,43
Non-ECOWAS national	00	00
Total	35	100

Source: Surveys, 2017

work in artisanal charcoal factories. The surveys reveal that, in general, these children come from large and/or reconstituted families that are often polygamous. The average number of wives in these homes is two (2) and the average number of children is seven (7). These data on the family composition of these young people show that the higher the number of wives, the more children there are. The children surveyed therefore come from large families. Such family structures generally push children to early empowerment or early involvement of children in work. This reality reveals on the type of family of children, the existence of a paradox between the increasingly late independence of young people who grew up in their biological family where they received better protection and the early independence of young people in a biological or adoptive family in which they would not have received better protection. Indeed, in the absence of a protective family environment, children must very quickly acquire financial independence, employment and housing. However, this challenge is all the more difficult to meet because these children face at the same time questions about their personal history and the ties they want, or can now have, with their families of origin. Thus, the importance of rapid social and professional integration of these children, even though many of them are far from the labour market due to low qualifications, presents a high risk of exploitation of their strength. As a result, these socially overadapted children sometimes engage in several activities that are often not of their age.

**Ability of families to support their members:** The various interviews with children working in artisanal charcoal factories revealed the economic status of their families.

Indeed, the parents of these children are mostly traders, farmers, coalminers, etc. The size of these families, combined with the economic difficulties associated with their professional activities, make their ability to provide for their children very limited. Therefore, for these families, the satisfaction of their needs is the responsibility of all family members, including children. Thus, some parents do not hesitate to make a clear choice, to involve children. This choice is justified by the low purchasing power of parents and the high number of family members. However, due to their lack of qualifications, they are oriented towards more physical than intellectual activities that parents consider more profitable. The interest of the child is relegated to the background. The well-being of the family, which has become a priority, seems to overshadow the child's interests and rights.

**Activities carried out by children and their working conditions in artisanal charcoal factories:** This part of the study describes the different activities and working conditions of children in artisanal charcoal factories.

**Activities carried out by children in artisanal charcoal factories:** The different activities observed during the surveys are:

**Collection of wooden stems and straws:** Artisanal charcoal manufacturing activities begin with cutting down trees with a chainsaw. Once the trees have been cut down, the trunks of the trees are cut into stems to facilitate their transport. The collection of the wooden stems consists in transporting these stems from the place where the tree was felled to the location chosen for the establishment of the furnace. This collection is a job that requires a lot of physical effort, as these wooden rods often have to be transported to tortuous places, sometimes up steep slopes or through passages that are sometimes so narrow that accidents are almost inevitable. This task is performed by children assisted by a few adults, especially for the transport of stems pregnancies. Depending on the case, it often happens that more than two (2) children join forces to pull a wooden rod; one pulls and the other pushes. The collection that is carried out by these young boys is also very difficult work. The duration of this activity is usually two to three days, often longer; it can last up to 9 hours a day. This activity is always associated with straw collection, which will separate the wood pile from the soil.

**Participation in the construction of the furnace:** After the wooden rods are stacked in the chosen location for the oven, the next task is to properly arrange the rods. This arrangement consists of placing the largest and smallest stems above the stems. Then the straw is stored on the stems. The end of these activities announces the construction of the furnace. Indeed, adults and children equipped with their respective dabas begin to gather the earth around the wooden stems covered with straw. This physical activity is performed at an overall group pace. Children participate in this activity. This ground rise is an activity that generally takes place over a period of two to three days or more, if the size of the furnace is large. In addition to participating in this activity, the children also go when the need arises in search of straw to fill the gaps that are created during the rise of the earth.

**Oven maintenance:** Oven maintenance is the most important and time-consuming task in charcoal manufacturing. Its duration often depends on the quality of the wood used.

It consists for children helped by adults to take care of the oven. His care prevents the earth from collapsing under the pressure of flames inside the furnace. Because when the wind is in contact with the wood of the furnace following the collapse of the earth, the wood is consumed and becomes ash. This action results in a loss of income or charcoal. Maintenance is an activity that requires increased vigilance at all times. It is very common to see children leaning around an oven in the middle of the night following the collapse of the earth at the top of the oven. In such cases, straw must be obtained very quickly to close the gap and cover the tower with soil. Maintenance is a laborious task for children who sometimes work at night to care for the oven. It is not uncommon to see these young people spend sleepless nights. According to the young people, this activity is the most demanding and risky. Because during the filling of a breach, there can be a sudden collapse of the earth under the pressure of fire.

**Collection of charcoal from wood:** The charcoal obtained as a result of burning the wood is put into 50 kg and 100 kg bags. This activity is for children only. Indeed, sitting on small stools, the children collect charcoal using small boxes. This type of activity generally lasts a maximum of 2 days for large furnaces. But if the oven is small, the collection lasts only one day. After carefully closing the bags, the children carry them.

**Transport of charcoal bags:** The transport of charcoal is an activity that is exclusively for young people. It is done with wheelbarrows, most of which are in an advanced state of disrepair; damaged wheels, degraded sleeves, etc. These children carry these charcoal bags often on their backs and use trails to reach their warehouse where vehicles will come to load the bags for transport for marketing. This extremely strenuous task for children must be done as quickly as possible because of the theft of charcoal bags and especially because of the rain. Because wet charcoal is not only difficult to transport, but is not much appreciated by buyers.

### Child labour conditions in artisanal charcoal factories

**Long hours of work in harsh and dangerous conditions:** The children interviewed work an average of six (6) days per week and more than nine (9) hours per working day. However, it should be noted that these working hours may increase during the charcoal harvest period. The average hourly labour rate for children remains high and exceeds forty-five (45) hours per week. This information shows that children in charcoal factories are subjected to too much work. In relation to this rate of work, some children say: *Charcoal work is not at all easy! When you start in the morning like that, you stop sometimes at night. And you come home at night with the snakes on the road there. My brother, it's not easy. If there was anything else I could do, I would do it. "It's hard to work here because of the many tasks involved. "It's slave labor, or we have no rest."* These comments confirm that child labour in artisanal charcoal factories, in addition to involving several activities, requires long hours of work. Such demands are difficult for these children whose bodies are still growing. The physical force they have at their disposal cannot support the rhythm and hourly loads imposed. This situation reflects their vulnerability and exposure to hazardous work.

**Working in environments at risk for children:** Some children working in artisanal charcoal factories are exposed to toxic

gases from burning wood. This exposure to these toxic products often leads to respiratory diseases and skin infections. In addition, the environment presents dangers for children at certain times. Indeed, due to long working hours, children may return from the fields at night. This return exposes them to snake bites most often. These statements are reported by the children in the following terms:

*"Look (the respondent presents me with a black stone) this stone is our protection against snake bites. We all have this stone. Many of us have already been bitten by a snake. "We had a friend named Moussa who worked with us, he died from a snake bite. We were going home one night when he was bitten by a snake. The bite was so fast that he only felt a slight pain in his foot. By the time we checked the surroundings, we didn't see anything. But as we walked, his foot started to swell. And that's when we deduced that a snake bit him. But it was too late. "Snakes are not the only threats. There are also the night fighters' stray bullets. And the cases where some of them met forest geniuses. The danger in the bush can come from anywhere"*

These comments highlight the many dangers associated with the working environment, which is the bush. This bush, if it may seem hospitable and generous during the day, it can still be a source of extreme dangers at times such as at night. These dangers range from snake bites to hunting accidents. In addition, respondents point to the existence of paranormal phenomena (genius, ghosts, etc.) as a source of danger.

**Work with little or no pay:** The difficulty and complexity of the work does not entitle employers to substantial remuneration. Indeed, many children work for their families and often with their parents. As a result, they do not receive any compensation as salary. According to them, work is part of their contribution to the creation of wealth to support the family. This assertion is justified by the following comments from some children:

*"Talk about salary with whom? My father is the chief operating officer. This is a family business whose profits are intended to take care of the family. "We don't have a salary as such. But sometimes the boss gives us some money for our needs. But it's not regular and it's often at the end of the month. To earn a little money, I make my dry wood packages that I sell to the women who run the restaurants"*

This shows that children are not paid. Some people develop strategies to get some money by selling wood. Tough, overwhelming and unpaid work. In the face of difficult working conditions and mistreatment, children have naturally developed coping skills that vary from one child to another. For some it is the trade of dry wood, for others it is working as a day labourer in the plantations of some people to get money.

**Explanatory factors of child labour in artisanal charcoal factories:** As a social phenomenon, child labour in artisanal charcoal factories cannot be the result of a unicausal explanation. Several factors can be invoked to explain the manifestation of this phenomenon. These include socio-economic and physical factors. It is therefore important to investigate the real influence of these categories of factors in the emergence and development of this phenomenon.

**Family poverty:** The results of the descriptive analysis of the data collected show that 83.33 per cent of respondents say that

poverty is the cause of child labour. On the other hand, 16.67% of those surveyed said the opposite. In general, it is noted that the respondents maintain that poverty is one of the causes of child labour in artisanal charcoal factories. Indeed, the families of these children, faced with difficulties in taking care of their members' needs due to their size and/or insufficient financial resources, ask their children to work. Their employment in these artisanal factories is intended to earn more financial resources to support themselves and to contribute to their families' expenses by providing direct financial assistance to parents. According to UNDP (1998), 250 million children work to survive, as 1.3 billion people in the world live in total poverty, with less than the equivalent of one dollar a day, i.e. less than the internationally defined poverty line. Sociological studies have established the close link between poverty and child labour. Indeed, child labour in artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé is part of the survival strategies implemented by the families of these children to meet their needs because "poverty is like living in permanent insecurity and simply trying to avoid the worst (Manier, 1999)". In addition, the causal link between poverty and child labour in the artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé was confirmed by our respondents through the following statements: *"Children involved in this work are involved because of the economic difficulties faced by their families". "The lack of money to meet their needs pushes them to work to earn money. "Working to satisfy their needs is laudable rather than stealing or assaulting honest men".* These comments show that the desire to take charge of themselves and/or provide assistance to their families pushes many of these children to work daily in artisanal charcoal factories. In short, a large number of poor households agree to have their children work in the artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé to meet their own needs and receive assistance from their children to participate in domestic work. Child labour can therefore be considered as a means of survival for poor families.

**Professional learning:** 77.78% of those surveyed say that vocational training is the cause of child labour in artisanal charcoal factories. On the other hand, 22.22% of respondents say that child labour in artisanal charcoal factories is caused by other factors. In general, it appears that the majority of respondents maintain that one of the factors explaining this phenomenon is the desire of parents to teach their children the practice of a trade to guarantee their future socio-professional integration. Child labour in the artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé is also explained by the parents' desire to pass on the practice of a trade to their children, the majority of whom are illiterate or out of school. This initiatory action by parents to their children appears to be a pattern of social reproduction aimed at empowering their children to take social responsibility for themselves. Surveys have shown that some parents working as coal workers have acquired this professional qualification from their parents. Indeed, they claim that it was in their childhood that they learned this trade from their parents. Thus, the employment of their children in the artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé could be perceived as compliance with a traditional requirement that is intended to be beneficial to children. This analysis is confirmed by the following statements from some charcoal-making parents or those working in the artisanal charcoal factory:

*"To make you work your child may be a violation of these rights, but for us it is loving your child because you give him the means to live by honestly earning his bread. Working is*

*better than stealing or anything else. "If today I have a family it is thanks to this profession and my children also have the minimum to live. I will be mean if I don't teach them what I learned from my own parents. "No one can stop me from giving my children the means to become respectable men in society tomorrow. I will continue to give them everything I know about the practice of this profession.*

It can therefore be noted that for some parents, their children's work in the artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé is a necessary professional apprenticeship. The social handicaps of their children, such as illiteracy, dropping out of school, lack of diplomas, etc., can constitute obstacles to their professional integration.

**Cheap labour:** The results of the descriptive analysis of the data collected show that 87.78 per cent of respondents say that cheap child labour is a cause of child labour in artisanal charcoal factories, while 12.22 per cent say the opposite. In general, this analysis shows that cheap child labour is the basis for their work in artisanal charcoal factories. Cheap child labour can be defined as the fact that parents or family members have several children at their disposal to perform work for which remuneration is lower. These children at their disposal most often come from the practice of fostering. This cultural practice is encouraged by the desire of some parents to give their illiterate or out-of-school children the best chance of learning a trade. Thus, children are removed from their home environment to another destination considered more conducive to their socialization. Such movement of children for the purpose of work is generally a violation of their rights. It was noted that some children working in artisanal charcoal factories had been displaced for purposes other than work. Indeed, they had been displaced to attend school, to learn a trade, to find other family members living in the city, etc. With regard to the place of origin, it was noted that the movement is generally from the village to the city. The assertions of some children confirm this reality of the facts:

*"I was sent to Tiassalé by my uncle who works in charcoal to learn the trade of mechanic but it was in charcoal that I found myself here". "I had no choice, my father wanted me to come and learn a trade in the city. "It's not easy, but we have to do this work so we don't get angry with our parents. "In life, you don't always do what you want. The only ones to decide for us are our parents. They have more experience than we do".*

The comments of these respondents essentially underline the fact that the choice of this profession is not a deliberate choice of children. Most of them claim that they work in these artisanal charcoal factories on behalf of their families who have remained in their villages of origin. They also claim that the reasons for their coming to the city, such as learning a trade, schooling, etc., were not respected by the members of their family who brought them to the city. Thus, these children are used for the benefit of their families, who benefit from an abundant and low-paid labour force. In addition, it is important to establish distinctive criteria between work that can be beneficial for the child and work that is dangerous for the child. UNICEF (1997) has developed a series of criteria to designate exploitative work: full-time work at an early age, too many hours of work, work that imposes excessive physical, social and psychological constraints, insufficient remuneration, the imposition of excessive responsibility, employment that hinders access to education, violations of children's dignity and

self-respect, work that does not facilitate the child's full social and psychological development. We can therefore see from the study of these criteria that child labour in artisanal charcoal factories is child exploitation. This exploitation is generated by the availability of cheap labour and the proximity of employers to children. This work also has negative consequences for the child's development.

## DISCUSSION

The study focused on child labour in artisanal charcoal factories. The results reveal that poverty, the desire to teach children a trade, and cheap labour are the causes of children's daily involvement in the activities of artisanal charcoal factories in Tiassalé. These results confirm Schlemmer's (1996) study that child labour is essentially linked to the various economic crises in our societies. This analysis by the author has the disadvantage of identifying only the economic crisis as the only factor explaining this phenomenon. This uncausal explanation obscures the social and cultural influences that are involved in the genesis of child labour. This is the direction that this study has confirmed by showing that this phenomenon has multiple causes. In the same vein, Sissoko (2003) points out that the factors that account for this phenomenon are the adaptation logics of the actors and the social dynamics. The results of the study confirm Sissoko's approach. However, this study has the merit of providing etiological knowledge on child labour in artisanal charcoal factories in relation to certain violations of the rights of these children such as trafficking and exploitation. The study's conclusions also confirm Manier's work (Op. Cit.), who argues that child labour is one of the survival strategies of poor people. As poverty prevents long-term decision-making power and leads to a daily struggle for survival, families may have to accept any proposal that helps them to improve their situation. Manier (Op. Cit.) also states that frequent illiteracy in developing countries is a cause of child labour, which leads them to trust unscrupulous people. In addition, it attests that child labour is perceived as social learning that is not the same in different cultures. Thus, child labour, far from being seen as a "scourge", is valued because it allows learning while the education system does not necessarily lead to good employment; this conception is often that of the poor. Children's perceptions of it also vary: there are those who suffer from their condition but others who are proud to help their families or learn a skill (BIT, Op. Cit. a). These different studies, despite certain nuances, confirm the results of this study.

**The limits of research:** However, the results of this study should be taken with caution as it suffers from some weaknesses. Indeed, the sampling technique used is the sample by reasoned choice (or a priori): the choice of individuals is based on the skills or representativeness of the individual. Since this type of sample is related to the researcher's assessment, it does not allow us to generalize the results. In addition, the fact that a large number of children involved in the work of artisanal charcoal factories could not be interviewed for the survey may affect the reliability of some results. However, the diversity of the social categories surveyed somewhat mitigated these limitations.

## Conclusion

In terms of results, we note that the children's description was based on identity characteristics such as their age, level of

education, nationality, ethnic group and religion. They come from relatively modest families. Concerning the typology and conditions of child labour in artisanal charcoal factories, it appears that their activities are the collection of wooden rods, participation in the construction of the oven, maintenance of the oven, collection of charcoal, and transport of charcoal bags. In terms of working conditions, it is noted that children perform dangerous work because of its arduousness and the long hours devoted to activities. Also, the environment in which this work is carried out, namely the bush, exposes them to snake bites and hunting accidents. Finally, it is unpaid work for most of them. As explanatory factors for child labour, the study shows that poverty, the desire to teach children a trade, and cheap labour are the causes of children's daily involvement in artisanal charcoal manufacturing activities in Tiassalé. In addition, this activity has various negative consequences for children, including injuries, exposure to toxic gases, and in some cases deaths due to workplace accidents.

Also, most of them are isolated, deprived of their families, they suffer from emotional deficiencies from which they may suffer lifelong after-effects. In addition, these activities deprive these children of the opportunity to participate in school education to ensure their future professional integration. Among the solutions envisaged, we propose to combat the lack of harmonization and implementation observed at the level of national and international legal instruments; cultural influences must be taken into account in the adoption of legal measures to promote the recognition of populations, especially in rural areas, in these measures. There is also a need to strengthen collaboration between actors in the fight against child labour in order to achieve better results. Public awareness of the negative consequences of child labour must therefore be raised and local actions targeted at artisanal charcoal factories, including education and the retraining of children in activities that do not endanger their moral, physical and social development, must be carried out.

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