

# Child labour or child work? Complexities of socio-cultural life of the Wataturu community of Igunga, Tanzania



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## ABSTRACT

For a long time the world has campaigned against child labour, both with local and global efforts. These initiatives however tend to ignore contextual forces such as, specific socio-cultural contexts and societal interpretation of child labour. Scholarship on this subject uncovers several circumstances, reasons, consequences, processes, and challenges of child labour among different communities in Africa. Extant literature also reveals information regarding the complexities of socio-cultural dimension in examining child labour practices. Building on the already existing evidence, this paper uncovers sociocultural complexity in explaining child labour practices among semi nomadic pastoral Wataturu communities in Igunga. The paper exploits various information collected through library and archival research, participant observation, and oral interviews to demonstrate how sociocultural set up of Wataturu challenges the mainstream approach to the claimed child labour practices.

## KEYWORDS:

Tatur, Datoga child, child labour, child work, semi-nomadic, Igunga

## INTRODUCTION

The call to end child labour is still facing critical challenges that have translated into various understanding and perception of what this problem is. In Tanzania for example, despite being internationally debated, the phenomenon child labour appears to be very foreign among the Taturu community in Igunga.<sup>1</sup> At the international and national horizons however, child labour is regarded as hazardous practice. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour of 1999, particularly Article 2 and 3 defines who is a child and what child labour practices are. Paradoxically, this understanding is often not compatible with how childhood is understood among different societies in Africa, Taturu of Igunga included. Living among the Taturu, a semi nomadic Datoga community in central western Tanzania, such disparity caught my attention and aroused curiosity to find out on whether child labour, as propagated by the international organisation, governments,

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1 One of the seven districts in the Tabora region-central western Tanzania. It was inaugurated on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1975, after splitting from Nzega district. It has an estimated population of 425,442 people. Wataturu are section of the population. Their number is minimal making them minority in the district. There is no official statistics about their actual number since information about ethnicity is not included in the data base of the Tanzanian Bureau of Statistics.



non-governmental organisation, and activists, is compatible with how some pastoral societies in Africa perceive it. This is so, since it is even doubting if the term child labour in the famous understanding is known to them, and whether what is commonly known, and quite indigenous child work can be separated from child labour. Substantive body of literature offers insights on the complexities of addressing child labour in different communities in Africa and elsewhere in the World (Bourdiillon et al., 2020; Bourdillon, 2011, 2015; Devji, 2021; Liebel, 2002, 2013; Masabo, 2021; 2016; Nieuwenhuys, 1996; Clark-Kazak, 2009).

Essentially, how to pin down the concepts such as child labour, and child work has attracted a heated debate among scholars (Bourdillon, 2015). There has been disagreement between scholars and activists on what constitute child labour versus child work. The central challenge dwells on the construction of childhood. Complexity is also on how to establish a clear-cut demarcation between the two concepts and identifying what is right or wrong in both child labour and child work in the larger spectrum of appropriate childhood (Bourdiillon et al., 2020; Lancy, 2015, pp. 164–212). Scholars such as Bourdillon (2015), Clark-Kazak (2009), Devji (2021), Liebel (2002), and Masabo (2021, 2016) have uncovered significant areas of controversy in the policy, legal formulation, implementation, and the concepts of child labour and child work. These scholars demonstrate how the west, because of technological development and history, influences the way childhood and child labour are constructed globally. These scholars also demonstrate how children protection against work on the grounds of protecting them from exploitation have in turn jeopardize rights of the same child such as schooling, economic benefits, social, psychological, cognitive benefits to child development (Bourdiillon et al., 2020; Bourdillon, 2015; Masabo, 2016, 2021).

Closely related studies on child labour among pastoral societies points out that child labour as an extreme practice among these communities. Studies by FAO (2013), ILO (2013) and Oxfam (2005) agree indicate that about 60 percent of children aged from 5 to 17 years are involved in hazardous child labour in the agriculture and livestock sector. These scholars recognize the uniqueness of the sociocultural and historical formation of the pastoral communities in Africa and elsewhere in the world. Nonetheless, they emphasize on poverty status, lack of awareness and conservative attitudes of pastoral communities as the driving forces to child labour practices. Thus, by recognizing the sociocultural and historical formation of children participation in daily activities, Goyal (2005) and Oxfam (2005) emphasize on specialized education for pastoral communities as an alternative to the mainstream formal education. It appears that emphasis on education, economy and urge for universality in perceiving life (FAO, 2013; Goyal, 2005; ILO, 2013; Oxfam, 2005; Shumetie & Mamo, 2019), dominate their approach in studying pastoral communities. It is undisputed that these studies accommodate several circumstances, situations, and reasons that reveal the complexity of this phenomenon in pastoral communities (FAO, 2013, pp. 15–18; Goyal, 2005, pp. 229–262), yet a proper understanding of the ideological and cosmological world which form these communities is significant. An emphasis on the socio-cultural dimension, particularly belief, social systems, traditions and other prevail circumstances is significant among traditional marginalized pastoral and nomadic societies in Africa.

Findings and reflections in this research paper were drawn from four years of experience, staying close and interacting with the Taturu community in Igunga district, central western Tanzania from 2009 to 2013. During this period, I was not in actual research. Nonetheless, exposure to this community raised curiosity to inquire more about their socio-cultural ways of life. This period, therefore, served as the time for developing puzzles and unanswered questions regarding Wataturu. Many closest people were not very much knowledgeable about this community, except, they were Wataturu pastoralists. Significantly, this article benefits from ethnohistorical field work research conducted in this community as part of PhD project, from 2020 to 2022. The puzzle which confronted my mind was on whether the concept child labour really exists in the minds of the Wataturu people. To respond to that puzzle, this paper offers some insights on the socio-cultural basis from which childhood is constructed among the Taturu pastoral community. The purpose is to demonstrate how the construction of childhood and the propagated rights stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as well as national policies and laws contradicts with the socio-cultural basis from which childhood is conceptualized understood and lived.

This paper is organised in four main sections. The first section deals with the concept child, child labour and the contradictions on how the concept child and labour have been constructed. Second part of the paper covers the socio-cultural construction of a child, labour, and work among the Taturu community. The third part discusses modernisation in relation to Wataturu's socio-cultural controversy in the way child labour is perceived and the last part covers conclusion whereby the papers pose challenges of researching culturally non-existing phenomenon among the perceived traditional pastoral communities.

## **CHILD LABOUR AND CHILD WORK IN AFRICAN CONTEXT: A REVIEW**

The concept child labour is commonly constructed on biological, socio-cultural, and legal criteria. Nevertheless, the concept child labour cannot be easily comprehended without providing satisfactory definition of who is a child. It is important to state clearly that the concept child is culturally contested. The common criteria and the mainstream in defining a child are age as stipulated by biological factors, law, institutional affiliation, and collective behavioural pattern (Humbert, 2009, pp. 14–20; ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138, 1973 Article 2&3; ILO Convention No. 182 Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 Article 2&3). From legal point of view, the colonial customary Law in Tanganyika for instance, from 1910 defined a child as a person who is below 14 to 15 years (Humbert, 2009; Sippel, 1998, p. 380). After independence, the amended Tanganyika customary law of 1961 identified a child as any person below eighteen years (Sippel, 1998). Likewise, anyone under the age of eighteen, is termed as a child according to the ILO Article 3(1) and Article 1 of the UN-CRC. Childhood is also constructed as period when children devote their time to schooling (UN-CRC, Article 28; Masabo, 2016). This, however, may not be universal to all cultures and ethnic groups in Africa because relying on chronological age criteria ignore socio-





cultural factors for one to be adult (Clark-Kazak, 2009; Nieuwenhuys, 1996). In the African context, and in this case, Wataturu community, childhood cannot be simply constructed along these parameters of chronological age limits.

On the contrary, biological, and socio-cultural or traditional African outlook, a childhood is not necessarily perceived based on chronological age criteria. One may still be regarded a child regardless of biological maturity or attainment of 18 years of age. In most ethnic groups in Africa, adulthood is attained after both attainment of biological maturity associated with first menstruation for girls and passing through cultural rite such as initiation ceremonies, and circumcision for boys and girls (Stakeman, 2004, pp. 143–156; Tomikawa, 1979). It is therefore important to understand the concept of who is ‘child’ in its social construction. In this circumstance, the contextual African outlook is contrary to the ILO especially in the way childhood and child labour have been constructed in the 20<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians of 2018. In this resolution, child labour is considered when a person of 5 and 11 years of age perform for at least 1 hour of economic work or 21 hours of unpaid household services per week, and when a person of 12 to 14 years of age performs productive work for 14 hours or 21 hours of unpaid household services per week. Child labour is also considered when a person of 15 to 17 years undertakes at least 43 hours either economic or unpaid household services per week (International Labour Office, 2018). For this description, the concept child labour gained a broader meaning. Nonetheless, realizing who is child, child labour as opposed to child work in the cross-cultural context has remained complex.

Child labour in Africa is an alien concept. It developed and matured in the colonial context but contradicted indigenous culture and day to day routine among communities. In actual African context, it is believed that children participation in work is part of socialization and acculturation (Liebel, 2013; Masabo, 2016; Nieuwenhuys, 1996). Children must work to be properly integrated in their society or communities and acquire skills and attitudes toward work. It is, however, very important to separate child work which is part of socialization from child labour which forces a child to perform tasks that are beyond his/her capacity and which are mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interfere with their schooling (ILO Convention No. 182, 1999, Article 3). Child work on the other hand is commonly not commoditized. Furthermore, the reconciliation between chronological age and social age adds complexity in realizing both the concept child and child labour. The underlying meaning of who is a “child” and what is “child labour” remained complex and in certain circumstances undermines the socio, cultural and political rights of certain ethnic groups who are culturally distinct from many other communities in the world today.

Nonetheless, changes in the social, economic, and political life due to colonial domination transformed the pre-existing social relations, including relations in production. Thus, child labour developed as an integral part of labour force throughout colonial and post-colonial periods. In colonial Tanganyika, child labour appeared in peasant, settler and to a little extent in mining. The practice was more evident during British domination. Swai (1971: 111), Shivji (1985), and Walters (2016) contend that employment of children labourer was clearer in colonial ag-

riculture particularly in the plantation sector. On the other hand, Lemelle (1986) reports on the use of child labour in the colonial mining sector. Lemelle shows that, child labour was observed in Lupa gold field as early as 1930s. Children were used to separate or recover gold from sand (Lemelle, 1986). Implicitly, this demonstrate that child labour is one among many other phenomena evolved due to coarticulation of modes of production particularly when pre-capitalist relations encountered capitalist relations in the context of colonial domination (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992, pp. 77-95).

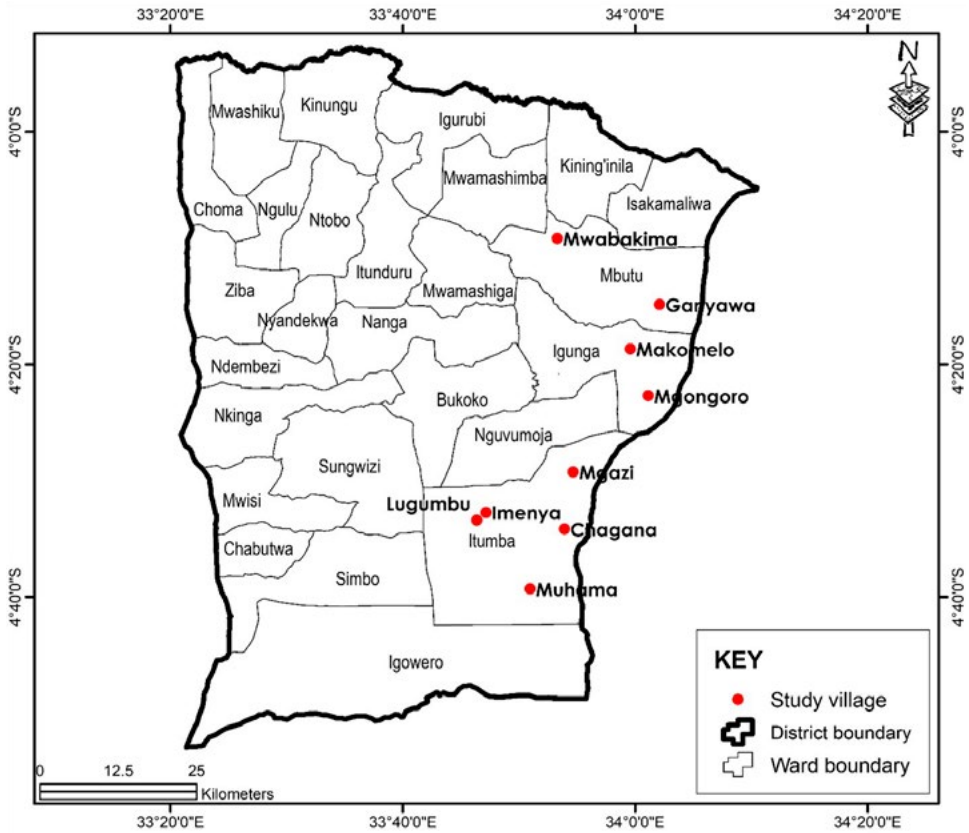
With the attainment of political independence in the 1961, Tanzania took measures to protect rights of a child through adoption and enactment of various laws. For instance, the Adoption of Colonial Ordinance of 1955 CAP 335 in 1963, and enactment several laws such as the Local Customary Law Number 4, the Citizenship Laws, Act No. 24 of 1970, the Marriage Law Act, No. 5 of 1971 [CAP 5]; the Tanzanian Constitution of 1977; the Education Act Number 25 of 1978, and the Corporal Punishment Regulations, 1979, are good examples. All these laws offered related definition of who a child is but posed contradictions in protecting the claimed rights. For instance, while the Age of Majority (Citizenship Laws) Act No. 24 of 1970 define a person below 18 years as a child, the Marriage Law grant freedom for the same child of 15 years of age to be married at the parent convenience (Masabo, 2021, pp. 7-8). Notwithstanding the relevance of these laws to Tanzanian majority, they posed a huge challenge to the Wataturu communities who considered them as alien laws and threats to their socio-cultural formation and ethics governing the community. National and international intervention on children rights and specifically on child labour, caused sociocultural controveerse and dilemma to Wataturu community. To understand why the universal-ity approach to child labour question remained a puzzle to Wataturu, an examination and analysis of their sociocultural, economic, and political life in the next section reveals underlying reasons and the circumstances.

## CHILDHOOD AND CHILD LABOUR CONTROVERSY AMONG THE WATATURU OF IGUNGA

*Wataturu*, ethnically and linguistically identified as Datoga, is one of several ethnic groups found in the Igunga district in the Central Western Tanzania. The official group name is *Buradiga* (*Brediga*). Nonetheless this name is not known among local population from which they are found. *Buradiga* (*Wataturu*), as will be used throughout this paper, is one of several subgroups of the Datoga who share cultural traits with minor distinction from one group to another (Itandala, 1980; Mulder, 1992; Tomikawa, 1979; Wilson, 1952, p.1).<sup>2</sup> The name *Taturu/Wataturu* was coined by the Sukuma and Nyamwezi neighbours. Recently, the name is used to denote all western

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2 There is up to 12 subgroups, namely, Darorajega, Gisamijenga, Barabaiga, Iseimajega, Gidang'odiga, Bajuta, Bisiyeda, Salagwajega, Rotigenga (Rudageing), Brediga (Buradiga), Bianjida (the Bajud), Daragwajeeega, Ghubiega, and Mangatiga.



**MAP 1:** A Map of Igunga District -Taturu Settlement Areas. Source: GIS Library-University of Dar es Salaam.

Datoga subgroups, mainly Rotigenga and Buradiga found in Igunga district in Tabora region, Iramba and Manyoni districts in Singida region, Meatu district in Simiyu region, Kishapu district in Shinyanga region and Serengeti district in Mara region (Mhajida, 2019). In the study area Wataturu are mainly located in Nguvu Moja, Mbutu, Lugubu and Itumba wards.

Their presence in this district stretches back to pre-colonial period in Tanganyika.<sup>3</sup> As hinted above, they are semi-nomadic pastoralists. They keep mainly cattle, goats, and sheep (Mhajida, 2019; Mulder, 1991). Wataturu are traditionalist. In this respect, they exhibit unique character not only in terms of their dressing style but the entire way of life including customs, belief systems, building style, food taboos, distribution of sex and gender roles, socio-political structures and principles governing social cohesion with people from different ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup> They establish their settlements in isolated areas as a way of avoiding influence and sociocultural interference from other ethnic groups. Wataturu avoid formal education and modern religion to protect their community from contamination (Bihariová, 2016) education is seen as an instrument of transforming pastoralists into settled farmers, labourers, modern livestock producers, and loyal citizens. The education-for-development approaches are accounts of pastoralists' poverty and assume that education will improve their standard of living. Together with national politics, Christianity/missionaries played, and still play, an important role in influencing pastoralists to change their traditional belief, which is represented by sending children to schools. This paper charts the past and the current (educational and do not regard themselves as poor people (Little et al., 2008, pp. 587–611) including politicians, international celebrities, academics, activists and practitioners. Despite the onslaught of interest, there is surprisingly little agreement on what constitutes poverty in rural Africa, how it should be assessed, and what should be done to alleviate it. Based on data from an interdisciplinary study of pastoralism in northern Kenya, this article examines issues of poverty among one of the continent's most vulnerable groups, pastoralists, and challenges the application of such orthodox proxies as incomes/expenditures, geographic remoteness, and market integration. It argues that current poverty debates 'homogenize' the concept of 'pastoralist' by failing to acknowledge the diverse livelihoods and wealth differentiation that fall under the term. The article concludes that what is not needed is another development label (stereotype). The criteria commonly used to measure the level of poverty in different community, do not appear relevant to them. Wataturu dwell their evaluation of better life and development around cattle ownership (Herskovits, 1926; Mtetwa, 1978; Wilson, 1953, p. 45). They interact with other communities with limitation. They earn cash from selling their livestock or grains which they have recently started to grow. This is to say, they have for long time been fully integrated into global economies in multiple ways.

Wataturu exhibit modernity in their own terms.<sup>5</sup> They are described as happy and proud people who conserve their tradition. Additionally, they fear much spiritual and ancestral curses. Testimony about the Wataturu from Fr. Daniel Ohman, a catholic missionary who served among them for over 25 years, pointed out that:

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- 3 Tanzania National Archives (TNA), Regional Book Western Province (1920–1945); TNA Singida District Book, 1921.
  - 4 National Record Centre, Location 5/6/01, Box No. 120, File No. UU.5/113 Watindiga, Mang'ati and Taturu
  - 5 They adopt and incorporate modern technology such as the use of mobile phone, mobile money transfer and transport such as motorcycle and resist many other aspects including religion, dressing style and other related urban cultures.



Watatulu people, a Tanzanian tribe that, unlike other African ethnic groups, resisted calls to Christianity for centuries. If I didn't believe I had something to offer them, I wouldn't even try. I admire their toughness, their pride, and their simple way of life, but their resistance to change comes at a price. Fear is at the heart of the problem — their [sic] fear of death, of witchcraft, of the world of evil spirits (Ohman & Meyer, 2009, pp. 23–24).

This implies that, historical social formation which generates beliefs and ideologies dictates the day-to-day socio-cultural and economic practices of this community. In this case, traditions, customs, settlement patterns, housing type and styles, dressing, food, social relations, interaction, space utilisation, and all forms of social control and order, are a product of social formation which forms the existential software of the community (Rigby, 1981, pp. 97–100). For instance, forms of social control, ethics and order are under the control of the councils of adult men, youth, married women, unmarried women as well as clan and neighbourhoods (Tomikawa, 1979, pp. 8–16; Wilson, 1953, pp. 36–43). Likewise, utilisation and organisation the environment and space depend on the Wataturu's ideological and the cosmological conception (Lawi, 2007, pp. 69–71, 1999). In this community aspects such as birth, death, fertility, land, and the general environment are connected to *Aseeta*, the Wataturu's god who provides them with all blessings (Blystad, 2000a; Karplus & Meir, 2013; Lawi, 1999; Mulder et al., 1989). Religion and ideologies, explains and defines Taturu mode of existence including rearing of children and nurturing. Like many pastoral communities, Wataturu, particularly, youth are identified as fierce people. They display heroic tendencies. This identification is rooted to the *lilichta/Lilikta/halooda*<sup>6</sup> ritual killing (Blystad, 2000b, pp. 75–102; Mhajida, 2019, pp. 112–113; Nyoni, 2008, pp. 128–129; Setreus, 1991; Wilson, 1953, pp. 43–48). Therefore, they are sometimes referred to as Taturu warriors.

While childhood in 'modern' communities is regarded as period of receiving education and playing, this is not the case with semi-pastoral Wataturu. Ethnological research conducted between 2020 and 2021 in the study area, and findings from other scholars reveals controversy on how the childhood is socially understood in relation to legal definition of childhood. This includes the division of labour based on sex and age. Mhajida (2019, pp. 220–222), Bihariová (2019), and Nyoni (2008) have shown that childhood ends when one undergoes initiation by circumcision. Tomikawa (1979) has describe stages from which childhood was understood among the Barbaig Datoga which is also applicable among the Wataturu of Igunga. These are an infant or toddler (*ghameyānda*), small child (*ghalsgechānda* who may be either son (*balānda*) or daughter (*huda*) and young boy (*balānda manan*) or young girl (*huda manan*). Commonly, *balānda manan* and *huda manan* are children of about five to ten or twelve years of

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6 *Lilichta* ritual killings involved killing the lion or human for social status and prestige. Scholars pointed that this custom symbolised graduation from youth to adult hood and was a requirement for marriage. Despite, this general explanation, there is still debate among scholars on the underlying reasons for this custom. Due to state intervention, ritual killings have completely disappeared.





**PHOTO N. 1:** A young Taturu boy herding cattle as part and parcel of Wataturu livelihood (Bihariová, 2017, pp. 83)

age. The young boy and young girl remains with that social status regardless of the age until he or she undergoes initiation by circumcision. While infant and small child stages are moment to be cherished, young boys and girls are taught minor domestic activities including looking after calves near homestead for young boys and fetching water, washing domestic utensils, cooking, and looking after the young ones. All these duties are performed as part of nurturing, learning and socialisation process so that to prepare them to become better members of their community in the later stages.

After attending initiation that is concluded by circumcision, young boys and girls change their social status to either *balānda murjew* (youth, herder, and warrior) or *huda hau* (unmarried girl). These are no longer treated as children. They are at youth age ready to marry or to be married. For the unmarried girls is the free time, time to behave, organise dances, perform domestic duties before being married. For the *balānda murjew*, this is a time to become both a warrior and herder. In most cases, these are youths of thirteen to sixteen years. When they reach up to about seventeen years of age, they become young men and warriors (*gharemanēda*) ready to marry. The core activity of both *balānda murjew* and *gharemanēda* is herding cattle. Nonetheless, the young warriors with sixteen years and above, *gharemanēda* also take part in seasonal or mobile herding activities. Seasonal mobile herding involves travelling to distant locality up to about 15 to 50 kilometres looking for water and pastures particularly during dry seasons (Bihariová, 2017, pp. 86–91). For instance, Wataturu of Chagana travel to as far as to Mwanzugi and Manoga River during extreme dry sea-



**PHOTO N. 2:** Domestic Activities.  
A picture taken by the researcher during fieldwork.

son to provide cattle with water from the artificial dam. Oral interview and personal observation show that youth attend night organised dances (*nyangira*) as part of socialisation and wife searching process. For the unmarried girl, it is time to behave, observe traditions, maintain proper relations, and perform various domestic works perfectly. At this age, dressing style and decoration changes significantly. It is the time when beads and metal rings (*budodi*) increase on the neck, wrist, and forearm as well as. Just like for the young warrior, they are allowed to organise and attend night dances (*nyangira*) as part of tradition, socialisation, and exposition to a better husband.<sup>7</sup> Both young girls and unmarried girls are among the Wataturu. Datoga are controlled by a clan system since they prepared to be mothers who will preserve traditions of the community. The difference between young girl and unmarried girl is that the unmarred girl who is an adult. The status of being unmarried is associated with have enough free time to enjoy in the night dances. This period can also be termed as the easy-going period.

It should also be reminded here that the preferred form of education among the Wataturu is the informal education acquired through doing and participation in daily activities. Schooling system which appeared to alienate a young Taturu boy or girl from the actual daily activities and socio-cultural role. Thus, formal education is strictly not preferred among the Wataturu. It is generally resisted overtly and

<sup>7</sup> Interview, Informant 1, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at Chagana-Igunga; Interview, Informant 4, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Makomero, Igunga District.



**PHOTO N. 3:** Unmarried Girls-Heading to a nearby neighbourhood for dancing. A picture taken by the researcher during field work.

covertly. According to Bihavriova (2017), a formal education system appeared to be incompatible with the Datoga semi-pastoral life. Datoga sociocultural systems and pastoral activity pushed them out of the formal schooling system as it adds, little or no value to their day-to-day life. As it was observed, childhood is not constructed based on chronological age but social age through which an individual acquires after passing specific social and cultural training. In this way, childhood as constructed by legal framework nationally, regionally, and internationally does not feature the ideological and physical space from which the Wataturu community exists.

Basing on the above socio-cultural arrangement and division of labour according to social age and sex rather than chronological age, it is evident that both the perception of who is child and what constitute child labour are in doubt. As it has been shown, among Wataturu, an individual remains a child if he/she does not pass traditional initiation by circumcision rite and the opposite.<sup>8</sup> On such grounds, national, regional, and international approach to child protection is incomprehensible among Wataturu communities in Igunga. Furthermore, execution of children rights by the government faces opposition and resistance since the concept is completely out of their reach. In addition, decision making regarding behaviour, development, and participation of an individual in the community depends much not on the governmental social and political institutions but on different traditional councils including: the male council (*girgweageeda emeeda*), the clan council made up of male members (*girgweageeda doshta*), the neighbourhood council (*girgweageeda gischeuuda*), the youth

<sup>8</sup> Interview, Informant 2, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at Chagana-Igunga.



council (*girgweageda gharemanga*) and the married women's council (*girgweageda gamemga*) (Blystad & Rekdal, 2004). These are the respectable traditional institution which control discipline and proper behaviour of members of the community. They are also punishable bodies in case of violation of tradition, customs, and other related social conduct. For instance, restricting a circumcised girl not to take part in night dances, avoiding cultural rite and ceremonies, wearing non-traditional dresses and violation of Taturu customs of marriage are some of the mistakes that are punishable. Interview with the government officials at village and ward levels such teachers, village, and ward executive officers, they pointed out that it was hardly for a girl to continue with schooling after she had attended initiation by circumcision rite. If she continues to attend the parents are vulnerable to punishment by penalties or isolation.<sup>9</sup>

### **WATATURU'S SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFESTYLE AND MODERNISATION ENCOUNTER ON CHILD LABOUR**

From the 1990s, Tanzanians experienced social, political, and economic transformation due to the interaction of global and local systems of governance as well as the penetration of neo-liberal politics.<sup>10</sup> It was due to these changes that Tanzania passed new policies, ratified regional and international agreements and enacted laws which corresponded to the changing globe. Tanzania witnessed the increased activities of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and re-adoption of multiparty democracy (Tambila, 1995, pp. 468-488). According to Ali Hassan Mwinyi, the then, President of Tanzania, transformation was compulsory for the country to cope with the needs of the contemporary global circumstances (Ally et al., 2013). These changes brought new experience and challenged the pre-existing social relations and division of labour among Wataturu community in Igunga district. The adoption of regional and international laws regarding child protection, on the one hand, and penetration of new ideas, on the other hand, have left Wataturu in the dilemma of negotiating between traditional customs and global ideas regarding the concept child labour and child work. Their traditional lifestyle and resistance to certain kind of modernity led to complexity to define, explain, and disentangle these two notions. Fieldwork in the study area, and by the aid of ethno-historical methods, several circumstances can be discussed.

Wataturu community in Igunga, like many pastoral communities, have a unique understanding of both the physical and ideological space they occupy (Karplus & Meir, 2013). The ideological space defines traditions, beliefs, customs, and the perception of the people toward community development and transformation. This means that, the 'do' and the 'do not' are determined by the set of societal socio-cultural

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Informant 2, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at Chagana-Igunga; Interview with Grfoup Informants, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> There is substantive body of knowledge on this subject. See also, Issa Shivji, *Let the People Speak: Tanzania down the Road to Neo-Liberalism*, (Dakar: Codesria, 2006).



systems. The historical processes of socio-political and economic marginalisation strengthening sociocultural systems and ethnic bond (Bihariová, 2017; Blystad, 1995). Consequently, Wataturu affiliation and patriotism to the preserved set of traditions and sociocultural values increased. Rights and responsibility of a child continued to be defined based on traditional socio-cultural terms. Based on these, that is why the Wataturu tend to ignore imported values because of their desire to preserve their unique cultural and identity including social relations, practices, dressing and general mode of life i. e. housing, make it difficult to realize the relevance of child labour phenomena. Evidence from interviews proves that this community has a strong sociocultural and political system which define ethical ways its members.<sup>11</sup> In an interview session, informant clearly said that:

*Look here, we cannot let each member of this community do and behaves as he/she wishes. For children, we have their mothers. The young ones have their own meetings. The elders foresee every aspect of our society. We punish individuals and families. To reconcile requires giving cattle or sheep to elders depending on the mistake. You people (the researcher) are used to courts and police. We do not like that. We have our systems.*<sup>12</sup>

Thus, participation of children in different activities correspond to the traditions and guarantee an individual a sense of inclusion and belongingness to the community.<sup>13</sup> Behaving differently brought societal curses and the person was to be punished. Thus, child labour as it is advocated nationally, regionally, and globally appears to be a meaningless concept to Wataturu since its application evict an individual from himself, the existing sociocultural systems, environment, economy, and the community at large. The cost that is unbearable.

Moreover, the fear to weaken family stability and continuity by destroying traditionally accepted labour force and reproductive roles. Drawing insights from the previous section, traditional division of labour and lineage continuity have been important aspects determining productivity, marriageability and reproductivity. Productivity, marriageability and reproductivity are crucial and undisputable among Wataturu community (Blystad, 2000b; Mulder, 1991; Setreus, 1991).<sup>14</sup> Childhood is therefore constructed depending on the ability of to perform such roles and not chronological age. For instance, a young boy (*balända manan*), gradually acquire herding skills and techniques. He learns to manage cattle by looking at calves at near places but after attending initiation that is concluded by circumcision when he became a young warrior (*balända murjew*), skills are strengthened and slowly he acquires heroic attitudes through practice. It is also a free time one learns how to get along with girls. When this young warrior becomes a true warrior and a heard

<sup>11</sup> Interview, Informant 5, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Igunga District.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, Informant 5, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Igunga District.

<sup>13</sup> Interview, Informant 3, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at Lugubu Centre-Igunga.

<sup>14</sup> Pastoral economy, marriage, and fertility are central to the formation of community identity and survival. They occupy the central position to the extent that the principle focus of beliefs, customs and traditions and other values are on them. For more details,



man, mobile herding is possible since he can protect himself and livestock against danger. He can also protect the community. Marriage is also possible. This applies as well to girls who learn domestic skills and multiply them after attending initiation concluded by circumcision. After initiation by circumcision the unmarried girl waits to be married since she is now ready for playing motherhood role. Therefore, constructing childhood along chronological age does not fit Wataturu socio-cultural setting. Child labour laws and policies threaten not only the cultural value but also the socio-economic survival of Wataturu community.

Likewise, evidence from the fieldwork reveals that, girls among the Datoga are controlled by a clan system (Bihariová, 2017; Tomikawa, 1979). Mothers should preserve tradition, take care of young ones, and ensure that reproductivity continues. Women Council-*girgweageeda gamemga*, also plays significant role in shaping girls' practices. Any socio-cultural contradictions developing as an outcome of local, global interaction and modernisation ideas threatens the existing sociocultural and economic balance between production, social life, and belief systems. For instance, implementation of ideas such as child labour interrupt a set of belief which defines the relationship between the community, physical world, and the ideological world. It is therefore due to this circumstance; child work appears to be common and regular. On the contrary, the ideas of child labour, its legal application and other guidelines are foreign and to a significant extent incomprehensible with African values and Wataturu community.

## CONCLUSION

This paper exposes the local sociocultural context that form Wataturu community and its implications to the global campaign against child labour. It attempts therefore emphasizes that universalising and homogenising perception, attitude and approach on development, rights or wrong, modernity and quality life (Featherstone, 1997, pp. 1-14), have always encountered significant resistances and in certain circumstances causing social conflicts. Strategies to integrate and standardize sociocultural practices and transform ways of life including social relations, production, division of labour other related social practices among Wataturu community to a substantial extent posed a notable puzzle to the implementers of such agenda. Among the Wataturu, child labour policies, laws and resolutions exist only in radios and televised news, newspapers and among their neighbouring communities. Wataturu are tied to a complex sociocultural system which define and shape their day-to-day life. The contextual sociocultural systems, which is the driving soft part, challenges the globalised view childhood and child labour. To the Wataturu communities, as Lancy (2015, pp. 164-212) puts, childhood is the period of "making sense," where a child acquires culture, learn important skills relevant to their economy and environment. The expected goals are to become competent, supportive, useful, and fully integrated member of the family. On the contrary, global forces which attempts to standardize childhood and education; both the mainstream and the specialized one for pastoral, dictate the destiny of such communities. Child labour policies, laws and resolution

threaten societal cohesion, and the rights of acceptance and belongingness of an individual. The failure to underscore the ideological sphere from which childhood, division of labour, sex and gender relations and other related sociocultural systems such as religion, complicates the proper perception and response of Wataturu community to government and non-governmental efforts.



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