

UNDERSTANDING REASONS OF CHILD LABOUR IN A DEVELOPING ECONOMY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The research aims at understanding and exploring the different reasons behind the plague of 'Child labour' that has engulfed Pakistan since its independence. As a member of International Labour Organization (ILO), Pakistan is obligated to eradicate child labour and/or bounded labour from its system in order to get value of its exports. Furthermore, the sample of this qualitative research consists of working children (e.g. auto-shops, factories, retail stores etc.), employers, community members, parents and teachers who were selected through convenient random sampling. The overall sample size consists of 130 respondents who were interviewed and their responses, after translation, were analyzed thematically. The results show that due to large family sizes and increasing poverty, children are inclined to work and earn a living on the cost of their education as either their parents do not work or are unable to meet their ends meet.

Keywords: Child labour, ILO, bounded labour, auto shops

INTRODUCTION

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "child labour" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

It refers to work that:

- a. is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- b. interferes with their schooling by:
 - c. depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - d. obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
 - e. requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

"Child labour" in-general refers to the work for children that harms them in anyway and/or exploits them in some way. However, there is no universally accepted definition of the same.

In some worst instances, child labour may even involve the enslavement of children and exposure to dangerous hazards or abuse, often at an early age. It is also not defined whether some specific forms of work can be termed 'child labour', it generally mostly depends on the age of the children, the working conditions, the working hours, and the type of work itself including the very purpose for which the work is carried out in a particular community, region or country.

Whilst child labour takes many different forms, a priority is to eliminate without delay the worst forms of child labour as defined by Article 3 of ILO Convention¹⁴¹ No. 182:

- a. All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- b. The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- c. The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- d. Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

In many developing countries, with high poverty and poor schooling opportunities, child labour is still prevalent¹⁴².

According to the Ghana News Agency;

“Child labour remains one of the major problems afflicting Pakistan and its children. Pakistan has passed laws in an attempt to limit child labour and indentured servitude - but those laws are universally ignored, and some 11 million children, aged four to fourteen, keep that country's factories operating, often working in brutal and squalid conditions.”

As per record of the National Survey of Child Labour carried out in 1996 through the Federal Bureau of Statistics with the collaboration of ILO, the total number of children in Pakistan of the age groups of 5 to 14 was 40 million. The total number of financially active children were observed to be 3.3 million (8.3% of the total children) in the entire Pakistan. Majority of the child workers (73%) were observed to be male, whereas 27% observed to be females. Majority of the child workers (58.6% or 1.94 million) were found in Punjab. The distribution of child labour is presented in Fig IV. This survey also recorded that involvement of children in work in the rural areas is almost 8 times larger than the urban areas. Almost one third of working children are literate, boys are more educated than girls and in urban children more than the rural children. The status of the employment by wide categories indicated that nearly 70% of the working children are unpaid family helpers. Sufficiently urban and rural differentials have been found in the status of employment. In rural areas, three fourths of the working children are working as unpaid family members, whereas in the urban areas it is one third. Nearly 46% of the working children work more than 35 hours per week and the good proportion work 56 hours or more. As per most of the parents surveyed, children work in order to assist in the household enterprises.

According to the Provincial Child Labour Unit (PCLU-Punjab) up-to-date data on child labour is not readily available in Pakistan. However, PCLU¹⁴³ has provided following data on their website;

Table 1. Province-Wise Comparison of Economically Active Children

¹⁴¹ <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

¹⁴² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_labour#cite_note-7

¹⁴³ <http://pclu.ciwce.org.pk/child-labour>

Child Labour in Pakistan			
<i>Province</i>	<i>Total No. of Children in age group of 5-14 years(millions)</i>	<i>Total No. of Economically Active Children in Age Group of 5-14 years(millions)</i>	<i>Ratio of Child Labour</i>
Punjab	22.63	1.94	8.60%
Sindh	8.62	0.3	3.50%
NWFP	6.71	1.06	15.80%
Baluchistan	2.07	0.01	0.50%
Total for Pakistan	40.03	3.31	8.30%

Fassa et al. (1999) is of the view that Child Labour may have positive impacts but in some situations it affects negatively on the health and the development of the children. It is core problem in developing countries. However, it is possible to observe the child workers in well developed countries as well, few of them includes in working in hazardous activities. In this study, the researcher revealed the profile of child labour in developed and under developed countries and principal occupations and hazards on it. Additionally, the study concise the epidemiologic evidences of the higher impact of few occupational exposures on the child health while comparing the adults and the theoretical concerns about the effects of the child labour on health. However, the researcher described the policies that may be used to combat the harmful menace of child labour.

Cigno et al. (2002) is of the view that the analogy of the international surge in the child labour. Decisions of parent either a child go to work or go to school quite depend on the expense and benefits of education. In the country that begins with the highly illiterate workforce, the globalization enhances the wages rates of uneducated, relative to the educated workers. This contracts the incentives to educate a child and enhance the incentives to develop the child work on the earliest opportunity. In contrast, a country that begins with a comparatively high share of educated workers, the globalization will raises the rates of wages of the workers related to the of uneducated child.

Khan (2003) vehemently analyzed the determinants of child labour particularly where the socioeconomic variable impacts the decision of parents for the children time utilization. The paper was econometric and the primary data was analyzed by using the sequential restrictions model. It was developed that children belonged to rich families and has literate parents were more likely to go to school and less likely to work. The existence of a severe gender gap in child education and many explanatory variables support the notion that parents prefer education of the son as compared to the girls. It was moreover discovered that attendance of the schools are negative and child labour is positively related to the size of household.

Mahmood, et al. (2005) has been concise that the socioeconomic factors perpetuate the child labour. The case of automobile and engineering, according to them, the majority of the respondents were forced by their parents to work due to financial circumstances. It was further observed that poverty is the major responsible factor for child labour chased by few other reasons like lack of the interest in education, big family sizes and compulsive societal behavior.

Awan et al. (2011) concluded that the supply side determinants of the child labour whereas they argued that the factors are absence of education of the mother, household heads education, large family size, low level of family income and less education of child pushed children into work that often damage to their development. Results have shown that low level income of the family drives children into hazardous labour. The parents of child labourers are mostly unemployed or underemployed, desperate for secure employment and income.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the economic, social, geographical, and demographical reasons of Child labour at research area?
2. What are the socio - economic background of working children at research area?
3. Which forms of child labour are frequent at research area?
4. What are the probable remedies to deal with the subject?

METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted to measure/find out the reasons of child labour at research area. 130 respondents were selected through purposive & snowball sampling techniques according to the following table. For data collection a comprehensive & in depth interview was taken from the unit of the sample. Interview had questions pertaining to various social and economical reasons of child labour and demographical & geographical in formations.

Table 2.

<i>S#</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>
1 Children	80
2 Parents	20
3 Community members/employers of the children	20
4 Teachers	10
<i>Total</i>	<i>130</i>

The data was analyzed as follows:

- I. The interview of children, parents, employers of children & teachers were transcribed and presented separately.
- II. Finally the data obtained was compiled separately and interpreted.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Findings of Children' Perspective

These children were found to be working mostly at auto-workshops, tea shops, general stores etc. The children that were interviewed were mostly boys with age 5 to 10 years and some were between 11 to 15 years. In almost all the cases, the children indicated that they had around 7 to 8 siblings while even the least number of siblings was 6. Most of the children were illiterate or had studied primary only. According to them, this was so because of low family income, strictness at school or the general environment of the school. Most of the

children also expressed that their parents were not literate and their income could not make their ends meet and could not even provide for three meals for a day. These were some of the reasons due to which the children were obligated to work even when they wanted to get education instead of labour.

Findings of Parents' Perspective

Almost all the parents shared that they were not educated and were mostly illiterate. They also admitted that their income was too low and could not afford to send their children to school. On top of that, none of the parents were aware of the rights of their children and insisted that the standard of studies and the general environment of schools were not good for their children. Even more so, the number of family members in form of siblings was such that more and more working hands were required to make the ends meet. Therefore, the children were sent to work.

Findings of Shopkeepers' Perspective

The shopkeepers and retail store owners where the children worked didn't know anything about the rights of the children. Even more disturbing was the fact that in many cases parents had insisted that their children be kept at the shops to work when there was no placement vacant or even when there was no help required at the shops. Also shocking was the carelessness of the shopkeepers/ owners about punishing the children and complete disregard of the safety and health conditions for the children. The shop owners also indicated that the standard of education was as such that even after completing some basic, primary or even secondary education, the children could not get fair opportunities for prosperous work, therefore it was better for them to learn some work from a young age so that they could get make their ends meet.

Findings of Teachers' Perspective

Upon interviews with the teachers, it was surprising to learn that even most of the teachers did not know the details about child rights. According to the teachers, the children from humble backgrounds seemed least interested in studies and did not come to school. The teachers also revealed that the parents seemed least interested in sending their children to schools as they wanted them to earn some money and considered schooling as ineffective and useless waste of time and money. The family size of the children was also a negative factor for the children as expressed by the teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

As deduced from the findings from this study, it is recommended that the authorities should take steps to eradicate the physical, economic, physical and social exploitation of child labourers and provide protection of the rights of children from the circumstances that hamper physical and mental development of children. The labour laws should be strictly implemented along with effective monitoring to assure that the factors causing the demand of child labour are eliminated. Furthermore, the education policy makers should consider the development of special schools for working including customized curriculum alongwith skill based learning.

Afternoon schools should be established for working children along with facilities of health care and social welfare for the children and their families. The schools should introduce motivating teacher methodologies in order to persuade the children in coming to schools while making sure that there is no factor of corporal punishment or bullying at play. The schools should develop strategies and include the parents and community members as well to make sure that child labour is defeated.

Awareness raising campaigns can also be launched at different media channels for the welfare of the working children while family planning could be emphasized more to ease of earning and income pressures on children.

From the point of view of economic reforms, the situation can also benefit from better employment opportunities especially for the families from humble financial backgrounds. On the other, non-governmental organizations could also spread the message across the board to all stakeholders in an effective manner regarding the child rights and the evils of child labour.

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