

**CHILD LABOUR:**  
**CONCERNS AND CONSEQUENCES IN PAKISTAN**

**Joseph Faheem\***

**Ijaz Ahmad Tatlah\*\***

**Saima Munnawar\*\*\***

**Abstract**

Child labor exists in the response of poverty and it is bitter reality of today's world. Parents are poor and they require money to run the household matters. Children become the easiest source of earnings, available to them. The main feature of child labor is that they are always ready to work on low cost that is why they get labor easily. Though Pakistan is signatory of many international treaties against child labor and the constitution of Pakistan does not allow its practice in the country but the current situation is quite alarming. At state level efforts are made, funds are raised, laws are framed but in the end it all seems result less. If the target of universalization of primary education is achieved and the ghost of poverty is eradicated from Pakistan, the situation can be overcome to at least some extent.

**Key words:** child, child labor, child rights, Laws, education, poverty

---

\* PhD Scholar, University of Management and Technology Lahore, Pakistan

\*\* UMT Lahore, Pakistan

\*\*\* Senior Elementary School Educator, District Sahiwal, Pakistan

## Introduction

Child labor has grasped the whole world; along with developing countries developed ones are also not free from its harmful effects. Child labor is prevailing all over the world as necessary evil. Ganta and Rao (1988) argue that world is full of crisis, water and power, environmental, financial and peace crisis are the top most. Child labor is no less as its magnitude effects on the future of nations. Child labor is an insidious vice. Leaving aside pathological cases of child abuse and neglect, it exists because it is the best response people can come up with to intolerable circumstances. It is particularly dangerous because it involves the sacrifice of a child's future welfare in exchange for immediate benefit, and difficult to combat because it involves questions of agency and power within households (Udry 2003).

Child labor is considered to be damaging, and to violate children's rights as it hampers children's appropriate emotional, physiological, psychological and social development (ILO 182). God has given human beings the boon of wisdom and prudence to think upon the signs of the universe and to draw conclusions. That is the reason why they disclose the hidden facts of it and its structure and have made remarkable progress in many walks of life. Children are the flowers of heaven. They are the most beautiful and purest creation of God. They are innocent both inwardly and outwardly. No doubt, they are the beauty of this world. Early in the morning when the children put on different kinds of clothes and begin to go to schools for the sake of knowledge, we feel a specific kind of joy through their innocence.

There is no one, denying the fact that child labor exists in Pakistan on an extensive scale. There is, however, controversy regarding its extent and enormity mainly because there is little official documentation on child labor. The lack of reliable data is partly due to the general tendency of the employers and others to conceal information as the work performed by children in certain cases may be prohibited by law (Jillani, year not given). The concept of child Labor got much attention during the 1990s when European countries announced a ban on the goods of the less-developed countries because of child Labor.

## Literature review

According to Siddiqi (2009) child labor is a worldwide observable fact. But, surprisingly, there is no universally accepted definition available for this largely cultural and

regional dependent phenomenon. Interesting enough, even the term child has different meanings in different cultures, regions and literatures. The International Labor Organization (ILO 1996) defines child Labor as:

- 1- When a child is working during early age
- 2- He overworks or gives over time to Labor
- 3- He works due to the psychological, social, and materialistic pressure
- 4- He becomes ready to Labor on a very low pay

Child labor is generally defined as employment of children on a sustained and regular basis. It is also often considered as the employment of children who are below a specific legal age (Schumpf 2004). Another definition by UNICEF (2009) states that “Child Labor” is generally speaking work for children that harms them or exploits them in some way (physically, mentally, morally or blocking access to education), furthermore “child” as anyone below the age of 18, and “child Labor” as some type of work performed by children below age 18.

### **Situation of child labor in Pakistan**

Child labor is overwhelmingly a rural and agricultural phenomenon. For example, in Pakistan, 70% of working children are employed in agriculture (Pakistan FBS, 1996). Boys are more likely to work than girls, and older children are much more likely to be employed than their younger siblings (Grootaert and Patrinos, 1999).

Article 11(3) of Pakistan’s Constitution expressly prohibits the employment of children below the age of fourteen years in any factory, mine or other hazardous employment. In addition, the Constitution makes it a Principle of Policy of the State of Pakistan to protect the child, to remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory education within the minimum possible period and to make provision for securing just and human conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex.

The ILO’s Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labor (SIMPOC) most recently estimated that 211 million children, or 18 percent of children 5-14, are economically active worldwide (ILO, 2002). In Pakistan children aged 5-14 are above 40

million. During the year 2009, the Federal Bureau of Statistics released the results of its survey funded by ILO's IPEC (International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor). The findings were that 3.8 million children age group of 5-14 years are working in Pakistan out of total 40 million children in this age group; fifty percent of these economically active children are in age group of 5 to 9 years. Even out of these 3.8 million economically active children, 2.7 million were claimed to be working in the agriculture sector. Two million and four hundred thousand (73%) of them were said to be boys (FBS, 2009).

It transpired that children are working at hotels, auto-shops, transport vans, printing industry, service stations or selling flowers and balloons in the streets. A large number of them also work as house servants. Although no authentic figures are available about the number of such children but according to Manpower Pakistan Survey (2007-08), 21 million children of age Group 10 to 14 are working in various sectors.

In 2003, UNICEF reported that about 8 million children were involved in economic activities while Human Rights Commission of Pakistan report of 2005 indicated the number of child laborers in the country was 10 million. The children working in both formal and informal sectors are not getting sufficient salaries. Some children shared with The Daily Nation that they got only lunch and Rs 200 weekly by their owner, whom they called Ustad. This is fact that the children are paid very low wages as a child working in printing press said that his monthly pay was Rs3, 000. The child laborers average income is Rs1, 500, which reflects that how they are being exploited. The menace is not on the priority list of the government, as it is reluctant to probe into the issue and conduct any survey to trace the facts behind child labor. (Nation October 20, 2010, Arshad Bhati)

### **Causes and consequences of child labor**

According to survey findings, the major factors responsible for child labor were:

- Large population with high population growth rate;
- Almost three-fourths (70 per cent) of the total population living in rural areas, with subsistence agricultural activities
- Low productivity and prevalence of poverty;
- Unpaid family helpers, especially in agricultural activities;

- Discriminating social attitude towards girls and women;
- Inadequate educational facilities. (FBS, 1996)

Besides the other mentioned facts there occur many more reasons of child labor. These may be different in different countries. Here is a list of the causes of child labor in the Pakistani scenario: poverty, feudal thought, to pay back debts, invisibility of child labor, illiteracy and ignorance, high rate of Population growth, uneven distribution of wealth and resources, out dated customs and norms, lack of opportunities, forced to live below poverty line, insecure social life, none implementation of labor laws and problem of compulsory Education.

### **Prohibition of employment of children in certain occupations and processes**

There are more or less 13 hazardous professions/fields which are considered the most dangerous for children in the world, they include: transport of passengers, goods; or mails by railway, cinder picking, clearing of an ash pit or building operation in the railway premise, work in a catering establishment at a railway station, involving the movement of vendor or any other employee of the establishment from one platform to another or into or out of a moving train, work relating to the construction of railway station or with any other work where such work is done in close proximity to or between the railway lines, the port authority within the limits of any port, work relating to selling of crackers and fireworks in shops with temporary licenses, abattoirs/slaughter houses, automobile workshops and garages, foundries, handling of taxies or inflammable substance or explosives, handloom and power loom industry, mines (Under ground and under water) and collieries, plastic units and Fiber glass workshops ([www.slideshare.net/](http://www.slideshare.net/))

### **Initiatives towards elimination of child labor**

Child Labor is a condemnable phenomenon and elimination of child labor is a feasible objective. It must be eradicated altogether, for democratic and healthy growth of the society. Children should grow into adulthood through love and care, education and training. Health of the

society depends upon the physical, moral and spiritual development of its children. Some of the strategies to get rid of child labor may be as: a) consumer campaign against child labor b) role of renowned politicians c) compulsory Education d) need to observe the child labor laws e) poverty alleviation f) enhancement of educational opportunities g) decrease of dropout rate h) new model schools for children i) celebration of child labor day j) awareness of the child labor phenomena.

### **National legislation and policies against child labor in Pakistan**

Moehling (1999) shows that there is little evidence that child labor laws contributed to the dramatic decline in child labor in the 19th century in United States. This decline was driven instead by changes in technology, immigration and the rise in the real wage.

### **Constitution of Pakistan 1973**

Article 11 (1) of the Constitution of Pakistan forbids slavery and states that no law shall permit or facilitate its introduction into Pakistan in any form.

Article 11 (2) prohibits all forms of forced labor and traffic in human beings.

Article 11 (3) prohibits employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment.

### **The employment of children act (ECA), 1991**

Section 2 of the Act defines a 'child' to mean any person who has not completed his fourteenth year. Section 3 of the Act bans employment of children under-14 in occupations connected with transport by railways, cinder picking, cleaning of an ash pit or building operations in railway premises, catering at a railway station or on a train, construction of a railway station, working close to or between railway lines, working in a port area, and manufacture or sale of fireworks. Part II prohibits employment of children in 13 specific sectors. The prohibition against employing children in hazardous labor, and the regulations governing the

working conditions of children under 14 do not apply to family run establishments, and schools (training institutes) established, assisted, or organized by the Government. ([www.sparcpk.org](http://www.sparcpk.org))

### **The bonded labor system (abolition) act, 1992**

The Act explicitly defines peshgi (or advance), bonded debt, bonded labor, bonded laborer, bonded labor system, family, and nominal wages. It considers any work done against peshgi as a form of bonded labor. The Act abolishes the bonded labor system with immediate effect. It declares all bonded labor free and discharged from any obligation to render any bonded labor, or any form of forced labor, or payment of debts. The Act prohibits any person from extracting labor under forced conditions from anyone. All customs, traditions, or contracts entered into before or after the commencement of the Act, pertaining to forced labor or bonded labor, have been declared void and inoperative. ([www.bondedlabour.org](http://www.bondedlabour.org))

### **The prevention and control of human trafficking ordinance (promulgated in October 2002):**

This Ordinance applies to all children aged less than 18 years. It defines exploitative entertainment as all activities in connection with human sports or sexual practices, and related abusive practices. According to the ordinance, human trafficking means recruiting, buying or selling a person, with or without consent, by use of coercion, abduction, or by giving payment or share for such person's transportation, for exploitative entertainment. The ordinance prescribes severe terms of punishment — 7-14 years of imprisonment — for perpetrators, depending on the degree of involvement in trafficking. If criminal groups are involved, each member of the group is liable to the same punishment. Parents guilty of the crime involving their own children are liable for the same punishment. The ordinance recognizes that all offences are cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable. The strong measures recommended in the ordinance are expected to check the incidence of human trafficking.

However, historical growth rates suggest that reducing child labor through improvements in living standards alone will take time. If a more rapid reduction in the general incidence of child labor is a policy goal, improving educational systems and providing financial incentives to poor families to send children to school may be more useful solutions to the child labor problem

than punitive measures designed to prevent children from earning income (Edmonds and Pavcnik, 2005).

### **An act to provide for compulsory primary education in the province of the Punjab**

Usually child labor is considered to be harmful and to have negative impact on the physical as well as mental development of children while interfering with their education (Munthali 2003). In the preamble of the above mentioned act it is stated that whereas it is expedient to provide for compulsory primary education in the Punjab (THE PUNJAB COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION ACT, 1994). Developing countries often lack resources to enforce child labor bans, especially when most children work for their parents on family farms. Non-compliance with compulsory schooling laws continues to be a large problem in today's developing world (Krueger, 1997; Brown 2001). Between 1993 and 1997, child labor in Vietnam declined by nearly 30 percent while the country's GDP grew by nearly 9 percent per year on average (Edmonds, 2005).

### **Pakistan and Child labor Treaties**

Pakistan is the active member of the following international treaties and organizations.

- ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182)
- ILO Forced Labor Convention (No. 29)
- ILO Abolition of Forced Labor Convention (No. 105)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

### **CONCLUSION**

In Pakistan a variety of child labor laws do exist. They are unique in their very nature. But the dilemma of their non implementation remains at the peak. Different actors of civil society are required to come forward and play due role in solving this magnitude phenomenon. Drafting different laws are useless until they are implemented. The law of compulsory primary education was introduced more than a decade ago in Punjab province, Pakistan and recently government seems to be fully detriment through its educational expeditions for universalization of primary education in the country. Policies targeted at improving school infrastructure and



reducing the cost of schooling provides the most promising targeted ways to reduce child labor. These initiatives might work best when combined with conditional cash transfers programs for households that send children to school, such as Food for Education in Bangladesh and Progreso in Mexico. Such programs have been successful in increasing school attendance, which ameliorates one of the concerns about child labor, and there is some evidence that these policies have, to a lesser extent, also reduced child labor. The success of such plans will definitely help in eliminating child labor from Pakistan.

There is lack of accurate data regarding the child labor in the country. It is the duty of the state to conduct surveys to have firsthand knowledge of the problem on regular intervals. They will also help in assessing the success of different action plans against child labor.

Child labor and education policies are required to be framed tandem and dependant to each other. All the parents of the world wish their children to be educated and well set. It is the mother of all crimes poverty that translates the fate of innocent children as child laborers. So concluding the above discussion the responsibility rests on the shoulders of state to eradicate poverty and provide proper schooling to the children of the state. Further, there must be sufficient budgetary allocations to cope with the situation.

## References

- Brown, D. (2001). "Labor Standards: Where Do They Belong on the International Trade Agenda?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 15:3, pp. 89-112.
- Dehli: Discovery Publishing House.
- Edmonds, E. V. (2005) Does Child Labor Decline with Improving Economic Status?
- Edmonds, E. V. and Pavcnik, N. (2005) Child Labor in the Global Economy
- Ghanta, R. & Digumarts, R. B. (1998). Environmental Education Problems and Prospects.
- Grootaert, C. and H. Patrinos. (1999). The Policy Analysis of Child Labor: A Comparative Study. NY: St. Martins.
- ILO (1996) about child labor [www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts](http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts) accessed on 5-4-2010
- ILO (1996), Child Labour: targeting the intolerable, ILO, Geneva.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). 2002. Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour. Geneva: ILO.
- Jillani, A. (year not given) The Legal Framework for Combating Child Labor in Pakistan
- Krueger, Alan. (1997). "International Labor Standards and Trade," in Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, 1996. Michael Bruno and Boris Pleskovic, eds. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, pp. 281-302.
- Lilongwe: IPEC Programme Final Report.
- Moehling, Carolyn. (1999). "State Child Labor Laws and the Decline of Child Labor." *Explorations in Economic History*. 36, 72-106.
- Munthali, A. (2003), Hunger, Public Policy and Child Labour: Case Study of Malawi,
- Pakistan Federal Bureau of Statistics (1996), Summary Results of Child Labor Survey in Pakistan. Federal Bureau of Statistics: Islamabad.
- Scrumpf, E. (2004), "Child Labour in the West," *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood History in History and Society*, <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Bo-Ch/Child-Labor-in-the-West.html>, (Accessed 02/01/2010).
- Siddiqi, A.F. I. (2009) Child Labor A Statistical Study Using Multistage Probability Proportional Stratified Systematic Sampling. PhD thesis GC University Lahore
- The Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter, 2005), pp. 199-220
- The Punjab Compulsory Primary Education Act, (1994) (Pb. Act IX of 1994)

- Udry, s.(2009) CHILD LABOR CENTER DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 856 New Haven, CT 06520- 8269 <http://www.econ.yale.edu/~egcenter/>
- [www.bondedlabour.org/.../Pakistan\\_Bonded\\_Labour\\_System\\_\\_Abolition\\_\\_Act\\_\\_1992.doc](http://www.bondedlabour.org/.../Pakistan_Bonded_Labour_System__Abolition__Act__1992.doc)
- [www.fia.gov.pk/pchto2002.htm](http://www.fia.gov.pk/pchto2002.htm)
- [www.slideshare.net/.../physiological-development-of-children-engag](http://www.slideshare.net/.../physiological-development-of-children-engag)
- [www.sparcpk.org/crs\\_employment\\_act\\_2.php](http://www.sparcpk.org/crs_employment_act_2.php)
- [www.statpak.gov.pk/](http://www.statpak.gov.pk/)
- [www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_childlabour](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_childlabour)

