

## **Economic Factors responsible for Child labor (A Case study of District Swabi)**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was conducted in district Swabi in 2010, where the data was collected through survey in three villages namely, Swabi, Zaida and Topi. In total, 225 respondents were interviewed to examine the determinants of child labor in the study area. The result of the study shows that seventy –three percent children belong to nuclear families. This implies that the parents of those children who belong to nuclear families are relatively poor. It also found that mainstream eighty-six percent of the working children are illiterate. It is evident from the study that only thirty-seven percent of the household monthly income is above Rs. 6000 per month. More than half (fifty-five percent) children are not getting any pocket money out of their earnings. On the whole sixty-three percent of working children want to become Ustad. About fifty-two percent of the working children have to work for nine to ten hours on daily basis. The study recommends that the government should introduce income- generating activities for the enhancement of poor people's income. Population growth needs to be controlled. Ignorance and illiteracy should be removed through introduction of education facilities. A campaign should be organized everywhere to make people aware of the adverse effects of child labor. The implementation of labor laws concerning child labor should be taken well care of. Education should be made compulsory and free for all at least up to middle level. Family planning recommendations should be followed to overcome the problem of expansion in family size and hence child labor.*

**Keywords:** Child Labour, District Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

### **Introduction**

Child labor is an important issue now-a-days. The developed and developing countries are taking serious action to eradicate child labor from the society. Child labor is the employment of children when they

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are too young to work on wages or when they are employed for jobs unsuitable or unsafe. According to Folk (1987) child labor is any work by children that interferes with their full physical development, their opportunities for a desirable education or their needed reaction. Ahmed (1987) defined child labor as “any mental or physical work done by a child for earning wages”. Shah (1997) said that child labor as “all children under the age of fifteen (15) years in work or employment with the aim of earning a livelihood for themselves or for their families”.

Child exploitation and child labor in our society is growing fast. There are different socio-economic factors which are responsible for its spreading and prevalence. These factors include poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of family planning, dis-satisfaction from education system, absence of social security and many others. It is the sole responsibility of the government to provide rights to children and protect them from all sort of exploitation. A child plays an important role in the future of mankind. The protection of a child from physical and social hazards is a pre-requisite for the proper growth of children in order to make sure the future progress and prosperity of human beings.

Unfortunately, a large number of children all over the world especially in developing countries are deprived of education and other amenities of life. The socio-economic strain forces these children for labor, who should be in a school and as a result face the harsh reality of the world and work simply for survival. The developing countries have been facing the crises of child labor due to poor economic and social condition. Children in these countries work for longer period in hazardous and life threatening conditions. A morally, mentally and physically healthy child is an asset for a nation. This should be the duty of all of us to make sure that today's children are physically, emotionally and educationally prepared for the future. The main responsibility of the government is to assemble their needs for economic support, health care, protection and education. Now-a-days this vision is gaining main ground of the nation of the world and for quite some time the intelligentsia has been trying to induce the world that removing and controlling of child labor are very important for sustained economic growth and social progress.

The informal sector in a number of developing countries in general and in Pakistan in particular, accounts for a large share of economic activities of the country. Children thus participate fully in every activity of the informal sector, such as workshops, small-scale industries, leatherwork, and carpet weaving centers, cheap hotels, brick kilns and garages. In addition, a substantial number are self-employment, hawking cheap goods, shining shoes or collecting waste material.

Although the 1973 constitution of Pakistan clearly states that “no child under the age of 14 shall be employed in hazardous jobs.” we find children less than 14 years of age working under life threatening conditions. So far no active efforts have been put in by any of our government to enforce any such law to minimize and control child labor.

The most important causes of child labor are poverty and unemployment of children's parent. When parents either earn low wages or when they do not get enough work to feed their family, they are forced to send children to work. Children are the prosperity of nations. Too often this valuable resource is wasted. At the time when they should be acquiring the skills, knowledge, values and sense of personal worth that produce good citizen; children are being exploited as mere commodities and cheap laborer. They are robbed of their childhood. Their physical, intellectual and emotional health is threatened. Child labor tends to be invisible, illegal and unmarked by most of the societies. The ILO recognizes that child labor is a complex and often stubborn problem deeply entrenched in poverty and rises even due to inequitable economic systems. This problem cannot be eliminated at once, but needs long term approaches within each country. Child labor is enveloping problem but Asia has been achieving visible reductions.

Asia is economically the most dynamic region in the world. At the same time, this region has the greatest concentration in the world's poorest people. It also employs more than sixty percent of the world's child labor, often in unendurable forms. The biggest employers of children in the country are in agriculture sector, brick kilns, small industries, carpet weavers, domestic services and urban informal sector. In view of the importance of the problem, the present study was conducted in three big villages of District Swabi, namely Swabi, Zaida and Topi. Only three villages have been selected for study due to financial and time constraints.

After the survey, it was found that in all types of working, children are working in abundance in these three towns. Majority of the children were working in shops, hotels and workshops.

### **Objective of the Study**

- The identification of the factors causing child labor in the study area.
- To examine the working condition of laboring children.
- To study the perception of the working children towards the attitude of the employers.
- To study problems relating to working children in the study area. To suggest remedial measures in order to reduce child labor.

### **Hypothesis**

- Higher the rate of poverty higher would be the practice of child labor. They are positively correlated.
- Higher the rate of illiteracy, higher would be the practice of the child labor.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five sections. Section II presents a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on the child labor. Section III explains the methodology, data collection and descriptive analysis. Section IV presents results and discussions of the study. Section V is devoted to main conclusion and recommendations of the study.

### **Literature Review**

This section with review of studies conducted in Pakistan as well as in other areas of the world. But our main focus will be on the past studies conducted in Pakistan.

Bibi (1980) reported that majority of the parents send their children to work due to their poor economic conditions. She concluded that thousand of the children under the age of 15 years were working under highly unhygienic conditions and ratio of female workers was higher than male. They were paid low and worked hard for 60 to 90 hours per week.

Metz et al. (1982) concluded after a general review of the socio-economic importance of child labor and its effects. Accounts are given of the employment of children in agriculture, industries and in informal sector in Egypt, Thailand, Colombia, India, Peru and Sri-lanka. Formally an account was given of ILO, UNICEF and the anti-slavery society research on the activities of child labor.

Rana (1985) found that majority of the child workers were working for 9 to 12 hours a day. She also found that more than seventy percent children were inducted by their parents. She described that main reason for inducement is poverty, other social and traditional factors. She also found that these children were very regular to go to work.

The daily news (1995) described that child labor was veracious in many parts of the world and Pakistan is one of them. Pakistan has one of the highest population growths in the world. Statistics warns that if the present rate of population growth continues, Pakistan would be the second largest populated country in the world by the year 2050. This rapid increase in population is one of the major causes of child labor.

The daily news (1995) described that poverty is commonly considered as the major cause of child labor. Research study indicates

that multiple factors including poverty are responsible for pushing children for exploited labor, such as availability of cheap and docile labor, lack of awareness among masses about the intrinsic value of education, lack of opportunities for compulsory free and quality education, presence of safeguards in the legislation for employment of children in the garb of vocational training and engagement of the children in small industrial process carried out by the families ventures and ineffective enforcement of the prohibited legislation.

Akhtar (1998) identified determinants of child labor participation in Peshawar city. The study was based on a sample of 150 respondents distributed equally over three categories; manufacturing, trade and transport. The study found that amongst all factors, economic condition of respondent's families occupied a vital role in forcing children to work. House hold income and education level as well as family size were linked with child labor. The study put forward various recommendations for solution of child labor issues including forceful enforcement of child labor lose, awareness of the harmful effects of the child labor, provision of employment opportunities adult members of the house hold, etc.

Rahatullah (2001) discussed social and economic causes of child labor in Mingora, district swat. The study was based on a sample of 100 respondents equally distributed and four categories; workshops, brick kilns, hotels and self-employment. He found that amongst all causative factors is the economic condition of respondent's families and its large size. Parent's income and education level occupy a vital role in forcing the child to labor. The study recommends that a campaign should be organized everywhere to make people aware of harmful effects of child labor. Labor laws concerning child labor should be enforced forcefully. Education should be made compulsory and free for all at least till primary level. Family planning should be followed. To overcome unemployment, job opportunities should be provided to make efforts to improve the working and living conditions of child workers.

The study recommended that the government should facilitate income-generating activities for enhancing poor people's income. Population growth needs to be curbed. Ignorance and illiteracy should be removed through introduction of educational program and providing necessary facilities. People must be educated about the negative impact of child labor upon children's health and future career.

### **Methodology, Data Collection & Descriptive Analysis**

In this section we will describe the methodology of the study, universe of the study, sample size, data collection and analysis.

### *Area of the Study*

District Swabi constitutes the area of the study. Before selecting a sample for this study, an informal survey was conducted in the three small cities i.e Swabi, Zaida and Topi. The main activities having child labor in these villages were workshops, shops and restaurants.

### *Selection of Respondent*

The sample respondents were selected from different activities, which mostly consisted of workshops, shops and restaurants. The interviews are taken from different children belonging to different working conditions and activities.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data was collected for this study with the help of a pre-tested interview schedule in January-February 2010. After the collection of data, it was transferred from interview schedule to tally sheets and then to computer and analyzed thereafter using percentage and frequencies.

### *Sample size*

Since the population or the universe of the study is very large, therefore it was decided that the following sample size will be selected for the study. The 225 respondents were interviewed, and the distributions were as follows.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Sample of Activities with Child labor

Types of Activity	Swabi	Zaida	Topi	All	Percentage
Workshops	50	44	36	130	58%
Restaurants	25	15	10	50	22%
Shops	24	13	8	45	20%
Total	97	72	54	225	

*Source: Survey*

The table shows that 130 (58%) children are working in workshops, 50(22%) in restaurants and 45(20%) in shops.

### **Results and Discussion**

This section presents main findings of this study.

### *Sample respondents classified by Age*

Table 4.1: Distribution of Sample respondents classified by Age groups

Age Group	No. of Respondent	Percentage
7-10	36	16
11-14	117	52
15-18	72	32
All	225	100

*Source: Survey*

The above table shows the classification of working children by age. More than half (fifty-two percent) belong to the age group 11-14 years. Thirty-two percent belong to the age group of 15-18 years. Similarly sixteen percent are of the age group of 7-10 years.

*Sample respondents by Place of Residence*

Do you live with your parents			If no, with whom you live?		
Responses	No. of respondents	%age	Response	No. of respondents	%age
Yes	173	76.89	a. Brother	26	50
			b. Paternal Uncle	8	15
No	52	23.11	c. Maternal Uncle	11	21
			d. Sister & brother-in-law	7	13
Total	225	100		52	100

*Source: Survey*

The data in the table shows that majority (seventy-seven percent) of the children on work were living in their parent's houses. The remaining twenty-three percent are living with their relatives. They were living with their brothers, paternal uncle, maternal uncle and sister and brother in law.

*Occupation of Father of Working Children*

Table 4.3: sample respondents Distinguished by Father Occupation

Father's Occupation	No. Of respondent	percentage
Labors	75	33
Drivers	67	30
Mechanics	42	19
Shopkeepers	28	12
Not Working	13	6
All	225	100

*Source: Survey*

That data shows that the parents of majority of working children are alive. When asked about their father's occupation, the thirty-seven percent working children reported that they are working as labor's , thirty-four percent as driver, nineteen percent as mechanics, thirteen percent as shopkeepers and only six percent reported that their fathers didn't work at all.

#### *Causes of Child Labor*

Table 4.4: Sample Respondents Describing Reason of their Work

Reason of work	No. of respondent	Percentage
To support family	169	75
To learn skill	56	25
All	225	100

*Source: Survey*

Although there may be different reasons for working, but the sample respondents reported two main reasons. Majority (seventy percent) of them reported that their family income was very low and they are forced to work to support their family. Only one-fourth, (twenty-five percent) respondent's wanted to learn some skills.

#### *Household Income*

Table 4.5: Monthly Income of the Sample Households

Monthly Family Income	No. of respondent	Percentage
Less than 4000	51	23
4000-5000	38	17
5000-6000	53	24
6000 & above	83	37
All	225	100

*Source: Survey*

Family income is one of the main reasons of child labor. It affects the child labor, therefore family income are collected. The data in the table shows that thirty- seven percent of the working children's family income



is greater than six thousand (6000). While other working children's income is less than 6000. it can be inferred from the data that almost all of the sample household income is very low to fulfill the daily requirements, which in turn implies that poverty is the root cause of child labor.

#### *Education level of Working Children*

**Table 4.6: Monthly Incomes of the Sample Households**

Do you attend school (n=225)			If yes up to which class		
Responses	No. Of Respondents	Percentage	Responses	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	31	14	1-5	19	63
			6-8	8	25
No	194	86	9-10	4	13
Total	225	100	Sub-Total	31	100

The data in the above table shows that majority of the children (eighty-six percent) did not attend the school and were illiterate. In the selected sample only fourteen percent attended the school. Among these children the primary level educated children are nineteen, up to middle are eight and only four are matriculate.

#### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation**

This section summarizes the findings of the study and draws main conclusion from these findings; it put forward policy recommendation as to how child labor can be reduced if not completely eliminated.

#### **Summary**

The present study was conducted in district Swabi. The study is based on a sample of working children. The data was collected in January-February 2010, with the help of a pre tested interview schedule in three towns namely Swabi, Zaida and Topi. On the whole there are 150 activities (workshops, shops and restaurant) in the District from which the sample activities are randomly selected. Out of the sample of 225 respondents 130 are working in Workshops, 50 in restaurants and 45 are working in Shops.

The age of sample respondents ranged from 7 to 18 years. Majority fifty-two percent (52%) of children are of the age from 11 to 14 years. As much as seventy-seven percent (77%) are living with their parents and the remaining are with other relatives. Similarly, seventy-three percent (73%) of the sample belonged to nuclear families and rest of them belonged to joint and extended families. Fifty-seven percent

(57%) of the respondent's families are 10-13 members per family, while the earning members are one to three. thirty-seven percent (37%) of the parents (father) of the sample respondent's are laborers, twenty-four percent (24%) drivers and nineteen percent (19%) mechanics.

A large number of working children, eighty-six percent (86%) are illiterate. Among the literate respondent's sixty-three percent (63%) has education level up to primary, twenty-five percent (25%) up to middle and twelve percent (12%) are matriculate. Majority sample respondents do not attend the school reputed either family problems. The household income of these respondents is very low ranging from 2000 to 7000 per month. This implies that poverty is the root cause of child labor.

Regarding working experience of the sample children most of them have working experience from one to three years. Most of the children revealed that they were working to support their family. They want to learn skills and experience which will help them in their future. The respondents want to open their own workshops, restaurants and shops. Some want to become Ustad, policeman, teacher and also some of them want to get more education.

### Conclusion

The main conclusions drawn from the study are

- The main cause of child labor is growing population, which exerts pressure on the existing resources. Growing population leads to sub division land in other resources, which results in poverty and deprivation. Hence, people need to improve their income; they are forced even to ask their children to work.
- House hold income and land holding are very low which leads to child labor.
- Similarly illiteracy is the main factor that forces the child to work.
- Although child labor contributes significantly to the family income but they do not get sufficiently as their pocket money. Thus, the reward of child labor is very low, although they work for longer hours. But they are mostly exploited.
- The working children work more than they received for their level. In addition, their employees exploit them and treat them harshly.
- Working children feel deprived, inferior and disappointed from their hard and difficult work and lower status as compared to other laborers.

### **Recommendation**

The study recommended the following policy measures to summarize:

- The government may provide income generating activity in the area. This will curtail the child labor.
- The government should control the high population growth in the area. Family planning should be widely introduced in the area.
- Illiteracy ranks second to poverty, and leads to child labor, therefore the government must implement its literacy programs more effectively, so that more people become literate and educated.
- The Nazim of the area must make the people aware of the negative effects of the child labor. Furthermore, some initiatives are necessary to control the child labor in the area.

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