



# Child Labor and Child Discipline its Reasons and Associated Health Effects in Sindh Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

The Child labor and child discipline are important public health issues to address, to maintain a child's physical and mental wellbeing. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-8.7) has a special emphasis on ending child labor. As per Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2010, several factors such as impoverishment, social attitudes and huge family size as well as low educational rates contributes behind child labor in Pakistan. Several legal context and laws in Sindh are to protect children against child labor. Joint efforts from parents, children and teachers can be an effective tool in improving children's life skills, knowledge thereby strengthening school attendance and ending child labor in Sindh, Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Child Labor, Child Discipline, Health Effects, Legal Context, Sindh.

## BACKGROUND

Child labor is a serious global public health issue despite having a declining global number of child laborers. Globally the burden of overall working children has an increasing trend which consist of a major portion of children who are labeled as child laborers. By definition, child labor does not include the work of children that has no harmful effects on their wellbeing and personal growth and interfere with their education. Any work that is not affecting a child's health and personal growth and development as well as is not interfering with their education is generally considered as something favorable. While child labor relates to "work taken up by children below the applicable legal minimal working age, based on international labor organization (ILO) standards" on child labor.<sup>1,2</sup>

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Providing guidance in handling the emotions and the manner of behaving and making judgments thereby preserving children's physical and psychological integrity and dignity is an essential component of child discipline.<sup>3</sup>

International labor organization (ILO) has defined a working child as child labor "when all children below 18 years in the labor market or their own household are exposed to harmful occupations or work activities and children undertaking work in the labor market or household interfering with their primary education, all children under 15 in full time employment, and all children under 13 in part time work."<sup>1</sup>

Globally among 218 million children between aged 5 and 17 years who are working, an estimated 168 million children (around 11 percent of the aged population) were in child labor in 2018. More than half of these children are working under hazardous environment, which endangers all aspects of the "physical, mental or moral well-being" of a child.<sup>1</sup> The maximum number of child laborers is in the Asia and the Pacific region. More than 72 millions of these child laborers are from Africa keeping its ranks highest among regions, followed by Asia and the Pacific for seven 7 per cent of all children (62 million) in region (global estimates 2016). And both the geographical areas collectively document for almost nine out of every ten children in child labor globally. Seven south Asian's countries absorb an estimated 17 million in child labor. The highest percentage of children being involved in child labor is found in areas of agriculture i.e., 71%, followed by services and industrial sector i.e., 12% and 12% respectively. Agriculture sector, where maximum children are employed mainly includes areas of fishing, forestry, livestock, herding and aquaculture, whereas industrial sector mainly includes mining.

In 1994, International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) came into its existence in Pakistan, as a result of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of

Pakistan (GoP) and the ILO. The MoU was signed to tap facilitation from the ILO for translating into action, the commitment of the Government of Pakistan concerning the eradication of child labor. Despite this, the number of out-of-school children in Pakistan is still high i.e., 7.3 million and around 3.4 million are working as child laborers in our country. Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) has given preference to this issue of child labor upon mutual agreement by the Ministry of Labor and Manpower, Pakistan Employers Federation and Pakistan Workers Federation.<sup>4,5</sup>

The GoP has also ratified ILO core Conventions related to child labor: "Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182)."

The sustainable development goal (SDG) 8.7 is having special emphasis in ending the child labor. It addresses the target of "Taking immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms."<sup>6</sup>

This Commentary aims to identify the major reasons and adverse effects of child labor and child discipline in Sindh Pakistan.

### **Prevalence of child labor and child discipline in Sindh**

Despite all these legislations and acts which are there for decades there are still a huge number of children facing hazardous occupations. In accordance with Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) report 2014, an estimated 26% of children between 5-17 years of age are involved in child labor in province. The distribution of child laborers varies according to the regions, for example, only 7.7% children in Karachi region are involved in child labor compared with 45.1% in Mirpurkhas region. The report identifies that main reason for a child to work was to earn money and hence labeled such work as economic activity. According to this report as compared to female children, male children are more likely to be involved in economic activity across all the age groups. Majority of

these children belong to the poorest wealth quintile and rural areas of the province. (MICS, 2014)

In the province of Sindh, among children aged 1-14 years, 81.3% of them were subjected to at least one form of psychological (78%) or physical (63%) penalty by family members during the previous month. Whereas 35% of the children experienced most severe forms of physical punishment (hitting the child on the head, ears or face or hitting the child hard and repeatedly). Male children (66 percent) are more prone to physical discipline than females (60.2 percent) whereas, older children, living in rural areas with low education of mothers having impoverished households living were equally likely to encounter at least one violent psychological or physical punishment.<sup>3</sup>

## LEGAL CONTEXT

### Laws and institutional unit for child labor in Sindh:

The province of Sindh has a reputable authorized framework for children when compared to other provinces of Pakistan. The province has developed many acts regarding children's right of which some includes:

#### 1. Sindh Children Act (1955)

In this act "A child was as any person below 16 years of age. The law deals with children who are victims of violence and those involved in criminal litigation."<sup>7</sup>

#### 2. Sindh Borstal School Act (1955)

This allows courts to "detain youthful offenders, between the ages of 16 and 21 in youth detention centers, for periods ranging from three to five years, with certain guidelines that protect the rights of youth."<sup>8</sup>

#### 3. Sindh Child Protection Authority Act (2011)

The purpose of this act was "seeking work for implementation of policies and laws, establishing an institutional mechanism for child protection and setting minimum and care standards for all institutions relating to children, including educational institutions, orphanages, shelter homes, child parks and hospitals."<sup>7</sup>

There are also other institutional arrangements that are functional for safeguarding children's right in Sindh. Examples include, "Sindh child protection authority" established in 2014, different "child protection units" established by department of social welfare, in association with UNICEF at around 11 sites of the province. These units provide diversity of services, directly or other associations, to children and their families.

### Reasons for child labor and child discipline:

Poverty is the major reason forcing a child to go out and work. Income inequality and low-income levels are the main reasons behind poverty. The risk of child labor is more with the children of poor, jobless households.<sup>9</sup> High ratio of unemployment, over population and the poor distribution of the resources are the factors that are leading towards child labor.<sup>9,10</sup> Poverty, social attitudes and large family size as well as low educational level are the reasons behind child labor in Pakistan as reported by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2010).

**Poverty** Throughout, Africa and Asia, child labor is widely distributed. Children are forced to labor rather of going to the school mainly by the poor households. If the family live beneath the poverty line, parents see children as part of supporter in their family wages. Studies conducted by "Edmonds and Pavcnik" (2005); "O'Donnell et al." (2005) and "Akarro and Mtwewe" (2011), showed that dealing with the poverty would be one of the solutions to the decline in the child labor.<sup>10</sup>

### Lack of education

As per NEMIS 2013-14, about half of the children are not enlisted in schools in province. Of the total admissions, 58% students are studying in urban areas while the enrollment in rural areas is 42%. Even among these enrollments there is a huge issue of dropout. The situation of dropout in the province of Sindh is very dreadful. The overall dropout rates in primary education is high in Sindh, i.e. nearly 50% for primary students who drop out before finishing their primary education.<sup>11</sup>

### **Family size and condition/High rate of population growth**

More number of children involved in child labor is expected in the families with large poor households than in the families with smaller households. And this is the reason that the parents due to the larger households are unable to meet the demands and force their child to go out and work.<sup>12</sup> Those children who have lost either of their parents and those affected by HIV/AIDS are also working as child labor to support their families and siblings.

### **Cultural or traditional factors**

This factor is responsible behind the fact that many children start working at very young age because their families think that working in such age will make them more skillful and better future.<sup>13</sup>

### **Corruption**

According to United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2012) “Corruption exacerbates poverty and inequality, undermines human development and stability, encourages and sustains conflict, violates human rights, and erodes the democratic functioning of countries.” Corruption is one of the major reasons that have a negative impact on a child and due to this a child is unable to get his basic rights such as health care, education and infrastructure.<sup>14</sup>

### **Globalization**

In developing countries, globalization affects adversely on child labor. In current times, many multinational companies moved their production abroad. They frequently hire children as labors because they are bearable, and they easily listen to what instructions they are provided with even if they're beat up and overburdened.<sup>15</sup>

### **Adverse Effects of Child Labor and child discipline**

Bad health outcomes are the direct results of work induced illness or injury. Working children usually encounter higher caloric demands than non-working children and when these demands are not met, health is affected directly or indirectly. This happens when the nutritional requirement are not fulfilled properly and mainly happens because of the lack of education of the parents and they are not aware of what essentially body requires and ignoring this fact they are sending their children to the work.

Two major issues affecting the health are physical injuries and the psychological stress or trauma at work. Physical injuries may include crushed foot, exposure to toxins. Depression, anxiety, panic disorders etc. are result of psychological stress or trauma at work.<sup>16</sup>

### **Proposed Solution/Changes**

Provincial governments should make attempts to eliminate child labor; provide passage to schooling besides making education mandatory; revise legislation and harmonize it with global principles; accomplish ILO Convention and ratify Minimum Age Convention; advance child labor and child discipline regulation mechanism; carry out a survey to assess prevalence of child labor, including bonded and forced labor and enhance the labor inspectorate. Risky professions should be prohibited strictly and skill development programs, with monetary benefits, should be initiated as a practical alternative.

The most effective and important suggestion is to strengthen local or district government, so they ensure that child protection issues are combined across sectors and agencies among local government bodies which are liable for health, education, labor, police, justice and social welfare.

### **CONCLUSION**

Effective participation of parents, children and teachers can be a productive tool in enhancing Children's life skills, knowledge

thereby increasing school attendance. Activities should be design and conducted in the schools in such a manner which will help them to groom their personality and make them more discipline. Families should be informed about childbirth spacing and their children rights to have a shelter, food, clothing and education so parents should know these rights and they should do their best to provide it so that

child labor can be eliminated. Counseling of parents and children about zero tolerance of violence against children. Education is vital for human development, reduction in poverty and for strengthening peace and security. Improving national and provincial education policies for improving the education sector is necessary to address the issues of education in Sindh.

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**SK:** Literature search, outline Development, referencing and final editing.

**HK:** Literature search, editing and referencing

**NK:** Conceptualization and final revision

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## **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors report no conflict of interest

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