

CHILD LABOUR: A NECESSARY EVIL FOR DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

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ABSTRACT

Child labour a great penance to the society. Every nation links its future with the present status of its children. Individual potential productive capabilities of these children are lost as they have to forgo their educational opportunities for the sake of gainful employment in most exploitative conditions out of economic distress. Although a great effort is made by different international organizations to eliminate child labour across the world and many countries have adopted legislation to prohibit child labour; nonetheless child labour is widespread throughout the world. It is not easy task for low income countries to achieve banning child labour because of low family income and lack of educational facilities.

Keywords: *Child labour, Gainful Employment, Economic Distress*

INTRODUCTION

Children are one of the greatest gifts to humanity. Childhood is considered as an important and vital stage of human development as it carries the potential citizens to take active part in the future development of any society. Having been brought up in an environment best suited to their intellectual, physical and social health, grow up as responsible and productive members of the society. Every nation links its future with the present status of its children. Individual potential productive capabilities of these children are lost as they have to forgo their educational opportunities for the sake of gainful employment in most exploitative conditions out of economic distress.

It is a challenge and long-term goal for many developing countries to abolish all forms of child labour since it poses a great threat to socio-economic development of these countries. According to the estimation of the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013) there are around 215 million children between the ages five to fourteen worldwide work as child labour who are often mistreated and work for prolonged hours, in very bad conditions thereby affecting them physically, mentally and emotionally. These children do not have the basic rights like access to school or health care. The largest numbers of child labourers are working in hazardous work and the total number of child workers is increasing, even though it is forbidden by law. These children are vulnerable to diseases and they struggle with long-term physical and psychological pain. The main cause that induces children to work is poverty. These children work for their survival and their familiesⁱ. Some studies like **Dessy and Pallage (2003)** argue not all the work that children do is harmful or brutalⁱⁱ. Some work may provide successful learning opportunities, such as babysitting or newspaper delivery jobs, but not if the work exposes them to psychological stress, like human trafficking, prostitution and pornographic activitiesⁱⁱⁱ.

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countries to achieve banning child labour because of low family income and lack of educational facilities.

DEFINITION OF CHILD LABOUR

The term child labour has many definitions by different scholars. The term child labour refers to when children is working in any type of work that is dangerous and harmful to children's health or the work hinders their education. For **Moyi (2011)** child labour refers to low wages, long hours, physical and sexual abuse^{iv}. According to **Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005)** child labour is viewed as a form of child labour abuse, when children work in bad conditions and hazardous occupations^v.

The meaning of the term of child labour also varies among organizations, ILO argues that child labour is difficult to define. It depends on the type of the job and, if the age is under eighteen and if the job intervenes the children's education and development^{vi} (**ILO: 2004**). A child, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 refers to a person under the age of eighteen. The World Bank assumes that child labour can do serious threat to long-term national investment. Furthermore, according to UNICEF the problem of child labour can have more bad consequences besides all the concerns of investment or its relation to economic activity^{vii}.

Bhat (2009) asserts that the definition of child labour is not simple because it includes three difficult concepts to define, which are "child", "work" and "labour". He claims that the term of childhood can be defined by age but in some societies, people cease to be a child at different ages. To avoid such confusion as to age therefore the Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182) defines a child who is under the age of eighteen years^{viii}. The definition of child labour differs among societies, for example in Africa and Asia they do not consider the work of fifteen years old person as a child labour and they view child labour as a good task that children learn skills from work. They distinguish between child labour and child work, where child work is considered to be a part of the children's training to be responsible adults while child labour is thought to be exploitative^{ix}.

Not all work that children does is severe, according to **ILO reports (2002)** if a work does not hinder children's schooling or do not affect their health physically and mentally, then it is generally not categorized as child labour. For instance, helping parents at home, looking after siblings or working for pocket money after school hours and during holidays. Also, **Aqil (2012)** assumes that not all work that children do can harm their health or considered as exploitative but it depends on what kind of work they are involved in and how many hours they work. It also depends on work conditions, or environment^x. However, **Weston (2005)** argues that any work children do, can be damaging to their health because of the abusive, exploitative or hazardous nature of the work which can influence their health^{xi}. **Omokhodion and Odusote (2006)** argued that any work that children perform outside home is categorised as child labour. According to them children working outside home is usually exposed to environmental hazards which may affect their health and safety.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD LABOUR

Recent research re-evaluating the child labour phenomena in the early stages of industrialization in countries of Europe, North America and Japan provides us with useful information, testable proportions and valuable insights for policy formulation. Six generalization culled from vast historical literature are worth serious attention^{xiii}. These are as under:

1. During early periods of industrialization each of the industrialized nations accomplished a populace blast made by pointedly declining passing rates yet high and rather slow aggregate effectiveness rates. These imbalances affected their population pyramids, increasing the proportion of children (0-14 years) in total population from about 30 per cent to over 40 per cent. It pointed at about 42-45 percent in all cases when the proportion started declining. Incidence of child labour was at its hit the highest point when the proportion of child population was around 42-45 per cent and virtually disappeared when it declined to under 30 per cent. Historically, time taken for this change has differed from country to country.
2. Structural change start by the industrialization process direct to migration of workers and their families from agricultural to non-agricultural activities. Degree of urbanization increased

as a by-product, urban facilities, including formal school education facilities, proved inadequate everywhere adolescent boys lacking discipline imposed by the family and the village community, having recently migrated to urban centres making a trouble of them. Demand for compulsory schooling particularly in these countries was partly to deal with this phenomenon of minor urban crime and indiscipline. The German and Japanese response, built on the foundations of experience of compulsory school education decades before the spread of industrialization and urbanization was qualitatively different from that of these two and other European countries.

3. Rural and agricultural child labour was not an important subject of debate or major concern in any of these countries except in Japan where girls (mostly in the age group 10-14 years) working in silk and textile production activities were targeted for compulsory schooling through a concentrated national effort during early decades of this century. In the US, agro-preparing industries dealing with fruit and juice can had widespread use of child labour. Their seasonal work had been a subject of argue and legal authorize.

4. Each state had a Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation law of its own and the issue got entangled in constitutional rights of the states to pass their own laws on the subject. The Federal Government having found itself entangled in a legal dilemma turned to the use of trade sanctions which were under its influence and above the state laws on child labour. Everywhere else operates as a join to deal with the child labour was not considered seriously.

5. Expansions of school facilities with or without compulsion occur everywhere once output per worker and output per capita started growing. Past it total fruitfulness rate, expansion of school enrolment and retention rates in schools occurred virtually simultaneously. Economic historians are still debating the efficacy of the policy instrument like compulsory school education in combating child labour. **Nordanellie (1992)** has re-examined the phenomena from the point of view of household's economic rationality. The counter view is also supported by extensive evidence^{xiii}.

Myrdal (1968) in his book "Asian Drama" devotes one of the three volumes mainly to the issue of school education and human resource development as a major ingredient of modernization in Asia. It shows the experience of South Asia, which is qualitatively different from the East Asia. The whole of India would be seriously misleading because the contrast

between Kerala and Bihar in school educational effort and outcomes is much sharper than between East Asia and India^{xiv}. Agricultural and rural child labour has not been an important concern of the policy-makers and pressure groups dealing with the issue of its elimination historically or in the contemporary world. We argue below that this is short-sighted and ignores the systemic implications of this neglect in terms of current welfare concerns and potential labour productivity losses^{xv}.

CHILD LABOUR AND POVERTY

Poverty create many problems such as child labour, prostitution, corruption, robbery, increased unemployment, poor living conditions, malnutrition etc.^{xvi} Child poverty refers to children who are born to poor parents. Child poverty differs from adult poverty because it has different reasons and effects, for example it robs a child of his/her childhood. It may affect or bear a long lasting or psychological makeup in their mind and the impact of poverty during childhood leaves permanent effects on children. Poverty influences children in many social ways, for instance that malnutrition can affect health and education which in turn may impact a child's long-term development. According to UNICEF child poverty is based on child rights, these children lack adequate nutrition, lack decent water and sanitation facilities, health services, education and information^{xvii}.

Practically, poor people face inadequate basic needs such as food, clothing, health facilities etc. People who live below poverty line, live in sever housing conditions and poor sanitary and hygienic conditions. Many of them live in slums or poor residential areas and some of them lack housing, health care and nutrition sufficiency. Although illiteracy is far more prevalent among poor people, many of them lack education or they drop out of school because of high cost of schooling. In general, poor people earn little and in such cases, parents are not able to take care of all the responsibilities of their children and they oblige their children to work to increase household income^{xviii}. **Hosen (2010)** showed that in Bangladesh poor rural parents can barely afford food let alone pay for school fees for their children^{xix}.

Several empirical studies show the link between living standards and child labour. Krueger (1996) showed evident trend from cross-country sample, that low income households are more

likely to send their children to labour market which is uncommon in richer households. Duryea, Lam, and Levison found in urban Brazil that the father's unemployment compels their children to work to in order increase family's income.

Aqil (2012) assumes that when parents have worked in their childhood their children will work as well, passing it from generation to a generation. As a result, once they are grown, they become uneducated and low-skilled. Therefore, parents' education plays a vital role in children education as it can increase the possibility for their children to have a good education^{xx}. Fasih (2007) assumes that child labour creates unskilled and uneducated labour which in turn affects country's development and economy^{xxi}

The afore-stated discussion evolves following research questions which in turn will pave way for further research:

Q.1. What is the relationship of economic condition of a country and the proportion of child labour?

Q.2. Does lack of education of a child drives it to the labour market?

Although child labour is a universal phenomenon but its rigour is more felt in developing economies than developed economies since most of the developed economies have already abolished such a social evil. But in case of developing economies it is seen as a necessary evil as poor families are not left with any other option except to send their minor children to the labour market for more gainful employment even without thinking about their physical, psychological and social well-being. This in contrary poses a threat not only to humanity but also to the socio-economic development of these economies.

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