

DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR IN DISTRICT PESHAWAR

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Abstract

This study examines the determinants and consequences of the worst forms of child labor in District Peshawar, emphasizing the challenges faced by children in hazardous work environments and their economic conditions. The primary objectives are to identify the problems encountered by child laborers during hazardous work and to evaluate their economic conditions. To collect the data, open and closed-ended questionnaire was developed, and interviews were conducted with the administration of the Labor Department in District Peshawar. The findings reveal that child laborers face significant health risks, including respiratory issues, injuries, and chronic fatigue, due to unsafe working conditions in sectors such as brick kilns, auto workshops, printing press, Tea Shops, and the steel industry. Economic analysis indicates that poverty is the primary reason, forcing children to work to support their families, thereby sacrificing their education and childhood. The study highlights the urgent need for policy interventions to protect children from hazardous labor and to improve their economic well-being through

educational and financial support. Additionally, there is a need for comprehensive strategies to enhance enforcement of labor laws and to promote community awareness about the adverse effects of child labor.

Keywords: *Child Labor, Peshawar, Hazardous work, financial Support, community, awareness, effects.*

INTRODUCTION

Child labor in Pakistan is prevalent in various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and informal industries. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), approximately 3.3 million children are involved in child labor in Pakistan (ILO, 2016). These children often work in hazardous environments, such as brick kilns, carpet weaving, and auto mechanic industries, which pose severe risks to their health and safety. Pakistan has enacted several laws to combat child labor. It includes the Employment of Children Act (1991), the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act (1992), and the Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act (2016). These laws prohibit the employment of children under a certain age and aim to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Despite these legislative measures, enforcement remains weak, and child labor persists (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2017). The Employment of Children Act (1991) prohibits the employment of children under 14 years in certain occupations and regulates the working conditions of children in other sectors. However, this law does not cover all forms of child labor and lacks stringent enforcement mechanisms (Government of Pakistan, 1991).

District Peshawar is the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province in Pakistan, and sixth largest city of Pakistan by population. As of the most recent census in 2023, Peshawar's population is approximately 2412,000 with the growth rate of 2.94% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The city's population includes a substantial number of children. According to estimates, around 40% of Peshawar's population is under the age of 15, reflecting the high birth rates and youthful demographic profile typical of many urban areas in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2018). This large proportion of children places considerable demand on the city's educational, healthcare, and social services infrastructure. These children, who should be enjoying their childhood and freedom, are instead deprived of their innocence and left to face the worst situations in various forms of labor. The purpose of this study was to investigate the socio-economic conditions of the worst forms of child labor in Peshawar. Due to the growing number and high influx of children involved in these severe forms of labor, there was a need to examine their working conditions and the socio-economic problems that have driven them to seek employment in these labor forms.

Child labor in Peshawar involves children working in hazardous sectors such as brick kilns, auto workshop industries, tea hotels, printing presses, and the steel

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industry. According to a recent survey, approximately 4,000 children are employed in these sectors. Specifically, 1,200 children work in brick kilns, 1,000 in auto workshops, 800 in tea hotels, 600 in printing presses, and 400 in the steel industry (Labor Department Peshawar, 2023). The working conditions in these sectors are extremely hazardous. In brick kilns, children are exposed to high temperatures and toxic fumes, which can lead to respiratory problems and heat-related illnesses. Auto workshops expose children to harmful chemicals and heavy machinery, increasing the risk of injuries and chronic health issues. Tea hotels often require children to work long hours with minimal breaks, leading to fatigue and musculoskeletal problems. In printing presses, children handle sharp tools and toxic inks, risking cuts and exposure to hazardous substances. The steel industry exposes children to extreme heat, heavy lifting, and dangerous equipment, which can result in severe injuries and long-term health issues. Furthermore, Poverty is the primary driver pushing children into these hazardous forms of labor. Many families in Peshawar rely on the additional income generated by their children to meet basic needs, as over 24% of the population lives below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2018).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know the problems face by children during hazardous work.
2. To find out the economic conditions of child labor.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Lack of economic opportunities and family dis-functioning leads towards Worst forms of child labor.

INDICATORS

1. Illiteracy, unemployment, inflation, sociology of poverty culture, lack of technical skills of adults.
2. Polygamy, death of one parent, separation/ divorce, domestic violence.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted from June to July 2023 in the district of Peshawar, KPK province. The working fields for children included auto mechanic workshops, brick kilns, the steel industry, tea shops, and printing presses. Children between the ages of 10–15 years were considered eligible for the study. A total of 400 child laborers were selected for the study. The International Labor Organization (ILO) criteria were used to identify the sample unit, and the technique employed for selecting children was convenient sampling. The children were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. Consent was obtained before interviewing each child.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher conducted interviews and focus group discussions with Child labors at selected working sectors. While the evaluation material was collected from

Bureau of statics and Labor Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The data were analyzed through graphs which were shown by using Pi-chart to highlight the facts.

SECTORS IDENTIFIED WITH WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR (WFCL)

S. No	Name of WFCL Sector	Name of Place
1	Auto Workshops Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pando Road• Ring Road• Circular Road• Wazir Bagh Road• Yakatooth
2	Steel Industry Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kohat Road• Ganj Gate• Circular Road• Tehkal Road
3	Brick Kilns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ormar Payan• Sara Khawra• Shamshatoo
4	Tea Shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saddar Road• Qissa Khwani Bazar• Namakmandi• Shoba Bazaar
5	Printing Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jangi Muhalla

DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR ACCORDING TO THE FIELD WORK

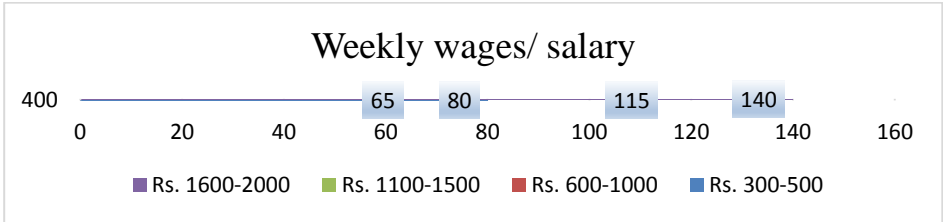
Field of work	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Brick Kills	60	15%
Auto Workshops sector	180	45%
Steel Industry sector	65	15.25%
Tea shops	50	12.5%
Printing Press	45	11.25%

According to the distribution of respondents per sector, out of 400 child laborers interviewed, a significant portion was found in auto workshops, comprising 45% of the total respondents. The brick kilns sector accounted for 15% of the children interviewed, highlighting another major area where child labor is prevalent. The steel industry sector had 15.25% of the respondents, indicating a substantial involvement of children in this hazardous field. Tea shops employed 12.5% of the respondents, while the printing press sector accounted for 11.25%. These percentages shows the widespread nature of child labor across various industries in Peshawar, with a particularly high concentration in auto workshops, brick kilns, and the steel industry. This distribution underscores the diverse and often hazardous working environments

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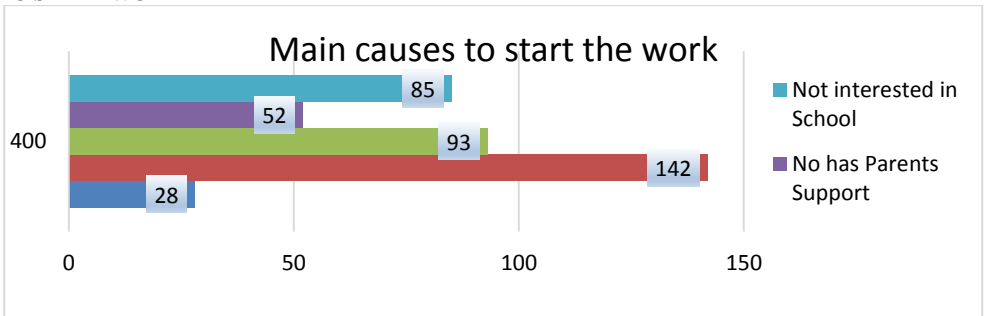
these children are exposed to, necessitating targeted interventions across multiple sectors to address the issue effectively.

WEEKLY WAGES/ SALARY OF THE RESPONDENTS



The above graph illustrates the weekly salaries of child laborers working in hazardous sectors. Out of 400 respondents, 140 earn between 1600 and 2000 rupees weekly, with the majority employed in auto workshops. Sixty-five respondents earn between 1100 and 1500 rupees per week, while 115 respondents earn between 600 and 1000 rupees. Additionally, 80 respondents earn between 300 and 500 rupees per week. This data highlights the significant income disparity among child laborers based on their specific working sectors.

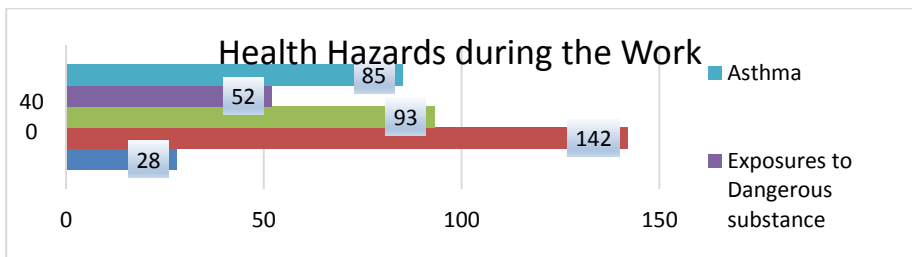
CAUSES TO START WORK



When asked about the main reasons for starting work at identified sectors of child labor in District Peshawar, out of 400 respondents, the majority, 142, indicated that poverty or lack of resources and having a large family compelled them to work instead of attending school. The 85 Children expressed a lack of interest in school, while 52 stated they lacked parental support, so they prefer to start work. Furthermore, 93 respondents wanted to learn skills, which is why they preferred to work, with many of them employed in the auto mechanic and steel industries. Additionally, 28 respondents mentioned that their father had died, necessitating their employment to support and feed their family and meet their needs. This data underscores the complex socio-economic factors driving child labor in hazardous sectors. Furthermore, several factors contribute to the prevalence of child labor in these sectors. Economic hardship remains a significant driver, forcing families to

prioritize immediate income over long-term educational benefits. Cultural norms and societal pressures also play a role, where working children are seen as contributors to the household income. Moreover, the quality and accessibility of education can deter children from attending school, making work a more viable option. The lack of effective enforcement of child labor laws further exacerbates the situation, allowing employers to exploit underage workers. These combined factors highlight the complex interplay between economic, social, and regulatory challenges in addressing child labor in district Peshawar.

RESPONDENTS HEALTH HAZARDS DURING THE WORK



In response to the question regarding the types of hazards faced during work, out of a total of 400 respondents, a majority of 142 stated that working for long hours makes them feel sleepy during their shifts. 85 child laborers reported experiencing asthma problems while working, with most of them employed in brick kilns and printing press sectors. Additionally, 52 respondents mentioned facing hazards due to exposure to dangerous substances, and some of them indicated they occasionally suffered cuts or other injuries while using blades. Furthermore, 93 child laborers reported experiencing backache problems during work, while 28 respondents cited fatigue as a significant issue, facing the lack of facilities to rest or lie down. Child laborers in hazardous work environments often they face respiratory issues due to inhaling dust and chemicals, especially in sectors like Brick kilns, steel industry, Auto workshops and Printing press, where burns and scalds are common among those working in industries involving hot materials or machinery.

PROBLEMS & CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE SURVEY

- Poor law and Order situation in the district particularly in current situation.
- It was very difficult to collect data without local references during field visits.
- Most of the Respondents were shy to communicate with enumerator.
- Public had a negative mind set during the survey.

INTERVIEWS WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF LABOR DEPARTMENT

An interview was conducted with The Director Labor Department, Mr. Irfan Ullah at District Peshawar on child Labor. The researcher asked various questions

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regarding policy and strategies to combat child labor. The Director said that “the primary reason many children in Peshawar choose work over school is economic necessity. Families often rely on the additional income generated by their children to meet basic needs. Poverty is a significant factor, and in many cases, these families see no other option. Additionally, there is a lack of access to quality education in some areas, and even when schools are available, they are often under-resourced and overcrowded. Cultural attitudes also play a role; in some communities, child labor is viewed as a norm and an essential contribution to the family's livelihood. Further he stated that , we have strict regulations in place under the Employment of Children Act and other related laws. Our focus has been on enhancing the enforcement of these laws through regular inspections and monitoring. We have increased the number of labor inspectors and provided them with training to identify and address child labor effectively. These inspections are aimed at ensuring compliance with child labor laws and verifying that personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided to all workers, including children. Inspectors look for signs of hazardous working conditions and take immediate action to address any violations. Additionally, we are working closely with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international bodies like the International Labor Organization (ILO) to implement programs aimed at rehabilitating child laborers and integrating them into the education system. Furthermore, we are running awareness campaigns to educate employers and the public about the legal and moral implications of child labor. These campaigns also highlight the importance of education and the long-term benefits of sending children to school rather than work. To overcome these challenges, we are enhancing our collaboration with other government departments, NGOs, and international organizations to create a comprehensive support network for affected families. We are also advocating for more resources to improve the quality of education in Peshawar, ensuring that schools are a viable and attractive alternative to work for these children”.

CONCLUSION

During field visits to various forms of child labor in district Peshawar, researchers focused on children aged 5-15 years and examined the socio-economic and working conditions of 400 children across five selected sectors. Some of these working children attend school, while others have dropped out due to financial constraints, lack of interest in education, or parental recommendation/pressure. The majority of the respondents' parents were illiterate and unaware of the importance of education, leading them to send their children to work for financial support. Additionally, parents from low-income families often have a positive attitude towards their children earning money to help meet the needs of their large families and learning new skills

simultaneously. The study indicates a lack of culture in reporting incidents of physical or sexual abuse to local police because children are often too shy to share such details with their family members. Additionally, abusers may threaten them into silence. The mindset of working children is also geared towards earning an income rather than pursuing quality education to improve their lives. The study also found that children across all five sectors expressed a desire for free education with monthly financial support, as their childhood is prematurely taken away due to poverty.



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