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Socio-economic Causes of Child Labor in Balochistan: An Analytical Study with Special Focus on Rag-Picking Girls of Quetta City

Momna Fareed

M.Phil scholar, Pakistan Study Center, University of Balochistan, Quetta

Dr.Shazia Jaffar

Assistant Professor, Pakistan Study Center, University of Balochistan, Quetta

Abstract

This study focuses on rag-picking girls in Quetta, Balochistan, and examines the socioeconomic factors that contribute to child labor. Twelve rag-picking girls chosen through purposive sampling participated in semi-structured interviews as part of a descriptive and qualitative study design. The results show that the main causes of young girls engaging in rag-picking are poverty, unemployment, parental illiteracy, big family size, and parental carelessness. Participants also emphasized the problems of social stigma and isolation, which serve to further perpetuate cycles of labor and poverty. The study comes to the conclusion that systemic socioeconomic disparities are at the heart of child labor in Quetta.

Keywords: Child labor, Rag-picking girls, Socio-economic causes, Poverty, Quetta, Balochistan

Introduction

Eliminating infant labor has been a major focus of international organizations. Although child labor is common at some point in the industry, many nations have implemented regulations to limit it. Prohibiting the child labor is a difficult task for emerging or poor nations. The main tactic in combating child labor is training, which has been considered by numerous studies

and international businesses. It may also help children avoid child labor. The workplace is one of the most difficult environments to deal with out of all the ones where kids are exposed to violence. According to worldwide standards and the strictest national laws and regulations, children under a certain age or developmental stage are not allowed to work at all, much less be left alone in a workplace where they can be the target of violence. To date, more than 200 million children and adolescents have been neglected, at ages that are both below and over the legal minimum age. Many of them endure physical and psychological abuse, verbal or sexual abuse, and other forms of abuse (Anwar, Alizai, & Ali, 2019).

There are minute numbers available, especially for child laborers in the extremely cheap places where mainstays are to be established, but vehemence is a feature that has been abandoned in talks on child labor. Even though there aren't many exact research studies, an upward frame of information from the government system and from the kindness of the children themselves presents an unquestionable picture of a significant global offender. Since the straightforward question is rarely modeled, ferocity with the concept of violence towards operational families has remained invisible. Insights and ethics have been required to temper and even destabilize the issue of workplace violence against children a statement that has spread similarly worldwide (Uddin, Hamiduzzaman & Gunter, 2009).

Background of the Study

Child Labor in Pakistan

There are two components to the phenomena of child labor. First, it's a phenomenon that affects children. Different jurisdictions have different child ages. Both the majority and minority ages are provided for by different legal systems. Child labor is defined as work done by children under the age of 14 in Pakistan's 1973 constitution, specifically Article 11. Furthermore, it differs from child labor in that it entails a certain amount of effort or labor for monetary rewards. Therefore, child labor is defined as work done by a group of persons under the legal age of majority in order to obtain financial help (Edmonds, 2017).

The idea that child labor is a horrible crime has been influenced by the numerous negative effects it has on society's general stability and growth. The fact that it is a crime and ought to be eradicated from society is supported by the numerous laws and constitutional provisions. Child labor is defined by the International Labor Organization based on the effects it has on children. The ILO claims that child labor is the factor that affects intellectual, emotional, psychological, and educational development. This viewpoint holds that child labor

is the practice that denies a child the opportunity that the state provides. Thus, child labor hinders a child's access to education and health care, which eventually affects the children's potential as human beings (Fallon, 1998).

The Human rights report of 2018 sheds light on the plight of the various disadvantaged groups in society. According to the report, given that children are the most disadvantaged groups in society like the children, minorities and labors are mostly have suffered due to their disadvantaged position. The situation of children in Pakistan is hostile both as children and as labors (Gilani, Zahoor & Iqbal, 2022).

Child Labor as a Social Issue

The phenomenon of children is a social concern in addition to a political one. Moreover, it is a social issue that has resulted from a number of circumstances, including unemployment, poverty, outdated social norms, illiteracy, and other social issues. Emile Durkheim has referred to the threat of child labor as a social issue because it arises in a specific social context and because of a number of social facts which hold that all phenomena are generated by social factors known as social facts (Edmonds, 2017).

Girl Child Labor

The same forces lead to child labor in Pakistan, where girls also engage in it. More concerning is the state of girl-child labor. They are typically mistreated physically. They are the targets of all types of mistreatment. Girls are employed as housemaids in Pakistan. The case of Tayyaba, who was subjected to physical abuse and torture by his employer, is the most famous illustration of child labor and the physical torment that followed. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore the issue of girl child labor in the nation (Gilani, Zahoor & Iqbal, 2022).

The Causes of Child Labor in Pakistan

A number of interconnected causes have contributed to the harmful phenomena of child labor, rather than it being the result of a single cause. Although it seems to be motivated by economic interests at first glance, a closer examination reveals that it is actually a complicated phenomenon caused by a number of causes (Gilani, Zahoor & Iqbal, 2022).

Economic Causes

Numerous elements in the economy are responsible for the rise in child labor in the nation. First, the nation's economic foundation is not very solid. Second, the nation is experiencing unemployment. Thirdly, there are disparities in income. Child labor has increased in the

nation as a result of the combination of all these variables. Pakistan's economy has been plagued by a number of issues since gaining its independence. Pakistan consistently experienced cycles of prosperity and recession. In order to keep up with the growing population, structural reforms and the utilization of indigenous resources were not feasible.

Social Causes

Social factors have been the main contributor to child labor in Pakistan. First of all, the social structure has generally been patriarchal. Additionally, several factors contribute to population growth, which over time may put too much strain on families. Under such circumstances, children are regarded as entities that could be used to supplement their income. The country's high rate of illiteracy and lack of education come in second. In rural places, the literacy problem is particularly noticeable. Children in such circumstances are more committed to child labor than to education. They are unable to consider the long-term benefits of children's education because they are illiterate (Basu, 2001).

The overpopulation of Pakistan has been identified as one of the main factors contributing to child labor. Pakistan has 210 million people, according to the most recent population census, conducted in 2017. If the current pace of population growth continues, that number is expected to rise to 350 million by 2030. Both household income and national resources are burdened by the overpopulation. Population and family growth can result in a number of problems, such as a rise in children and corresponding needs for higher incomes. The family's sole option in such a scenario is to depend on the labor of the children to supplement their meager income and effectively meet their different demands (Gilani, Zahoor & Iqbal, 2022).

Problem Statement

In Balochistan, where unemployment, poverty, and a lack of educational possibilities force youngsters to enter the informal labor market, child labor is still a major socioeconomic problem. Rag-picking is one of them that have become a common type of child labor, especially for young girls in Quetta. In addition to being exploited financially, these girls often endure serious health risks, social stigma, and exclusion from school. Despite Pakistan's current child protection legislation, the practice has remained unchecked due to lax enforcement and enduring socioeconomic inequities. Rag-picking girls are disproportionately marginalized as a result of the lack of gender-sensitive research, which further restricts policy initiatives.

Significance of the Study

With a focus on rag-picking girls in Quetta, this study offers a targeted analysis of the socioeconomic factors that contribute to child labor, making it noteworthy. The research will provide important insights into the lived realities of marginalized children in Balochistan by highlighting the interaction of gender, education, and poverty. In addition to closing a current research gap, the results will help civil society, NGOs, and politicians create successful programs meant to lessen child labor and support girls' education. In the end, the study aims to support Pakistan's larger objectives of social justice, child protection, and sustainable development.

Research Questions

1. What are the main socioeconomic variables that lead to child labor in Balochistan, specifically among Quetta city's rag-picking girls?
2. How can household economic insecurity, unemployment, and poverty affect young girls' engagement in rag-picking as a means of subsistence?
3. What roles do parental carelessness, family size, and illiteracy play in the persistence of child labor among girls in Quetta?

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the main socioeconomic causes of child labor in Balochistan, with a focus on Quetta's rag-picking girls.
2. To examine how household income instability, unemployment, and poverty contribute to young girls turning to rag-picking as a source of income.
3. To investigate the impact of family size, parental carelessness, and parental illiteracy on the persistence of child labor among females in Quetta.

Limitations of the Study

1. Because the study only included rag-picking girls in Quetta city, the results could not be representative of all child labor in Balochistan.
2. The sample size might not adequately represent the range of experiences across various age groups and locations because of time and resource constraints.
3. Data collecting depth may be limited by cultural sensitivity and limited access to certain populations.

Literature Review

Uddin, Hamiduzzaman and Gunter, (2009) claim that one of the main causes of child labor in Pakistan, according to the majority of the writers, is poverty. Traditionally, the elderly population is too busy to fulfill their basic needs and frequently relies on their children's employment and works.

Khair, (2004) explains that children, along with their parents, may not be interested in studying and believe that studying is not a real necessity. Furthermore, poor education is frequently attributed to minimal child labor in Pakistan, particularly in rural areas.

Mamun et al, (2008) claim that all experts and researchers agree that the primary factor influencing the supply of newborn child labor is decline, and that a small amount of child labor will have a significant impact on the favorable conditions for the survival and sustenance of the family's offspring. Because women who are adept at planning do not accumulate (or under-acquire) animal capital, they are deprived of the opportunity to enhance their skills and potential for future financial gain. As a result, their hereafter family will have less money, and their infant will have more opportunities to paint. Adolescent behavior and rejection are thus suppressed from one era to the next.

Aqil, (2012) explains that additionally, studies on adolescent labor typically needed qualitative advice to understand the intricate methods and related nuances of a traditional allocation of acutely negative families and the market for activities. However, there are numerous occupations that can be disqualified by the corporation of absolute groups or castes, such as carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, goldsmithing, hair cutting, ceramics, authoritative accessories made from assumed and altered metals, ornamentation like handicrafts (clothes and stone), and a variety of other occupations. In certain cases, accommodations have been seen as the first steps towards allowing them to perceive through their parents and the network. Due to their incompetence, they left once more, with the females serving as composed advisors and the lads working as anniversary day laborers in agronomy, aqueduct excavation, coastal canning, and other jobs that may be part-time paid jobs.

Aqil further explains that it became clear that there were many marketers who had previously been young employees and had fallen into the trap of accepting an apprenticeship in one of a few nearly obscure skill-based organizations, such as welding, carpentry, fitting, sterile, electric-controlled repair, or even wealth holding. Some of them were able to cope

with and comprehend concepts that were preferred for their line of work since they had inferior accent apprenticeships, which were as common as the eighth grade. Numerous empirical researches examine the relationship between adolescent labor and living conditions. Numerous research shown that skip patterns give off an audacious impression, with low-income families finding it acceptable to send their children to other forms of entertainment that are abnormal for wealthier families.

Fassa et al, (2000) state that mother and father ancestry play a simple role in children's ancestry because it can gain access to the fallout for their children to simply accept a proper ancestry, which acknowledges that infant hobbies create untrained and benighted activity that roughly marks the nation's boost and banking device.

Cigno, Rosati and Guarcello, (2002) state that considering the fact that while child labor can sometimes produce positive outcomes, in two or three situations it has a negative impact on the children's development and well-being. The main annoyance in creating nations is this. However, it is possible to see children in properly supervised global locations since; quite honestly, very few of them engage in risky running activities. The profile of child labor in developed and developing countries, as well as the risks associated with it, was discovered by the analyst in this review.

The study further explains that considering the connection between child labor and the overall rise. The expense and justifications for coaching fervor are key factors in the decision to choose both a child's visit to work and transfer to a partner school. The US began with a workforce that was incredibly ignorant, but as a result of globalization, the wages and costs of the uneducated workers are now the same as those of the knowledgeable workers. Children who worked in small-scale industries and offered services were found to have lower incomes and weights when they were completed changing compared to those who attended school.

It should be noted that there was very little literature available that was especially focused on child labor in Quetta or even the larger Balochistan region. There is a significant study gap concerning the distinct socio-economic and cultural dynamics of Balochistan because the majority of the studies that are currently available on child labor in Pakistan focus on Punjab or Sindh. The researcher had to rely on more general national and international studies to contextualize the problem of rag-picking girls in Quetta city because

there was a dearth of material that was relevant to the location, which made it difficult to create a thorough and reliable review.

Methodology

This study investigated the socioeconomic factors that contribute to child labor among rag-picking girls in Quetta city using a descriptive research method and a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. Purposive sampling was used to select 12 rag-picking girls from various areas in Quetta city, ages 8 to 15. The limited but targeted sample made it possible to fully comprehend the lived experiences of children from marginalized communities. A thematic analysis of the data was conducted in order to find recurrent socioeconomic trends.

Results

Theme 1: Poverty and Family Income Insecurity

According to the respondents, their families' precarious financial situation compelled them to engage in rag-picking in order to pay for everyday necessities.

Theme 2: Parental Illiteracy and Neglect

According to interviews, the majority of parents lacked literacy and were therefore unable to help their kids pursue an education. Due to financial strains, some parents neglected their kids' extracurricular activities.

Theme 3: Big Family Size

Girls from larger households said they felt pressured to help out financially because their parents had a hard time providing for all the kids.

Theme 4: Social Exclusion and Stigma

Due to their rag-picking activities, participants frequently experienced humiliation and stated sentiments of exclusion from society and schooling.

Conclusion

The results show that the main factors contributing to child labor among Quetta city's rag-picking girls are poverty, unemployment, parental illiteracy, and high family size. Their marginalization is exacerbated by social isolation and a lack of parental support, which keeps them stuck in cycles of work and poverty.

Recommendations

- For families of child laborers, the government and non-governmental organizations should start programs to reduce poverty and skill building.

- It is necessary to launch awareness campaigns to emphasize the value of education for girls.
- It is recommended that Government of Pakistan and Balochistan develop special scholarship schemes and free schooling for youngsters who pick rags.
- To help and rehabilitate rag-picking females, child protection centers should be established.

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