

Causes and Consequences of Child Labor in Carpet Weaving Industries

ANILA KOUSAR, SAIRA AKHTAR, SHAHZAD F. KHAN, ASMA SAFDAR, NOREEN AKHTAR AND SHAGUFTA NIGHAT
Department of Rural Sociology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad–38040, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to investigate the causes and consequences of child labor in carpet weaving industry of Pakistan. Using the simple random sampling technique, 120 respondents from the carpet weaving industry in Faisalabad, Pakistan were selected. Questionnaire was designed as a data collection tool and interpreted according to SPSS PC+. The majority (71.7%) of respondents started carpet weaving because of poverty; whereas, 10.7% started due to poverty and own interest, 6.7% started due to own interest, 5.8% due to parents interest and 5.0% due to poverty and parents interest. The majority (78.3%) of respondents was suffering from diseases.

Key Words: Child labor; Carpet; Weaving industry; Faisalabad

INTRODUCTION

The term child labor is defined by the United States Department of Labor, as 'the employment of children when they are too young to work on wages or when they are employed for jobs unsuitable or unsafe for them' (The News, 1983).

Child labor is a pervasive problem throughout the world, especially in developing countries. Africa and Asia together account for over 90% of total child employment. Children work for a variety of reasons, the most important being poverty and the induced pressure upon them to escape from this plight.

In Pakistan, most children under the age of 15, who constitute 45% of the country's population, live below the poverty line. People are economically handicapped. They are not able to fulfill the basic needs of their families. They dream of fulfilling their basic needs of food, shelter and health, but the bitter irony of poverty bounds them to send their children to start wage labor at a very tender age of their life.

There are many bad consequences of child labor, social as well as psychological. The child who remains deprived of any basic education and other facilities which are necessary for his good mental and social development, how he can become a good citizen of the society.

The number of the carpet looms (weaving units) in Pakistan is estimated to be between 300,000-350,000 and around 1.5 million carpet weavers in the country. About 5-10% laborers are children of below the ages of 15 years (Ali, 2004).

In Faisalabad district, there were about 7,168 carpet weaving children estimated in the 5-14 age group. This constituted around 6.7% of the total carpet weaving children in Punjab province; girls made up about 92% of the total child weavers. An overwhelming majority (75%) of child

weavers was found in Faisalabad and Jaranwala sub-districts (ILO, 2004).

The present study was planned to identify the socio-economic reasons which lead the young children to work in carpet weaving industries at Jaranwala road in Tehsil Faisalabad, Pakistan. The study was further aimed at to find the effect of labor on their health, to identify the social and to suggest measures to reduce the child labor in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

The study undertaken was focused on child labor in carpet weaving industry in Tehsil Faisalabad, Pakistan. The respondents of the present study were children under the age 16 years old from villages Chack 239 Gollar, Chack 210 Lakhuana, Oddan Wali Basti, Chack 105 GB and Chack 109 Roady at Jaranwala road in Tehsil Faisalabad. A sample of 120 children was drawn through simple random sampling method. The data were collected by a well prepared interviewing schedule. Questionnaire was designed as a data collection tool and interpreted according to SPSS PC+.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of respondents according to their age, education and income is given in Table I. Majority of the respondents (92.5%) were interested in education; 54.2% of the respondents were not going to school due to poor economic conditions; whereas, 19.2% were not permitted, 18.3% had no education facilities and 8.3% were not going due to family problems.

It was found 55.8% of the respondent's fathers were laborer, 20.8% were occupied in agriculture; whereas, 11.7% had adopted business, 9.2% were doing nothing and 2.5% of the respondent's parents had died.

Table I. Distribution of respondents according to their age, education and income

Age(years)	Frequency	Percentage
10-12	79	65.8
12-14	18	15.0
14-16	23	19.2
Total	120	100.0
Years of schooling		
Illiterate	107	89.2
Primary	13	19.2
Total	120	100.0
Earning per month(Rs)		
2000-3000Rs	10	8.3
3100-4000Rs	4	3.3
4100-5000Rs	76	63.3
5100+	30	25.0
Total	120	100.0

It was found 55.8% of the respondent's fathers were laborer, 20.8% were occupied in agriculture; whereas, 11.7% had adopted business, 9.2% were doing nothing and 2.5% of the respondent's parents had died. Majority (71.7%) of respondents started work due to poverty whereas 10.8% started work due to poverty and own interest, 6.7% started work due to own interest, 5.8% due to parents interest and 5.0% due to poverty and parents interest.

Data revealed that 54.2% of respondents started work at the age of 5-7 years, whereas 38.3% started at the age of 8-10 years and only 7.5% started work at the age group of 11-13 years. The daily working hours of 45.8, 23.3, 19.2 and 11.7% of respondents were 10, 12, 8 and 6 h, respectively. The monthly earning of majority (84.2%) of the respondents was Rs. 500-1000; whereas, 10.0% of respondents earned Rs.1100-1500 per month and 5.8% earned Rs.1600-2000 per month. More than half (55.8%) of respondents were interested in job whereas remaining were not interested. Data also revealed that majority (77.5%) of the respondents faced polite behaviour where as 20.8% of respondents faced harsh behaviour and only 1.7% faced any other behaviour. It was found that less than half (42.5%) of the respondents had masters who took it lightly whereas 25.0% of the respondents had masters who punished verbally, 20% masters cut pay and 12.5% masters punished physically. The majority (89.2%) of the respondents were not agreeable to that early age job helps adopting bad habits, while 10.8% agreed to it.

As far as health is concerned, 21.7% of the respondents did not suffer from diseases; whereas, 16.7% of the respondents suffered from fever, 14.2% of respondents suffered from cough, 11.7% suffered from cuts, 10.0% suffered from cuts and fever, 6.7 %suffered from temperature and headache, 6.7% suffered from eye problem, 4.2% suffered from fever and eye problem, 3.3% suffered from fever and headache, 2.5% suffered from lungs and 2.5% suffered from cold cough and cuts. The results

revealed that majority (89.2%) of the respondents were satisfied with the behaviour of other workers; whereas, 8.3% workers satisfied to some extent and only 2.5% received no love and affection.

CONCLUSIONS

Poor economic conditions, large families and social deterioration are the reasons emerged for child labor. Though children are not well paid, they still serve as major contributors to family income. Child weavers pay the cost in terms of more frequent illness, stunted physical growth, premature aging and death. A higher incidence of health related problems like headache, cold cough, fatigue, conjunctivitis, cuts and bruises, knock knees, bow-legs and muscular-skeletal disorders as carpet tunnel syndrome and backache were the common diseases. However children are happy with this industry in spite of the fact that they are paid at much lower rates and their work condition cause illness of various kinds, but they are satisfied and want to continue their work. In the area of child labor, child labor and carpet weaving industries seems to be one of the worst occupation and hence there is need to get rid of this job. A few suggestions are given below.

SUGGESTIONS

- 1- Parents must be informed about the ill effects-of child labor and they should be motivated for education of their children and they should also be informed that their children poor income would not improve the economic conditions of their families.
- 2- There is dire need of providing social support system to the families and children engaged in labor, which is almost non-existent.
- 3- Although child labor under the age of 16 is prohibited but it should be strictly banned through taking proper measures under the age of 10 years. The minimum age limit for child workers must be increased from existing 14 years to 15 years and eventually 18 years.
- 4- Government should take appropriate measures to enhance the economic conditions of the needy and poor families, so they can provide education to their children.

REFERENCES

- Ali, Z.T., 2004. *Combating Child Labor in Carpet Industry in Pakistan*. ILO-IPEC Carpets Project Lahore, Pakistan
- ILO, 2004. "Wool and Carpet Review". Vol. 22, No. 1 and 2 Export Promotion Bureau/Pakistan Carpet Manufactures and Exporters Lahore, Pakistan
- The News, 1983. The daily news paper "The News" (Weekly Magazine) dated June 1983

(Received 15 October 2004; Accepted 20 November 2004)