

Socio-economic Determinants of Child Labor in Automobile and Engineering Workshops

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to identify the socio-economic factors responsible for child labor in automobile and engineering workshops in tehsil Samundri district Faisalabad (Pakistan). For this purpose, 120 respondents under 15 years of age were randomly selected. A comprehensive interviewing schedule was designed to collect the required information. Almost one half of the respondents was below 14 years of their age, and had attained primary education. Majority of the respondents belonged to the rural areas, living in nuclear family system, having both parents alive but with low income. Majority of the respondents were not willing to work, but financial problems and motivation by the parents forced them to work. There is a need to enhance educational facilities of children and employment opportunities for adults particularly in the rural areas.

Key Words: Problems, Child, Workshop, Labour.

INTRODUCTION

The Child Labour Survey in 1996 conducted by the Federal Bureau of Statistics for the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis, found 8.3% of the 40 million children aged 5-14 years to be economically active practically on a full-time basis (ILO, Programme in Pakistan, 1998).

Pakistan has recently passed laws greatly limiting child labor and indentured servitude, but those laws are universally ignored, and some 11 million children, aged 4-14, keep that country's factories operating, often working in brutal and squalid conditions (Silvers, 1996). The inexpensive child labour has fuelled Pakistan's economic growth. Entire industries have relocated to Pakistan because of the abundance of cheap child labour and our labour laws (Elias, 2000).

A review of literature on determinants of child labour in Pakistan shows that poverty is the most important causal factor of child labour (Hussain, 1986; Ahmad, 1990; Hamid, 1994; Mahmood, 1994).

Keeping in view the above mentioned situation, the present study was designed to investigate socio-economic factors which force children to work in automobile and engineering workshops.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A sample of 120 respondents (children) working in automobile and engineering workshops of tehsil Samundri, district Faisalabad was selected randomly for conducting interviews. A comprehensive interviewing schedule was developed in the light of research objectives. The data were collected and analysed statistically. Major findings are presented in this paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data in Table I revealed that majority of the respondents i.e. 61.7% belonged to the rural areas; while, 38.3% of the respondents were from urban areas. It indicates that rural areas contribute a lot in the prevalence of child labour force. The statistics about the family type show that majority of the children i.e. 60.8% belonged to nuclear family, while rest of the respondents were from joint family system. A vast majority (85.0%) of the respondents' parents were alive, only 1.7% children had father only, 10.0% had mother only and remaining 3.3% children's father and mother both were died. The data show that 28% respondents' monthly family income was Rs. 1001-2000 and the same percentage had monthly income of Rs. 3001 and above, respectively. The respondents' families who had their monthly income upto Rs. 1000 only were almost one-fifth of the respondents. It is obvious from the data that child labour ratio is higher among the families having low income.

Table II reveals that half of the respondents started work due to financial problems. No interest in the study was the second largest factor among the respondents i.e. 37.5% were indulged in the work due to the said factor. The rest of the respondents i.e. 12.5% reported that they started work due to large family size. Amjad (1991) reported that majority (56%) of the respondents do labour due to household needs. Some (51%) of the respondents did work for 10-12 hours daily. On enquiring from the respondents about that who motivated them to work, more than half of the respondents reported that their parents have directed them to work. The respondents who started work themselves were more than one-fourth of the respondents.

The data reveal that a huge majority of the respondents i.e. 80.0% were not willing to do the work but they had to

Table I. Background characteristics of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
7-10	20	16.7
11-13	39	32.5
14+	61	50.8
Total	120	100.0
Education		
Illiterate	18	15.0
Primary	77	64.2
Middle and above	25	20.8
Total	120	100.0
Family background		
Urban	46	38.3
Rural	74	61.7
Total	120	100.0
Family Type		
Nuclear	73	60.8
Joint	47	39.2
Total	120	100.0
Parents alive		
Both alive	102	85.0
Father only	2	1.7
Mother only	12	10.0
Both died	4	3.3
Total	120	100.0
Family Income/month (Rs.)		
Upto 1000	26	21.7
1001-2000	33	28.3
2001-3000	27	21.7
3001 and above	34	28.3
Total	120	100.0

Table II. Distribution of the respondents according to the factors/motivation behind the child labour

Category	Reasons / factors behind their labour	Frequency	Percentage
Reasons / factors behind their labour			
	Due to financial problems	60	50.0
	Large family size	15	12.5
	No interest in study	45	37.5
	Total	120	100.0
Respondents Motivation to work			
	Self	34	28.3
	Parents	66	55.0
	Brothers	13	10.8
	Friends	7	5.8
	Total	120	100.0
Willingness to work			
	Yes	24	20.0
	No	96	80.0
	Total	120	100.0

do. Only one-fifth of the respondents showed their interest to continue their work.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded from the results of the present study that poverty is the major factor responsible for child labor followed by other reasons like lack of interest in education, large family size and compulsive societal behavior.

SUGGESTIONS

To curb child labour, a comprehensive policy package that can simultaneously increase employment and earning opportunities for adult household members, and ensure rural based industry and other facilities to discourage rural to urban population shift be introduced. Education should be free up to higher secondary level. There should be recreational facilities available in schools. So that children are attracted to go to schools. Teacher should behave in friendly manner with children so that they may not leave school because of teacher's punishment fear. Immediate action should be taken against those employers who employ under 14 years aged children. The government should take some remedial measures towards the issue.

The present study was limited but the magnitude of the problem is so large that a more comprehensive study on a wider scale needs to be conducted to gain further knowledge and insight into the nature and magnitude of the problem of child labour in specific fields, in particular, in carpet weaving, tailoring, hotels, farming and agriculture, newspaper selling, boot polishing and brick kilns. Only a thorough countrywide empirical investigation could enable proper planning and devise effective measures to overcome this complex problem.

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