

Criminal neglect of child labour and its consequences

Outline:

1. Introduction

Thesis Statement:

Children are primarily forced into labour due to poverty and illiteracy. However, it is the social neglect and legal injustice that perpetuates this vicious practice. It is the collective responsibility of the community and the state to protect its children.

2. Condition of children in Pakistan

3. Causes of child labour and its neglect

- a) Children becoming bread earners due to poverty.
- b) Illiteracy: the potential driver of child labour
- c) Inability of legal system to provide justice
- d) Rapidly increasing growth rate and scarcity of resources.
- e) Society's ignorance: lack of responsibility and empathy.

4. Terrible effects of child labour

- a. Physical and sexual abuse of children at workplace
- b. Children kept out of school for employment
- c. Juvenile Delinquency: Involvement of children in other crimes
- d. Economic and social backwardness of children
- e. Halting the process of nation development.

5. Ways to ensure a safe and secure childhood

- a) Promoting **justice, equality** and women empowerment.
- b) Reforms in criminal justice system
- c) Education and awareness: the best way forward

6. Conclusion.

John Watson said: "Give me a handful of children and I can make anything of them." This highlights the importance of nurturing children. They are the future of a nation. If a child spends the early ~~years~~ years of his childhood and adolescent life in labour, he ~~don't~~ become a useful citizen of society. Child labour deprives a child of his home, family, friends and school. Instead, he wastes the precious years of his life for breadwinning.

Poverty is the most important and compelling reason behind this evil crime.

The lack of awareness and illiteracy further worsens the scenario. Mostly,

these two factors co-exist and aggravate

one another. On top of that, there is a

rapidly increasing growth rate. It is becoming

difficult for one person to feed an entire

family. However, the worst of all reasons

is the complete apathy and ignorance of

society. Consequently, entire communities bear the burden of child labour. Children are frequently abused at work places. They remain economically, socially and mentally backward. Sometimes, they become involved in various other crimes. In short, the entire process of nation development is halted. There is an urgent need to protect these children. The criminal justice system should be reformed to protect fundamental rights of citizens. State should make education accessible to all children. Although poverty and illiteracy force children into labour, it is the social neglect and legal injustice that perpetuates this vicious practice. It is the collective responsibility of the state and the society to ensure the safety and growth of its children.

Children are the biggest asset of a nation. A country that invests in the education and development of its children, always achieves

social development and economic stability.

According to UNESCO, 3.3 million children in Pakistan are working odd jobs. They are overworked and underpaid. According to Global Human Development Index, Pakistan ranks on 161 position out of 192 countries.

The conditions for children in Pakistan are suboptimal. In these conditions, it would be impossible for the country to become financially independent. Moreover, these children will carry the scar of their troubled childhood for the rest of their lives.

It is the responsibility of Parents to provide for children. However, in Pakistan, the situation is different. Almost 40% of the country's population is living below the line of poverty. It is difficult for the poor man to make ends meet. Further more, only a small percentage of women are the part of workforce. Women are either not allowed to work or they are not

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equipped with essential skills for employment. People are compelled to live in very poor conditions. As a result, children have to compromise their childhood.

The childhood of many innocent souls is also taken away due to lack of awareness and illiteracy. According to ministry of education, 41% of population in Pakistan cannot read or write. Even the education that is available, is not of quality. An eighteen year old child in Pakistan has the learning skills of a ten year old in the developed world. Illiteracy predisposes a person to many evils. One such misery is child labour. Uneducated parents send their kids to work place instead of schools.

Why do parents do such things to their children? The answers are many. Along with illiteracy and poverty, a serious matter is that of population explosion. Pakistan is the fifth most populous

country in the world. Average women in Pakistan bears 3.2 children as per the general fertility rate. This is much higher than that of developed countries. China adopted the single kid policy a long time ago to control their population and manage their resources carefully. A population which is deprived of basic life facilities like shelter, security, education and health becomes a liability for the country.

Along with epidemiological and social factors, the incompetence of legal system in the country is the main reason behind child labour.

In the constitution of Pakistan, fundamental human rights are mentioned in article 8-28. It is the responsibility of the judiciary to ensure that these rights are not violated. Parliament has passed many laws for the protection of children. But, the institutions of state have failed to enact these laws. In the year 2023,

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a minor girl who was employed in the house of a judge was allegedly beaten brutally by him and his wife. When the protectors of constitution start violating it themselves, the country's legal system is bound to fail.

On top of all these issues, is the utter lack of responsibility and empathy by the society. Paul H. Mussen said that it is the responsibility of society to train its individuals. An individual's behaviour is the direct reflection of social influence.

However, the contemporary society has not fulfilled its responsibility as the protector of citizens. In many households, young children, especially girls, are employed as house maid or nannies. Boys are compelled to work at shops, hotels, markets, bus stations etc. Some ill minded people use their children for beggary, which they have adopted as a profession.

Children working in these
 terrible working conditions are exposed
 to emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
 According to Sahil NGO, 0.5 million children
 are abused in Pakistan annually. The employers
 of children beat them, hit them and threaten
 them all the time. Children become scared
 for life as a result of this ~~case~~. Those who
 are exposed to physical trauma at an early
 age in life, can end up becoming an
 abuser themselves. Many incidents of child
 abuse are not reported. A young girl in
 Kharan died at the hands of her landlord
 after being beaten to death. But, the tragedy
 is that the case would have been swept
 under the carpet if legal proof of a video
 regarding had not surfaced on media.

Another consequence of
 child labour is school dropout. Children
 who are working either don't go to
 school or leave studies after sometime.
 Parents intentionally keep children out of

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school to keep them going to the place of employment. According to UNESCO, 2.8 M children in Pakistan are out of schools, with a majority of girls in this population. Children are deprived of their fundamental human right. In Quran,

it is mentioned that those who know are not equal to those who don't. These uneducated children cannot compete with their literate counterparts in any walk of life.

Illiteracy, poor socialisation, inadequate social control, exposure to abuse: all increase the tendency of these children's involvement in crimes. Juvenile delinquency is often taken very lightly by the police and the society. However, juvenile criminals often continue to follow this ill path. Once children become delinquent, they are exposed to violent gangs. According to relative deprivation theory of criminology,

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frustration and anger builds up in individuals when they can't achieve their life goals due to social condition. Due to this frustration, they resort to crime.

As children spend the crucial early years of life in labour, they don't acquire essential education and skills. As an adult, they become a liability for the family as well. They are deprived of career opportunities. They are socially and economically underdeveloped. As a child, they do jobs at very low wages. This misery continues throughout their lives. They remain overworked and underpaid.

Financial stability is the most essential requirement for having a quality life. Unfortunately, these children don't get to experience that.

As child labour negatively impacts the growth of children, it also

halts the process of nation building. All Nations have their rise and fall. However, when states don't invest in their citizens, especially children, the dream of glory remains unfulfilled. It has been seventy-seven years since Pakistan got its independence. From economy to agriculture, and industry to health sector, the country is lagging behind other states.

Despite the grim contemporary situation, there are ways to ensure a safe and adequate childhood for all children. Firstly, children cannot be helped without empowering women. Like a bird cannot fly on one wing, society cannot function without women being equally productive. According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, only 22% of women are a part of workforce in the country. Educated and empowered women raise educated families.

In addition to women empowerment, the criminal justice system

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of the country requires urgent structural reforms. Lord Hewart said: "Justice should not only be done, but should be seen to be done". Apparently, Pakistan has a sovereign and independent judicial system, but the situation on ground reflects otherwise. There is a huge backlog of cases. Judiciary should be equipped with optimal resources. Moreover, they should be subjected to official oversight.

Of all the ways to prevent child labour, education is the best method. Article 25-A of the constitution emphasizes that each and every citizen of Pakistan should have uniform access to education. A ^{based} skills and technology focused curriculum should be adopted.

Government should work with private sector and engage civil society as well as NGOs to promote education. If there is one thing that can change the future of children, its quality schooling.

In a nutshell, it can be said that child labour is a heinous crime. It has serious consequences. It doesn't only affect the children involved but damages the whole structure of society. Children are of immense importance for country's growth and progress. Benjamin Essex once said: "It's not what you have but what you do with what you have". Pakistan has one of the largest under 30 population. However, the children of this country are neglected by the society. With equality, justice, education and human development, the menace of child labour can be curbed.

Note: Kindly Evaluate and give marks
out of 100.