

# ESSAY:

## CHILD LABOUR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

### OUTLINE

#### I - Introduction:

a - Hook

b - Background

c - Thesis Statement:

Child labour remains a hazardous global and national challenge that is mainly driven by poverty, unemployment, lack of education, natural disasters and poor law enforcement. This heinous practice exposes children to physical, psychological and economic harm while perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

#### II - Causes of Child Labour

a - Informal and weak Macroeconomic Structure:

i - Poverty and Economic Hardships:

Case-in-Points:

• Around 160 million children were engaged in child labour worldwide according to the

joint report  
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joint report by the International Labour Organization and United Nations International Children's Fund.

- National Poverty Rate in Pakistan increased to approximately 29% in 2024-25.

ii- Inflation and Household Financial Pressure Leading to Child Labour

Case-in-points:

- Inflation in Pakistan reached at about 70% in February 2026
- Nigeria experienced inflation of about 33.69% in April 2024, which significantly increased child labour.

iii- Adult Unemployment as a Driver of Child Labour

Case-in-Points:

- Unemployment Ratio in Pakistan reached 7.9% according to International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- Research shows that when no adult is employed, the probability of child labour rises to 6.5%.

## B-Lack of Access to Quality Education

### i- Lack of Adequate School Facilities

#### Case-in-Points:

- 15.1% children in Bangladesh left school because families could not afford education expenses.
- A study in Nepal found that long-travel distances to school significantly increase drop out rates.

### ii- Parental Education Deficits and the Prevalance of Child Labour

#### Case-in-points:

- Research published in Pakistan Institute of Development Economics show around 72% of the parents of working children were illiterate.
- Research by the International Labour Organization: Parents of 60-70% of child labourers were illiterate.

### iii- Absence of Universal Compulsory Primary Education

- Article 25-A of Pakistan Constitution

of 1973 guarantees free and compulsory education for children aged 5-16, but implementation gaps exist.

## C. Inadequate and Weak Legal Frameworks and Enforcement

Case-in-Points:

- Pakistan has the Employment of Children Act 1991 yet labour inspection systems remain weak.

- ILO Convention No. 138

(Minimum Age Convention) and

ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst

Forms of Child Labour Convention)

require countries to eliminate

child labour. However, enforcement

challenges persist in many

developing countries.

## D - Social Factors and Crisis

i - Overpopulation

Case-in-points:

- In India 65% of child labourers come from large families.

- International Labour Organization

- United Nations Children's Fund:

Nigeria's population exceeds 220 million and over 15 million

children are labourers due to

large families.

ii - Conflict and Mass Migration

- Conflict in Afghanistan and

Syria forced many displaced children into informal labouring.

~~iii - Conflict and Mass Migration~~

iii - Natural Disasters and

Climate Change:

Case-in-Points:

- The 2022 Pakistan floods affected about 33 million people.

- The Typhoon Haiyan (2013) in Philippines led to over 30,000 children dropping out of school.

- World Bank: In drought-affected areas, child labour can rise by 15-20%.

iv - Social Apathy and Tolerance of Child Labour:

- In India and Bangladesh, over 40% of the households view child work as a family contribution.

- Tolerant social norms in Sub-Saharan Africa increase child labour incidence by 10-15%.

v - Orphanhood

United Nations Children's

Fund: orphaned children are up to 2 to 3 times more likely to engage in labour.

- Kenya: Nearly 50% of orphaned children are involved in work.

## E- Political Instability and Weakened Institutions

i- Flawed Democracy where the impoverished were further squeezed

Case-in-Points:

International Labour Organization:  
In fragile states, 40% of children work under hazardous conditions.

ii- Inadequate Social Protection Policies:

- Vulnerability to Shocks:

International Labour Organization:  
9 million children globally entered child labour during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## III- CONSEQUENCES OF Child Labour

A- Deteriorating Physical health and Maltreatment:

i- Hazardous Work Environment:

## Case-in-Points:

United Nations Children's Fund:  
Children in South-Asian brick  
kilns suffer from respiratory  
illness.

## ii- Maltreatment and Exploitation:

### Case-in-Points:

International Labour Organization:  
Over 30% of working children  
in West Africa face some  
form of abuse.

## B- Psychological and Emotional Detriments Resulting from Child Labour:

### Case-in-Points:

- United Nations Children's  
Fund: 60% of working children  
exhibit signs of anxiety,  
depression and behavioral  
problems.
- 77% of working children in  
Iran experience psychological  
trauma and abuse.

## C- Educational Deprivation and Restricted Cognitive Growth:

- 1- Decline in Literacy Rate:

## Case-in-Point:

Research shows nearly 60% of child labourers in Punjab and Sindh have never attended schools.

## ii- School Retention and Increasing Drop out Patterns Case-in-Points:

United Nations Children's Fund: and International Labour Organization Global Estimates 2024; nearly 1 in 5 million children who work are out of school.

## D - Economic Consequences and Poverty Cycle:

### i- Reduced Future Earning Potential

#### Case-in-Point:

ILO: Child labour reduces adult earnings by 20-30% compared to educated peers.

### ii- Intergenerational Poverty Cycle:

#### Case-in-Points:

World Bank: South Asian households with a history of child

Labour are 30-40% more likely to have subsequent generations also working from childhood.

## E- Detrimental Effects On Human Capital Formation:

i- Scientists, Artists and Persons of Eminence lost to Child Labour

Case-in-Points:

- Jqhal Masih who was forced into carpet weaving, became a child labour activist and killed at age of 12.
- Shamim Afridi

## F- Social and Ethical Consequences

i- Communal Degradation:

Case-in-Points:

World Bank: Globally, child labour contributes to GDP losses of 2-5% in countries with high prevalence.

ii- Social Marginalization and Stigma:

Case-in-Points:

In South Asia child labours are excluded from social events, clubs, or school activities. - UNICEF.

The term child labour is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

This definition highlights that child labour is a curse to society which destroys children in every aspect of their life.

It denies them of education and exposes them to exploitation. In many developing countries, children are forced to work in agricultural sector, factories, domestic labour and street vending.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization

(ILO) estimate that about 160 million children worldwide are engaged in child labour.

In countries, specially in developing countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria etc. economic instabilities

Social pressures and weak institutional frameworks have intensified the problem.

Child labour remains a hazardous global and national challenge driven by poverty, inadequate educational facilities, fragile legal framework, political and social factors. These hurdles expose children to maltreatment, lack of education, Economic deprivation, Loss of Human Capital and social Setbacks.

To begin with, Child labour primarily emerges from economic hardship and structural weaknesses in developing economies. Poverty is considered the most significant driver, forcing families to rely on children's earning for survival. Weak macro-economic structures, characterized by unemployment and informal labour markets, also

encourage child employment because employers seek cheap controlled labour.

In Pakistan economic instability has increased inflation and household vulnerability. Additionally lack of education contributes significantly to the problem. Many families cannot afford school expenses or lack nearby schools, making work more appealing than education.

Reports by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics show 72% of the parents of working children are not educated.

Besides, structural crises such as natural disasters also intensify child labour. According to ILO and UNICEF report in 2025 about 138 million children were engaged in child labour globally in 2024, including around 54 million in hazardous work that threatens their health and safety. Such alarming figures demonstrate how economic shocks and fragile institutions

Continue to exploit children. Weak labour frameworks like UN Charter, Child Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), Article 25(A) of Constitution, Employment of Children's Act 1991 exist but face implementation gaps. In addition, over-population or large families is a contributing factor whose living examples are the 15 million Nigerian children who are working to cater their family needs. Moreover, migrated individuals, particularly children of Afghanistan and Syria got trapped in the quagmire of child labour. Some other causes like floods, earthquakes, droughts have also worsen the situation globally. Orphans are also highly vulnerable to exploitation and are disproportionately pushed into child labour. Lastly, defective governance systems leave impoverished populations more susceptible to unfair utilization. An ILO report

Shows that around 9 million children globally entered child workforce participation during the Coronavirus outbreak.

These causes ultimately lead to the devastating consequences of child workforce.

The acute repercussions of child exploitation affects the children's health, education and long-term economic prospects. Working children frequently work in hazardous environments that expose them to injuries, toxic substances and excessive physical strain.

Globally, about 54 million children perform hazardous tasks. According to UNICEF, 60% of child labour suffer mental health challenges

Such as anxiety, depression, behavioral issues. Children

working in toxic and high-noise atmosphere are prone to developing hearing issues. Furthermore, children also face issues in continuing their academic

Life and ultimately drop out  
This Sabotages their whole  
life. A recent Survey in  
Sindh, Pakistan found school  
attendance among working  
children at 40.8%. compared  
with 70.5% among non-  
working children. Such  
disparities demonstrate  
how uneducated individuals  
are stuck in the vicious  
cycle of intergenerational  
poverty. Also, this issue  
results in societal and  
national loss of valuable  
human capital and future  
productivity. Last but not  
the least, working children  
are also deprived of all forms  
of recreation and enjoyment,  
often facing social exclusion  
and losing opportunities for  
healthy childhood development.  
Nations also strive due to  
child labour. It's ~~example~~  
quite evident from the  
Report of World Bank that  
child labour undermines  
global GDP - Gross Domestic  
Product to an estimated

2-4% loss. This restricts  
overall national output.