

CRIMINAL NEGLECT OF CHILD LABOR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

→ Outline:

1- Introduction

Thesis statement: The criminal neglect of child labor is prevalent throughout the globe particularly under-developed countries.

It is considered and supported as a means to elevate economic situation of poor families. However, as strict and multilateral approach implemented in labor letter and spirit can eradicate the scourge.

2- Situation of child labor and its neglect in Pakistan.

3- Why child labor is prevalent in society

a- Protection laws not implemented in True letter and spirit.

b- Poverty and Economic Deprivation.

DAY: _____

DATE: _____

Climate Change,
c- Conflict and Mass Migration.

d- Over population and Limited Resources

e- Lack of Access to Quality Education.

4- Consequences of Neglecting Prevalence of Child Labor.

a- High school Drop-out rates.

b- Exposure of Children to Hazardous Environment and Malnutrition.

c- Persistence of class and Income Inequities.

d- Impact Human Capital of the Children

e- Physical and Mental Abuse.

f- Moral Corruption of Children.

5- Addressing This Neglect of Child Labor in Society.

a- Implementing a Multilateral Approach of Public - Private Enterprises

b- Introducing Programme of Child-Sponsorship and Financial Support.

c- Mandatory Free and Fair Education for Minors.

d- Spreading 'Child is Meant to Learn not Earn' Awareness Campaign.

6- Conclusion.

ESSAY:

'Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man.' Rabindranath Tagore, a highly prolific composer and social reformer beautifully explained that every child is a flower to be nurtured and every child is an opportunity from God for mankind to fulfill his role. Sadly, the situation is worse than imagined. Nowadays, Child Labor is not only prevalent but even acceptable as ~~a~~ in conservative societies as ~~a~~ a financial opportunity. The widespread of this menace is contributable to weak implementation of legislation, poverty, lack of ^{access to} educational ~~acce~~ overpopulation and mass migration. Consequences of Child Labour

negligence are far-reaching and result in high dropout rates, physical and mental health issues of children, widening economic gaps between poor and rich, declining human capital of children and their moral corruption. However, by adopting a multilateral approach to deal with this menace, child sponsoring programs, and free education, and awareness campaign to prioritize learning over child working can prove fruitful in eradicating this social evil. The criminal neglect of child labor is prevalent throughout the globe particularly under-developed countries. It is considered and supported as a means of economic elevation of poor families. However, a strict and multilateral approach implemented in true letter and spirit can eradicate this scourge.

Child labor as defined by

International Labour Organisation is the work that hinders a child from living their childhood and to realize their potential, and the work is harmful to the physical and mental health of children. So, a work that is mentally, or morally dangerous and harmful to children (any person under age of 18 years) ~~is~~ done for financial gains comes under child labor.

There are different forms of child labor and include slavery, child trafficking, forced recruitment into armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, drug production and trafficking, debt bonding, agricultural labor, mining or any other form of domestic work. This social ill is spreading like an epidemic and according to a recent report of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), globally 9 million, additional children are at risk of being pushed into child laborer by the end of 2022.

DAY: _____

DATE: _____

Moreover, child labour has risen to 160 million by 2022. (UNICEF, 2022) The situation is much worse in conflict hit ~~countries~~ and under developed countries. For example, in Pakistan according to Human Rights Report (2018), given by the economic situation of country, children are the most disadvantaged group in the society and there are multiple deeply rooted causes to it.

The ~~wid~~ negligence of child labor is rooted in non implementation of many national and international laws which are signed and ratified but not implemented in true spirit. Due to lack of political will and bending laws to favor the rich has resulted in commonness of this ill.

There are many conventions and laws designed by ILO to check counter this social ill like. The Convention of the Rights of Children - 1989 to ensure

conducive environment ^{children's} for growth. Many countries ratified the convention but still 160 million children are working under forced employment. This shows the legislations are mere paperwork with little statutory value.

Non-implementation of laws coupled with economic turmoil and income penalty among classes force families to involve children in income nets at a very small age. Deteriorating financial situation of poor families, low income, inflation and one person earning bread to feed ten further ~~at~~ alleviate the poverty. Under such circumstances, families are forced to add more hands on earning end resulting in voluntary child labor. In Child Labor report published by UNICEF in 2023 highlighted that in World's poorest countries, around 1 out of 5 children are engaged in child labor. Thus, poorest and strained financial situation leads to

DAY: _____

DATE: _____

acceptance of child labor ~~at~~ instead of negating it.

Along with this, with the emerging change in global dynamics, the world is seeing more conflicts and climate related incidents. These destructive incidents of war, floods, insurgency, terrorism, droughts etc further decline the financial situation of already poor.

Sometimes, the affected families opt for mass migration and start from scratch.

The illegal migration exposes children to many challenges and threats are often maltreated through forced labor, violence, non-payment of wages etc. (International

Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour,

ILO). So, migrant child laborers are

more vulnerable to exploitation and is a leading cause of child labor in catastrophic situations.

Besides above mentioned reasons, overpopulation is considered to be a prime

causative factor of child labor. With the increase in population, the available resources do not feel enough. This put strain on availability of resources resulting in more demand and less supply and inflation and poverty contributes to working of under-age children. The second issue created by over population is unemployment.

Taking case study of Pakistan, there is 7% 7 per cent of whole population which is unemployed. (IMF, 2023) So, with high levels of unemployment, children are forced to earn livings for their families.

Another important contributor to the edifice of this malice is low levels of literacy and lack of quality education. Parents being illiterate are unable to comprehend importance of education and take it as a luxury rather than necessity. For example, the literacy rate of Pakistan is 59.3 percent as reflected in the Economic

Survey (2022-23) and has relatively higher ~~no~~ number of child laborers is 14 million according to Pakistan

Bureau of Statistics (2021-22). Hence,

the lower the literacy rate, ~~and~~ the higher number of child laborers.

and this poses significant threat and has long-lasting repercussion for not only child but whole society.

First and foremost of these consequences is the high drop out rate at schools. Countries are replete with case studies where children are forced to leave school and enter labor

market. This forceful expulsion from schools by family of child to make him contribute to income results in high drop out rates. Being a low-income country,

ⁱⁿ Pakistan the drop-out rate at primary schooling is 50 percent as reported

by a UNICEF Report in 2022. So, it is the education of child that suffers

immediately due to minor's labor.

Secondly, forced labor exposes children to hazardous environment and malnutrition. Extended work hours and dealing working with illegal products like drugs poses a significant threat to the health and development of children. Situation becomes even worse when children are hired for human or drug trafficking. Moreover, in Pakistan many children are hired for agriculture related jobs and dangerous tasks like spraying the pesticides on crops, driving tractor, using thresher machines are more risky for their health. According to National Labor Survey of Pakistan 6.6 percent of the working children, aged from 5 to 14 years, frequently suffer occupational injuries whereas around 28 percent occasionally suffer injuries. Thus, child labor is detrimental to health and development of children.

Along with this, child labor does not left unchecked further widens the socio-economic divide and worsen the already present inequities. When children are deprived of education and are forced to work for hazardous and minor manual jobs, it eliminates the chances of their upward mobility. For example, according to a report published by UNICEF in 2023, child labor compounds social inequalities and discrimination. Hence, by denying the child a fair chance to education and good health, class and income inequities already present ~~are~~ persist.

Moreover, neglecting child labor as an important issue impacts the human capital of children. Human capital is inversely related to child labor which means it declines in high child labor societies. Human capital is the measure of education.

health and income. In the report titled "Child Labour: Global estimates 2020", ILO and UNICEF jointly stated that in countries with low human capital, the percentage of child labor was around 25 percent while in countries of very high human capital, ~~the~~ only 3 percent of children were involved in underage labor. Hence, the more children are involved in labor net, the more the human capital will decline.

Exposure to risky and hazardous workplace conditions at early age makes children more vulnerable to physical and mental abuse. Being a girl child heightens the risk. ~~As per~~ ~~a UNICEF Report on Child Labor (2021)~~ around ~~adolescent girls~~ The case study of Rizwana (Pakistan) is a warning and breathy example of physical and mental abuse faced by child domestic workers. She was

DAY: _____

DATE: _____

tormented by a wife of civil judge in unimaginable - Unimaginable way and carries the wounds, burns and broken bones as an evidence of torture she went through. Therefore, child labor puts children to more risky environment making them vulnerable to physical and psychological abuse.

Exposure to risky, illegal and immoral environment serves as a stimulus to moral corruption of children. They socialize and learn the illegal activities at early age ^{and} which those criminal acts become their life time habits. According to social learning theory, children learn what they observe in their environment. So in case of child labourer, there are highly chances of becoming an addict of a child who works in drug dealing and trafficking. Same way children involved in pornography market at early age

leads to opt prostitution as a profession. So, by exposing children to criminal environment raises their chances of becoming the same criminal as for them it's new normal. However, there are way through which child labour can be curbed or atleast be made less detrimental to health and development of child.

There is an urgent need of implementing a multilateral approach spanning over educational institutions, NGOs and law enforcement agencies to curb levels of child labour. Schools must share the drop out rates and cases of such cases with other two organizations. While NGOs can provide an alternate way or help the child and his family to reverse their decisions, law enforcement agencies can help by executing those who don't abide by Child Protection laws and are convicted.

of forced labor or a part of organized crime. Thus, by adopting a three pronged approach, this menace can be dealt with.

Secondly, NGOs and state can work together to introduce child sponsorship programmes and financial support systems like BISP. A child sponsorship programme can be helpful in lessening the financial burden of poor families already choked with unemployment. It

will also lessen the probability of forced child labor. Currently, Pakistan Sweet Homes and EID center for children are providing such programmes for child sponsorship in which sponsors are not only involved in investing in their future but also provide monthly meetings to foster a support system for deprived children.

A legislation should be implemented in true spirit on

free education for minors i.e. aged under 14 years. Schooling and child labour are inextricably linked. Elimination of tuition fees, free textbooks, uniforms and school transportation as well as the implementation of in-kind transfer initiatives like food for education and conditional cash transfer programmes in form of school scholarships can encourage parents to send their children to schools and not labor markets.

Lastly, a comprehensive campaign reaching far flung areas and rural societies spreading awareness that "Child is meant to learn not earn" is need of an hour.

Social media channels, electronic and print media, educational institutes and seminars can be conducted to spread the slogan all over the world.

Through awareness this course will be considered a mallace rather than

an opportunity for economic gain. Moreover, children and parents be made aware of legislations and penalties regarding child labour which can serve as a buffer for future.

In conclusion, as said in start, children are sent as opportunity to humans, to check what we make out of this clay. He can be a productive citizen or a hardened criminal. He can be a flourishing individual or a deprived cripple. He can contribute to national growth or his own growth and development be hindered.

Challenges are many but the silver lining is that all challenges are surmountable. It only needs a will power and determination at government level, investment at corporate level, check and balance at law enforcement level and awareness at public level.

DAY: _____

DATE: _____

As a victim of child labor "Iqbal Masih" once said, "children should have pens in their hands not tool."

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