

Child Labour: A Neglected Issue

OUTLINES.

I Introduction:

Undoubtedly, Child labour is a neglected issue in Pakistan. There are several reasons behind child labouring in the country. Owing to this, Pakistan is facing severe consequences at many fronts. However, by taking some pragmatic measures situation can be reversed.

II A Bird's eye view of current Child labour condition in Pakistan.

III Some major causes of Child labour in Pakistan are:

a) Weak enforcement of labour laws has provided room for children's exploitation in labour work.

b) Mass illiteracy forces children

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Engage with labour work in Pakistan.

- c). Poverty pushes children to earn livelihoods for their families.
- d). Climate-induced-disasters also exacerbates child labouring by destroying houses and income sources.
- e). Feudalism also drives children into labour work for maximum profits.

IV Some major impacts of child labour in Pakistan are:

- a). Child labouring increases volume of informal economy through cash payments.
- b). Child labour reduces school enrollment rate in

Pakistan.

- c). Child labour triggers health crisis among children due to long hours employment.
- d). Child labour reduces innovation and entrepreneurship by bringing children into survival trap.
- e). Extensive child labour creates intolerance among children which gives rise to extremism and crimes in the society.

✓ Some major measures to eliminate child labour in Pakistan:

- a). Ensuring strict enforcement of labour laws can eradicate child labour from Pakistan.
- b). Providing more employment opportunities to parents can

decrease child labour in Pakistan.

c). Improving school enrollment rate through incentives and scholarships can be a right step in right direction.

d). Spreading mass awareness about rights of children can curb child labour in Pakistan.

VI Conclusion.

Since its inception, Pakistan has been facing several socio-economic crises. Among all of them, child labour is a prominent one. In recent years, child labour culture has significantly increased in Pakistan. There are several causes behind it. Some of these include, weak enforcement of labour laws, widespread mass illiteracy, and rising poverty rate in the country. Owing to these, Pakistan is suffering at multiple fronts such as, increasing volume of informal economy, decreasing school enrollment ratio, and growing health hazards among children. These factors have not only pulverized the socio-economic fabric of the society but also threatened existence of the country. Therefore,

it is imperative to take some pragmatic measures in this regard. Ensuring strict enforcement of labour laws, providing more economic opportunities to people, and spreading mass awareness about child labour can be right steps in the right direction. By taking such measures, it is hoped that one day Pakistan will be free from menace of child labour.

Before diving into deep, it is pertinent to give an overview of current child labour conditions in Pakistan. Despite legal protection to children, child labour is increasing day by day in the country. According to one estimation of United Nations Development Programme

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"out of 99 per cent workforce, 7 per cent constitutes child labour." This indicates that child labour has reached to an alarming condition in Pakistan.

To begin with, the major cause behind child labour culture is weak enforcement of labour laws. ~~Weak~~ This weak enforcement of laws has provided room for children's exploitation in labour work. The Constitution of Pakistan fully protects rights of children and envisions severe punishment in case of violation of those laws. Unfortunately, despite such protection, innocent children continue to suffer, miserably. It is a common observation that children work at workshops, garages, and hotels, but no one questions the employers. Thus, child labour is becoming

normative in Pakistan. Therefore, it can be said that child labour is exacerbated by poor governance of the country. Moreover, mass illiteracy forces children to engage in labour work in the country. Currently, 26 million children are out-of-school as per Economic survey of Pakistan (2024-25). This means, these children are forced into child labour rather than into class rooms. Additionally, illiterate parents are not aware of children's rights. Thus, they have normalized child labouring in the society. As a result, child labour is getting grounds in Pakistan.

Besides, poverty pushes children to earn livelihoods for their families. Poor parents prefer their children's employment to fulfill their basic needs. It is pertinent to mention here

The views of Anadol lieven about child labour in Pakistan. Anadol lieven writes in his book "Pakistan: A Hard Country" that poor households perceive their children as a social security and source of income.

Thus, they try to drive children into labour work to achieve financial stability. This proves that poverty is a major cause behind child labour in Pakistan.

Furthermore, climate-induced disasters also exacerbates child labouring by destroying houses and income sources of people. Climatic catastrophes, such as floods and erratic rainfalls wash away income sources of people. Hence, all family members start earning by all means. In this situation, child labour increases by leaps

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and bounds. It ^{also} is evident from the fact that Pakistan is ^{on} top on Climate Risk Index and similarly, Pakistan is among top five countries having high numbers of child labour. This indicates that there is an explicit connection between climate - disasters and child labour. Therefore, it is safe to say that ~~the~~ child labour is caused by climate - induced disasters.

Last but not least, feudalism is a culprit behind child labour culture in Pakistan. In rural areas, feudal lords make their farmers to engage children into labour for greater profits. Tehmina Jungi writes in her book "My Feudal lords" that the worst effect of feudalism is surge in child exploitation. The author further

adds that feudal lords hire those farmers who have more children for work. Instead of opening schools for them, feudal lords buy more machinery for labour work. This also indicates that feudalism adds fuel to the fire, constantly.

The consequences of child labour are visible in every walk of life in Pakistan. It is open secret that child labour increases volume of informal economy through cash payments. Most of the children are paid on daily basis in cash. This method of payment is devoid of taxation and government oversight. In Economic Survey of Pakistan (2004-05), 60 percent of the economy is informal. Out of this, 27 percentage is attributed

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to child labour. Thus, it can be stated that child labour contributes to informal economy of Pakistan.

Furthermore, child labour reduces school enrollment rate in Pakistan. When children are engaged into labour work at early age, they are unlikely to attend classes in their lives. They remain busy all the day in their labour work. In an social survey of Pew (2003), out of 10, 7 children revealed that they skipped studies because of labour work. They also told that labour work has changed their mindset from education to employment. This reflects that child labour is equally responsible for low school enrollment rate in the country.

In addition to this, child labour triggers health

crisis among children due to long hours of employment. In most of the cases, children are made to work from morning to evening. This adversely affects their immune system and produces diseases like Asthma and physical disabilities. Dr. Rehman sebah explains in his article "Health crisis and social norms" that child labour is dangerous for health of children. The doctor further adds that children involved into ~~the~~ labour work are highly vulnerable to pre-mature mortality as they ^{remain} ~~are~~ entrapped by infectious diseases. This proves the statement that child labour is inimical to health of children.

Moreover, child labour reduces innovation and entrepreneurship by bringing children into survival trap. When children work the whole

day, they are unlikely to ~~the~~ innovate anything. They work from morning to evening for their survival. Thus, they do not bother to think about new ideas and startups. It is visible from the fact that countries having low child labour have more ~~the~~ innovation and entrepreneurship ~~in~~ from children side. Contrarily, countries having high child labour ~~also~~ have no any contribution from children side. This proves that child labour decreases innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.

Lastly, extensive child labour creates intolerance among children which gives rise to extremism and comes in the society. Children have to face harsh behaviour

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from their employers. With time, their personality also change into rude and harsh. As a result, they become less tolerant and more prone to crimes in the society. For instance, in areas where children work for longer hours and face rude behaviour, there child crime rate remains comparatively ^{highly}. Korocho is a suitable example in this regard. Thus, it can be said that prevailing intolerance in the society is partly caused by child labour.

As it is said that there is always a method to every madness. Similarly, there are some measures which should be taken to eradicate child labour menace in the country. The first and foremost is ensuring strict enforcement of labour laws. The respective

Institutions should build mechanisms to fully protect children. The employers should be warned for child labour. Moreover, in case of violation, owners should be given severe punishment to set an example. Additionally, a child protection cell should be established like that of Finland. The prime objective of the cell should be to handle queries and complaints of children, only. In this way, child labour can be nipped into bud.

Furthermore, providing more employment opportunities to parents can decrease child labour in Pakistan.

When parents are unable to earn their livelihoods then they drive children into labour work. So, if there

parents are provided economic opportunities, they will unlikely prefer child labour work. In this way poor parents will fulfill their basic needs early and children will remain free from doing labour work. Therefore providing employment opportunities will be a right step in the right direction.

Besides, improving school enrollment ratio through incentives can be fruitful in this regard. When children will be given financial assistance to attend school then they will enroll themselves as soon as possible. Thus, the government should provide assistance in the form of transportation, stationary, uniform, and stipends to enhance school enrollment ratio. By doing

results are more assured.
last but ^{not the} least,
spreading more awareness about
rights of children can curb
child labour in Pakistan. Most
of the parents and employers
are not aware of rights of
children. Thus, they exploit children
unknowingly. Therefore, government
should organized campaigns,
seminars, and programmes to spread
information about ~~the~~ children
rights. In this way, children ~~themselves~~
themselves will create resistance
for child labour work. As a
result, child labour will ~~reduce~~ ^{decrease}
up to some extent in the
country.

To conclude, child labour
is a severe issue in Pakistan.
It is increasing day by
day in the country. There are
several culprits in this regard.
They range from social factors

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to institutional failures. Owing to this, Pakistan is facing consequences. Informal economy is increasing, crimes are surging, and health costs are burgeoning. Therefore, some pragmatic measures should be taken in this regard, urgently. Improving enforcement mechanism, ensuring awareness can bring fruitful result in this regard. It is hoped that one day Pakistani children will enjoy their rights freely.