

Psychosocial Factors Influencing Child Labor: A Psychological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The increasing incidence of child labor is one of the major problems afflicting the whole world, especially in developing nations like India. This research aims to provide insight into the reasons behind child labor as well as the long-term psychological impacts of child labor. Additionally, an effort has been made to determine ways to minimize or eradicate child labor. Many times, parental financial commitments are the main reason why children must work. Mainly due to the population's fast growth, the adult poor community experiences pervasive joblessness and poverty; this is the main reason for child labor. Large, low-income homes that usually lack access to educational opportunities, literacy rates, and misconceptions about the importance of education and its relationship to their children's careers are some of the factors that contribute to the prevalence of child labor. But as time has passed, more people throughout the world are becoming aware of how serious the problem is. The Indian Constitution also prioritizes well-being over economic interests and protects and advances them. Consequently, the Indian government established many committees and commissions to either offer suggestions on how to deal with the problem of child labor or to concentrate only on it, giving us a better understanding of the circumstances. Modern governments must have thorough and useful laws on labor for children and development for children.

Keywords: Child labor, psychological factors, social factors, mental health, India

"I want to cry out to the world the rage of chained children. I want to cry out to the world about the pain of abused girls. I want to cry out to the world the unutterable sadness of abandoned babes. I want to cry out to the world about the fear of maltreated kids. I want to cry out all this to the world. But who will cry out with me?"

___Michele Bedulli

Child Labor in India

Child labor pertains to the employment of minors in any type of job that robs them of their childhood and interferes with their capacity to attend a normal school, regardless of whether the work is risky or damaging to their mental, physical, social, or moral development. Many people worldwide view this technique as exploitative. All across the world, child labor is prohibited by law. "World Day against Child Labor" is celebrated on

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June 12. The theme of this day in 2024 is “Let’s act on our commitments: End Child Labor!” Not every job performed by minors is regarded as child labor under these regulations. There are certain exceptions, such as child creators, supervised training, and specific types of employment, such as Amish children’s, various types of child labor that are widespread among Native American youngsters, and others. The National Child Labour Project and the Child Labour Act of 1986 both target child labor in India. More than 10.12 million youngsters in India are currently learning how to weave carpets, roll beds, work as domestic help, work in agriculture, make fireworks, make clothing, and engage in a myriad of other jobs instead of attending school and obtaining a good education (Kumari, 2019). Young people who are harmed or prevented from attending school are considered to be laboring as youngsters. Millions of youngsters have been pulled away from school and into the workforce in the United States and throughout the world in recent decades due to widening wealth and poverty divides. An estimated 215 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are employed in circumstances that are deemed unlawful, dangerous, or greatly exploitative, according to estimates from the International Labor Organization (2023). Around the world, minors are employed in a variety of professions due to their great poverty and that of their families. Many young people are employed in industry, mining, fishing, domestic service, and commercial agriculture. Certain youngsters are employed in illegal occupations such as drug trafficking, prostitution, or other stressful jobs like military service.

The Kailash Satyarthi Foundation’s study and projections from the 2011 census indicate that by 2023, there would be 7.8 million child workers in India, with a male-to-female ratio of 57% and 43%, respectively. A stunning statistic shows that one in ten children, or 160 million youngsters worldwide, are trapped in the web of child labor, according to research published by UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021). The number of youngsters between the ages of five and eleven who are working as child laborers has significantly increased, the research says. Furthermore, the number of kids between the ages of five and seventeen who labor in dangerous jobs; jobs that might endanger their physical and mental health, security, or morals rose by 6.5 million to 79 million during the period of 2011–2016.

Informal child labor and formal child labor

Children typically labor in the formal and informal sectors (Hilowitz, 2004). However, in both cases at least one of the following situations pertains to child labor:

- a) disobeys the minimum wage regulations of a country;
- b) endangers the psychological, physical, or emotional health of children;
- c) contains unconscionable mistreatment, such as debt enslavement, forced labor, child trafficking, forced labor, or unlawful activities;
- d) keeps kids from attending school;
- e) uses kids to subvert labor laws.

Children can work picking up trash and cleaning shoes in the informal labor sector. Nonetheless, adolescents who engage in the official labor market typically work for businesses involved in commerce and agriculture. Since there are more job options in the informal sector, most youngsters labor there; yet, workers in this sector face more hazardous conditions and receive lower wages. In the worst-case scenario, youngsters working from informal sources will only receive food and shelter instead of pay (Hilowitz, 2004). Numerous pieces of evidence point to the fact that young children who work in informal sectors, including the agriculture sector, perform vital labor that generates significant cash for the employer, who refrains from hiring adults or international workers to avoid having to pay

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them more (Nieuwenhuys, 1996). Generally speaking, female children work in various industries more than male children; for instance, they work more in cafes, clothing stores, and sawmills (Bourdillon, 2019). Children will labor long hours; in the agricultural sector, this translates to 10 hours or more of work per day, especially during the busiest times of the year. Additionally, kids who engage in mining are able to spend a full day in the depths (Bourdillon, 2019).

Reasons of child labor

Children are involved in child labor for a variety of reasons. According to Khan (2016), the most frequent cause is the family's financial situation; a large number of youngsters come from impoverished homes where parents are barely able to give their kids access to necessities such as shelter and food (Khan, 2016). Empirical studies have demonstrated that children from lower-income families are more inclined to work; for instance, 76 percent of working children identify as impoverished (Quattri & Watkins, 2019). Second, a lot of kids will be employed as a result of family issues like divorce. Many families force their daughters into marriage or put them to work early because they do not understand the value of an education for women (Khan, 2016). Thirdly, many of the children who work are the offspring of immigrants who, upon relocating, put their kids to work. This might be due to financial hardship, a lack of access to education, or a combination of the two (Quattri & Watkins, 2019). Furthermore, children in low-income households with a higher child-to-adult ratio are usually put to work. Fifth, parents who are the primary provider for their family—typically the father—send their kids to work when he is unable to work due to a handicap or other illness. Research indicates that 15% of families send their kids to work for this reason. Sixth, parents with low levels of education have a greater likelihood of sending their kids to work (Quattri & Watkins, 2019). Lastly, since their kids are significantly less inclined to get into trouble, many refugee parents send their kids abroad since they can't acquire a work visa in some countries.

Psychosocial Impact among Child Laborers

The psychological dangers associated with child labor are highest in third-world nations (Khan, 2016). Children were becoming dissatisfied and irritated due to their bosses beating them, according to a study conducted by the Terre des Hommes International Federation (Lieten et al., 2010). Several studies have demonstrated that stress or trauma experienced by kids during their early years at work may be the cause of mental illnesses such as anxiety, panic attacks, schizophrenia, and depression (Edmonds, 2007). Additionally, laboring children experience emotions such as remorse, hopelessness, and humiliation, all of which can lead to serious social and health issues (Khan, 2016). Children were dissatisfied and frustrated because of the lengthy hours they had to labor (Bharti & Agarwal, 2013). Youngsters employed in unstable settings are typically less gregarious and more detached (Beegle et al., 2009). Research indicates that a significant portion of children used as child laborers have unfavorable psychosocial development (Bharti & Agarwal, 2013). Children's psychological effects from their working surroundings are significantly more detrimental than their physical effects (Khan, 2016). It's crucial to note that a lot of parents are ignorant of the detrimental psychological effects on their kids, but even those who are conscious of the dangers continue to feel that sending their kids to work is their only option (Khan, 2016). Numerous minors who work, mostly girls, are subjected to sexual harassment (Bharti & Agarwal, 2013). Many juvenile laborers stated that they were subjected to unwanted sexual contact from their employers or other people (Edmonds, 2005). For two reasons, a lot of employers would rather hire women. Primarily, compared to men, girls need less money. Furthermore, a lot of companies view hiring girls as an opportunity to harass and

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sexually abuse them (Kuppers & Ruhmann, 2016). Kids often acquire unhealthy behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse and cigarette smoking, which can have detrimental effects on their mental and physical health (Lieten, 2010).

Work can be classified as dangerous by the ILO due to factors such as the nature of the task or the surroundings in which the child performs the task (Stave & Hillesund, 2015). Furthermore, hazardous labor is broadly defined as any detrimental circumstance that jeopardizes a child's morals, health, or safety (Stave & Hillesund, 2015). While child labor occurs in all sectors of the economy, children employed in the agriculture sector make up the largest percentage (70%) of all laborers (Schultz & Strauss, 2008). Children working in agriculture are put in risky situations due to the large loads they must carry, the sharp tools used, the necessity for pesticides when cultivating, and their proximity to potentially harmful organisms like snakes. According to Schultz and Strauss (2008), young people who work in agriculture typically sustain more injuries than youngsters in other industries because of all the dangers they are exposed to. When it comes to some particular agricultural industries, the level of risk differs from nation to nation. For instance, harvesting sugar cane in Peru is considerably riskier than in other nations (Stave & Hillesund, 2015). Certain industries, like child labor, are difficult to define in terms of the risks they may encounter, which is why this industry is sometimes referred to as hidden. It's also possible that children in this industry have a tendency to be mentally dangerous. For instance, domestic workers may experience exploitation, abuse, and solitude (Schultz & Strauss, 2008). Not to mention that a lot of kids get hired for dangerous jobs like portering (Lieten, 2010). Children raised by Porters typically live in a congested, dirty, and toxic environment, which might later cause major health issues. Porters typically labor in a barefoot environment, carry very heavy staff, and have other conditions (Lieten, 2010). The primary issue with hazardous jobs is that many youngsters won't be aware of them when they are still in their early years since the serious health issues that arise from them will only manifest in adulthood (Schultz & Strauss, 2008).

Economic prosperity is largely dependent on education. According to the data, 145 million kids under the ages of six and eleven do not attend school. It is noteworthy to note that there are more females (85 million) than boys (60 million) who are not enrolled in school (Leal Filho et al., 2021). In many nations, the ban on child labor and the need for education work together to lower the number of children (Quattri, & Watkins, 2019). Families sometimes pull youngsters away from school and put them to work when they fail to see the value and immediate impact of education. Children will become victims in workplaces as a result of this (Leal Filho et al., 2021). Children who work while attending school typically have lower academic success levels (Beegle et al., 2009). Additionally, youngsters who work and attend school sometimes leave school early to pursue full-time employment (Edmonds, 2007).

Long Term Impact of Child Labor

Regarding economic well-being, a large number of underage laborers is considered a severe problem. Kids who work do not receive the education they need. They are deprived of the chance to grow in terms of their physical, mental, emotional, and psychological development. Children's physical conditions make them unsuitable for prolonged, monotonous labor since they tire out more easily than adults do. The children's physical circumstances worsen as a result, increasing their susceptibility to illness. Children who labor in dangerous environments suffer considerably more. Instead of attending school, children who work will continue to be illiterate, which will hinder their potential to improve both their personal well-being and the community in which they reside. In India, child labor has negative long-term effects (Bulut & Alabed, 2021). A key requirement for maintaining economic growth is

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having a workforce that is educated and has the necessary skills to meet industry demands. The youthful laborers of today will comprise the human resources of India in the future. There is no question that child labor has a trade-off with the development of human capital. The bulk of child labor in India (70%) is engaged in agriculture, with a smaller percentage in heavy industries like coal mining and low-skilled labor-intensive sectors like sari weaving or domestic helper work, which do not require formal schooling or training. The International Labour Organization (ILO) claims that underdeveloped countries might reap significant economic gains from having children attend school instead of working. Children who do not receive an education will not acquire the technical ability and English literacy needed to become more productive adults who can eventually find higher-paying professions that will help them escape poverty (Lieten, 2010).

Suggestions

Numerous recommendations have been made that changing government policy is the best way to address child labor in emerging nations. Based on these recommendations, a study shows that there are two different areas of intervention emphasis (Stave & Hillesund, 2015). There are two main approaches to ending child labor: the first is a complete prohibition on the practice, while the other is a policy-based strategy that involves passing laws to end child labor over time. One argument in favor of a complete ban on child work stems from the belief that, in industrialized nations with similar bans on child labor, per capita income was lower than in developing nations currently facing child labor issues. According to Weisbrot and colleagues (2006), underdeveloped nations may thus argue that they lack the resources to outlaw child labor. This claim has been criticized for using a very limited approach to comparison, neglecting to include the fact that the per capita income of industrialized nations was determined using data that was more than a century old and the effects of globalization and liberalization on the forces of output. Ignorance of the potentially harmful net effect on society is a well-established critique (Basu, 1999). However, outright prohibitions can backfire since they undermine international efforts by tainting statistics, forcing child labor into the unregulated and informal sectors as a result of the fear of legal action (Edmonds, 2005). According to some writers, outlawing child labor will hinder governments' ability to come up with innovative ways to address the issue (Edmonds, 2005).

Given the close ties between child work and impoverishment, financial framework, society, and familial characteristics, it is suggested that the other emphasis will require a multifaceted strategy (Murshed, 2001). To make this recommendation clear, the strategies need to be a comprehensive campaign to reduce child labor with the goal of eliminating it altogether. A dynamic strategy will be needed for such a program, one that calls for an all-encompassing policy as opposed to a temporary restriction. This may be accomplished by deploying innovations to combat the many causes of child labor without severely harming the people who benefit in the process. According to Murshed (2001), administrations must first acknowledge the existence of a problem. The governments of poor nations shouldn't be the only ones doing this. Authorities in developed nations will also need to acknowledge the existence of the issue and realize that legislation or prohibition is not a solution in and of itself (Kern, 2000). It will be essential to ensure that the regulatory structure is in place before legislatures act in order to ensure that the rules will, first of all, be practical and, then, not worsen the circumstances. According to Dillon (2003), policy intervention refers to this, with legislation serving as only one aspect of it. In order to find answers, impoverishment is a critical challenge that has to be addressed. Some people feel that tackling low adult salaries and joblessness is the solution because legislation's result may be unpredictable (Murshed, 2001). According to Basu (2003), there are many who disagree, arguing that greater wages

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would restrict supply since workers would have to put in fewer hours to exceed subsistence levels. As a result, such interventions should be continued until they are no longer needed. This would also resolve the difficulties of migration and residence for parents. In order to escape the cycle of poverty, parents' awareness of the long-term effects of child work must be increased as part of the family qualities factors. As Basu (2003) notes, several writers have acknowledged the positive ripple effects of teaching one generation.

Interventions such as income subsidies, which make up for the lost income from child labor (Singh & Zammit, 2003), along with increases in adult wages, are necessary to change the way society views child labor. Ultimately, the execution of sending children to work should become the rare case rather than the rule in a given community. Since gender norms, fertility rates, and cultural customs and traditions are firmly ingrained in cultures, it will take a significant amount of work to change attitudes regarding these topics. This is not to argue that it is impossible to alter these kinds of views. It has been observed that there has been a favorable influence on child labor and that the view of women working in industrialized nations has changed (Murshed, 2001).

Numerous innovations have been implemented in suitable and accessible schools to sustain and grow enrollment. These have shown that in order to reach a long-term solution, accessible, high-quality schools must be strengthened with additional incentives. Financial incentives have drawn criticism since it's been suggested that opportunists would force parents to send their kids to work as slaves in order to take advantage of the benefits. Indeed, in light of these concerns, additional improvements that have been proposed—like mandating education to enable oversight rather than simply prohibiting child labor—indicate that there are no assurances and that the best course of action will have to be to choose the less harmful option (Basu, 1999). All of the many policy approaches that have been explored have something in common. In order to reduce poverty and increase employment opportunities and adult wages, the economy must be restructured. In addition, parents who choose to send their children to school instead of working should be compensated and educated. There must be accessible, excellent schools available. Lastly, changing the cultural norms and conventional values that influence the dynamics of family would be extremely expensive, as these changes have an impact on whole civilizations (Wolfgang & Feuerhake, 2002). When considering these expenses in light of the fact that governments have not been able to bring about these changes on their own and that, by 2020, failing to address child labor in developing nations would have disastrous consequences for 90% of the world's workforce, it is clear that a global effort is required to address this issue. Three different types of intervention have been identified in this regard (Murshed, 2001). There are three types of intervention: supra-national, which involves international organs for the promotion of international child labor norms; and intra-national, which involves laws, institutions, and programs inside national boundaries. Thirdly, developed nations can use their internal laws to force developing nations to outlaw child labor. This kind of action is known as extra-national intervention. These three types of intervention should be complementary to one another. The most popular approach is to outlaw goods made in poor nations that employ child labor. Extra-national interference is limited by the fact that it frequently violates agreements made on global trade, particularly at the WTO. Consequently, there is a drive to get around this by pursuing global child labor laws through the WTO. Social concerns are common at the WTO, where it is permissible to discriminate against goods that have been produced using labor from prisons. It is rarely utilized; nevertheless, it is challenging for customs officers to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the production of such commodities (Waer, 1996). It is said that prison labor and child labor should not be compared since prison labor is carried out under a certain level of

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control, whereas child labor is particularly problematic due to its lack of oversight. Furthermore, one argument against putting child labor under WTO auspices is customs' inability to evaluate the circumstances of production for child labor. In light of this, some writers believe that as child labor is a global element of production, it should be controlled like any other resource (Langille, 1997). It may be claimed that any country has sovereignty over its natural resources if this claim is upheld.

As Waer (1996) points out, there is international agreement on the use of child labor in many fundamental commodity trade agreements. These industries are a dark sector of the economy, and the production concentration has shifted to other sectors, according to a deeper look at them in the context of emerging nations. In developed nations, several of these industries have already fallen prey to significant extraterritorial efforts. The restriction to particular industries has drawn criticism for only affecting a tiny percentage of underage laborers and for not addressing the issue as a whole (Edmonds, 2005). However, it has been noted that if sanctions are applied universally without focusing on particular industries, there may be large losses to world welfare (Trebilcock & Howse, 2004).

According to studies, there is a positive correlation between increased exports and child labor in general (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005). The continued discussion about applying trade penalties via the WTO not only makes the issue worse, but the ambiguity surrounding it will drive the matter further more under wraps. Some developing nations have committed to child labor responsibilities because of the uncertainty created by these differing perspectives, even if they are not actually able to implement them because of resource constraints. Nepal is one example of this. Under pressure from other countries, it ratified the 1973 International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention, which aims to end child labor and stipulates that the minimal age for admission to a job cannot be lower than the age at which one must complete compulsory education. However, Nepal was unable to follow the convention's requirements after it was made mandatory (Edmonds, 2005). This is blatantly evident to be an instance of Nepal's government being unprepared, and it has been argued that such acts greatly restrict international debate on the subject, which in turn favors dishonest business people who prey on the bewilderment and misery of underprivileged children. It has been noted that using the power of media to stir up societal displeasure can aid in the abolition of child labor (Basu, 2003). Sadly, the detrimental effects of such societal disapproval, which would be equivalent to an outright ban, have not been taken into account. These kids could be forced into more dangerous jobs if there is an abrupt decline in the market for goods made using child labor.

CONCLUSION

There are strong reasons to look for a solution to end child labor rather than the need to place blame. Thus, it is argued that poverty in developing nations leads to child labor, both in terms of the social backdrop and the governments' inability to fund the essential initiatives to reduce the prevalence of child labor. The issue of child labor in emerging economies cannot be solved by putting these nations in a vacuum; rather, the globalization of society has made the effects of child labor more widespread, affecting businesses and customers outside of these nations. Therefore, international initiatives to address the primary source of child labor in countries that are developing hold the key to the answers. However, given the pervasiveness of the issue and the relationship between poverty, child labor, and social characteristics, a multifaceted international effort is required. The punishment of people in developing countries for using child labor is not a viable basis for this strategy since it is ineffective. Therefore, a venue without a sanctions-based system that focuses on the problem of child labor, like the ILO, could be a preferable option to increase the likelihood of success.

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In addition to concurrently implementing rehabilitative programs, the government has been taking proactive efforts to address this issue through the stringent implementation of statutory regulations. In order to find instances of breaches, state governments which are the proper implementing authorities have been conducting routine searches and inspections. Since punishment alone cannot address the root cause of this problem of poverty, the government has placed a great deal of emphasis on the reintegration of these children and improving the financial situation of their families.

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Conflict of Interest

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