

Critical Analysis of Multifaceted Approaches to Combatting Child Labor in Lakki Marwat, Pakistan

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Abstract

Child labor has been among the most tenacious abuse of fundamental human rights that compromise the development of many children, their education, and dignity. This paper critically analyzes the structural and social aspects of child labor in Lakki Marwat, Pakistan, where poverty, poor institutional systems, and poor access to quality education are some of the factors that contribute to exploitation. Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and mediated by the Minimum Age Convention of the International Labor Organization, the study draws the line between the forms of work which are age-appropriate and those which are hazardous and exploitative. Even with the legal framework, thousands of children in Lakki Marwat continue to stay in the fields, small-scale industries, and informal markets in the labor sector, keeping low-income families in poverty and unsatisfactory literacy. The barriers are at the system level, which the study noted to be poor infrastructure, law enforcement of child protection law, and socio-cultural acceptance of child labor as a positive aspect when it comes to the economy. To overcome these problems, the study recommends a complex approach to intervention, which is to combine legislative changes, comprehensive enforcement mechanisms, social protection networks, and education access opportunities. The study focuses on the need to collaborate among government institutions, civil societies, and international development partners in eradicating child labor and thus recommends feasible measures that can foster such goals. This is emphasized by the conclusion, which highlights the importance of child rights as a key pillar of socio-economic development. This makes child labor eradication not just a legal and moral duty but rather an essential prerequisite toward establishing a socio-economic future without exploitation.

Keywords: *Child labor, Child Abuse, Lakki Marwat, Poverty, Human Rights*

Introduction

Child labor is considered to be one of the most urgent violations of children's rights that deprives millions of people of their health, education, and potential. Child labor is the work that impedes the physical, mental, moral, or social development of a child, i.e., it is a work that is inadmissible and is listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified by the maximum number of countries in the history of human rights and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention (C138). Such frameworks make a draw between light, age-appropriate employment that helps in personal development, and risky employment, which is disruptive to education and poses a risk of child exploitation. All over the world, children aged 13-15 have the right to engage in light work that does not harm them, a previously common practice, with children as young as 13 years being used to complete heavy duties. This kind of work may be part and parcel of childhood in rural economies (ILO, 2022). Nevertheless, the situation where children are subjected to bonded labor or hazardous industries, or where students are engaged in work that denies their education, is categorically a contravention of their rights (ECLT Foundation, 2022; Baland, 2000).

Child labor is a damaging issue in Pakistan child labor. A recent estimate suggests that over 11 million children are in labor, especially in farming, brick kilns, coal mines, carpet work, and also in household help. Most of them work in bonded conditions, and the children tend to follow to ensure the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Although it is strictly prohibited by law, implementation is still inadequate and children are under pressure to engage in labor brought about by the socio-economic factors (Express Tribune, 2022; Basu, 2020). The impacts of child labor in Pakistan are dire, affecting the well-being and growth of children as well as affecting the economy and literacy rates of the nation. Pakistan has been issued trade restrictions and sanctions under the World Trade Organization regulations due to ineffective controls of child labor at the international level. At home, child labor still undermines national developmental objectives and thus, eliminating this vice should be an issue of the law, morality, and economy (Beegle, 2020; Cigno, 2020).

Lakki Marwat, a district in the southeast part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is critical for taking a case study of this issue. The district has several developmental problems that include poverty, dirty drinking water, infrastructure breaking down, lack of power, and illiteracy levels. In this case, poverty is the most crucial factor of child work, whereas the lack of socio cultural norms, employment, and appropriate educational venues contribute to the issue. The problem of child labor in Lakki Marwat cannot be solved in a single dimension, since legal enforcement, poverty alleviation actions, and student access to quality education should be combined to defeat the problem. The support of international organizations like the ILO and UNICEF can be seen as necessary cooperation with them, as well as the government and civil society. It is possible to address both the underlying factors (poverty, illiteracy, infrastructural, lack of) and the

institutional facilitators (lax enforcement, social acceptability) so that sustainable change can be brought about.

Literature Review

Child labor is a very ingrained social and economic phenomenon that crosses boundaries. However, it is compounded in the case of developing countries such as Pakistan by poverty, lax law enforcement, and social-cultural acceptance. Studies have also shown that child labor usually takes the form of physically threatening industries like brick kilns, coal mines, farms, and informal workshops, where children are likely to experience bodily harm, poor pay, and lack of access to education (Fallon, 1988; Zaighum, 2008). ILO focuses on the fact that not all work by children is bad. Age-specific contributions, such as helping out at home or during seasonal harvests, can be beneficial for developing life skills and fostering independence, especially when done in safe environments. Nevertheless, in case work is exploitative, dangerous, or disruptive to schooling, it is a direct violation of the rights of children (ILO, 2022).

Researchers point out that child labor not only affects individual welfare but also weakens development at the societal level. It keeps people in cycles of deprivation, decreases the amount of human capital, and undermines moral and ethical norms (Munawar, 2020). These government efforts, which are assisted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies, are based on creating awareness, changes in the character of the law, and social protection schemes. Despite these, there are still imperfect implementation gaps, particularly in the countryside and economically disadvantaged regions (Asaad, 2022). Cultural tolerance towards the use of child labor, along with a lack of job opportunities and poorly funded education systems, form an unending cycle of exploitation in Lakki Marwat. To overcome this, a broad policy framework that excels in a combination of economic adjustment, social consciousness, and child protection mechanisms should be tailored to the local circumstances.

Statement of the Problem

Child labor is a struggle that extends beyond Lakki Marwat to the national level because structural poverty, illiteracy, and lack of institutional capacity are struggles to quell child labor. The worst child labor practices, such as bonded labor, hazardous industrial work, and engagement in extralegal practices, are very hazardous to the physical security and education of the children and their earning potential in the future. Child labor in the district is not only an economic issue, but it is a social menace, rooted in conventional norms and existence mechanisms. Cultural expectations perpetuate it, necessity brought about by poverty, as well as the lack of access to formal protection, as Durkheim would say, as a social fact. Government action would not be sufficient to deal with this issue. It must be a multi-stakeholder, holistic approach that interconnects local communities, the NGO, religious leaders, educational institutes, and

international partners. In the absence of intervention on a large scale, child labor will keep the subsequent generations in a deprivation cycle.

Significance of the Study

Child labor not only contravenes the rights of the individual but also acts as an obstacle to national development. There are several advantages of eradicating child labor in Lakki Marwat:

Effect on the economy

Decrease of child labor leads to an augmentation in the level of schooling, consequently enhancing the skilled labor force and its productivity.

Social Development

Ensuring that the rights of children are offered enhances social justice as well as reducing cross-generational poverty.

International Compliance

Being in line with ILO and CRC requirements boosts Pakistan's credibility in the international trade and diplomacy front.

This study aims to provide pragmatic and locally adjustable recommendations on child labor drivers and effects in Lakki Marwat, with minimal modification to existing child protection standards at the regional and national levels.

Aim

To critically analyze the causes and effects of child labor in Lakki Marwat, with a focus on sustainable and rights-based measures.

Objectives

- Determine the causes of child labor in Lakki Marwat.
- Examine the types of economic, social, and educational effects that child labor has on the district.
- Put forward feasible and cross-stakeholder steps to end child labor and foster child welfare.

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive and analytic, and it is a mixture of both an empirical field study and a human rights-based analysis. Primary source: Structured, semi-structured, and unstructured questions to government officials, NGO representatives, educators, parents, and children working in labor. Secondary Data: Reading of government reports, NGO literature, academic articles, and legal documents concerning child labor and rights to children. Comparative Analysis: A cross-analysis of child labor interventions in comparable socio-economic setups. Analytical Tools: Thematic analysis of the data will help to recognize patterns, challenges, and opportunities in order to undertake targeted interventions.

Theoretical Framework

This study comprises the normative (cultural) and rational choice (economic) theories to justify the issue of child labor in Lakki Marwat.

- Rational Choice Theory: Destitute of resources forces the families to invest the minimum resources available in survival, and instead of investing in long-term education, they focus their energies on short-term income.
- Sociocultural Theories: The Durability of child work is normalized by culture and exploitation, especially in rural areas, where children's labor are regarded as a family contribution.

Social Learning Theory: Social learning theory also applies since behaviors learnt by children through associating with labor environments tend to normalize and always repeat such patterns in their subsequent offspring.

- Resource Theory: The less access the family has to economic and educational resources, the more it is likely that children will be engaged in work to be able to satisfy the household's needs.

Such theoretical interplay points to the economic necessity of adopting social norms and continues to facilitate child labor; hence, the solution must be on both factors.

Recommendations

The only solution to child labor in Lakki Marwat would involve an integrated and multi-pronged approach that cannot be more than law enforcement. Since the problem is also highly

related to poverty, illiteracy, poor institutional ability, and social norms, the solutions should rest on these factors as well.

A. Measures against Economic Crises/Poverty

- Targeted Poverty Reduction Measures: Introduce a conditional cash transfer to the vulnerable households so that the vulnerable family will be allocated some amount of money provided that children are attending school.
- Microfinance and Livelihood Support: Offer small loans, training, and start-up capital to families so they can develop alternative sources of income that are flexible enough to require less use of child labor.
- Adult Vocational Training: Implement skills-development centers whereby parents and the older youth will be provided with employment opportunities to ease economic demands placed on children to go to work.

B. Skills and Education Development

- Universal Free Education: Broad access to quality primary and secondary education to all with government and international agency support, especially in rural and remote regions, in a free education format.
- School Incentives: Establish stipends, free textbooks, free meals in school, school buses, and other amenities that would render education affordable and appealing.
- Community Schools: Ensure that Community Schools that are operated by the communities themselves are encouraged to be set up in places where the district governments have little access, with support from NGOs and the local government.

C. Legal and Institutional Strengthening

- Strict enforcement of Child Labor Laws- Enhance measures of inspection to check workplaces and prosecute any violators, engaging in bonded or hazardous child labor.
- Labor Department Capacity Building: Have enough resources and training on their part to utilize labor regulations in the rural districts effectively.
- Child Protection Services: Establish greater interconnection between the inspection regarding labor, social welfare agencies, and law enforcement to respond quickly to cases of exploitation of children.

D. Cultural and Social Change

- Raising Awareness: Do continued awareness campaigns to change cultural attitudes towards child labor by focusing on education as a right and investment.
- Religious and Community Leaders collaboration: There should be a collaboration with religious scholars, elders, and people with influence in the community to pass anti-child labor messages in the streets, churches, Mosques, including meetings.
- Parental Literacy Programs: Initiate Adult literacy and awareness campaigns that will enlighten parents on the need for education and their next steps in child labor prevention.

E. Cross-nation Collaboration

- Collaboration with International Organizations: Partner with UNICEF, ILO, and international NGOs to bring technical competence, international funding, and international good practices to local action.
- Integration into Trade Policy: Connect strategies to reduce child labor with trade or export incentives in order to bring Pakistani labor standards into line with international standards.
- Through a combination of these measures, the struggle against child labor in Lakki Marwat is to become a community affair. Economic reforms, cultural change, and institutional responsibility will be connected.

Conclusion

Child labor in Lakki Marwat cannot be thought of as a tragedy only of the children who are exploited in labor, but also as a structural hindrance to the social and economic development of the district and the country of Pakistan in the long run. It continues because of the rooted poverty, poor education system, cultural tolerance, and poor monitoring of laws protecting children. These are the conditions that perpetuate the cycles of exploitation and worsen the well-being and prospects of society's most vulnerable members. Such influence goes much wider than the life of an individual. Child labor decreases the levels of literacy, depreciates human capital, reduces the productivity of the workforce, and negatively affects the international image of Pakistan. Not only is it a moral duty, but it is also a wise investment in national building and economic security. An effective process of getting rid of child labor in Lakki Marwat would require a multi-level strategy: Whole-of-Society Engagement: Involvement of government institutions, civil society, religious leaders, local communities, and global partners in full force to devise a united front on child labor.

Policy and Resource Alignment: Statement of policy and access to funds, legal framework, and human resources to follow through on policy directions to aid law enforcement, education,

and social protection efforts. Community Ownership: Grassroots mobilization to ensure that the local community identifies the eradication of child labor as a means to increased prosperity and stability, as well as social well-being. Lakki Marwat can become an example of the district where child labor can be eliminated in Pakistan, provided that the adoption of these measures is carried out consistently and sincerely. The picture is there to see, a vision of a world where all children are free to learn, flourish, and contribute to a society where education is valued. Childhood is respected, and exploitation of the youngest members is abandoned.

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