



Child labour: The effect on child

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Abstract

Child labor is an important global issue associated with poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, gender inequality, and a range of health risks.¹ Child labor is defined by the relevant international conventions (UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child,² International Labor Organization [ILO] Convention 138,³ and especially, 182⁴) not by the activities performed by the child, but by the consequences of such activities (exceptions are the so-called unconditional worst forms of child labor such as prostitution and bondage, as noted in ILO Convention 182). For instance, work affecting a child's health and schooling should, according to these conventions, be eliminated.⁵ Identifying the health effects of child labor is essential because it enables policymakers to decide which types of child labor to target for eradication.

The ILO estimates that there are approximately 250 million child laborers worldwide, with at least 120 million of them working under circumstances that have denied them a childhood and in conditions that jeopardize their health and even their lives. Most working children are ages 11 to 14 years old, but as many as 60 million are between the ages of 5 and 11.⁶ Although the exact numbers are not known, available statistics indicate that approximately 96% of child workers reside in developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; there are also pockets of child labor in many industrialized countries.⁵⁻⁷⁻⁸ In spite of a reported decline in child labor during the period 1995 to 2000,⁹ child labor remains a major concern. Most child laborers begin working at a very young age, are malnourished, and work long hours in hazardous occupations; frequently they do not attend school. They receive very low wages or are unpaid, and their income or help is usually essential for family survival. They are mainly employed in the informal sector, with agriculture accounting for more children workers than any other sector. It is estimated that, in developing countries, at least 90% of economically active children in rural areas are employed in agriculture.¹⁰ Recent ILO statistics from 20 developing countries categorized the proportion of economically active children aged 5 to 14 years as employed in agriculture, animal husbandry, and related work at 74% (73.3% of boys and 78.8% of girls).¹¹

Short term, the most obvious economic impact of child labor at the family level is an increase in household income. Long term, the underaccumulation of human capital caused by low school attendance and poor health is a serious negative consequence of child labor, representing a missed opportunity to enhance the productivity and future earnings capacity of the next generation.¹² Child laborers grow up to be low-wage-earning adults; as a result, their offspring will also be compelled to work to supplement the family's income. In this way, poverty and child labor is passed from generation to generation.¹³⁻¹⁴ Although child labor is recognized as a global health problem, research on its health impact on children has been limited and sometimes inconsistent. In 1998, Graitcer and Lerer published the first comprehensive review of the effect of child labor on children's health by extrapolating data from the Global Burden of Disease Study.¹⁵ The occupational mortality rate among children matched the adult occupational mortality rate, such that the occupational mortality rate indicates mortality associated with child labor. In another study, in 2000, Graitcer and Lerer did not find any differences in the health status of working and nonworking Egyptian children in the short run (the children were not followed to adulthood).¹⁶ A 2003 report on children's work in Morocco,¹⁷ Yemen,¹⁸ and Guatemala,¹⁹ and a review developed under the aegis of Understanding Children's Work Project²⁰ provide an overview of the nature and extent of child labor, its determinants, and its consequences for the health and education of children in these countries. Several case-control and cohort studies have reported on the association of child labor, impaired growth, and malnutrition.²¹⁻²⁶

The health effects of child labor on children and the correlation between current health and future health status are difficult to investigate and are compounded by short-term versus long-term health consequences. The situation is further complicated because work can contribute to an improvement in a poor child's nutritional status (a positive health effect).¹⁴ Finally, the anthropometric measurements that traditionally have been used to evaluate children's health status are of limited value for those who are age 10 years and older.

We provide evidence, garnered from a cross section of countries, on the relation between child labor and children's health. To our knowledge, this study represents the first use of cross-country data to examine the issue. The benefit of cross-country data is that they allow us to synthesize indicators, creating a set of indicators unavailable in micro- or individual-country data. The drawback to using different data sources is that the statistics may not be comparable. To avoid problems of comparability, we limited ourselves to data that were standardized by the institutions that collected or compiled them. We analyzed the health effects of child labor on children by correlating existing health indicators and the prevalence of child labor in a large group of developing countries (Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Congo, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Libya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon's Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Uruguay, Tanzania, Venezuela, Vietnam, Thailand, Togo, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

Keywords: child labour, inadequate educational opportunities, gender inequality

Introduction

For many years, child labour has been one of the biggest obstacles to social development. It is a challenge and long-

term goal in many countries to abolish all forms of child labour. Especially in developing countries, it is considered as a serious issue these days. Child labour refers to children who

miss their childhood and are not able to have the basic amenities which a child should have. Recently the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013) estimated there are around 215 million children between the ages five to fourteen who works worldwide. They are often mistreated and work for prolonged hours, in very bad conditions. This can affect their health physically, mentally and emotionally. These children do not have the basic rights like access to school or health care.

According to ILO (2013) the largest numbers of child labourers are working in hazardous work and the total number of child workers is increasing, even though it is forbidden by law. These children are vulnerable to diseases and they struggle with long-term physical and psychological pain. The main cause that induces children to work is poverty. These children work for their survival and their families. (Mapaure, 2009). Some studies like Dessy and Pallage (2003) argue not all the work that children do is harmful or brutal. Some work may provide successful learning opportunities, such as babysitting or newspaper delivery jobs, but not if the work exposes them to psychological stress, like human trafficking, prostitution and pornographic activities.

The international organizations have made great efforts to eliminate child labour across the world. Many countries have adopted legislation to prohibit child labour; nonetheless child labour is widespread throughout the world. It is not easy task for low income countries to achieve banning child labour. Several studies and international organizations considered that education is the key strategy in addressing child labour, and it can help children to stay away from work. However not every family can afford to send their children to school or, even if they enrolled, afford to keep them attending the school.

Delimitation

Since child labour is an extremely complex phenomenon, this study is limited to examining the nature and extent of child labour aged between five and fourteen years old. The largest number of working children between the ages of five and fourteen involved in economic activities worldwide. The study focuses on the fight against child labour, and the importance of legislation for working children. This study looks at the two countries India and Nigeria and to describe what policies have already been implemented to tackle child labour. India and Nigeria have been chosen for the study because today, Asia has more child labour in the world, for example India has the largest number of world's working children with almost every third child being a child labour and every fourth child between the age group of five to fifteen is engaged in some economic activities. While, Nigeria has the highest the incidence of child labourers in Africa. Both countries have been experiencing the burden of the phenomenon and difficulties to eradicate it (Bhat & Rather, 2009; Owolabi, 2012).

Definition of child labour

The term child labour has many definitions by different scholars. According to Suda (2011) the term child labour refers to when children is working in any type of work that is dangerous and harmful to children's health or the work hinders their education. For Moyi (2011) child labour refers to low wages, long hours, physical and sexual abuse. According

to Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) child labour is viewed as a form of child labour abuse, when children work in bad conditions and hazardous occupations.

The meaning of the term of child labour also varies among organizations, ILO argues that child labour is difficult to define. It depends on the type of the job and, if the age is under eighteen and if the job intervenes the children's education and development (ILO: 2004). A child, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 refers to a person under the age of eighteen. The World Bank assumes that child labour can do serious threat to long-term national investment. Furthermore, according to UNICEF the problem of child labour can have more bad consequences besides all the concerns of investment or its relation to economic activity (ILO, 2013; Weston, 2005).

Child labour in India

The use of child labour is very prevalence in India and the cause is deep rooted with poverty. UNICEF India has estimated 28 million children aged five to fourteen involved in work (UNICEF, 2011) Child labour is not a new phenomenon in India where children has always worked. During the industrial revolution child labour increased, due to the shift of labour movements to colonial countries. Children can be found in every sector of the informal economy (Molanka,2008).The incidence of working children in India are engaged in hazardous occupations such as factories manufacturing diamonds, fireworks, silk and carpets, glass and bricks(Waghamode & Kalyan, 2013). There are several factors that force children to work such as inadequate economic growth, poverty, unemployment over population and lack of education and health care (Ahmad, 2012).

On school attendance in India a large number of children between ten to fourteen years of age are not enrolled in school because of household economic condition. Attendance in school or dropout differs for male and female while boys are more likely to provide financial income for the family, girls are more involved in household chores (Kakoli & Sayeed, 2013). High illiteracy and dropout rates are high in India due to inadequacy of the educational system. Even through many poor families don't see education as a benefit to society, they consider that work develops skills that can be used to earn income (Ahmed, 2012)

Overview of Child labour

During the beginning of the industrial revolution children were forced to work around family farms, in factories, tending crops or preparing food. They work in industries and their conditions of work were very dangerous and often deadly. At that time, the industry preferred children to work because children provided cheap labour and more malleable workers (Basu, *et al.* 1999). In 1833 and 1844 the first legislation came to ban child labour. It implied that children should not work, and the idea was to remove all children from labour which interfered with school. However many children continued to be involved as child labour which was prohibited by law (Bhat 2011).

Indeed child labour was almost completely reduced from the developed world, however currently, child labour still continues to rise in developing countries because of rapid

population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption and low wages (Bass, 2004). Child labour is taking place everywhere in the world particularly in low income countries and these children are working in all sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, manufacturing, fishing, construction, domestic service street vending etc. In addition to that children are normally unregistered as employers and working in very poor and dangerous conditions without social protection. (Serwadda-Luwaga, 2005)

Types of child labour

Child labourers are involved in many different forms of works, which include risks and hazards. These children are vulnerable to physical pain and injury particularly being exposed to health hazards (Levison & Murray, 2005). According to ILO (2012) the vast majority of child labour is involved in hazardous occupations such as agriculture, mining, manufacture, construction bonded child labour, domestic work and fishing. Environmental and occupational conditions can impact on the health and development of the children. Children working in different sectors such as agriculture, factories, domestic labour, sex workers and carrying out their illicit activities, migrant labourers, and on the streets as vendors etc. The effect of job and activities can vary from a country to a country. Also working conditions, ages and gender of children involved in the differences too (O. O'Donnell *et al.*, 2002). According to Amon *et al.*, (2012) mainly child labourers in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Southeast Asia are involved in the worst forms of child labour, which persists such as child trafficking, bonded child labour, child domestic work, hazardous child labour, etc. More than 90 percent of working children in hazardous jobs which are exposed to chemicals, and dangerous tools.

Poverty as root cause

There are several circumstances that affect child labour. Studies have demonstrated that the most notable reason being poverty (Bhat & Rather, 2009). Decisions about child labour and schooling are generally made by parents. If the family live below the poverty line, parents see children as part of contributor in their family income. Basu (1998) used a theoretical model of child labour, where he showed the only reason parents send children to labour is because of their low income. Consequently poor parents cannot afford schooling for their children. Thus, mainly poor households are to send forced their children to labour instead of sending to school. Rena (2009) shows that that poverty and underdevelopment drives child labour. She found that the high prevalence of poverty amongst countries, including India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Sudan, and Chad increases the child labour. Therefore, child labour is widespread throughout Africa, and Asia. According to the studies of Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005); O'Donnell *et al.* (2005) and Akarro and Mtweve (2011) they assume that tackling poverty can be a perfect solution to reduce child labour. Beside poverty, many factors influence the incidence of child labour which can be listed in the following points.

Family size

Indeed, large poor households usually have more children involved in child labour than children from smaller households, which demonstrates family size have an effect on child labour. Parents oblige their children to work because they are not able to manage the demands of a large size family. There is also gender differences among household size. Not everyone and of all age in the family are working as child labour, which depends on the child's age and gender, for example boys are more likely to attended to school than girls. Older siblings often contribute more to the family income (Ahamd, 2012; Boyden J and Myers, 1998). Okpukpara *et al.*, (2006) found that in Nigeria, younger children, where are more likely to go to school than older children, where mostly boys attend schools than girls.

Family condition

A growing number of children who have either lost one or both the parents and those impacted by HIV/AIDS in the family, are forced to work in order to support themselves and their siblings. The numbers of orphaned children are increasing particularly in sub Saharan Africa, many whom become street children, and live in very different circumstances (Vandenberg, 2007).

Traditional or cultural factor

Culture is another factor which is driving children into labour market. Different cultures of many societies make children start work at very young age which are related to traditions and cultural factors. They assumed that children need to learn skills that can be good for their future. According to Tauson (2009) in rural Guatemala; parents prefer their children to work because they consider it beneficial for them as they learn work skills. Obinna E and Osita-Oleribe (2007) assume that many families in Africa want their children to help in contributing towards family income.

Globalization

Globalization is another cause of child labour. Globalization has positive and negative impacts, nevertheless; globalization might give developing countries the opportunity to increase their gross domestic production (GDP) per capita via new trade possibilities and ascend their foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. Globalization also has brought adverse impacts on child labour in developing countries. In recent years, many international companies moved their production abroad. These companies often indulge in hiring children as cheap labours as they are durable, and carry out commands given by their employers even if they're abused and exploited (Mapaure, 2009). Mishra (2012) claims that in India, globalization has obliged more children to work in hazardous occupations like brick kiln, motor garage, hotels, shops, transportations, manual loading work etc.

Some studies suggest that higher income and higher standard of living can reduce the potential problem which resulted from the increasing child labour of globalization (Congdon Fors, 2012). Other argues that globalization will increase the opportunity of exploiting cheap labour Specially from low income countries. For example countries like Vietnam,

Mexico and Thailand have provided evidence that child labour declines due to globalization, but countries like Bolivia and Zambia have showed a decline in schooling and an increase in child labour (Mishra, 2012).

Conclusion

The problem of child labour appears in severe form and various factors are involved. The reasons for the incidence of child labour in both countries are complex and deeply rooted into the society. Poverty seems to be the main cause. In general poor children contribute to household income. Child labour can be found in urban and rural areas. However the vast majority of child labour occurs in rural areas since poverty is more rampant. Although, many poor rural families struggle for a better life in urban areas, this pushes families to force their children to work in order to increase the family income and ensure survival. Study found children under the age of fourteen years are still engaged in economic activity in India and Nigeria. These children tend to work more consequently they are not regularly in school. However, besides poverty there are other causes such lack of schools, lack of regulations and enforcement, corruption, lack of awareness and rapid population growth.

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