

Early Age Employment and its Socio-Economic Determinants

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Abstract

Education of children is must for the development of healthy nation and society. In many underdeveloped countries children are sent to work instead of going to school. Their earnings add to family income. The main purpose of the study was to assess the contribution of working children to their families' economic stability and to identify socio-economic reasons behind early age employment. The study was conducted in Peshawar city and it was based on primary data. A total of 70 respondents were interviewed from different work places. Since most of the respondents were not able to read and write, they were directly approached and interviewed. The data was examined by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The study finds that poverty is the root cause of child labor along with education of parents and large number of family members. It is recommended that child labor laws should be implemented. Education should be made compulsory at primary level. People must be aware about the detrimental effects of child labor upon their future.

Keywords: Child Labour, School, Poverty, Parents' Socio-Economic Status

Introduction

A healthy society depends on a healthy body and mind. A nation's strength lies not in its material resources but in its manpower. Today's children are tomorrow's nation builder. Societies that do not lay stress on the welfare of their children grow in to be decadent societies. It is the right of every child to be treated like a child irrespective of his status. Every child has a right to basic necessities i.e. to play and enjoy life, to have a safe and healthy environment, the right to education and self-respect. A society which caters to the needs of its children is the one which progresses in the world. In a world where a child is deprived of the right to smile is a sorry world indeed.

Today there are millions of children who are being ill-treated by the adult around them, especially in the third world and other underdeveloped countries. They are made to work in hazardous and life threatening conditions and for longer periods of time in unhygienic and unpleasant environments and by this way society is deprived of their potentials. During the course of history it is observed that children in traditional societies did light work for their families or their social groups (Rahatullah, 2001). These tasks were not harmful to the child's health but rather helped to prepare him for adult life. However the problems of working children assumed new proportions when they began to be exploited

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for the profit of employers. Child labor can be defined as children under the age of fifteen years in work to earn income for their families and for themselves (Shah, 1997). It is any physical or mental exertion done by a child for receiving income (Ahmed, 1987). Early age employment is a global phenomenon but underdeveloped countries are facing this problem more seriously due to their poor social and economic conditions. There are many children in the world who are deprived of their basic needs and rights. Children are working in pitiable conditions which retard their development and have its harmful effects on the society. Early age employment is increasing day by day in less developed countries. Thus the problem is getting worse with the passage of time.

Children play an imperative role in the upcoming career of society. For the progress and prosperity of human beings it is important that children should be protected against physical and social hazards. Government is responsible for elimination of child labor in order to get social progress and sustained economic growth. Early age employment is a curse for the economy. If we do not give proper attention to our children today we will not be able to secure our future. Our children are our assets. They are tomorrow's nation builders. Government is responsible to provide them proper education in order to break the vicious circle of poverty. Although there are different NGOs working for abolition of early age employment, and child labor laws have also been approved but still child labor remains as a problem that needs to be resolved. This paper is an effort to find out some of the determinant of early age employment.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate contribution of child labor to their families economic stability
2. To identify socio-economic causes of child labor in the study area

Review of Literature

Saleema et al. (2009) declared that early age employment is a socio-economic problem which can be resolved by improving the economic conditions of the society. Effective implementation of child labor legislation should also be made Gulzar (2010) declared that the main reasons of early age employment are poverty and unemployment of parents. Growing population is the core cause of child labor, which put forth burden on the available resources. Increasing population results in poverty and scarcity of resources. Henceforth, populace need to increase their income, for which they are enforced even to send their youngsters to work. When income of the parents is low and they do not get a job to fulfill basic needs of their family, they are bound to send children to work. Duglas (1986) found in his study that working conditions of these children are not good. They worked in bad working environment and majority of them had no toilet facilities at their work premises.

Pervaiz (1981) concluded that most of the parents send their children to work because they are too poor to feed their family. Their main purpose is to increase income of the household. Ali (1992) found that enactment regarding child labor cannot be fully implemented as increasing population along with limited financial resources and poor socio economic conditions prevails in these countries. Deprived parents send their

children out as wage earners to increase household income. Bonnet (1993) in his study concluded child labor occurs elsewhere under similar conditions. Education is still required by working children and this must be assimilated into programs. Rana (1985) revealed that mostly child workers were inducted by their parents because of their poor economic condition. These children were very efficient and regular irrespective of their working environment.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Peshawar city. The area of Gunj and Meena Bazaar were selected for data collection. The study is based on primary data, since most of the respondents were not able to read and write, they were directly approached and interviewed to collect primary data. The questionnaire was in English, so it was translated into Urdu and Pushto.

Pre-Testing

Before proceeding to the field for actual data collection, pre-testing was done by interviewing 10 respondents from two areas i.e. Gunj and Meena Bazar. Irrelevant questions were excluded from the questionnaire.

Sample

Given limited time and resources a total of 70 respondents were interviewed from different work places. These were workshops, furniture, embroidery, tailoring, household servants, and garbage collection.

Data Analysis

After data collection, the data was analyzed by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). In order to get the objectives of the study the following econometric model was estimated.

Econometric Model

$$Y_{0i} = a_0 + a_1x_{1i} + a_2x_{2i} + a_3x_{3i} + b_1d_{1i} + b_2d_{2i} + e_i$$

Y= number of working children

a_0 = intercept

x_1 = family income

x_2 = family members

x_3 =education

d_{1i} = 1 if willing to go to school

d_{2i} = 1 if Parents are educated and zero other wise

e_i = random error

a_i and b_i are regression coefficients.

The above model was estimated by using linear, semi log and double log functional forms.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Household

Number of Family Members

Table 1 **Distribution of Respondents Regarding Number of Family Members**

Size	Number	Percentage
3-5	0	0
5-8	10	14
8-10	18	26
10-12	18	26
12 and above	24	34
Total	70	100

Almost 34% of the sample respondent belonged to households of more than 12 family members. Whereas 26% respondents belonged to households from 8-10 similarly 26% respondents belonged to family members of 10-12 respectively. On the whole, 86% of the respondents were from families where number of family members is 8 and above. No child was found with family members 3 to 5. This may partly be due to the reason that the larger the size of the household the higher the prevalence of child labor. Increased number of family members put more pressure on household expenditure which induces household head to send children to work.

Household Income

Table 2 **Distribution of Respondents Regarding Household Income**

S. No	Income (Rs)	Number	Percentage
1.	Less than 5000	4	6
2.	5001-6000	12	17
3.	6001-7000	42	60
4.	7001 and above	12	17
	Total	70	100

Income of the household is one of the important determinants of child labor. According to the data collected 60% children belonged to households with monthly income up to Rs.7000 while a small proportion that is 17% had monthly income of above Rs.7000/-. Remaining 17% had income in the range of 5001-6000. One of the major reasons for increased income is the income of children who added to the household budget. This motivated the fathers to send their children to work harder to satisfy their family's needs and to increase their income. So poverty becomes the main reason for the prevalence of child labor.

Education of Parents

Table 3 Distribution of Respondent Regarding Education of Parents

S. No	Education	Father's Education		Mother's Education	
		No.	%age	No.	%age
1.	Illiterate	46	66	66	94
2.	Primary	8	11	0	0
3.	Middle	4	6	0	0
4.	Above middle	0	0	0	0
5.	Religious	12	17	4	6
	Total	70	100	70	100

Educated parents play an important role in understanding their children properly and children learn a lot from them. It was hypothesized that child labor is negatively correlated with the literacy status of the household head. The findings of the present study conform this hypothesis. Table 4 shows that parent of the respondents were significantly illiterate. Among educated fathers 11% have got Primary education, 6% were educated up to middle. No one has got education above middle. Almost 66% fathers were illiterate. It further shows that a greater number of respondents' mothers i.e. 94% were illiterate and only small ratio 6% mothers were religiously educated.

Types of Family

Table 4 Distribution of Sample Respondents by Type of Family

S. No.	Type of Family	Number	Percentage
1.	Joint	48	69
2.	Nuclear	22	31
	Total	70	100

According to the data collected almost 69% of the respondent were living in joint family system. This implies large number of family members. While only 31% respondent belonged to nuclear family. So larger the family size, the higher will be the tendency towards child labor. Household expenditure increases with the increase in family size. In order to cover these expenditures parents are compel to send their children to work.

Willingness of Parents to Send their Children to Work

Table 5 Distribution of Sample Respondents by Willingness of Parents to Send their Children to Work

S. No	Response	Number	Percentage
1.	Positive	58	83
2.	Negative	12	17
	Total	70	100

Attitude of parents towards working children is an important determinant of child labor. Parent's role is important in personal development of their children. The data shows that most of the parents were willing to send their children to work. An etiological factor might be the fact that they had less monthly income which was not sufficient for their family needs. Almost 83% parents have positive attitude towards sending their children to work. They willingly send their children to work and do not bother negative effects of early age employment on personality and health of their children. Only 17% parents do not like child labor but their socio economic conditions compel them to send their children to work.

Estimated Econometric Model

Simple descriptive analysis of early age employment with the help of one way classification as well as cross tabulation analysis were performed to know the children's socio economic conditions. To confirm such analysis, an econometric model was also estimated. The estimated regression model is given as follows.

Table 6 Regression Results of Econometric Model

S. No	Variables	Model #1		Model #2		Model #3	
		Coefficient	t-value	Coefficient	t-value	Coefficient	t-value
1.	Intercept	1.812	1.44	1.91	1.49	3.31	3.78
2.	Family Income	0.94	3.24	0.93	3.28	1.01	3.62
3.	No of family members	0.510	1.48	0.49	1.47		
4.	Willingness to go to school	-6.596	E-02-1.93				
5.	Parents Education	-1.27	-1.48	-1.25	-1.94	-1.25	-1.91
6.	R ²	0.215		0.215		0.189	
7.	Adj.R ²	0.167		0.179		0.164	

The assessed regression model indicates that the working children have diverse variation with respect to explanatory variables. The coefficient of independent variables supports our hypothesis. Coefficient of X_1 is positive which shows that the income of household goes up as child labor increases. It implies that the working children add sufficient amount to household income. It is statistically significant at 1% level. Coefficient of X_2 is also positive which shows that with the increase in the number of family members child labor also increases. There is positive correlation between working children and household size. The negative coefficient of D_1 depicts that if children are willing to go to school there is less tendency of child labor. Similarly $D_2 = 1$ if Parents are educated and zero otherwise. The negative coefficient of D_2 confirms that if parents are educated there is less tendency of child labor. The above regression model is based on the values of F-statistic and is statistically significant. Although value of R^2 is a bit low but in cross-

sectional data it is acceptable. The coefficients of the estimated model have algebraic signs therefore it is best fit.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are many reasons that compel parents to send their children to work. The main cause of child labor is of course poverty along with large number of family members, uneducated parents, children not interested in going to school and parent's willingness for the child to work. They want their children to learn some skill as a source of income instead of getting education. Family income is low which also leads to child labor. The parents regard their children as an economic asset therefore they are not hesitant to send their children to work. Another major reason is illiteracy of parents which leads to early age employment. Disadvantages of child labor cannot be seen by illiterate parents. They cannot foresee the effects of early age employment on child's health and future. They have no desire to educate their children. Increased numbers of household members indicate that they have more dependents as well as limited resources. Parents are unable to meet family needs and they have no option but to send their children to work. A child works for longer hours but the reward of child labor is low as compared to their elder counterparts.

It is recommended that government should expedite income earning activities. Child labor laws should be enforced influentially and education should be made compulsory for the children. Especially primary education should be free for those who cannot bear the expenses. Population growth needs to be controlled. People must be educated about the undesirable effects of early age employment upon children's health and upcoming career. Although child labor laws are made but proper implementation does not exist. Measures should be taken for eradication of early age employment to make parents aware of its social, psychological, emotional and physical detriments.

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