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Causes and Consequences of Child Labour on Children's Health: A Case Study of Afghan's Refugee Child Labourer in Peshawar

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Abstract: *This study focuses on exploring the causes and consequences of child labour on children's health among Afghan's refugees living in Peshawar. Data were collected from 100 child labour respondents through in-depth interviews from an area of research, and results were drawn through analysis to reach a conclusion. This study found that these child labour respondents have body aches, headaches and joint pain, skin disease, eye problems, coughing, and tiredness, are affected by large family size, facing harassment at the workplace that torcher them physically and mentally as there is no such mechanism that can cure their illness or address their harassment issue. Long working hours, less rest, and heavy loads affect their health negatively. Due to a lack of money and time, these children cannot visit doctors. Even if a doctor's check is free of cost, they do not purchase medicine. These children often rely upon homemade medicine, which is offered by their families. Therefore, this study found that health issues among child labour respondents are a common phenomenon, and treatment issues need to be resolved for their health and their future.*

Introduction

In developing countries, various factors are responsible for promoting child labour, including poverty, family structure, size and schooling cost (Shunsuke, 2014). Child labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development (ILO, 1973). Some misperception also exists in developing countries among parents regarding child labour that labour for a child is a source of training and a safe haven from social evils in society (Chudary, 2012). The nature of work that a child is adopting often depends on the economic structure of the residence, as many children in rural areas work in agricultural sectors or brick kilns, whereas in urban areas, they do jobs in the carpet industry or selling products in streets (Hall, 2014).

Afghanistan has been facing one of the world's largest refugee crises since the outbreak of the Saur Revolution in 1978. The process was further acerbated by the Soviet invasion in 1979-1989, the repressive Taliban regime in 1996, the USA war on terror in 2001 and now again, a Taliban regime with a devastating economic structure that has interrupted the proper mechanism of state and its institutions. The longevity of the war in Afghanistan, along with other socio-economic problems, has given rise to the problem of child labour among a majority of migratory Afghan's families living as refugees in Pakistan. The present study attempts to fill the gap in existing literature, i.e. causes of child labour among Afghan's refugees living in Peshawar and its impact on their health. Previous studies on child labour have identified problems related to child labour health consequences, but

there is no such study that addresses the issue specifically related to the effects on the health of Afghan refugee child labourers living in Peshawar. While often, most of the studies on child labour and its consequences on health are confined to other parts of the world.

Objectives

To find out the causes and effects of child labour on the health of Afghan's refugees' children living in Peshawar.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of child labour among Afghan's refugee children living in Peshawar and its impact on their health?

Methodology

The study objective is to find out the causes of child labour among Afghan refugee children living in Peshawar and to investigate its impact

on their health. The current study is qualitative in nature. For the purpose of data collection, in-depth-interview were conducted with Afghan refugees' children and respondents living in Peshawar to reach a conclusion. The present study is based on a qualitative research method; both secondary and primary sources were utilized for data collection to achieve the objectives of the study. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, published and unpublished resources, articles and relevant literature. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interview schedules and formal and informal interviews that were conducted with sample respondents in the field. The questionnaire was designed in such a manner that it started with socio-economic background followed by health-related questions and their effects. A total of 100 children were selected from nine different working sectors on the basis of their availability and consent to be part of the study.

Table 1

Total Number of Respondents

Child labourer Residential Status	Number of Population (Child labourer)
Peshawar	100

Field Survey: 2020

Causes of Child Labour among Afghan's Refugees

Lasting Legacy of War in Afghanistan

Decades of war and internal conflict in Afghanistan interrupted the social and economic fabric of society leading to disastrous social infrastructure, financial weakness, insecurity, and poverty, contributing to the volatile health and economic situation for children in Afghanistan (Lutf & Yasini, 2018). There is no specific policy enforcement mechanism for child labour in the country; however, the government adopted a number of different legislations and policies in line with the recommendations and support of international organizations and trying to implement these with the help of MOLSMAD

and other donor organizations to eradicate child labour in Afghanistan (USDOL, 2009). The severe food insecurity faced by 3.4 million Afghans and the condition of 39.1 per cent of the population that are living below the poverty line deteriorated by factors of 27 per cent of joblessness among youth and cultural restrictions on females that bar them from jobs further worsened the financial condition of the population (CSO, 2016).

Nimble Fingers Preferences in Carpet Sector

Only small children can make it delicate, and only they can beautifully fix the nuts of carpet is one of the main reasons for child labour involved in the hazardous generation's old house-based carpet industries in developing countries (Humbert, 2009). Carpet sector impact can be

noted as these children have breathing problems while when they grow up, they have muscular-skeletal injuries (Goodweave, 2020). With the migration of Afghan refugees, the carpet-weaving cottage industry also shifted to Pakistan and Turkmen and Uzbek refugees due to financial weakness involved their women and children in meeting their daily needs, which gave rise to the utilization of free and cheap child labour in cottage carpet industry (Baloch, 2003).

Bonded Child Labour in Bricks Kiln

Bonded child labour is considered a form of slavery in which children have no choice but to leave without permission of the employer until the redemption of a loan taken by their parents and for payment, these children work from dawn to dusk in brick kilns, houses and other hazardous places that violate their rights and have bad impact on their health (Humbert, 2009). A study conducted among Afghan refugee families in Pakistan in 2011 highlights the mechanism behind debt bondage in the brick kiln sector, stating that approximately 98% of the families surveyed fell into debt bondage just for survival (ILO, 2011). These Afghan refugees have large family sizes, are without any technical skills, and lack access to credit facilities, forcing them into debt bondage and pushing their children into carpets and brick-kiln sectors to compensate the whole family (Ali, Ali, & Abbas, 2017).

Migration

A refugee is a person who leaves his place of origin from the fear of being executed on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, political opinion or gender, and it can be categorized into two groups; purpose fate group and reactive fate group (Christensen, 1983). Afghan's migration can be divided into different waves from 1979 until now, and many causes compelled Afghans to leave their homeland and settle in another country to save their lives, but war and conflict within Afghanistan can be declared as the main reason for their migration (Newland, 2001).

Peshawar is the area where a majority of Afghan's cross the Durand Line and have lived as refugees since 1978 due to the close cultural and geographical proximity between Afghanistan and Peshawar, which attracted more asylum seekers to take shelter and live without any cultural shock (AREU, 2006). Children consist of 50% of the total Afghan's refugees population and are working as carpet weavers, beggars, house servants, drug sellers and scavengers (Berti, 2003). Pakistan is not completely satisfying UNHCR Guidelines on the safety and care of refugee children as these children are not attending school, mostly involved in hazardous jobs in carpet weaving, rag-packing, cross-border trading and smuggling in Baluchistan and other areas that negatively affects their health (Shujaat, 2015).

Peshawar is the capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, hosting 195,052 registered Afghan refugees; where most of the Afghan children can be found working as labourers in different segments for the survival of their families (Akbar, 2015). These refugee population and their children were involved in unregulated domestic labour, working in homes, brick kilns, agriculture, and scavengers to earn their livelihood and support their families (Shujaat, 2015). According to ILO, 3.6 million children are working in different sectors in Pakistan, which includes tens of thousands of Afghan's refugees across the country (ILO, 2017). Migration caused by a natural disaster, armed conflict and often from rural to urban area generates extreme pressure on families for their survival that push children to earn to compensate for their expenses (AREU, 2006). Effects of child labour in the long run also cannot be ignored as case studies show that these children are often forced by parents and families that are headed by a female, and these children are worst off in future due to lack of education, lack of mental and physical development when they grow into an adult (Lowicki, 2002).

Large Family Size

Afghan refugee population from their arrival in Pakistan comprise 51% children with an exceptionally high women fertility ratio of 13.8 in NWFP, now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and has given births to 700,000 children in camps since 1979 (Yusuf, 2008). Family is the primary social group, and it plays a major role in the upbringing and socialization of a child as these children grow physically, emotionally and socially during this age of life (Children' bureau, 2017). The size of a family and its resources also have negative and positive impacts on the well-being of its new generations, as the large size of Afghan's households has a negative impact on children that pushes them into labour (Lutf & Yasini, 2018).

Child Labour and its Impact on Health

Worldwide, 12.5% of children between the age of 10-14 years are working day and night as domestic servants for at least 45 hours per week and are more open to health hazards (ILO, 2015). Those children who start work in early childhood suffer from physical injuries, illness, mental stress, and malnutrition, while older children experience tiredness and exhaustion that negatively affect their health (Ahmed & Ray, 2014). Although, in a few sectors, children can work along with the continuation of their education, like the carpet industry it gives birth to numerous health complications among

children, i.e. asthma, eyesight weakness, lungs problem, cuts and bruises, headaches and other diseases (Kausar, Akhtar, Khan, Safdar, Aktar, & Nighat, 2005). Children working in bricks making sector works long hours and are more visible to environmental effects, facing heavy dust and fatigue, skeletal disorder and exhaustion problems (Høilund-Carlson, 2008). They are also susceptible to insect biting, cutting, traffic accidents, sexual harassment, body pain, headache and injuries that always go unnoticed by elders (Agbo, 2017). Medically, a child can carry a maximum of 10% weight of his/her body, while those children who are busy in child labour are carrying heavy loads that give birth to long-term health complications like deficient attitude, muscles and skeletal growth (Oyebanji, 2019). It is also observed that child labour from 9 to 12 years old has digestive disorders, weight loss, weakness, sleep disorders, emotional imbalance, night blindness, premature deaths and other problems like disabilities (Agrawal, 2017).

Findings and Discussion

This section included data that were collected from child labour respondents in the field through interviews and questionnaires and were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted to reach a conclusion. The majority of respondents belong to the age group of 7-10 years, and boys were dominant as compared to girls' child labours in this study.

Table 2

Working Sectors of Child Labour Respondents

No	Working Sectors	No. of Population (Child labourer)	%age
1	Scavengers	15	15
2	Agriculture Sector	14	14
3	Hotels and Restaurants	13	13
4	Shoe Polishers	13	13
5	Street Vendors	13	13
6	Bricks Kilns	12	12
7	Automobile Workshops	11	11

8	Transportation Sector	06	06
9	Carpet Industry	03	03
	Total	100	100%

Field Survey: 2020

Working Sectors of Child Labour Respondents

The above table presents data from a hundred Afghan's Refugees child labourers that were working in nine different working sectors in Peshawar in Karkhano Market, Board Bazar, Peshawar Saddara, Lahore Adda and Haji Camp Adda. According to the current study, different determinants influences the health of child labourer, and their impacts differ on the basis of child working sectors, working hours, working condition, age and employer behaviour. It is also noted during this study that among respondents, most families not allowed female children to work outside their houses but in extreme compulsion for their family's survival. They work as scavengers or carpet weavers. The current study includes a few females child labourers whose ages were between 7-10 years and who are helping their brothers in uplifting sacks or collecting useable items from shops or home waste. This study consists of 15% of scavenger respondents and found out that scavenging is like a family profession for survival among most of the poor Afghan refugee families living in different parts of Peshawar. Pakistan produces 48.5 million tons of waste yearly which increases by nearly 2% annually (Tahir, 2020). The waste provides an opportunity for Afghan refugees in

Pakistan to make they are surviving from solid wastes as scavengers. Scavengers are those who collect food items, usable goods, plastic bottles and cans from waste, and these Afghan scavengers are considered part of the informal economy in Pakistan (Tahir, 2020). Respondents from the Agriculture sector 14, hotels and restaurants 13, shoe polishers and street vendors 13 respondents from each, 12 from bricks kilns, 11 from automobile workshops, six from the transportation sector and three respondents from the carpet industry were selected for the current study. All respondents from Hotels and Restaurants are working as dishwashers, waiters and cleaner. They all were male as, due to the nature of the job, it starts early in the morning, and in some places like Tandoor, they need to start work before Fajar prays at 4 am. The majority of these children stay in these hotels to avoid daily transportation charges and start their work on time. Shoe polishers wander in streets and shops to find out their customer and polish their shoes, while automobile sectors work under the supervision of technicians to repair vehicles and transportation sectors respondents as conductors to collect fares from riders etc. Many among them have been affected during their labour and have some sort of health-related issues, as shown by this study.

Table 3
Impact of Family Structure on Child Labour

No.	Family Structure	Number of Population (child labourer)	Percentage %
1	Nuclear Family	29	29
2	Joint Family	64	64
3	Extended Family	07	07
	Total	100	100%

Field Survey: 2020

Impact of Family Structure on Child Labour

Table 3 From collected data, it has been found that the type of family has enormous effects on children's behaviour. Among the interviewed respondents majority of 64% of children belongs to joint families, only 7% belongs to extended family, and 29% belong to nuclear families where parents are responsible for all the acts of their children. It is noted that in joint and extended families, as opposed to nuclear families, parents of child labourers have little or no choice but to interfere in house judgments even for the future and education of their own child. As is found out that mothers in both joint and extended families are working all day in the kitchen, washing clothes and performing other house chores without giving any time to their children. It is also found that 29% of children who belongs to nuclear families go to school or madrassa, and parents also have to focus on their education and nurturing. However, it's a cultural trend that fathers in all types of families are busy earning

for the survival of their family, and in most cases, earning is not sufficient to meet the demands of 6-8 members; therefore, he takes help from his children in the shape of sharing their labour. UNESCO report stated that a family is a unit of kinship, and it's existed even if its members do not share a common house (UNESCO, 1992). Developed and economically sound families play a vital role in nurturing, provision of adequate food, socialization, intellectual stimulation, caring behaviour, education and development of a child as a good adult member of society (National Research Council, 2004). Those parents who have sufficient cultural capital (education, intellect, speech and dress style) can promote their children well in all fields of life as compared to parents with insufficient cultural capital (Passeron, 1990). The size of the family and its resources also have negative and positive impacts on the well-being of its new generations, as the large size of a household has a negative impact on children that pushes them into labour (Lutf & Yasini, 2018).

Table 4

Child Laborer's Working Hours Per/Day

No.	Child Labourer Working hours per/day	No. of Population (Child labourer)	Percentage %
1	3-5 hours	16	16
2	6-8 hours	30	30
3	9-11 hours	37	37
4	12 and above	17	17
Total		100	100

Field Survey: 2020

Child Laborer's working hours per/day

Table 4 shows the day working hours of the respondents. Many studies illustrate the effects of long and conducive working hours on productivity, while wages are noted as a factor that has a greater negative and positive impact on the working of child labour (Vallo & Mashau, 2020). The above table elaborates data regarding the working hours of sample respondents in four different categories. The majority of respondents, i.e. 37%, are working between 9-11 hours a day while 30% are working 6-8 hours a day. These

respondents consist of those children who are working as scavengers, and some of them are attending school or religious education along with their work but have no time for regularly attending educational institutes. About 17% of the respondents' child labourers who works above 12 hours usually work in Hotel and Restaurants and Bricks kiln. Their working hours exceed their capacity is a routine job for every child labour and continues without notice during their childhood. The majority of children respondents who belonged to the 9-11 hours

working category are sellers in the streets is a violation of international and national laws for children. The impact of long working hours is visible in the health condition of these children, and more working hours mean less or no leisure and entertainment activities. They also have no time for education or family life. As compared to their long working hours, they are getting little daily wages which cannot fulfil their financial

needs and are not an alternative to their conducive labour. During this study, it is noted that these children who are working in hotels and restaurants have many health complications. A study revealed that hazardous causes of child labour in brick kilns in Pakistan turn into a hidden sector where no child labour officers can approach to investigate the violations of their rights (Ali, Ali, & Abbas, 2017).

Table 5

Staggering Effects of Child Labour on Child Health

No.	Type of Effects on Child Health	No. of Population (child labourer respondents)	%age
1	Skin Disease	4	10.81
2	Tiredness	7	18.92
3	Injuries	4	10.81
4	Chest problems	9	24.33
5	Eyesight blurriness	2	5.40
6	Body Aches	11	29.73
	Total	37	100.00%

Field Survey: 2020

Staggering Effects of Child Labour on Child Health

Table 5 shows the effects of child labour on respondents' health. A total of six types of effects were noted during the field study in were written in the table along with the number of child labour respondents. As discussed earlier that it's the basic right of each child that he should be protected from harmful work, and the state provides them with the opportunity basic educational facilities for healthy development in society. Out of the total 100 sample respondents, 37 are facing health-related issues due to the nature and place of their work. Among these 37 sample respondents, children who are working in agriculture, workshops, brick and carpet making sectors are uploading heavy weights, prone to harsh weather and dust, and their working time exceeds their physical limits. Therefore, it is found that the majority of child labourers, i.e. 29.73% have body aches due to setting positions,

heavy loads uplifting, long working hours and illness. Skin diseases and injuries during work, specifically in agricultural sectors and scavenging, also affected a total of around about 21% of respondents. Skin disease as dry and cut skins and other diseases are found among respondents, which goes without any treatments or doctor checkup that, gives birth to other health problems among respondents. Among sample respondents, 24% have chest-related problems like coughing, asthma, breathing discomfort at night and temperature often at night or early in the morning, but it's also going unnoticed by their family and often cured with homemade medicine like red tea etc. Another problem that is faced by 18% of respondents is tiredness as the nature of their work and environmental effects low their energy level and all day they often work without drinking sufficient water or taking food to fulfil their physical needs while some of them have jaundice, typhoid and other related

problems. About 5.40% of sample respondents have eyesight weakness problems, and they said

that it's difficult for them to see far away and also face difficulties during crossing roads at night.

Table 6

Child Labour Harassment at Workplace

Type of Harassments	Subtypes	Child labourer	Total	
		No.	No.	%age
Verbal Harassment	Yelling	24		
	Insulting	19	61	61
	Cursing	18		
Physical Harassment	Inflict harm	08		
	Physical attacks	08	27	27
	Threatening behaviour	11		
Sexual Harassment	Inappropriate touching	03		
	Sexual jokes or comments	05	10	10
	Romantic activities	02		
Not responded	-----	02	02	02

Total		100	100	100%

Field Survey: 2020

Child Labour Harassment at Workplace

Table 6 consists of data regarding the harassment of child labour respondents at the workplace. The above table was categorized into three major types of harassment, and are further divided into subtypes. Out of the total respondent's majority, 61% complained about verbal harassment, 27% about physical, 10% about sexual harassment, and only 2% didn't share their experience with the researcher. Among the majority of respondents, i.e. 61% said that yelling, insulting, and cursing are our routine. Some of the respondents said that we are mentally tortured by our Ostad every time to keep us under pressure. At the same time, 27% of respondents complained about physical attacks and threatening behavior from employer and their co-workers. Only 10% of respondents complained about sexual harassment, and among them, many children are told that the elder customers, i.e. drivers and conductors at the workplace, make sexual jokes to attract us and inappropriate touching is often normal to them, which causes mental stress on children and also

damage their social impact in friends circle. Elder children are also bullying their younger ones and, often by force, compel them to satisfy their own sexual thrust from them with different means. Parents mostly rely on owner/ostad and never ask their children about their daily life occurrences, and children also cannot express their own experiences with someone due to cultural barriers.

As it is noted above, harassment is categorized into three parts, i.e. verbal harassment, physical harassment, and sexual harassment, and is further subdivided into categories according to the collected data from the respondents. Verbal harassment is common, like yelling, insulting and cursing child labour by the employer, and the majority of children face it on a routine basis. Even if these children are working well, the employer is trying his best to keep all the children under pressure, for which he needs such types of tactics for their control. On the other hand, physical harassment that includes inflicting harm, physical attacks and threatening behaviour of masters' children also

occurs in the study area and during interviews, children complained about the behaviour of their masters. These children always remain under stress and work in a congested work environment which affects their health and mind. According to observation and collected data, Sexual harassment is not that common, like the aforementioned two categories of harassment among respondents, and very few children talked about such issues in a freight manner. They feel dishonour to talk about such issues and also try to avoid such discussions. Sexual harassment is further divided into three categories, i.e. inappropriate touching of private parts of the body of children in the workplace by their elder mates, customers and sometimes by their masters, while sexual jokes or comments are as common as verbal harassment and through these types of acts they want to attract and violates these children. Romantic activities were also claimed by two respondents in workshops by their elder mates and master, but they did not disclose any further information to the interviewer. At the same time, 2 per cent of child labour ignored questions regarding sexual harassment. While employers always guarantee that they are dealing with these children like their own, sometimes they use hot verbal communication for their betterment, but in reality, it's the opposite of their claims. Therefore, it is found that harassment is a common phenomenon among child labour respondents, but due to limited access to decent work, cultural barriers and their docile nature, these children remain silent about what they face at the workplace.

Results and Conclusion

This study found out that boy child labourers are dominant in supporting their families financially while girls child labourers were limited to house chores since their childhood. Therefore it is proved that there is a cultural effect that restricts females from educational institutes and works outside of homes. The majority of respondents belong to the age group of 7-10 years, so its

shows that all child labourer starts work in their early childhood due to the weak financial condition of their families and other related problems. On the other hand, these children are pushed to work and support their families instead of going to school or educational institutes as a usual process among respondents' families. These refugee families lost their properties due to unrest in Afghanistan and migrated to Pakistan to survive but were compelled by circumstances to get help from the labour of their children.

This study found that joint and extended family structures have enormous negative impacts as they are living miserable life conditions as compared to nuclear family and increasing the burden of the child labourer in this case and take-away parents' focus and responsibilities from their care and wellbeing. While the economic backgrounds of studied families play their part in vulnerability to child labour, increased illiteracy and promote a culture of family dependence on child labour among refugees child labour in Peshawar. In comparison, it can be stated that in nuclear families, children have some upper edge in caring and nurturing because of the nature of their family. Thus it is found that households with extreme poverty contribute more to child labour in the study area. Child labour and its impact on their health investigated the size type of health impact upon these children, which include skin disease, tiredness, injuries, chest problems, eyesight blurriness and body aches. When the children asked about tiredness so, some among them were astonished and laughed that if, at this age, we were tired, then what would we do in old age? However, the impact of labour and the environment on their health condition cannot be ignored at this stage, as some have severe coughing issues, skin disease and body aches, as shown in the data tables. These children are also facing harassment at the workplace that affects their mental ability, feeling threats from their co-workers and visitors at the workplace all the time. Verbal harassment is dominant as the employer always tries to keep all the children

under his supervision under pressure to utilize their abilities for his own interests and avoid quarrelling between child labours. Physical harassment also remains an issue for all workers even if they work independently, and sexual harassment in workshops also occurred in some places, as respondents discussed with the researcher. Therefore, it is found that these child labour respondents' health is affected from different dimensions, and they are facing the brunt of war, migration, parents' indebtedness and poverty by giving up their education and leisure time to compensate for their families.

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