**Child Labor in Pakistan**

According to ILO and UNICEF, all work done by children can’t be classified as child labor. So, there is a need to differentiate between child labor and child work. If work is not affecting the health and personal development as well as the schooling of children, then this type of work cannot be taken negatively and does not fall in the category of child labor, e.g. assisting in family business or working during school holidays or after school hours. These activities are not “child labor”, rather these can be termed as ‘child work’. Child work is not only important for the personal development of children but it also provides them with necessary skills to be useful and productive members of a society.

According to ILO, Child Labor is defined as work that has the potential to deprive children of their childhood, their dignity and is also harmful for their physical, moral and mental development and it interferes with their education (either by not allowing them to attend school, leaving school prematurely i.e., without compulsory education or forcing them to combine school attendance with heavy work.). So, the question arises as to how should we differentiate between child labour and child work? This, according to ILO, depends upon age of the child, type and hours of work performed, working conditions as well as the development stage of individual countries.

Child Labor is one of the ever growing social problems faced by Pakistan since time immemorial. This causes adverse impact on mental, physical, moral, and social life of children. In India the figure of child labor has crossed above 44 million, in Pakistan it is from 8 to 10 million, in Bangladesh 8-12 million, in Brazil 7 million, whereas it is 12 million in Nigeria. Unfortunately with the passage of time, there is an increase in child labor, ranking Pakistan on third position of child and forced labor. According to an estimate of Child Rights Movement (CRM) National Secretariat, 12.5 million children in Pakistan victimized in forced labor.

**Causes**

**Causes of Child Labor:**

**Poverty**

Children work for a variety of reasons. The major reason is poverty. Poverty is the lack of food, shelter, money and clothing that occurs when people cannot satisfy their basic needs. Poverty can be understood only lack of money or most of them in terms of barriers in everyday life. At certain levels of poverty in developing countries, child labor could play a useful role in the economic survival, which increases national economic development.

The unequal attention of poverty between children compared to adults demands reason and attention. Child labor causes poverty because when a child is employed he takes a place of an adult job, so there is decrease in adult income in the industry. And when the child is without education and they do work so there is no possibility of escaping from poverty. Poverty in the country is the main cause of child labor which forces the parents to send their children to work. Poor Families which face the poverty force their children to work for extra income for their household's. Poor families like to have more children and when the income of an individual one in not enough then they force their little children to go for work anywhere they have. A large number of members represent a financial need for families suffering from poverty; parents are forced to send their children to work to earn extra income.

**Lack of education**

Between the poorer parts of society is also most important cause for children to start working before time. Necessary education is not free in all countries and in many countries it is not available for all children, especially in rural areas. So if there are schools in some areas there is poor education or where education is expensive parents observe no value in education field then due to this situation parents send their children to work rather than schools. Children are mostly encouraged to work by their parents. Uneducated and unaware people never think about child labor and they are also unaware of the dangerous physical and mental pain of children. When parents agree to their children to go work, it affects their chances to go school. Schooling problems also contribute to child labor. Many times children search for employment just because there is no access to schools. Even as the parents cannot afford for their children to be educated nor do they understand the importance of primary education in children lives. Or Due to insufficient educational facilities many families think that school won't help their children survive.

**Gender inequity**

Means gender differences which refer to inequality between persons due to gender. The encouragement of gender equality means give equal opportunities to boys and girls, and men and women. Social thoughts towards girls and women are most important cause of child labor effect on child to do work because women are not allowed to go outside from home for any work. The encouragement of equality between girls, boys, men and women. Child labor is work which subjects children to use and abuse.

**Unemployment**

Lack of unemployment of adults and when the adults are not in position to do work like disable adults or ill adults or death member of the family.

**Demand for child labor**

Demand for child labor is increasing day by day for cheap labor which is also a cause of child labor. Market demand of child labor cause strong demand by many companies because they want to win large market share. So children are considered as a cheap source of labor which provides an opportunity to increase earnings. And Demand for cheap labor by contractor's means that children are often offered in the workplace of their parents. With limited margins of this type, such as contractors and farmers make game owners know that children can be exploited and forced to work for less than minimum wage.

**Escape from home**

This may also factor or cause of child labor. When a child escapes from home he may have many reasons like

Bad temper of the parents, because generally the insufficient salary of fathers provides lack of basic human needs to their families which create a frustration and anger in the members of family after that it turn to the attitude of fathers or head of family in harsh or strict due to which a child prefer to leave from the home in search of his own comforts, it might be physical or mantel. And when a child leaves the home he faces different problems of necessities so that why he have to do any work to survive.

Company of other children plays an important role in child grooming because the company of friend makes a child manner able and social. It is psychological fact that surroundings affect individual's behaviors and attitudes and the habits of child is also depend on the company of family and friends. Usually negative activities between the children create negative impact on child personality. Due to this sometime the passion of negative activities level become high and serious for a children future. In these situations the strictness from home and school enforce children to escape.

Behaviors of the teachers at schools also plays very important role in child life. Because teachers are the builders of nation. But in our society the way of teaching is quite harsh and the methods of teaching are also useless. Mostly children are punished physically for their minor mistakes which create unfriendly atmosphere then due to these type of behavior of teachers impact bad impression on children and force child to runaway. And after those majority children get negative feedback from home as well so they escape.

Attractions beyond the home also cause of child labor because it is the human nature that a person mostly tends toward those things which they don't have. And these types of want are found in children. In some cases due to some reasons parents are unable to provide the needs of their children so this also lead to child to escape for necessities.

**Political Crises**

Political crises and political issues Sometimes have caused violence, rallies, strikes, civil wars, terrorism and armed conflicts due to which there is a political and economic instability in the country so adults are unable to do work or jobs or in some other situations children have to do work for their needs.

**Overpopulation**

Large family sizes and over population are main factors which cause child labor. The basic cause of child labor is high population growth-rate, particularly in Third World countries. According to Wikipedia.org, "Pakistan has increased its ranking from 7 to 6th in the list of most populous countries of the world. The figures are based on a July 1, 2007 estimate by the UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs, Population Division.

**Industrial revolution**

Revolution in industries plays role for child labor. Sometimes multinationals prefer to use child labor in developing countries due to industrial revolution and these which encourages multinationals to use child workers which cause a negative impact on children. Due to all these reasons child labor recruited for less pay, they take extra work from them and there is no problem of union in industry as well. This situation is also difficult for adults to find jobs and send their children for work.

**Child Labor in Pakistan**

In Pakistan children aged 5-14 are above 40 million. During the last year, the Federal Bureau of Statistics released the results of its survey funded by ILO’s IPEC (International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor). The findings were that 3.8 million children age group of 5-14 years are working in Pakistan out of total 40 million children in this age group; fifty percent of these economically active children are in age group of 5 to 9 years. Even out of these 3.8 million economically active children, 2.7 million were claimed to be working in the agriculture sector. Two million and four hundred thousand (73%) of them were said to be boys.

**Steps Taken by Government on Child Labor in Pakistan**

There are number of laws regarding the prohibition of child labor, or regulating the working conditions for adolescent workers. The most significant laws are:

• The Factories Act 1934

• The West Pakistan Shops and Establishments Ordinance 1969

• The Employment of Children Act 1991

• The Bonded Labor System Abolition Act 1992

• The Punjab Compulsory Education Act 1994

• The Employment of Children Rules 1995

**Constitutional Provisions**

Article 3: the state shall ensure the eradication of all forms of exploitation and the regular fulfillment of fundamental principle, from each according to his ability and to each according to his work.

Article 11(3): No child below the age of 14 years shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment.

Article 25(A): The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as determined by law.

Article 37(e): The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that women and children are not employed in vacations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment.

Child labor remains one of the major problems troubling Pakistani children. Many laws have been passed in an attempt to limit or eradicate this menace from our society. Unfortunately, these laws are globally ignored. Around 11 million children between 4 – 14 age groups are behind the operations of country’s factories, working in even hazard conditions.

**Minimum Work Age in Pakistan**

According to Employment of Children Act 1991 a “child” is categorized as a person below 14 years of age and an “adolescent” is below 18 years of age. The Constitution of Pakistan also regards the minimum work age as 14 years. However, the 18th amendment has actually risen the minimum age up to 16 years without amending the labor laws, this has increased the contradiction. Article 25(A) of the Constitution says that the state now has to provide compulsory education to all children between the ages of five and sixteen years, which means that, a child can’t be allowed to work before 16 years of age.

There are certain exceptions to this law. It says clearly that no child has to be employed in any occupation which is hazardous for children except the family business or in any (training) school established, assisted and recognized by the government.