

Causes and Long-term Consequences of Child Labour

Sefa Bulut *, Shaima Tariq Hasan Alabed

Department of Guidance and Counselling Psychology, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey

Article Info

Received: February 04, 2021
Accepted: February 18, 2021
Published: February 24, 2021

***Corresponding author:** Sefa Bulut, Department of Guidance and Counselling Psychology, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey.

Citation: Bulut S, Hasan Alabed S T. "Causes and Long-term Consequences of Child Labour." *Clinical Psychology and Mental Health Care*, 2(2); DOI: <http://doi.org/03.2021/1.10014>.

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Abstract

Recently, the statistics show an incredible increase in child labor rates. The purpose of this paper is to point out the reasons behind child labor and the long term consequences. This research deeply investigates the case of Syrian refugees and how the number of Syrian children in labor increased due to the war conditions. The literature emphasized the low income of the family to be considered as the most common reason for child labor. From the literature, harming the bones is a wide range of physical consequences of child labor. I conclude that the country's government should arrange programs that monitor child labor after school time, and arrange educational programs in the rural areas.

Key Words: child labour; low-income; injuries; education; future; barefoot; harassment; refugees

Introduction

For some children, work is a short-term experience, while for others work is a lifelong process [1]. Child labor is the work that children have to do, and in impacts, it affects negatively their either mental or physical development, and it makes the child exposed to many challenges [2]. Any work that harmfully affects the children age between 0-15 years old, considered child labor, which is considered to be prohibited in most countries [2]. For 60% of children in Bangladesh; the average working hours for children age around 14-16, is 14 hours a day [3]. For the Brazilian children age from 10-17, there are 7.5 million children who are considered to be child labor [4]. According to the International Labour Organization, the term child labor means taking the children away from their childhood, and not enable them to have their simplest rights such as education right [5]. Besides, deprive children of education right mean either not sending them to schools at all, or the family might force the child to go to school but they put a pressure on the child to balance between having an intensive work besides going to school [5]. There are severe psychological as well as physical impacts of child labour. According to research conducted in Jordan, the statistics show that 24.1% of child labor will suffer from loneliness as a psychological impact [6]. In addition, for the same research enuresis and hearing problems were the most common problem between children and it forms the percentage of 90% [6]. The ugliest form of child labor is when the child is separated from their family and left on the streets trying to find work which is generally harmful and led children to have many diseases [5]. For some children even that working beside going to schools will affect their academic achievements, still, if they can not balance both of them, the child might loss the chance of education [7]. According to statistics, in total there are around 250 million children between the age of 5 and 14 years old, are working and consider as child labor [8]. 80 million of these children are working on extremely risk jobs [8]. Child labor is a very important topic to mention because there are many changes in the world such as immigration. Parents have to be aware of the consequences and their risk on the future of the child. In addition, this topic is also important for the Ministry of Education to have the needed monitoring of whether children attendance in schools, because this kind of control the child labor issue.

Two Main Forms of Child Labor



There are many claims that there is a positive relationship between the poverty rate of the family, and child labor [9]. Hypotheses illustrate that family is not sending their children to work unless they are at a high level of poverty, this hypotheses called luxury axiom which conducted by Basu and Van [9]. There are two main forms of work sectors where children tend to work, formal and informal [4]. In the informal work sector children can work in collecting garbage and cleaning shoes [4]. However, in the formal work sectors, children tend to work for trade and agriculture related companies [4]. Most children are working in the informal section since it has more work opportunities, however, the informal work section pays less money and workers experience more harmful situations [4]. In the worst situation children will work in the informal sections without getting any money, instead, they will only have food and a place to sleep [4]. There are many proofs that children working in the informal section such as the agricultural section, are doing a very important work which gives a huge income for the work owner who avoids bringing adult worker or foreign workers so they will not take more money [10]. Female children generally are having different types of work than males, for example, they tend to work more on the saw, clothes shops, and cafes [11]. Children will be working for long hours, which means that for the agricultural section they will work around 10 hours and more; especially at the time of peak seasons [12]. Also, children working in mining have the possibility to stay for 24 hours in the shaft [12].

Causes of the Child labor

Many reasons drive children to be part of child labor. The most common reason is the economic status of the family which many children are having poor families who are not able even to provide their children with food and shelter [13]. Research has proved that the lower-income the family has, the more likely to send their children to work, for example, according to this research 76 percent of the worker children have identified themselves as poor [14]. Second, many children are going to work due to family problems such as divorce [13]. Many families are not aware of the importance of female education so they send them early to work, or they get them to marry [13]. Third, many child laborers are from immigrant people, when they settled in the new places they send their children to work, and that might be because they are poor or because the family had no access to school, or both reasons [14]. Fourth, poor families who contain less adult people, and have more children, generally children will be sent to work [14]. Fifth, when the breadwinner, generally the father is a person with a handicap or has any other diseases or disabilities which obstruct him from going to work, they tend to send their children to work, according to research 15 percent of the family are sending their children to work due to this reason [14]. Sixth, uneducated parents are more likely to send their children to work [14]. Finally, many refugee parents have a problem with having a work permit in some countries, so they tend to send their children because they are less likely to get into trouble.

Physical Impacts and Economical Impacts

Physical impacts refer to the harmful environments and the risk of injuries and diseases that children might expose to in the working environment [1]. Physically, children can be harmed

through heavy work, which might affect their bones and the development of their skeletons [12]. Since many children are coming from extremely poor backgrounds, they had very weak nutrition, which leads them to have many diseases [3]. Works like bringing water from far places, and some heavy agricultural works can prevent the child from healthy development [12]. Also, many children tend to work in places that have a lack of clear and fresh air, such environments which also tend to be crowded, that allowed the spread of infectious diseases [12]. For example, digestive disorders and tuberculosis [12]. In addition, many workplaces tend to have weak lighting systems which result in children suffering from vision problems [12]. According to a medical test that took place in 1997 in a camp that including 85 children who are under the category of child labor, all of these children were suffering from malnutrition, and some of them have a severe health problem such as pulmonary tuberculosis, hearing, vision and skin infections related problem [12].

Child labor is a reason for losing the chance of having a good future because many children will have injuries that might result in handicaps on different parts of their body [15]. Besides, it is important to mention that stress at the childhood level might result in physical health problems such as immune system disorders, diabetes and, heart diseases in the adult stage of life [15]. According to Kassouf et al (2001), he believed that working at an earlier age will result in worst health-related problems in life later [15]. According to research in Jordan, a comparison done between school children and working children, the result shows that worker children tend to have heavier health problems such as influenza [6]. Suffering from headache was one of the most health problems that worker children in different informal work sections report [16]. Porters children, for example, tend to carry heavy things, which later on in their adult life will result in headache, and back and leg pain [17]. Long-term diseases and severe consequences can be a result of child labor such as low IQ, infertility, cancer, and severe chronic back pain [18].

From an economical aspect, child laborers are losing almost all their rights in working places. According to research, children are gaining less money for the same work that adult person could do with more money, and the employers generally do that without any concerns because children generally work without any job contracts [3]. In addition, lack of job contracts lead many of labor children to work out side the work time [3]. What is the worst about child labor, from economic perspective, is that they are not gaining money for their own well being or improvement, for example they are not spending money for education purposes, instead, they tend to give this money for their families [3]. This child labor phenomenon can passed from generation to another. Once the child is grow up and become a father, many of them tend to send their children to work [3].

Psychological Impact and Sexual Harassment

According to Terre des Hommes International Federation research, children were getting disappointed and annoyed because they were being beaten by their employers [16]. Children working in third-world countries are having the heaviest psychological risks [13]. Many pieces of research proved that mental disorders such as depression, panic disorders, schizophrenia, and anxiety might be a result of trauma or stress that a child lived in childhood in his working environment [15]. In addition, labor children are



suffering from feelings including shame, less confidence, hopeless and guilty feeling, all these feelings can result in real physical and social problems [13]. Due to the long hours that children have to work, this made them feel disappointed and frustrated [19]. Children who are working in insecure environments tend to be more isolated and less social [19]. According to research, a high percentage of child labor children are having unhealthy psychological development [19]. The psychological impacts on children are far worse than the physical impacts that result from working environments [13]. It is important to mention that many parents are not aware of the negative psychological consequences on their children, however even some other parents are aware of the risks, they still believe that they have no other choice than to send their children to work [13]. Many worker children, generally girls exposed to sexual harassment [19]. Many child laborers claimed that they expose to sexual abuse, in a way that either employer or stuffed they touch them inappropriately [16]. Many employers would prefer to employ girls for two reasons. First, girls are requiring less money comparing to males. Second, many employers look to employ girls as a chance to sexually abuse and harass them [11]. Children tend to gain negative habits that would affect them psychologically and physically, like using drugs, alcohol, and smoking cigarettes [17].

Educational Aspect of Child Labor

Education is playing an essential role in economic prosperity [8]. From the year 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) made observable efforts to limit child labor on the way that they put global standards for work, for example, determining a minimum age that allows working legally [8]. According to UNESCO, the statistics show an incredible number of children who are not receiving educational right, the statistics reveals that 145 million children between the age of 6 to 11 years old are out of school [8]. It is important to mention that the number of girls out of school (85 million) is higher than boys out of school (60 million) [8].

In Britain, As a result of the mandatory education law that emerged in 1880 the child labor rate has decreased [14]. Long together, the prohibition of child labor and the obligation of education has the role to decrease the rate of children in many countries [14]. Some researchers claim that the compulsory education law is far more important than the prohibition of child labor law because it is easier to monitor whether the child is attending the school or not [14]. The biggest problem with education is that it is not free in all countries, in addition to that, when schools are available the quality of education is low generally [8]. When the families are not realizing the immediate effect and quality of education, they tend to take their children out of school and send them to the workplace [8]. This will result in children as victims in workplaces [8]. In the case of children who are working and going to school, they tend to have low academic achievements [20]. Also, children who are working and going to schools, tend to drop out of school in order to have full-time work [21].

Hazardous Child Labor

According to ILO, work can be categorized as hazardous, either

because of the work itself or the conditions and environment of the work that the child is working on [22]. In addition, any harmful situation that affects the child's moral, health, or safety is considered to be hazardous work as the general definition [22]. Although child labor could be found in any work section, still the highest percentage (70%) is children who are working in the agricultural section [18]. Agriculture exposes children to hazardous situations because of the heavy loads that children have to carry, a sharp tool used, insecticides needed for planting, and, the presence of dangerous animals such as snakes [18]. Due to all risks children expose to in agriculture, they tend to have more injuries comparing to children working in other sectors [18]. The degree of hazard varies from country to country regarding some specific agricultural sectors, for example in Peru the harvest of sugar cane is far riskier comparing to other countries [22]. Some sectors, such as children working as domestic laborers, it is hard to specify the hazardous that they might face, which lead to call this sector as (hidden), however, possibly children in this sector tend to have psychological hazardous [18]. For example, domestic laborers might suffer from loneliness, abuse, and exploitation [18]. Moreover, many children tend to work as porters, which is hazardous work [17]. Porters children tend to be in an environment that is polluted, dusty, and crowded, which eventually leads to a serious health problem [17]. In addition to the environment that porters work in, they generally carry extremely heavy staff and being barefoot [17]. The main problem with hazardous works is that the severe health problems that result from these risky works, will appear in the adult stage of life, so many children will not be aware of it at the childhood level of life [18].

About the Syrian Refugees' Case of Child Labor

An incredible number of Syrian children have lived harmful and traumatic situations that prevent them from their right to education and result in children who have to work [11]. On 2011-2012 Syrian family was not sending their children to work because it was just the beginning of the war, and generally Syrian people had some asset, but the situation has changed on the year of 2014, where child labor rate of Syrian children increased [11]. Syrian children have the risk to engage in child labor even in their country, or outside the country where they because refugees [11]. Many Syrian children even that they are with or without their families they have the risk of being part of child labor [11]. Many Syrian children are playing the role of the family breadwinner, especially in the countries besides Syria, for example, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan [11]. In the previously mentioned countries, children might work in agriculture, on streets, and in construction places [11]. For example, in 2014 - 2015, the United Nations had to stop supporting and sending of rations, which eventually lead to having more children who tend to be part of child labor [11]. Even that Jordan opened the state schools for the Syrian children, still, a huge number of Syrians did not attend, which increase the child labor between the Syrian refugee children [23]. Not attending schools lead to a long-term problem, where children refugees will lose the chance to have a good work opportunity in the future [23]. In Jordan, Syrian refugees are doing things like selling their jewelry if they have, and more than one family will be sharing the same house, but still, in many cases, they need to send their children to work [11]. A comparison between the rate



of children between the age 15 to 17 years old and children between the age 9 to 14 shows that Syrian children refugees who their age group of 15-17 were more likely to work compared with Jordanian children from the same age group [23]. According to statistics, in both Jordan and Syria, less than 50% of working children are completing their education journey [23].

The International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor

This program which has the abbreviation of IPEC was found by the International Labour Office in 1992, and nowadays it is applying to 88 countries [24]. There is almost 400 person who is working for IPEC and nearly 90 percent of them tend to do their work on the field [25]. On the other side, people who are on the field, are getting support from other IPEC who doing work like: data collection, research, technical support [25]. Even that the IPEC is doing well, and the number of child labor decreased, there are many children are being exploited in working places [25]. Although the general purpose of IPEC is to eliminate all forms of child labor, still they have the priority to eliminate the most severe and dangerous types of work such as making children slavery or selling children [24]. IPEC uses education as the main activity of the program for eliminating child labor [21]. IPEC allowed children to engage in an informal kind of education, which offers for the worker children an education system [21].

Discussion and Recommendations

There are many suggestions from the researches trying to eliminate and prevent the phenomena of child labor. First, according to the International Labour Organization the approach of multi-sectoral which means the involvement of the efforts from different government-related ministries, this approach resulted in many effective outcomes for the elimination of child labor [21]. Second, the government has to take into consideration the hazardous work children do after school time [21]. Many parents are sending children to their school just to avoid legal accountability, however; after school time, they will send these children to work. Third, a country should have a budget for funding the poor families [7]. As mention in this paper, low economic status was one of the main reasons for increasing the percentage of child labor. Supporting these families might not fully eliminate child labor, but I think aside from financially supporting families the should be seminars that increase the awareness of parents about the harmful consequences of not getting an education at the level of childhood. Fourth, there should be consideration of the education programs in the rural areas, because sometimes people in rural areas will not have the same official language as the big cities [7]. When a child feels hopelessness that would defiantly affect his willingness to attend school. Fifth, schools should increase the awareness of the children about their rights so children can inform the competent authorities in case they were forced to be part of child labor [26]. Sixth, while buying from any well-known mark trade, people should make sure that this is a (fair trade) which means they are not exploiting children to produce their product [27].

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