

Article

Socio-Economic Situation of Child Labours in Peshawar, Pakistan: A Study of Peshawar, Saddar

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Abstract: This study focuses on the socio-economic situation of child labours in Peshawar's Saddar area. The study employed a quantitative research strategy, involving 70 child labourers from various professions. It paid attention to the demographic characteristics of child labourers, their financial and educational status, the nature of the work they did, and their working conditions. Structured interviews were used to collect data using snowball sampling techniques. And cross-tabulation used in the analysis using SPSS software. Based on the findings, most child labourers receive only primary education because they do not have the means to continue with their studies due to poverty. However, a lot of them are concerned about additional learning. Most of them start working before the age of ten, usually in a family with five or more members. The majority receive less than 400 rupees per day or week, and a very big percentage are employed in mechanical workshops without safety equipment. Such children are regularly employed for more than ten hours every day, which can have adverse consequences for their physical and psychological well-being. Frequently subject to verbal abuse, but continues to interact socially with peers daily. They are employed mostly due to financial necessity, and the majority of the income is used to sustain their families, especially fathers who are the breadwinners. It is essential to note that not many individuals are involved in child labours prevention programs, as most of them are focused on supporting household finances and do not have the time to concentrate on self-development programs.

Keywords: snowball sampling technique, verbal abuse, socio-economic situation, structured interview.

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1. Introduction

Developing countries across the world, including Pakistan, have acknowledged child labour as a significant and challenging problem. In Pakistan, children are often labourers, providing services to both formal and informal economies. In Pakistan, children are often labourers, providing services to both formal and informal economies. (Baghal et al., 2015). Childhood is a time of fun, learning, and family bonding. It, however, also has child labours whereby innocent children work long hours to fulfil family needs. This illegal practice, varying by country and government, is considered manipulative by the United Nations and other international organisations. Child labour is an emerging challenging issue all over the world. Child labour is mainly caused by unemployment of parents, low-income background, high population density, large family size and migration. Child labour, especially among lower socioeconomic classes, causes damage to physical and mental health and deprives children of fundamental rights working in the shops of the bazaar selling goods (Goel et al., 2012). Child labour continues to be a global challenge in both industrialised and developing nations, endangering children's physical, emotional, social, ethical, and cognitive development. Although considered one of the methods to reduce poverty, it remains a major concern in economically disadvantaged areas. (Shabbir et al., 2020). Furthermore, different factors are responsible for child labour, such as parents' illiteracy, poverty, an underprivileged area background, ignorance, overpopulation, large family size, traditional occupation, unemployment, and migration. Different socio-economic factors contribute to child labour (Venkateshwarrao, 2004).

1.1.Problem Statement

The problem of child labour has increased in the twenty-first century, especially in developing countries. As a result of weak policymaking and implementation, a lower commitment to resolving child protection issues, and a lack of well-defined strategies in developing countries. Even with initiatives to reduce child labour, Pakistan is a developing country where the number of child labourers is rising day by day. Furthermore, it will assist the government and non-government in formulating policies concerning this significant matter (Zafar et al., 2016). The number of child labour in terms of 5-17 years old stands at approximately 138 million. One out of five children is involved in child labour. (UNICEF, 2025). Child labour is considered a social problem, as child negatively affects their physical, mental, and emotional health and their education and development, which has existed in developing countries, including Pakistan, for decades, with a growing rate in Peshawar city due to low-income backgrounds. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), child labour has harmful effects on children,

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such as slow growth and depriving them of educational opportunities, recreational activities, or the act of work itself, feeding a family (Lambon-Quayefio & Owoo, 2021). ILO documents indicate that there are 168 million child labourers worldwide, of whom 85 million are involved in hazardous labour, with more than 80 percent located in developing Asia, the Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Sadler Lawrence, 2020). International concern over labour-related child abuse, especially in developing countries, is growing, but limited research exists on their mental health despite various risk factors and social needs (Thabet et al., 2011). Child labour not only puts an end to the life of a child, but it also destroys the lives of children and calls into question the moral system of society, besides having various political, social, and economic repercussions for the society in question (Raza Shah Gilani et al., 2022). This problem is widespread in low-income countries, where families are forced to rely on the income their children earn due to poverty (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005). Globally, child labour is still a significant problem that is caused mainly by complicated socioeconomic variables, such as poverty, a lack of education, and the passing down of work practices from generation to generation. Their social and economic condition is often weak. There is ample evidence from several studies that poverty and child labour are related, showing that children from low-income families are far more likely to work rather than go to school. For example, studies conducted in Indonesia have shown that a 3.7% rise in child work involvement corresponds to a 100% increase in the poverty rate (Sandra et al., 2020).

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1.2.Research Objectives

- 1. To dig out demographic information of child labourers in Peshawar Saddar.
- 2. Highlight the nature of child labour and the workplace environment of child labours in Peshawar Saddar.
- 3. To explore the educational and financial condition of child labour in Peshawar Saddar.

1.3. Question & Hypothesis

- 1. What are the Socio-economic conditions of child labour in Peshawar Saddar?
- 2. H1. The higher the rate of poverty, the higher the practice of child labours.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Child Labor

According to international organizations, child labour is an individual who is working to earn money under the age of 18. It considers child labour in the bazaar, where children learn skills without

access to basic education, a violation of the fundamental right to education that every child is entitled to in every country. Furthermore, child labour is defined as employment that involves economic exploitation of children as well as work that may be dangerous, disrupt their education, or negatively impact their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development; it refers to work that is socially, mentally, physically, or morally dangerous and harmful to children (Lumba, 2009). While acknowledging certain instances in which early work aids in skill development, the article defines child labour as work activities that limit children's physical and psychological development (Jariego, 2021). Child labour is a complex problem because it is correlated to poverty, education, health, and other socioeconomic problems, and cannot be discussed in a vacuum (Cigno, 2002).

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2.2. Pakistani Perspectives on Child Labor

Child labour is a global societal problem, especially in Pakistan, which has faced a child labour problem for decades. Children working in workshops, in break companies, in street labour, in domestic labour, as employees in rich people's homes for caring for their kids, etc. There are so many international and national organizations fighting against the child labour issue. According to statistics, two-thirds of Pakistan's eight million children who work in various occupations are full-time employees.

Child labour is a blatant violation of children's fundamental rights, which include survival, education, protection, and development. Extreme poverty is the leading cause of child labour since it compels parents to hire their kids to make ends meet. The purpose of this study was to gather data on the characteristics of children who work and to determine the connection between child labour and poverty in Pakistan (Naeem, Shaukat, & Ahmed, 2011).

Another study estimates that 11–12 million Pakistani youngsters, half of whom are under ten years old, are working (Gulzar, Vertejee, and Pirani 2009). Furthermore, child labour is still a significant problem due to several intricate socioeconomic, political, and demographic variables (Hussain & Kashif, 2013). An estimated 11–12 million Pakistani youngsters, half of whom are under the age of ten, are working (Gulzar, Vertejee, and Pirani 2009). This pervasive practice hurts children's health and the country's social cohesion. Child labour's numerous negative repercussions disrupt the social fabric of society, and the government of Pakistan is alarmed by the rising numbers. It is taking all necessary steps to battle this curse (Zafar, Sarwar, and Haider 2016).

2.3. Socio-Economic Factors of Child Labor

Poverty is the mother of all social evils, and Pakistani society is suffering from many social problems. If we think about it, there is not only one factor responsible for child labour in Peshawar; different influences are connected with the reason for the child labour issue in Pakistan. These factors $Page \mid 214$ include gender inequality, poverty, illiteracy among adults, large family size, absence of education, low parental income, generational illiteracy, lack of motivation, lack of peer motivation, lack of proper guidance and counselling centres, lack of future planning, lack of monitoring and evaluation of child protection, and non-governmental organizations, etc. (Siddhanta & Nandy, 2003).

Rendering to the analysis, child labour is crucial to the family's financial survival at some poverty levels. Since the child currently has economic value, parents should utilise their financial resources to meet their fundamental needs and maximise their utility (Khan, Chaudhary, & Khan, 2002).

2.4. Child Labor's Impact on Education and Health

When a child under 18 is employed, it can negatively impact their schooling and overall wellbeing. Some studies indicate that kids who work have lower educational achievement and less school involvement, demonstrating the substantial detrimental effects of child labour on education. However, there is limited evidence of serious health consequences; therefore, the health implications are less noticeable. It is interesting to note that child labourers may earn more money as young adults, which could compensate for the financial losses resulting from less education, especially for girls (Beegle, Dehejia, & Gatti, 2009).

Child labour has several root causes, such as family dissolution, poverty, and greed (Agbo, 2017). The child labour issue is a substantial barrier to attaining widespread education, but education is also a crucial component in reducing child labour. Children's capacity to enrol, attend, and benefit from education is compromised by child labour, which encompasses both economic activities and domestic duties. One of the most crucial factors in determining how child labour affects schooling is the intensity of the activity, whether it is home-based or economic (Guarcello, Lyon, & Rosati, 2006).

Studies finds that child labour is a significant public social issue after conducting an intensive and systematic evaluation during fieldwork data collection. There is still a negative correlation between child work and the physical and emotional health of the children involved. There is still a negative correlation between child work and the physical and emotional health of the children involved. A greater frequency of various health conditions was observed among working children in contrast to the general population or control groups. However, because the included studies were cross-sectional, it was unable to demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship. This indicates that measures have not been successful in making child labour safer, as well as in ending it. Even if fewer youngsters are working, those who continue to work as children appear to have a poor quality of life (Ibrahim, Abdalla, Jafer, Abdelgadir, & De Vries, 2019).

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2.5. Child Protection Laws in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

According to the Employment of Children Act of 1991, Children under the age of 14 are prohibited from working in hazardous settings, such as mines, factories, or carpet industries (Shahid, 2020). According to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Unit (2010) Act, a child at risk engages in begging in the streets, one who has lost one or both parents, one who lacks sufficient income, one who needs support to study, and one who needs to be monitored on the implementation and violation of the child protection, welfare, and rights. This includes the prevention of child labour and encompasses orphans, children with disabilities, children of migrant workers, children working or residing on the streets, children in conflict with the law, and children living in extreme poverty (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, 2010).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research design

In this research, the socio-economic conditions of child labourers in Peshawar Saddar are to be examined. A cross-sectional research design is adopted, and descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and frequency analysis will be used. It is a quantitative research in nature, focusing on data gathering and its mathematical quantification to give a holistic perspective of the social problem.

The researcher employs snowball sampling to select a sample of 70 child labourers in the city of Peshawar, specifically in the Saddar area, Pakistan. Data were gathered through structured interviews featuring a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions from the child labourers in Peshawar Saddar. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

3.2. Participations

Table 1Gender of the Respondents

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Gender of the respondents	Frequency	Percent
Male	64	91.4%
Female	6	8.6%
Total	70	100.0%

The table 1 shows the gender of the respondents, with 64 (91.4%) being male and six (8.6%) being female, out of the 70 respondents who participated in the study.

Table 2 *Age of the Respondents*

Age of the respondents	Frequency	Per cent
Less than 12 years	44	62.9
more than 12 years	26	37.1
Total	70	100.0

Table 2 shows the age distribution of the respondents. Out of 70 respondents, 44 (62.9%) are under 12 years, while 26 (37.1%) are over 12 years.

100.0

Table 3Education of the Respondents

Education of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Primary	47	67.1
Religious Education	2	2.9
Middle	15	21.4
None	6	8.6

Table 3 shows the educational status of the respondents. Out of 70, 47 (67%.1 %) were primary school educated. On the other hand, 2 (2.9%) reported having madrasa-based education, 15 (21.4%) received a middle-level education, and 6 (8.6%) did not receive any formal education in an institution.

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Table 4 *Number of family members and respondent's position in the sibling group.*

Total

	What number positioning?			
	Youngest	Middle	Elder	Total
Less than 5	8	11	1	20
More than 5	21	12	17	50 (71.4%)
Total	29	23	18	70
	(41.4%)	(32.9%)	(25.7%)	70

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Table 4 shows that out of 70 family members, 20 (28.6%) have fewer than five family members, while 50 (71.4%) have more than five family members, indicating a large family size. Next, out of 70 children, 29 (41.4%) are the youngest, 23 (32.9%) are in the middle position among their siblings, and 18 (25.7%) are the eldest among their siblings.

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4. Results

4.1. Reasons for School Non-Attendance and Desire for Education

Table 5 *Reasons for not attending school and continuing to wish in Education.*

Reason for not attending school	Do you wish to continue y		
	Yes	No	Total
	24	6	30
Poverty	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	7	4	11
Family Pressure	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%
	6	12	18
Not Interested	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	9	2	11
None	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
	46	24	70
Total	65.7%	34.3%	100.0%

Table 5 shows the reasons for not attending school. Out of 70, 30 (42.9%) are not attending school due to poverty, preferring to learn a skill. On the other hand, 11 (15.7%) reported that they were not attending school due to family pressure, to earn money, while 18 (25.7%) expressed no interest in receiving an education. Lastly, 11 (15.7%) were receiving an education.

On the other hand, out of 70, 46 (65.7%) are interested in continuing education, while 24 (34.3%) do not wish to continue their education in the upcoming time due to a preference for learning skills.

Out of 70, 30 (42.9%) are not attending school due to poverty, preferring to learn a skill. Among the remaining 40, 46 (65.7%) show interest in continuing education.

4.2. Children's Work Activities and Family Support

Table 6Showing What You Do to Earn Money, and a Child Who Is Currently Supporting the Family

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What do you do to earn money

Currently, who is financially supporting your family

_	Father	Mother	Brother	Total
Support family	37	2	7	46
	52.9%	2.9%	10.0%	65.7%
Save for the future	11	0	4	15
	15.7%	.0%	5.7%	21.4%
spend on personal needs	7	0	2	9
	10.0%	.0%	2.9%	12.9%
Total	55	2	13	70
rotar	78.6%	2.9%	18.6%	100.0%

Tables 6 show that 70 children (46.7%) earn money at home to support their family, 70 children (15.7%) save money for the future, and 70 children (9.3%) spend money on personal needs, such as buying food. Currently, 70 children (78.6%) are financially supported by their fathers, 70.2 children (2.9%) by their mothers, and 70.13 children (18.6%) by their brothers.

Significant findings indicate that 70 (4Six percent (6%) percent of the respondents earn money at home to support their families, and 70 (55%) of these families currently provide financial support to their children.

4.3. Daily income of child labourers.

Table 7This table indicates whether children are paid for their work and examines the daily income of child labourers.

Is it paid for your work?	How n			
is it paid for your work.	Less than 400	More than 500	Not paid	Total
	36	28	1	65
Yes	51.4%	40.0%	1.4%	92.9%
	1	0	4	5
No	1.4%	.0%	5.7%	7.1%
	37	28	5	70
Total	52.9%	40.0%	7.1%	100.0%

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Table 7 shows the daily income of the children: 70, 65, or 92.9 percent receive daily income from their workplace, while 29.5 percent (7.1%) do not receive any money from their workplace. Next. 70, 37 (52.9%) out of 100% have less than 400 rupees daily income, while 70, 28 (40.0%) out of 100% have more than 500 rupees daily income. While 70, 5 (7.1%) are not paid for their work, learning Skills.

4.4. Nature of child labour & Safety in the workplace

Table 8 *The nature of child labour and the provision of safety tools to child labourers in the workplace.*

What is the nature of child labour	Safety tool in	the workplace.	_	
	Yes	No	Total	
Shopkeeper	4	16	20	
	5.7%	22.9%	28.6%	
Mechanic	11	25	36	
	15.7%	35.7%	51.4%	
Collecting Scavenges	0	7	7	
	.0%	10.0%	10.0%	
Beggar	0	7	7	
	.0%	10.0%	10.0%	
	15	55	70	
Total	21.4%	78.6%	100.0%	

Table 8 shows the nature of the child labour, 70, 20 being (28.6%) are working as shopkeepers, 70,36 being (51.4%) are working as car mechanics and motorcycle mechanics, 70,7 being (10%) are collecting scavenged spare materials, 70,7 being (10.0%) are involved in begging. In the workplace, 15 (21.4%) child labourers have been provided safety tools, while 55 (78.6%) have not.

4.5. Labour hours and the use of abusive words in their workplace.

Table 9 *A table shows the number of child labour hours and the use of abusive words in their workplace.*

Hours spent in the	Use of abusi			
workplace	Often	Sometimes	Never	Total
Less than 10 Hours	6	19	4	29
	8.6%	27.1%	5.7%	41.4%
More than 10 Hours	7	24	10	41
	10.0%	34.3%	14.3%	58.6%
	13	43	14	70
Total	18.6%	61.4%	20.0%	100.0%

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Table 9 shows that 20.7% and 41% of children, as well as 1% of their workplaces, spend more than ten hours.

Next, shows an in workplace using abusive words to child labour, 70, 13 being (18.6%) using abusive words often in their workplace, 70,43 being (61.4%) have used abusive words sometimes, 70,14 being (20.0%) never use abusive words in their workplace.

Findings show that while 70, 41 being (58.6%) child labourers are spending more than ten hours in their workplace, 70,43 being (61.4% have used abusive words sometimes in the workplace.

4.6. The State working age for a child

Table 10

At what age do children start working as child labour, and interact with peer groups in free time?

At what age do you start working		un fuiands duning fuss time	
	Are you interacting with yo Yes	No	Total
	27	21	48
Below 10 years	38.6%	30.0%	68.6%
	14	8	22
Above 10 years	20.0%	11.4%	31.4%
	41	29	70
Total	58.6%	41.4%	100.0%

It is clear from the table 10 that the age children start working as child labourers 70, 48 (68.6%) start working below the age of 10, while 70,22 (31.4%) start working above the age of 10.

Next, we present an interaction with a friend in free time, with 70% (41/58.6%) of participants not $\overline{\text{Page} \mid 222}$ interacting with friends during this time, and 70, 29 (41.4%) interacting with friends during free time.

Child labourers (70, 48, and 68.6%) start working at a young age, interacting with friends in their free time, with 41, 70% (58.6%).

4.7. Child Labour and Financial Contribution

Table 11Child labour participation in institutions and showing interest in contributing financially to the family.

Participation in child labour programs.				showing interest in contributing financially to the family		
		_	Yes	No	Total	
	Yes	Count	9	1	10	
		% of Total	12.9%	1.4%	14.3%	
	No	Count	51	9	60	
		% of Total	72.9%	12.9%	85.7%	
		Count	60	10	70	
Total		% of Total	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%	

Table 11 shows that 70.10% (14.3%) of labourers participated in government and non-government programs, specifically in the Zamongkor organization and wing of child protection institutions, where they arranged programs for ten children. In contrast, 70.60% (85.7%) did not participate in any government or nongovernment program aimed at supporting the children's moral and social development.

While 70% (85.7%) are interested in contributing financially to their family, 70.1% (14.3 %) are not.

5. Discussion

The table indicates that most respondents are male (See Table 1). Among the 70 respondents, 64 (91.4%) are male child labourers (See Table 2). The table shows that most respondents are primarily

educated (see Table 3). Out of 70, 30 (42.9%) are not attending school due to poverty, preferring to learn a skill. Of the 70 participants, 46 (65.7%) showed interest in continuing education (see Table 4). 70, 50 being (71.4%) out of 100% there are more than five members in the family, indicating a large family size. Out of 70, 29 (41.4%) children are in a young position (see table 5). Significant findings suggest that 70 children (46, or 65.7%) earn money at home to support their families, with 55 children (78.6%) currently financially supported by their fathers (see Table 6). 70, 65, or 92.9 per cent are receiving a daily income from the workplace. Next. 70, or 37 (52.9%) out of 100, have a daily income of less than 400 rupees (see Table 7). The findings indicate that 70.36% of child labourers work as mechanics in the workshops, while 70.55% (78.6%) have not been provided with a safety tool in the workplace (see Table 9). Child labourers, 70, 48 (68.6%) start working below, interacting with friends in their free time, 70e, 41 (58.6%) (see table 10). While 70.6% (85.7%) are interested in contributing financially to the family, 70.1% (14.3%) are not interested in doing so (see Table 11).

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6. Conclusion

This study on the socio-economic situation of child labourers in Peshawar Saddar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, reveals significant challenges related to workplace environments, financial constraints, and limited access to education, as well as migration from Afghanistan to Pakistan. The findings indicate that 30 out of 70 child labourers (42.9%) are unable to attend school due to poverty, often prioritising skill acquisition, while 46 (65.7%) express a desire to pursue education, highlighting a critical opportunity for intervention. Children from large families and those working in car workshops face heightened risks, compounded by the absence of safety equipment and socio-economic vulnerabilities. Social activists inadequately address the weak socio-economic status of these children to fight the child labour issue. There is an urgent need for structured vocational training programs in car and motorcycle workshops to prevent exploitation and enhance skill development, alongside strengthened educational support and coordinated efforts from stakeholders to improve the welfare of child labourers in Peshawar.

6.1. Suggestions

- 1. Government and non-government agencies should launch a program for low-income families' child labour to reduce economic and educational barriers.
- 2. Develop policies to reduce child labour to promote technical skills and education.
- 3. Launch a non-formal school to educate child labourers in the workplace workshops.

- 4. Community-based awareness initiatives should be encouraged regarding child labour issues.
- 5. Form coalitions of social workers, educators, and NGOs in Saddar to advocate for child labourers' rights and provide direct support, such as rescuing children from exploitative work.

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