



## Family Social Structure and Intergenerational Persistence of Child Labor in Mechanical Workshops in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Muhammad Asghar Khan<sup>1</sup>, Prof Dr. Arab Naz<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Child labor is not a new phenomenon in human history which is commonly and unacceptably found in ancient as well in contemporary societies throughout the world. The researchers have explored that various determinants are held responsible for child labor depending upon the socio-cultural conditions and other aspects of life in a particular society. However, the current study adds a unique approach which explores the problem of child labor with intergenerational persistence of child labor in mechanical workshops of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The researcher focused those children who work in mechanical workshops, their parents and grandparents were also used to work in mechanical workshops during their childhood. The objective of this study merely targeted the family social structure and family related factor which lead towards intergenerational persistence of child labor. The researcher designed descriptive research questions followed by a qualitative phenomenological research approach to investigate the issue. The targeted population comprised of children working in mechanical workshops, their parents who were/are also involved in work and remained child labor during their very early stage of life. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques for data collection. Two major research instruments (semi-structured interview guide and a Focus Group Discussion) were used to collect data from the respondents. The data were analyzed, and major themes were discussed in the light of secondary data. The major findings reflect that large family size, age of child, family nature, family social norms, parent's personal behavior, household composition, siblings and relatives' involvement in mechanical workshop, were the major structural factors of intergenerational persistence of child labor in mechanical workshops.

**Keywords:** Child Labor, Persistent of child labor, Intergenerational, Family social structure, Relational hardships, Mechanical workshops

### 1. Background of the Study

The issue of child labor is a matter of grave concern both in developing as well in developed countries because every country has passed through the stage of development where child labor persisted (Anker, 2000). The survey of ILO reveals that nearly 160 million children (5 to 17 years) are involved in labor industries which make 7.6% of same age children of the world (ILO 2020). Among them, 79 million children belong to Asia and Pacific as compared to 41 million of Africa, 12 million of America, 06 million of Europe and Central Asia and 04 million of Arab States (ILO, 2021).

The issue is terrible and more vulnerable in underdeveloped and developing states i.e., in Sub-Saharan World and Africa, children are socialized in child labor which in return shows that socio-economic activities in African countries have enhanced the exploitation of children in this regard (Shendell, Noomnuat, Sorensen Allacci, & Madrigano, 2016). Webbing, Smit, and de-Jang (2013) explain that child labor is the result of both family oriented and national level decisions directly or indirectly pushing the child to work. Similarly, another Study indicates that parent's decision for child labor is not merely the family characteristics but availability of work opportunities for children and poor quality of education support parents to use child as a backup and alternative source of income.

Hussain, Saud, Khattak (2017) enlighten that South Asian region is the most awful region where myriad numbers of children are employed in hazardous working conditions which has been reflected in the survey of ILO (2010) that, more than 16.7 million children between the ages of 5-16 years are engaged in child labor where Pakistan stands second in this ranking. Bangladesh is the 3<sup>rd</sup> worse one from child labor perspective (Hussain, Saud & Khattak, 2017). child labor issue in Pakistan is more terrible and alarming as in other developing countries of the world. In spite of the constitutional provisions concerning the fundamental rights of children, federal and provincial assemblies legislations for child rights, their welfare, and eradication of child labor, ICT Children Protection Act-2018; Punjab Destitution and Neglect Children Act-2004; Punjab Prohibition of Child Labor at Brick-kiln Ordinance-2016; Sindh Child Protection Act-2011; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Welfare and Protection Act-2010) 10.7 million children (the ages of 5 to 17 years) are still involve in different forms of worse laboring (ILO, 2020). UNICEF (2021) report reveals that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1.6 million children (5-14 years) are laboring in agriculture, domestic, and informal sectors (Small manufacturing, mechanical workshops).

<sup>1</sup> PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan, [asgharsocio@uswat.edu.pk](mailto:asgharsocio@uswat.edu.pk)

<sup>2</sup> Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, [arab\\_naz@yahoo.com](mailto:arab_naz@yahoo.com)

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2017) indicates that child labor was seen as a necessary means of earning a livelihood by many families along with lack of awareness about the negative impacts of child labor on children's health and education.

Furthermore, as a tradition of family which does exist worldwide child labor persisted from generation to generation, in such case developing countries are more concerned, In such traditions head of the family make important decisions about family activities, including decision of children work. The decision-making structure along with other factors like poor parents, large family size etc. compelled people to send their children to market and involve them in labor activities which lead to intergenerational persistency of child labor (Aransiola, & Justus, 2017). More precisely looking into the contemporary world, the persistence of child labor over generation is unavoidable issue which is further intensified by adverse socio-economic crisis particularly in Covid-19 era school closure has provided opportunity to poor children to work for the financial support of their families in time of such economic depression (UNICEF, 2020; Şentürk & Ali, 2021).

Fetuga, Njokama, and Olowu (2005) summarized that large family size is among the most significant factor leads to child labor. Zafar, Sarwar and Haidar (2016), certify that in Pakistan extended and single parent families are more likely to push children in labor work as compared to nuclear families.

Elghazally *et, al*, (2022) found the similar situation in Egypt children of large families are feeding more in child labor as compared to children of small nuclear families. A Egyptian researcher Khatab *et, al*, (2019) exposes that 67% of child laborer are from large size families.

Likewise, De Mesquita, and de Farias Souza (2018) point put that children living with both parents are less likely to go for work as compared to single parent (divorce). Due to divorce family's stresses increase the chances of child labor, increase in number of siblings has also the same effects. Therefore, research results confirm that family structure, family size and nature of parents' relationship are closely related to increase or decrease child labor. Webbing, Smit, and de-Jang (2013) display t social structure and resources of families which are responsible for pushing the children to work. An unskilled and manual job is one of great employment opportunity and specifically in rural areas such jobs are easily available as compared to urban localities. Khatab *et, al*, (2019), in Egypt also views parents' occupation as a significant cause of child labor and workers of agriculture, cotton production, and fishing industries are more inclined towards engaging their kids in work. Besides,

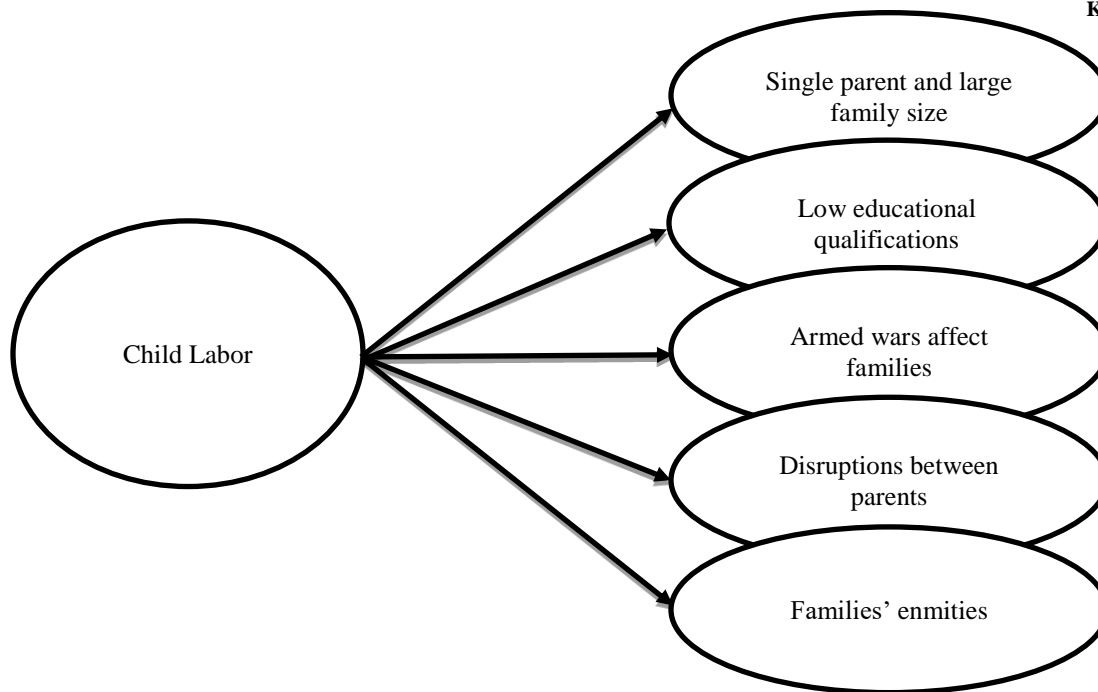
Elghazally *et, al*, (2022), identified parents working in agriculture, daily wagers, garments, and construction employed are tend to send their children to work earlier as compared to some other professions.

Apart from economic patterns of families, social structure of families is also responsible for persistence of child labor. The social situation of families such as parents' death, separations, and conflicts, nature of family (single, nuclear and joint/ extended families) also push or restrains child from work in early age of life. M. Niaz Asadullah and Zaki Wahhaj (2011), concluded that family structure is significant agent of child labor, in most families death of father (earning source) was significantly pushing children to work. According to Isaac Addai and Jelena Pokimica (2015) the role of family structure and household composition influence parents' decisions about their children education and work. The study reveals that in Ghana the non-traditional families such as single parent family's children have low academic achievement and more inclined to work during school age. Beniamino Savonitto and Vincenzo Di Maro (2017) adds that family crisis (poverty, relational and social) forces engage their children in labor work, matriarchal families inclined towards child labor is more as compared patriarchal ones.

Ririn S. Purnamasari and Daniel Suryadarma (2018) sum up that large families with low educational status of parents, and single parents' family's children are more likely to work in early childhood because large families need more sources of income to fulfil the needs of households and they are not interested in their children education. Same is the case with single parents' or broken families i.e. one parents with single source of income cannot satisfy the needs of child, therefore all these process ends on sending the child to work instead of schooling.

In addition Vargas and Luis Carlos Reyes (2020) adds that armed conflicts and enmity of family's children are unable to attend schools due to fear of conflicts and enemies which push the family heads to decide laboring. In a nutshell, family social structure has significant impacts on child as it directly suspends the educational activities of children and pushes them to work. As well as social characteristics of families includes, poverty, disruption between parents, family size, enmity, armed wars, and family heads educational status are the major driven forces that contribute positively into child labor persistence and activities.

Herz and Epstein (2021) point out that the phenomenon of child labor in most of cases is an intergenerational transmission from parents to children. An analysis was carried out to study that how social and cultural factors during childhood time of a child do affects their parents' choices for them (Education/work/leisure time/demands/expectations etc.). It was concluded that parents' behaviors, characteristics, choices and other environmental factors (within the family and in the surrounding community) enhance the probability of adopting similar pattern of choices, behaviors and characteristics at adulthood.



**Figure: Social characteristics of family that leads towards child labor**

## 2. Methods and Procedures

The study concentrates on explorations of family social structure with its relational adversities as a major determinant of intergenerational persistence of child labor working in mechanical workshops of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. It was imperative to explore this research phenomenon by following qualitative research design with special concentration on the background determinants responsible for child labor persistence from one generation to another generation. Likewise, this study intends to explore life experiences of the study participants in their natural setting (mechanical workshops), therefore, phenomenological research design with thematic analysis from qualitative approach have been adopted by researcher. The descriptive survey method was adopted for data collection in the field through self-designed interview questions and focused group discussions. The interview questions were used for one-to-one interviews from children working in mechanical workshops while focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with parents/guardians of children working/worked in mechanical workshops through personal visits. For locating study participants children working in mechanical workshops were included and whose parents also remain child laborer during their childhood. A total of 20 study participants (child laborers working in mechanical workshops) and 32 participants in three Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) constituted sample group of the study.

Thematic analysis techniques has been to analyzed data because in qualitative research studies the most frequently used method is thematic analysis technique by researchers. For thematic analysis the interviews data were transcribed as it was recorded through mobile phone and notes were also taken during face to face interviews along with focus group discussions (FGDs). Codes and sub-codes were sorted in the light of research objectives and questions where major themes and sub-themes were identified which was helpful to answer research questions and discuss themes in the light of available literature.

### 2.1. Objective of the study

Major objective of the study is to explore family social structure and its relational hardships in promulgation of child labor persistence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.

## 3. Results and Discussion

As discussed in methodology in current study, thematic analysis method was used as a tool of data analysis to interpret and present the collected data in a good manner and sequence. The following discussion shows family social structure with various relational hardships being responsible for child labor persistence in mechanical workshops of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

The field data reflects that 46% of children age was found between 11 to 14 years as compared to 30% of 15 to 17 age group children working in mechanical workshops. There were no children from joint family system in comparison to 53% children from nuclear and 47% children from single parent families. Family size and structure is

also greatly contributing into the persistence of child labor. According to Haile, and Haile (2012) there is close positive association between family size and work along with education among children. Furthermore, Dodge, Cox, and Commenges (2006) conclusions also supported that large family size contribute into child labor, because the educational, living, medical and related expenditure of children in large families are mostly difficult for the household to satisfy. The participants of the study revealed that mostly nuclear families' children do join mechanical workshops in early ages, their source of income is less, and daily expenses of homes are not satisfied with a single source of income.

#### Child Age, Family Nature, and Father Status

1. Child age range	7-10 = 23%	11-14 = 46.6%	15-17 = 30.4%
2. Family nature	Nuclear = 53.3%	Single = 46.7%	Joint = 0.0%
3. Father's Status	Alive + Working = 33.3%	Don't work due to health issues = 30%	Died = 26.7%

Furthermore, along with nuclear families the children of single parents' families are also huge in number that is 46% of the respondents fathers were died in their early ages, which is considered a cause of their work and their fathers also belongs to mechanical workshops. These increase numbers of family member reduce the focus of parents in multiple perspectives, including, education, health, social development, and other related domestic necessities. As in focus group discussion one participant on a supplementary question (what is more important for children i.e. money or parents' quality time?) replied

*Making money is more important for children because without money you cannot satisfy their basic needs and all of us know that one thing i.e. money or time with kids is possible both are not possible even for rich families. Another participant added that, it is mothers' responsibility to work on children development but they are only satisfying their needs of food, cloths, cleanliness etc and the rest are supposed to be catered by the schools.*

Furthermore, uneducated mothers are unable to provide their children the atmosphere which supports their educational, recreational and social development. They can't assist the kids in their teachers' assigned homework, study routines for children at home, dividing the roles and responsibilities related to domestic matters. It was also inferred from the focus group discussions and individual interviews that there are no pre-determine routines for children at home, whatsoever the work is supposed to be done by the availability where most of the tasks are completed by fathers, and elder kids.

A parent add that

*Being a poor person, it is more important for me to provide food, treatment, cloths to my children instead of sending to school which has no guarantee of jobs for poor people (BKLE-SPIEA-19-22).*

*One parent was of the view that, I do not know about education, but I know that skill learning is important for livelihood. I have five kids and have the only source of income that is the work of Kharad, and you do not know the situations of market now a days, I can feed only (BKLE-SPIEA-39-25).*

A child who was working with engine mechanic recorded his view that

*My father is suffered from asthma since last nine months who was once an expert of engine and who was the only source of our family income. Therefore, it is my responsibility to work for my father and family in these crucial times (CHCH-LFGDEA-11-10).*

In response to a question that "is there any possibility of financing the education of children whose parents have been suffered from different diseases or deaths" a child replied

*No one helps those who are alone in family, or whose parents are poor/died. Even government finances / support are impossible without other support. It is quite apparent that people only show courtesies and showoff only, but they never help you, it's all about you only (UDCH-LFDGEA-13-8).*

These results are in accordance with the results of Hafeez, and Hussain (2019) who concluded that children of poor nuclear families are more exposed to child labor as compared to other types of families, but the results of the study of Elghazally *et, al*, (2022) were in contrast as they concluded that children of joint families are more inclined towards child labor as compared to nuclear families. The results also showed that 33% fathers were working and alive as compared to 27% died fathers and 30% do not work due to health issues fathers of child labors. Alam (2015) concluded that children involvement in labor activities are also related to the parental health shocks, deaths, and financial declines. In nutshell, large family size, more siblings along with other mentioned determinants are significantly contributing the persistence of child labor.

#### Father's education, Mother's Education and Family Size

1. Father's education	Illiterate 66.2%	Primary 20.4%	Secondary 13.4	University 0.0%
2. Mother's education	Illiterate 100%	Primary 0.0%	Secondary 0.0%	University 0.0%
3. Number of siblings	1 to 3 13.3%	4 to 6 32.3%	7 and above 54.4%	

The interview data revealed most of the parents of child labors working in mechanical workshops are illiterate and having primary or maximum secondary level education. No child claim University degree of his father and mother but as compared to mother educational level their father's educational status seems to be high but still not encouraging. Empirical information of the study argued that 100% of mothers were found uneducated, 66% fathers were illiterate, 20% were having primary and 13% having secondary level education.

Elghazally *et, al*, (2022) concluded that 72% child labor parents were illiterates while Khatab *et, al*, (2019) indicated that most of the parent of child labors are illiterates and they considered children as a source of earning. Similarly, Ali and Soharwardi (2022) are of the view that uneducated parents tended towards child labor instead of sending them to schools while Owoyomi (2018) also revealed that in rural areas of Nigeria the literacy rate is very low and number of child labor working in different sectors belong to these rural areas are very high. During the focus group discussion one statement was that "whatever mother can do nobody can" but the problem of uneducated mother is enough to disturb the whole family and disproportionately used and waste the skills, abilities and attitude of their kids. Alcaraz, Chiquiar, and Salcedo (2012) concluded that educated and skilled mother can make a difference in combating against child labor. Furthermore, some significant responses of the children as mentioned below are enough on the effects of illiteracy of these mothers.

*You cannot make anything of this schooling, go to the workshop of Mr. XYZ, on one hand you will earn something and on the other hand you can make your future.*

*Your father is the only person who earn and now (at the age of 10 years) older enough to assist your father because he is alone in the workshop.*

*Shame on you, you ask for money every day from your father for books, notebooks, pencils etc, you can earn by yourself. At your age my brother was supervising all the work of our fields.*

*You are the elder son, who is the supporter and backbone of fathers, and you, NA NAR YE AW NA KHAZA (you are neither male nor female), good for nothing.*

These statements are quite natural in discussions of uneducated parents with their children, because of unawareness about the importance of education. A parent believed, *The educational expenses of boys who are the future earning source is difficult for them to bear, in such situations how can I educate my daughter, and why should I educate her as she belongs to another family after her marriage.* (DULE-SPIEA-47-30)

The data also revealed that children of educated parents are rarely involved in mechanical workshops which confirms that increasing level of education also contribute in reduction of child labor. This inverse correlation is strong enough from the perspective of mother education and number of children at home is also an important indicator of child labor persistence, as according to the results more children families are more likely to send their children to work as compared to few children family.

### 3.1. Siblings and Relatives in Mechanical Workshops

Parents, sibling, relatives' involvement in mechanical workshop was another important theme responsible for persistence of child labor in mechanical workshops. Siblings and peers easily influence children, they follow the trends set by elder siblings and relatives with whom they interact frequently. Edmonds (2006) concluded, elder children do work more than younger and this is quite significant among girls as compared to boys who work more than boys. Elder children are more exposed to work and continue with the space between the birth of child and number of siblings. Wilke, Howard, and Goldman (2020) also studied this phenomenon during covid-19 pandemic where elder children along with adults of the family were employed to support the financial positions of family. The study data showed that majority of the children are inclined to mechanical workshops because their brothers, cousin and other near relative are already working there. One participant told that

*We are four brothers, my father health condition is not good, my elder brother is working with my father in denting and painting workshop while I have been employed here with XYZ ustad (mechanic) where I am paid with rupees two hundred and fifty per day, I have told my parents that my earning will only be spent on my younger brother so that he can attend the school. But sometimes my parents spend my earning in paying utility (electricity) bills (DUCH-LSPIEA-13/05).*

The researcher also observed sibling associations found significant in employment of children in mechanical workshops and (60%) children are working with their parents, siblings and near relatives. A child in this regards stated

*My brother is always dominant at home, all of us are supposed to obey him, he gave money to my father, mother and to us (me and my sister). He wake up late in the morning, came home late at night, no one ask him anything, but we are supposed to wake up early and to be at home on time, if I get late to home for any reason, my mother get angry to me, therefore, last year after covid-19 I decided to go to the workshop instead of school with my brother, so that I may have all the privileges that my brother has (UDCH-LSPIEA-14/04).*

Another participant discoursed that

*Children get inspired easily from workshop environment where they have more autonomy, relationships, chance of earning along with learning multiple skills as compared to the children in schools only (SWCE-SPIEA-41/22).*

In nutshell, children react strongly to siblings, relatives, and parents' actions and majority of their actions are reactions to the perceived situations at home, interactions with siblings and parents' treatment (Loeser, Whiteman, & McHale, 2016).

Likewise, the results of Waziri (2019) also add fifty-four percent families were comprised of seven and above siblings as compared to 13.3% families of 1 to 3 siblings. Fetuga, Njokama and Olowu (2005) revealed that large family size increase difficulties of guardians to meet basic, educational and health related needs which in reverse increase chances of child labor.

## 4. Conclusions

The research study concluded that family social structure and its relational difficulties have a strong association with child labor and its persistence from one generation to another. Age of children, family size, nature family social norms, parent's educational status along with siblings and other relatives are most responsible determinants for child labor persistence specifically in mechanical workshops of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The themes along with other responses of parents and workshops owner proved that they let the children to be attracted by operant things of workshops and do not guide their children regarding the importance of education.

These results also concluded that parents with lower educational status are more inclined and motivated towards child labor works instead of parents with high educational status and even a single child employed in mechanical workshop of such parents has not reported.

It also important to add that there was not a single participant's father or mother who have university level education which means that university level degree reduce the chances of child labor persistence in successors. Parents influences on their children is significant, as most of the initial decisions related to children are taken by parents and they also influence it directly/intentionally or indirectly/unintentionally which mostly led towards quitting of school and joining of labor work in mechanical workshops. Therefore, female education is more important, as they are supposed to prepare future generations, and they are in a better position to bring out their children from child labor and break the malicious circle of intergenerational persistence of child labor.

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