

A Review on the Typology of Child Labour

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Abstract

Child labour is a major social problem that negatively impacts children's development. It literally siphons from them their childhood by denying them opportunities to develop physically, socially, emotionally, and mentally. International Labour Organization (ILO), is one of the International organizations that is playing a leading role in protecting children from detrimental labour practices. The aim of this article is to review literature on labour practices that have harmful effects on children's development. In this article, we identified two classification of labour practices that have negative effects on children. The two classifications are: Hazardous labour and Worst forms of Labour

Key Words

Child Labour, Hazardous labour, Worst forms of labour

Introduction

Child labour refers to all work activities performed by children that deprives them of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, to the extent of harming their physical and mental development. This definition does not imply that all forms of work, whether paid or not, performed by children amounts to child labour but rather it focuses on those work activities that have negative implications on all aspects of children's development. Some work activities, such as domestic chores and working in family businesses, have positive impacts on children's development. They enable children to build their character and acquire or sharpen their skills. For instance, engaging children in performing work activities such as domestic chores, babysitting, garden work have been found to have beneficial effects on them. They enable children develop skills such as selfcare, tolerance and good personal finance management among many other (Dessy & Pallage, 2005). The definition of child labour focuses more on protecting and excluding children from activities that may harm their physical, moral, social, and mental developments. Examples of such jobs/work

include working in armed forces, mines and quarries, bondage and prostitution, factories and plants, plantations, and construction sites among many others. These types of work require children to spend long hours performing them, consequently disrupting their schedules of development and schooling. Due to nature of these jobs, most children are normally forced to prematurely discontinue their schooling (International Labour Organization, 2004; Kopinec, 2013; Mačkinová, 2017).

The ILO estimates that approximately 151,622,000 children are globally engaged in various forms of labour. 19.6% of these children are from Africa, 7.4% in Asia and the Pacific, 5.3% in the Americas, 4.1% in Europe and central Asia, while 2.9% are from Arab states. The ILO further estimates that globally; at least 58% of children involved in child labour are male while 42% are female. In terms of their distribution according to their ages; 48% of them are within the age brackets 5-11 years, 28% are 12-14 years old, while 24% are aged between 15-17 years. In Europe, 77% of all children involved in child labour work in agricultural sector, 10% in industries and 13% in service sector. ILO further estimates that globally 72,525,000 (4.6%) of children are involved in hazardous forms of labour, of which 8.6% of them are in Africa, 4.0% in Europe and central Asia, 3.4% in Asia and the Pacific, 3.2% in Americas, and 1.5% in Arab states (ILO, 2017; ILO, 2017).

Causes of child labour

The main cause of child labour is usually child poverty, which can be measured by the degree to which children have been deprived of basic services and needs (Dessy & Pallage, 2005). According to Pinilla-Roncancio & Silva, (2018) these basic needs and services are '*food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and access to services*'. Children who have been severely deprived these basic needs and services have higher risks of joining labour force in order to satisfy these needs. Though deprivation of these factors may tip children towards joining labour force, a good proportion of them get coerced in doing so by their parents. Such parents see their children as sources of extra income for their families. Other factors that have been attributed to child labour are literacy levels of their parents, socio-cultural practices, and inaccessibility to schools due to socio-structural and geographical barriers such as social inequality and physical distances (Ahmed, 2013).

Criteria for classifying child labour

There are three criteria that are normally used in classifying child labour: sector of economy, job occupation, and the geographic location of the job. The first criteria involve classifying child labour based on sector of economy as either formal or informal sector. Formal jobs/work are those that are regulated by the State and have defined duties, work hours and days, salary/wages, and work-related benefits/bonuses. On the other hand, informal jobs are legal jobs/work that operate outside State regulations. Most children are normally employed in informal sectors where the State rarely regulate their work activities. Informal sector easily absorbs children because they rarely require individuals with highly specialized skills, skills which children do not have. Examples of such jobs includes working as domestic house helps (popularly known as house maids), armed fighters, garbage collectors, street beggars, merchandizers, farm/garden workers etc. In most countries, children are not allowed to enter formal job markets, however, there are few States with weak regulators that still condone this practice. In these countries, children work under the cover of darkness and away from the glare of media. They are most often employed in factories, construction, and mining sites, and some in armed forces.

The second criteria involve classifying child labour based on occupation. Large proportion of child labour abuses takes place in agricultural, mining and manufacturing based occupations. This system of classification a vital role in enabling practitioners and policy makers ascertain levels of risk occupations have on the health, safety, and morals of children.

The third criteria involve classifying child labour based on geographical regions where they take occur, i.e. urban vs rural areas. Based on this criterion, there are child labour abuses that are more likely to be reported in some geographical regions than others. For instance, involvement of children in manufacturing processes are more likely to be reported in urban centres than in rural areas. This criterion of classification assists practitioners and policy makers in determining kinds of push and pull factors that make children join labour force. For instance, children living in impoverished parts of urban centres are more likely to be pushed by economic factors in seeking employment in industries compared to those living in rural areas who are more likely to be pulled by need for casual labourers in big agricultural plantations.

Minimum Age for Employment

Minimum age for allowing children to be engaged in employment has been of great contention. This contention was brought by varying definition used by different societies in determining who qualifies to be an adult. Some societies conferred on their members status of adulthood, despite their chronological ages, based on their marital statuses and cultural rites of passage such as circumcision. In 1973, ILO through Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Employment, laid this problem to a rest.

The Convention, no. 138, stipulated that each countries ratifying the Convention should fix in their national laws a minimum age for employment not to be less than that of completing compulsory basic education, and for whatever reasons it should not be less than 15 years with exception of developing countries which may fix theirs at 14 years. The Convention further set the lower age limits on the kinds of work children may be allowed to perform. Through Article 7 of this Convention, ILO set 13-15 years as the lower age limits for which children may be allowed to perform light and general work, respectively , i.e. work activities that do not cause harm or hinder children from attending school. For developing countries, the Convention set the age limits for engaging in light and general work to be at 12-14 years, respectively. The Convention further forbade children, below 18 years, from being allowed to performing hazardous work (International Labour Organization, 2011).

Types of Child labour

There are two types of detrimental child labour namely, Hazardous Child labour and Worst forms of Child labour.

a) Hazardous Child labour

Hazardous child labour refers to kinds of work that are likely to cause harm to children's health, safety and/or morals. They include all economic activities that may lead to children's death, injuries, and illness due to work itself or work environment. Under ILO Convention no. 182 Article 3 (d), hazardous work includes working:

- i) Under the sea, below ground levels, in confined spaces or dangerous heights

- ii) With or handling dangerous machineries, tools, and equipment, and/or transporting and lifting heavy items
- iii) In environments that may expose them to dangerous substances, agents, or processes, and or to extreme temperatures, noise, or vibrations
- iv) under tough working conditions such as long hours, nightshifts, or high pressure to deliver results (International Labour Organization, 2011; Kamei, 2018).

b) Worst of forms of child labour

Worst forms of child labour are forms of labour that have higher risk of causing physical and psychological harm to children (Dessy & Pallage, 2005). In 1999, International Labour Organization through Convention No. 182, Article 3 listed the following labour practices as Worst Forms of Child Labour:

- a) All forms of Slavery and/or similar practices such as sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour including recruitment into armed forces
- b) Sexual exploitation of children such engaging them in prostitution and/or use in production of pornographic materials
- c) Enlisting children for purpose of committing illegal activities as trafficking of narcotics
- d) Hazardous work i.e. those that are more likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (Dennis, 1999).

Conclusion

Child labour does not necessarily mean all work activities that children engaging in are bad. There are some that are beneficial to children. Some may help acquire and develop various skills and personality. On the other hand, there are some work activities that siphons off childhood from children such as prostitution and debt bondage. Thus, we conclude that the work activities that children need to be protected from are hazardous labour and worst forms of labour.

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