

Child Labor Facts in the Worldwide: A Review Article

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Abstract

The economic exploitation of children is an insult to humanity. All over the world children continue to work, putting at stake their education, their health, their normal development to adulthood, and even their lives. Millions of them work under hazardous conditions which present dangers to their health, safety and welfare. They toil in mines and quarries, are exposed to agrochemicals in agriculture, squat in crippling positions to weave rugs and carpets, and scavenge in rubbish tips. Too many are enslaved in bonded labour, isolated in domestic service, and traumatized and abused in the commercial sex trade.

The number of children working in the world today is higher than most people think, although it is difficult to obtain anything more than an educated global estimate. This is firstly because many kinds of child labour are underreported, and secondly because many countries have no desire or incentive to publicize how many of their young people work. Nevertheless, statistical techniques allow us to estimate that between 250 to 304 million children aged 5–17 involved in any economic activity are counted. Child labour accounts for 22% of the workforce in Asia, 32% in Africa, 17% in Latin America, 1% in US, Canada, Europe and other wealthy nations.

Key Words: Child labour, Child Rights, Facts, World.

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Introduction

Child labour refers to the employment of children in any work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful (1). This practice is considered exploitative by many international organisations. Legislations across the world prohibit child labour (2, 3). These laws do not consider all work by children as child labour; exceptions include work by child artists, supervised training, certain categories of work such as those by Amish children, some forms of child work common among indigenous American children, and others (4-6).

Child labour was employed to varying extents through most of history. Before 1940, numerous children aged 5–14 worked in Europe, the United States and various colonies of European powers. These children worked in agriculture, home-based assembly operations, factories, mining and in services such as newsies. Some worked night shifts lasting 12 hours. With the rise of household income, availability of schools and passage of child labour laws, the incidence rates of child labour fell (7-9).

In developing countries, with high poverty and poor schooling opportunities, child labour is still prevalent. In 2010, sub-saharan Africa had the highest incidence rates of child labour, with several African nations witnessing over 50 percent of children aged 5–14 working (10).

The incidence of child labour in the world decreased from 25% to 10% between 1960 and 2003, according to the World Bank (11). Nevertheless, the total number of child labourers remains high, with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and International Labour Organization (ILO) acknowledging

an estimated 168 million children aged 5–17 worldwide, were involved in child labour in 2013(12).

Defining child labour

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. These kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

The term "child labour" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- Is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- Interferes with their schooling;
- By depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
- By obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
- By requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Defining the worst forms of child labour

In 1999, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182 was adopted at the

International Labour Conference in Geneva by delegates from employers' organizations, trade unions and governments of the 175 countries that are member States of the International Labour Organization. The vote for this international agreement was unanimous, expressing a growing international consensus that certain forms of child labour are so fundamentally at odds with children's basic human rights that they must be eliminated as a priority. The individual member governments may each ratify the Convention, and more than 140 of them have already done so (as of June 2003). In so doing they commit their country to take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate all worst forms of child labour for all children under the age of 18. No other ILO Convention has ever been ratified at such a rapid pace (13-17).

Materials and Methods

The current study was a review survey which was conducted to evaluate some informations of child labour that is mentioned in science website by studying articles, ILO website and books science texts. To evaluate the texts, the singular or combination forms of the following keywords were used: "Child Labour", "Worldwide", "Child Rights".

To evaluate the electronic Persian databases the following websites were searched: Google, Scientific information database (SID), Ministry of healthcare, Medical articles library of Iran (medlib.ir), Iranian research institute for information (Iran Doc), publication database (Magiran, Iran medex), and also search in other electronic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus and PubMed. Also, library search was performed by referring to the journal archives of libraries, and evaluating the available Persian and English references such as text

books and also articles of research-scientific and educational journals, and articles of the annual seminar of medicine and psychology.

Results

Child labour is still common in many parts of the world. Estimates for child labour vary. It ranges between 250 to 304 million, if children aged 5–17 involved in any economic activity are counted. If light occasional work is excluded, ILO estimates there were 153 million child labourers aged 5–14 worldwide in 2008. This is about 20 million less than ILO estimate for child labourers in 2004.

Some 60 percent of the child labour was involved in agricultural activities such as farming, dairy, fisheries and forestry. Another 25 percent of child labourers were in service activities such as retail, hawking goods, restaurants, load and transfer of goods, storage, picking and recycling trash, polishing shoes, domestic help, and other services. The remaining 15 percent laboured in assembly and manufacturing in informal economy, home-based enterprises, factories, mines, packaging salt, operating machinery, and such operations (18, 19).

Two out of three child workers work alongside their parents, in unpaid family work situations. Some children work as guides for tourists, sometimes combined with bringing in business for shops and restaurants. Child labour predominantly occurs in the rural areas (70%) and informal urban sector (26%).

Contrary to popular beliefs, most child labourers are employed by their parents rather than in manufacturing or formal economy. Children who work for pay or in-kind compensation are usually found in rural settings, than urban centers. Less than 3 percent of child labour aged 5–14 across the

world work outside their household, or away from their parents (20).

Child labour accounts for 22% of the workforce in Asia, 32% in Africa, 17% in Latin America, 1% in US, Canada, Europe and other wealthy nations. The proportion of child labourers varies greatly among countries and even regions inside those countries. Africa has the highest percentage of children aged 5–17 employed as child labour, and a total of over 65 million. Asia, with its larger population, has the largest number of children employed as child labour at about 114 million. Latin America and Caribbean region has lower overall population density, but at 14 million child labourers has high incidence rates too (21).

At what age should a child be allowed to work?

People hold very different ideas about what children should and should not be permitted to do, and at what age they should be allowed to do certain kinds of work - or even to work at all.

Different countries have different minimum ages in their national legislation. ILO Convention No. 138, adopted in 1973, sets 15 as the minimum age for work in developed countries, but a child can become an apprentice at a younger age (14 years) or undergo vocational training. More than 130 countries have ratified this convention. Yet the report of an ILO meeting held in 1996 indicated that many children are still put to work as young as five or six years old (Table.1) (16, 22, 23).

Table 1: Minimum ages according to the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

General minimum age	
Light work	Hazardous work
In general *Not less than age of completion of compulsory schooling, and in any case not less than 15 years	
13 years	18 years (16 years under certain strict conditions)
Developing countries *Not less than 14 years for an initial period	
12 years	18 years (16 years under certain strict conditions)

Why do children work?

Children enter into work for many reasons:

- Being born into a poor family and working to earn money to help support them;
- In order to get food or to have somewhere to live;
- Working to pay off money their parents owe;
- Being the head of their household (there are a lot of child-headed households in Africa because of HIV and AIDS);
- Being taken against their will and being used by or sold to corrupt people;
- It is easier for employees to get children to work in bad conditions than adults. They are also cheaper to employ;
- Poverty Reduction;
- Education is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty;
- Reducing poverty will mean parents aren't forced to send their children to work or sell them to employers in order to survive;

- Train adults in skills needed to improve their income.

What can be done about child labour?

There are a number of things that can be done:

Improving Laws and Regulations

- UNICEF urges governments to pass laws to stop child labour. Many companies based in the industrialised world adopted laws intended to stop children from being involved in manufacturing goods that the company imports from developing countries.
- UNICEF supports the Roadmap for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016, which calls for an integrated approach to solving the issue of child labour.

Poverty Reduction

- Education is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty.
- Reducing poverty will mean parents aren't forced to send their children to work or sell them to employers in order to survive.
- Train adults in skills needed to improve their income.

Education

- Children must have an education. It is critical to improve a child's employment and income opportunities later in life
- Children can be educated about their rights and where to get help if they need it.
- At the same time, the public can be educated about the effects of child labour on children and encouraged to support fair trade goods (2, 8-10).

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, United Nations General Assembly voted that children all around the world needed a special convention just for them. The Convention sets out the rights of children, aged 0 to 18 years, and the responsibilities of governments to achieve those rights. These rights are based on what a child needs to survive, grow, participate and fulfill their potential. They apply equally to every child, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion or wealth. It also mentions the responsibilities parents, governments and children themselves have to ensure the rights of children are met. The UN Child Rights Convention consists of 54 statements (called articles) and is guided by 4 fundamental principles:

1. **Non-discrimination:** all children should have equal opportunities and are of equal worth regardless of ethnicity, gender, language, religion, wealth or ability.
2. **The best interests of the child:** laws and actions affecting children should put their interests first and benefit them in the best possible way.
3. **Survival, development, and protection:** the authorities in each country have the responsibility to protect children and help ensure their full development, physically, spiritually, culturally, and socially.
4. **Participation:** children have a right to have their say in decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account (12, 22, 23).

Conclusion

It is clear that there are more children as a percentage of the total child population working in the developing countries than in the industrialized ones. They start work at a younger age, sometimes but not always

within the family home. The variety of jobs they do is greater than in the developed countries, and less recognized by the authorities. They enjoy fewer legal or other protections, if any, and no training to help them deal with the health and other hazards of their work, and they are often helpless to counter poor treatment and exploitation by their employers (or by their families). When laws exist, they may not be implemented. All in all, children in developing countries work much harder than those in industrialized countries, for less reward and most often foregoing the benefits of schooling. Some even have to create their own jobs, which they do by working on the streets or scavenging for garbage.

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