

Original Research

Socio-Economic Determinants of Child Labor: Evidence from Brick Kilns Industry at District Bhakkar, Pakistan

Altaf Hussain¹, Kamran Ishfaq*¹, and Syed Zuhaib Aziz²

1 Department of Sociology, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan; altafhussain1733785@gmail.com ; dr.kamran@bzu.edu.pk

2 Department of Sociology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan; zuhaib979@gmail.com

* Email address: dr.kamran@bzu.edu.pk

Abstract: Child labor is global concern that disproportionately affects the underdeveloped countries like Pakistan. According to the national statistics, more than 3 million children in Pakistan are engaged in child labor. Child labor does not only result in the deprivation of the basic rights of the children including health and education but the long working hours also negatively affects their physical, psychological and social development. There are multiple factors that contributes to the acceptance of child labor and understanding these factors is essential to develop effective child labor policies. Given this, the current study aims to determine the socioeconomic determinants of child labor in brick kilns in Bhakkar, Punjab, Pakistan. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from child laborers working in brick kilns. A total of 384 respondents were selected from 284 registered brick kilns in Bhakkar District using a convenience sampling technique. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In this study, the majority of respondents were males aged 14 to 17 years old and were equally distributed among being the local inhabitants or Afghan migrants. Most of respondents did not possess a home. According to the study, the key predictors of child labor are poverty, lack of education, regional culture, adopting a family career, children's desire to earn rather than educate themselves, and a lack of skill institutions for children. Conclusively, poverty is the major cause of high prevalence of child labor. There is a high need to increase the public knowledge regarding the negative consequences of child labor on the health, education, and development of the children which could then help to reduce child labor.

Keywords: Socio-Economic, Determinants, Child labor, Brick Kilns, Bakhar, Punjab, Pakistan

Introduction: Child labor refers to the engagement of children in work that exploits their physical and mental capacities instead of providing them with adequate opportunities for education, development, and a healthy childhood. The concept is relative, as its definition varies across different cultures and societies (Dessy, Sylvain, & Stéphane, 2001). According to Grand (1983), child labor is the employment of children who are either too young to work for wages or engaged in jobs that are

inappropriate, unsafe, or detrimental to their wellbeing.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labor as work that compels children to earn a livelihood for themselves or their families on a regular basis, resulting in educational and social deprivation. Such work is often exploitative, hazardous to children's health, and harmful to their physical, mental, and emotional development. It frequently separates children from their families, deprives them of educational and vocational opportunities, and forces them to assume adult responsibilities prematurely.

More broadly, child labor encompasses the exploitation of children through work that interferes with their education, compromises their health and

Publication Date: 30th June, 2026



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development, and deprives them of their fundamental rights, including the right to a safe and fulfilling childhood. Consequently, child labor is widely recognized as a serious violation of children's rights and is condemned by numerous international conventions and organizations. The ILO defines child labor as "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development." According to the ILO (2021), an estimated 152 million children worldwide are engaged in child labor, nearly half of whom are involved in hazardous forms of work.

The problem of child labor has two components. The phenomenon of children comes first. The age of children varies based on the jurisdiction. Many legal systems protect both the majority and minority ages. According to Article 11 of Pakistan's 1973 constitution, child labor is defined as work performed by a person under the age of 14. Second, it differs from child labor is that it requires some form of efforts or labor in exchange for monetary rewards. As a result, child labor refers to work done by a group of people under the age of minority in exchange for money (Edmonds, 2007).

A range of social, economic, and cultural factors influence the frequency of child labor. Several researches have looked into the factors that contribute to child labor's existence, offering light on the underlying reasons and circumstances. Here are some research-backed important determinants; Poverty remains one of the most significant underlying causes of child labor. When families face persistent financial hardship and are unable to meet their basic needs, children are often forced to enter the workforce to supplement household income, thereby increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and depriving them of educational opportunities. Several studies

have consistently found a strong positive relationship between poverty and child labor (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005). Child labor is heavily influenced by a lack of access to adequate education. Children are more likely to engage in labor activities if they are not enrolled in school or have access to educational resources. The significance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty and lowering child labor is critical (Basu & Tzannatos, 2003).

A social and cultural group known as 'Khana Badosh' (gypsies) has a tradition of migrating from place to place in pursuit of work; they are mainly self-employed, and women are more frequent in economic activities. Most rag pickers and beggars come from these families, which are the poorest in society because their tradition is to wander from place to place; therefore, the concept of schooling has no meaning for them (Gillian, 2004). Acceptance and prevalence of child labor can be influenced by cultural and social norms. Children's work is viewed as a tool of character development or a customary practice in some communities. Child labor practices can be perpetuated by cultural ideas and conventions that priorities children's economic contributions over their education (Ahmed & Ray, 2011). Child labor exists in many Asian countries since parents are no longer accountable for their children's care and protection. The youngsters are forced to work as a result of their parents' irresponsible approach towards education. Parental authority is the primary reason for child labor in Pakistan; nevertheless, in many developing nations, parents may remain jobless precisely (Kataria, 2016).

Many poor families rely on their children's earnings to cover their basic requirements. Furthermore, insufficient access to quality education adds to child labor because children are frequently forced to work instead of attending school. The

estimated number of child laborers in Pakistan between the ages of 10 and 17 are roughly 3.8 million. This represented 9.4% of all children in this age range (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Children are a significant part of the society and represents the future of the country. Their wellbeing and development are indistinguishably associated with the development of the society. The environment in which the children are raised and socialized, the type and quality of education they receive, and the different exposures they encounter, all have a long-lasting impact on their development. The importance of providing an environment to children that promotes their social, physical and intellectual health is necessitated throughout the world. This is because the wellbeing of the children and the youth is critical to ensure that they grow up to be a productive and a responsible member of the society (Jafar, 2018).

Child labor is a major social issue in the modern era, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. The majority of youngsters in Pakistan are still compelled to work in factories, hotels, teashops, and brick kilns to support their family or supplement their income. They are in a horrible circumstance and should be treated with compassion. They are forced to work excessive hours, which is detrimental to their health. Our country has over 12 million child laborers (Shoaib, 2017).

Child labor is influenced by a variety of factors that contribute to its incidence and durability in specific locations or countries. Understanding these characteristics is critical for developing successful anti-child labor policies. Here are some significant determinants of child labor, along with citations: Poverty is commonly acknowledged as a key motivator of child labor. Poverty-stricken families frequently

rely on their children's wages to boost household earnings. The immediate need for financial assistance exceeds the long-term benefits of schooling. In developing nations, discovered a strong positive link between household poverty and child labor involvement (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005). Child labor has existed since the very beginning of time. In the early days of child labor, families needed extra hands to complete everyday chores, so they put their children to work both at home and at work to earn money. This was the first stone in the problem's foundation. Children began to go to workplaces to earn money, which became a pattern in many communities where children were forced to work and earn money. This tendency created an issue for many children around the world. We can now witness this problem on a larger scale in our communities. We can now observe this problem on a huge scale in our communities. Consider the problems in society, such as poor literacy rates, poverty, and widespread unemployment; there are many other causes, but one of the primary causes is child labor. However, child labor is more than just a youngster supporting their parents with duties that are vital for survival and prosperity (Bhukuth, 2006).

The main objectives of the study are:

- 1) To investigate the working conditions of child laborers at brick kilns.
- 2) To know the socio-economic factors influencing child laborers in the brick kilns sector.
- 3) To evaluate the attitudes of working children towards their employers.

Methodology: A quantitative study design was utilized to study the socio-economic determinants of child labor. Total numbers of 284 brick kilns are registered in the District Bhakkar, Pakistan and a substantial number of children work at these brick kilns. The present study was conducted

at district Bhakkar. The working children at bricks kilns were target population. About 384 respondents from various brick kilns in the district of Bhakkar were participated in this study. The data were collected from the working children at brick kilns who were under the age of 10 to 16 years. A convenient sampling technique was employed to choose respondents for filling out the interview schedule. The interview schedule was used as tool for data collection. Researchers went to the field and collected data from ten different respondents in order to pre-test for errors and question ordering. The tool was modified after receiving feedback from ten different respondents. The gathered information was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results: Table I showed the demographic information of the respondents. Among the 384 respondents, 223(58.0%) respondents were aged between 15-16 years while 120 (31.3%) of the respondents were aged between 13-14 years and 41(10.7%) of the respondents were aged between 10-12 years. Of the 384 respondents, majorities 357(93.0%) of the respondents were male while 27(7.0%) of the respondents were female. About 379(98.7%) were unmarried and only 5(1.3%) were married. Of the 384 respondents, 198(51.6%) were belonged to Pakistani families and 186(48.4%) of respondents belong to Afghan migrant families living in district Bhakkar. Greater part of the respondents 365(95.1%) lived in rural areas and only 19(4.9%) of the respondents lived in urban areas. Of the 384 respondents, majority 213(55.5%) respondents were living in the rented and boss provided home while 171(44.5%) had their own home. As for the respondents' family size, about 154(40.1%) of the respondents had of 5-8 family members and 154(40.1%) of the respondents had 9-12 family members, about 37(9.6%)

respondents had family members 1-4 and 39(10.2%) respondents had 13-16 family members.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency (%)
Age	
10 to 12	41(10.7)
13 to 14	120 (31.3)
15 to 16	223(58.1)
Gender	
Male	357(93.0)
Female	27(7.0)
Marital status	
Married	5(1.3)
Unmarried	379(98.7)
Family background	
Pakistani	198(51.6)
Afghan migrants	186(48.4)
Residential area	
City	19(4.9)
Village	365(95.1)
Have own home	
Yes	171(44.5)
No	213(55.5)
Number of family members	
1 to 4	37(9.6)
5 to 8	154(40.1)
9 to 12	154(40.1)
13 to 16	39(10.2)

Of the 384 respondents, the majority (77.2%) of the respondents reported that they had no land property in the village while (20.8%) respondents had their own land in the village. The majority (94%) of the respondents expressed that their father was alive, while (6%) were orphan their father had died. Question was asked to the respondents about the profession of their father, majority (72.8%) of the respondents responded that they work at brick kilns, (11.4%) respondents' father were laborers, (8.3%) respondents' father belonged to agriculture, (7.2%) respondents' fathers were driver. The majority (80.6%) of the respondent's fathers were illiterate, (13.6%) had primary education, (4.2%) were middle, and only (1.7%) had metric. The majority

(88.2%) of the respondent's mothers were illiterate, (7.2%) had primary education, and only (4.5%) were middle. The majority (65.9%) respondents never attend school, (15.4%) just attend school for 1 to 2 class, (15.6%) respondents attend school for 3 to 4 class, and only (3.1%) respondents attend school 5 to 6 class. About (94.8%) of the respondents were not enrolled in schools, only (5.2%) respondents were studying. Reason behind disconnecting with schooling in which above data showed the majority (59.9%) not attended school due to not encouraged environment, (25.9%) couldn't attend school due to poor condition at home, (10.4%) respondents discontinued with school because they were not interested in study due to boring environment at school, (3.8%) respondents discontinued with school as their parents insisted them. The majority (94.8%) of the respondents' parents know about their work, (5.3%) respondent's parents were not aware that they work at brick kilns. The data regarding the nature of the work in which the respondents were involve, mostly (48.2%) respondents were involved in making the raw bricks, (45.8%) respondents were involved in drying the raw bricks, (6%) respondents were involved in transporting the raw bricks. The majority (84.6%) respondents came with their families,

(10.2%) came here alone, and (5.2%) respondents came with friends. The majority (43.8%) started to work at brick kilns because of proximity to home, (36.7%) parents' advice, (12.5%) no alternative occupation, (6.3%) better wage, (.8%) with friends' advice. The majority (49.5%) respondents were living in the masters provided house, (44.3%) were living in their own house, and (6.3%) respondents were living in the rent house. The majority (58.1%) of the respondents were earning 10,000 to 12,000 per month, (31.1%) were earning 7,000 to 9,000 per month, (8.9%) were earning 4,000 to 6,000 per month, (1.8%) respondents were getting less than 3,000 rupee per month. The majority (94.8%) respondents get the loan from the master, while only (4.9%) not get the loan from the master. The majority (81%) respondents said they got punished on doing something wrong, (19%) respondents were not punished on doing something wrong. The majority (69.8%) of the respondents were not satisfied with their job while (30.2%) respondents were satisfied with their job. The majority (89.8%) respondents were not aware about the child labor laws while only (10.2%) respondents were aware about the child labor laws. The majority (65.9%) respondents had school in their village, while (34.1%) respondents had no school in their village.

Table 2: socio-economic determinants of child labor at brick Kilns

Category	Frequency (%)	Category	Frequency (%)
Own Land		Child labor nature of work at brick kilns	
Yes	80(20.8)	Making Raw Bricks	185(48.2)
No	304(79.2)	Drying the Bricks	176(45.8)
Father alive		Transporting Raw Bricks	23(6.0)
Yes	361(94.0)	Who brought to this work	
No	23(6.0)	Own	39(10.2)
Father Occupation		With friend	20(5.2)
Laborer	41(11.4)	With family member	325(84.6)
Driver	26(7.2)	Main reason behind involving in the brick kiln industry	

Agriculture	30(8.3)	Better wage	24(6.3)
Works at brick kiln	262(72.8)	With Parents Advice	141(36.7)
Father education		Friend's Advice	3(.8)
Illiterate	291(80.6)	Proximity to home	168(43.8)
Primary	49(13.6)	No alternative occupation	48(12.5)
Middle	15(4.2)	Residential place	
Metric	6(1.7)	Master's provided house	190(49.5)
Mother level of education		Rented house	24(6.3)
Illiterate	330(88.2)	Own house	170(44.3)
Primary	27(7.2)	Respondents' monthly income	
Middle	17(4.5)	1 to 3000	7(1.8)
Education status of respondent		4000 to 6000	34(8.9)
Never attend School	253(65.9)	7000 to 9000	120(31.3)
Grade 1 to 2	59(15.4)	10000 to 12000	223(58.1)
Grade 3 to 4	60(15.6)	Family get any loan from master	
Grade 5 to 6	12(3.1)	Yes	364(94.8)
Respondents enrolled in school		No	20(5.2)
Yes	20(5.2)	Get punished for something wrong	
No	364(94.8)	Yes	311(81)
Reasons for discountenance of schools		No	73(19)
Poor condition at home	95(25.9)	Respondents satisfied with the job	
Parents insisted	14(3.8)	Yes	116(30.2)
Not interested him / herself	38(10.4)	No	268(69.8)
Not encouraged environment	220(59.9)	Knowledge about child labor laws	
Parents know about their child working in the brick kilns industries		Yes	39(10.2)
Yes	364(94.8)	No	345(89.8)
No	20(5.2)	Schools in village	
Respondents have Skill Centre for child		Yes	253(65.9)
Yes	0(0)	No	131(34.1)
No	384(100)		

Discussion: In our study majority of the respondents were aged between 14-17 years, similar results were found in the study conducted by (Latif et al; 2016) that average age of the respondents were 12 to 18 years. In our study majority (65.9%) of the respondents never attended schools, similar study findings were reported by (Hussain, & Saud, 2017) that (54.4%) respondents never attended schools. In this study majority (95.1%) of the respondents were doing labor work at brick kilns to support their family. The similar findings were confirmed by (Mahmood, Maann, Tabasam & Niazi, 2005; Ali, 2011; Latif et al 2016) that mostly children worked to support to their families and in household income. Parent's education

plays the very important role in the socialization of their children. Educated parents most probably earn higher income and educate their children.

The results of this study revealed that majority (80.6%) of the respondents' father's and (85.9%) of the mothers were illiterate and they never attended school in their life. Similar findings were addressed by (Ali, Manzoor, Ahmad, Noreen, Masroor & Mahmood, 2022) that majority of child labor parents were illiterate. In our study mostly respondents had 5 to 8 members in the family, similar findings were reported by the (Ali, 2019), so the family size found negative effect and possibility for a child to work. In the present study mostly (56.3%) respondents were working for 5 to 8 hours per day on low

wages and were involved in making the raw bricks. Similar findings were reported by the (Bunnak, 2007) that the average wages were <5000 for 8 hours work at brick kilns. Majority of the children work clay preparation, firing Kilns, cutting raw bricks. The majority (72.8%) of the respondents expressed that their father works at a brick kilns. Mostly respondents were living in the master's provided houses because they have no land or property. Similar findings were reported by (Bunnak, 2007) that the main reason of the child labor at brick kilns where their parents were working at brick kilns and were living master provided homes.

The majority (84.6%) of the respondents came to the workplace with their families. In our study majority (65.9%) of the respondents never attend school and there per month family income was 10,000 to 12,000 PKR per month. In our study majority (94.8%) of the respondents get a loan from the master. Mostly (89.8%) respondents did not know about the child labor laws. The majority (69.8%) of the respondents were not satisfied from their work because working environment at the brick kilns because it hazardous to child health i.e. consuming pond water, unclean, smoke, bad smells, heat, burning ashes, pieces of broken bricks everywhere, flying ashes, prolonged working hours, dangerous job, heavy work. In addition, many brick factories were having poor working conditions like no sanitation, no first aid kits, unsafe place for child labor.

Conclusion: The study concluded that poverty was one of the major causes of child labor. There was a big problem with Afghan migrants that they were not allowed

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education and have no citizenship in Pakistan. The majority of children working in Bhakkar were not locals; they lived in rented homes or temporary houses and work to support their family. Children forced to work at brick kilns were sometimes denied an education. It was very shocking that 100% of the respondents reported that they haven't skill centers in their locality. The majority of working children never enrolled in any educational institute; those that were enrolled wish to continue their studies while desiring to finish their studies. Lack of knowledge and understanding of children's rights exacerbates the problem. The study concluded that the main reason behind the child labor at brick kilns were low education of respondents and their parents, poverty, poor monitoring by the government.

Recommendations: In order to reduce child labor, a multifaceted approach is needed. First of all, targeting the micro level issues faced by children and their families is very necessary. For instance, for out-of-school children, establishing schools near brick kilns or mobile schools, would help in ensuring the children's right and access to education. Further, technical skills centers and courses must be introduced for children. Different stakeholders including the education department, government organizations, and NGOs can work together for the elimination of child labor, particularly at brick kilns. Increasing the awareness of general population regarding the negative consequences of child labor on the health, education and development of the child can help to reduce the demand for child labor in brick kilns, and in general.

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Declaration Section

Acknowledgement: N/A

Funding Statement: N/A

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

Ethical Consideration: The present study has been conducted following the ethical considerations. The present study does not have any unethical practices.

Consent to Participate: Verbal consent was taken from all the respondents

Availability of Data: The data is available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author