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A Vicious Cycle of Poverty in Pakistan: A Case Study of Child labour and Out-of-School Children in Rawalpindi and Islamabad

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ABSTRACT
Child labor and increasing number of out of school children in Pakistan shows a serious socio-economic crisis caused by continuous poverty, ineffective governance, and limited educational opportunities. This study examines how poverty, child labor, and lack of educational opportunities are directly interconnected for creating a self-reinforcing cycle in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Based on Human Capital Theory and Structural Poverty Theory, the research shows that financial struggle force families to prioritize/focus on immediate survival instead of investing in education for the long term. This led to poverty being passed down through generations. The study used a qualitative case study approach. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with working children, parents or guardians, and employers. Secondary data was analyzed from government reports, ILO and UNICEF publications, and academic studies. Data was analyzed by using thematic analysis, which indicates that poverty is the main factor leading children to do informal jobs like workshops, cafes, street vending, and domestic work. Hidden education cost, poor school quality, and lack of government support further contribute to increasing the dropout rates. The finding shows that child labor exposes children to long working hours, unsafe environment, and both physical and emotional abuse, which negatively impacts their overall development and growth. The study highlighted and emphasized that child labor is not just a result of family choices, but it also a structural systematic issue, which is caused by due to financial crisis, poor implementation of policies, and lack of educational opportunities. While many children and parents are willing, and desire education, financial pressure and limited institutional support hinder ongoing schooling. This research provides local, evidence-based insights and concludes that breaking this cycle requires efforts to reduce poverty, improve the accessibility and quality of education, offer social protection for low-income families, and enforce child protection laws effectively.

Keywords: Vicious Cycle, Poverty, Child labour, *Vtreet vending, Financial Crisis, Low-income Families.*

Literature Review

1.Poverty is a Big Driver of Child Labor in Developing Countries:

In developing countries, the enormous issue is poverty. More than 90% of children of developing countries are child labor, around 211 million children are incorporated in child labor like 61% in Africa, 17% in Latin America, 22% in Asia. Parents have no money to send their child to school. They forced their children to go to work to earn money and support their households (Krueger, 1997). There is a linkage of poverty and child labor. At microlevel, poverty deprives the children to go school and at macro level, poverty limits the investment of money on education. In this way poverty pushes the children to child labor (Skoufias, 2003; Beagle et al, 2006; Ferreira and Shady, 2009).

There are several socioeconomic reasons of child labor globally. Mostly developing countries are more engaged in child labor. South Asia is the region where the ratio of child labor is at peak (ILO, 2010). The main cause of Child labor in South Asia is the poverty. Parents have no job and they forced their children to work to support their household (Ali, 2022). Poverty brings street children from school to industry, workshops, and restaurants to earn money and forced them to child laborers (Rehman, 2023). The ratio of child labor of boys is more than girls, about 88 million boys and 64 million girls are child labor globally (UNICEF,2020).

2. Out-of-School Children and the Expanding Child Labor Crisis in Pakistan

The population of Pakistan is compromised up to 64% of youth which is biggest population of youth in the world, among these 13.7% of children 10-14 years are working as a laborer. (Ali, 2011, ILO, 2024). Millions of children out of school, around 3.3 million, are working as laborers under the age of 10-13 years. (Tribune, 2022). Children working in difficult and tough conditions may put their life in danger. It has bad impact on physical and mental health as well as there are lots of chances of sexual abuse (Lika, 2012).

Child labor and the growing population of out-of-school children in Pakistan represent one of the country's most complex socio-economic challenges. Literature consistently identifies poverty, weak governance, and limited educational access as the most influential factors driving children into work and keeping them out of school. The studies conducted in Rawalpindi and Islamabad show that child labor not only deprives children of education but also perpetuates a deeper structural cycle where poverty produces child labor, child labor blocks schooling, and lack of schooling reinforces lifelong poverty (Fehmi, Shinwar, & Ali, 2024; Madni et al., 2024).

3. Poverty as the Primary Determinant of Child Labor

Across all reviewed studies, poverty emerges as the most persistent and powerful driver of child labor. Families experiencing financial stress rely heavily on children's income to meet basic needs. Empirical evidence from Rawalpindi and Islamabad shows that children are employed in car washing, street vending, workshops, hotels, and informal domestic work because parents cannot afford school-related expenses (Fehmi, Shinwar, & Ali, 2024). Employers interviewed by Madni et al. (2024) similarly reported that nearly every working child they hired belonged to a household experiencing severe financial hardship.

The socioeconomic analysis by Muhammad Noaman Yousaf et al. (2025) reinforces this perspective by situating child labor within broader structural poverty. Their findings show that when families lack access to stable employment, affordable schooling, and social protection, child labor becomes a survival strategy. This structural poverty not only pushes children into work but also ensures that they remain trapped in a low-skilled, low-income future.

4.Global Definitions and Standards of Child Labor:

Different countries have different definitions of Child Labor, it means there is no specific definition of child labor. However, International Labor Organization (ILO) defined child labor as any work that snatches dignity, fundamental rights, childhood and harm their physical and

mental health development (ILO, 2016). Similarly, according to UNICEF (2014) child labor refers to the work that exceeds the hours, harms the child mentally, physically and socially. Additionally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defined child labor as any work that hinders his/her education or harms the children physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. According to International Labor Organization (2020) the employment should be 15 years in developed and 14 years in developing countries to do work.

5. Educational Barriers and the Rise of Out-of-School Children

A major theme across literature is the failure of the education system to retain vulnerable children. Despite constitutional guarantees and government policies, schooling remains inaccessible for many families. According to Fehmi, Shinwar, and Ali (2024), most out-of-school children in Rawalpindi and Islamabad come from households where parents are uneducated, unemployed, or unable to pay for books, uniforms, and transportation.

The studies further highlight that educational exclusion is not only a result of poverty but also a result of poor school quality, overcrowded classrooms, untrained teachers, and the absence of non-formal education programs. This limited access, combined with weak state support, creates an environment where children naturally drift into informal labor markets rather than pursue schooling.

6. Child Labor, Exploitation, and Abuse

In Pakistan Children are working in industries, agriculture, homes, restaurants and workshops They are forced to do dangerous works, loading and unloading heavy weight, brick manufacturing, cleaning hotels and homes, dishwashing, cleaning washroom, and baby care. They are pressured to work from sunrise to sunset by the owner. These works put a child in physical, mental, and psychological harm and abuse. The only thing that put children to do dangerous work is financial problems. They put themselves in danger to earn money and support their family (Ebrahim, 2022; Detho, 2023).

The literature also documents the harsh realities of child labour, particularly in informal sectors. Madni et al. (2024) provide detailed evidence of physical, emotional, and psychological abuse experienced by child labourers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Children working in workshops, hotels, and domestic households face long working hours, unhygienic conditions, verbal harassment, beating, and exposure to hazardous tools and environments.

Street-working children, documented by Fehmi, Shinwar, and Ali (2024), are even more vulnerable. They are exposed to harassment, exploitation, traffic hazards, and health risks. The absence of monitoring systems and legal enforcement allows such abuse to continue unchecked. Employers exploit children because they accept lower wages, work longer hours, and lack the agency to resist exploitation (Madni et al., 2024).

7. Weak Governance and Policy Implementation

A recurring observation in all four sources is the gap between legislation and implementation. Pakistan has ratified international conventions, including the UNCRC and ILO conventions, yet enforcement remains inconsistent and politically influenced. Madni et al. (2024) emphasize that while child protection laws exist, they are rarely implemented due to weak monitoring, insufficient inspections, and lack of coordination between provincial institutions.

Pakistan signed international conventions and make laws on child labor, but the implementation is ineffective. Even the existing laws that fail to protect the children from harmful works and put them in danger mentally and physically (Rehman, 2023). Article 25-A declared the rights of education to all children according to the constitution of Pakistan. In 1990, Pakistan joined the UN convention on the rights of child and signed on it. Article 32 said

that children are protected from the dangerous work and occupation that harm them mentally and physically (UN, 1990). Additionally, government of Pakistan ratified the convention of ILO the prohibition and eradication of child labor. Similarly, the lack of awareness among the parents and employs exploiting the rights of children as cheap labor and there is not any presentation from the government to protect their rights (Gilani, 2022). Similarly, Fehmi, Shinwar, and Ali (2024) observe that government programs for street children are either underfunded or absent in major urban centres. According to Yousaf et al. (2025), the problem lies not only in inadequate laws but also in the absence of long-term structural strategies to address poverty, unemployment, and weak educational infrastructure. This governance failure allows the cycle of poverty and child labour to persist across generations.

8. The Reinforcing Cycle of Poverty, Child Labour, and Educational Deprivation

One of the strongest contributions of the reviewed literature is the identification of a self-reinforcing cycle. Poverty pushes children into labour; labour prevents schooling; lack of schooling leads to future unemployment and poverty, repeating the cycle for the next generation (Yousaf et al., 2025). Empirical studies from Rawalpindi and Islamabad illustrate this clearly: children who drop out of school due to poverty rarely return to education and instead transition into low-wage adult labour markets (Fehmi, Shinwar, & Ali, 2024).

Madni et al. (2024) further note that working children suffer from stunted intellectual development, poor health outcomes, and psychological trauma, making it even more difficult for them to escape poverty. This interaction between structural poverty, weak governance, and educational deprivation defines the "vicious cycle" that traps millions of children in Pakistan.

9. Research Gap and Contribution of the Present Study

Although existing studies provide strong evidence on the causes and consequences of child labor, none comprehensively explain how these factors interact to create a persistent, self-reinforcing poverty cycle specifically within Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In Pakistan more than 12 million children are child labor mostly from Rawalpindi and Islamabad (ILO, 2018). This means lots of children are working as child laborers to fulfill their basic needs and to support family. The present study fills this gap by examining the intertwined dynamics of poverty, child labour, and educational exclusion in these two major cities, offering policy-oriented insights drawn from local experiences and stakeholder perspectives.

Problem Statement:

Child Labor and the increasing number of children out of school in Rawalpindi and Islamabad show how poverty trapped families keep poverty poor for generations to generations. Despite constitutional grantees, international commitment and national legislation, children in these cities are working in dangerous places and unfair jobs just because of poverty, weak governance and lack of access to education. Existing studies show that poverty is the main cause, but do not fully explain how poverty, out of school and child labor interact with each other in these cities. This gap creates a difficult situation in the development of policy that really helps these effected people. Therefore, a comprehensive study is needed to examine these interconnected factors to keep a vicious cycle that deprives a child to go to school, child labor and pushes them into lifelong economic and social vulnerability.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how poverty drives child labor and out of school in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

2. To identify the educational, social, and structural barriers that contribute to the high number of out-of-school children in both cities.
3. To analyze how poverty, child labor, and educational deprivation interact to create a self-reinforcing cycle across generations.
4. To provide effective policy-oriented recommendations based on the lived experiences of children and parents.

Research Questions

1. How does poverty influence parents' decisions to send their children to work instead of school in Rawalpindi and Islamabad?
2. What educational barriers contribute to the increasing number of out-of-school children in these cities?
3. How do poverty, child labor, and lack of education interact to form a self-reinforcing cycle in the lives of affected children?
4. What policy measures and community-based interventions can help break this cycle and protect vulnerable children?

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables:

- Poverty (family income, employment status, financial stress)
- Weak governance and policy enforcement
- Educational barriers (school fees, distance, quality, teacher availability)

Mediating Variables:

- Child labor (type, hours, hazardous nature)
- Exploitation and abuse in labor settings

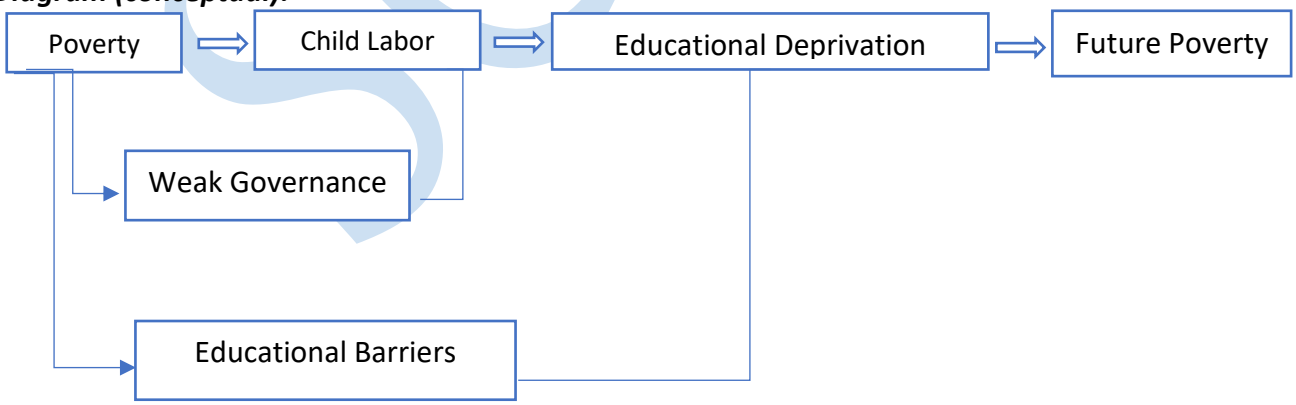
Dependent Variable:

- Educational deprivation (out-of-school status, dropout rates)

Outcome:

- Perpetuation of the poverty cycle across generations

Diagram (conceptual):



Theoretical Framework

The study can be anchored in Human **Capital Theory** and **Structural Poverty Theory**:

Human Capital Theory (Gary Becker, 1964):

Education is an investment in skills, productivity and knowledge. This investment boosts the individual's earnings and economic growth of a nation. Lack of access to school and education reduces human capital accumulation, stay in poverty, limit future income and face financial crises generation to generation. Child Labor hinders the path of education and school to gain this capital.

Structural Poverty Theory (Lewis, 1954; Skoufias, 2003):

Poverty is not only the failure of an individual but the systematic barriers, unfair social, economic and political system. Weak governance, low wages, lack of social protection, and economic inequality lead to a family in poverty and push their children to labor. This creates a sustainable poverty cycle from parents to children.

Methodology

1. Research Design:

- Qualitative case study focusing on Rawalpindi and Islamabad by exploring the interconnection between poverty, child labor, and out of school children.

2. Population and Sample:

- Children are between 10–17-year-old in labor or out of school.
- Parents / Guardians of these children
- Employers of the children.
- Purposive sampling to select participants with relevant experiences.

3. Data Collection Methods:

Primary Data:

- Semi-structured interviews with children, parents/guardians, and employers.

Secondary Data:

- Government reports, ILO/UNICEF statistics, academic studies, and policy documents.

4. Data Analysis:

- Thematic analysis to identify patterns and relationships between poverty, child labor, and schooling.
- Thematic Analysis to know the relationships between poverty, child labor, and school exclusion.

5. Ethical Considerations:

- Informed consent from parents/guardians.
- Protection of child participants' identities.
- Minimization of psychological risk during interviews

Thematic Analysis:

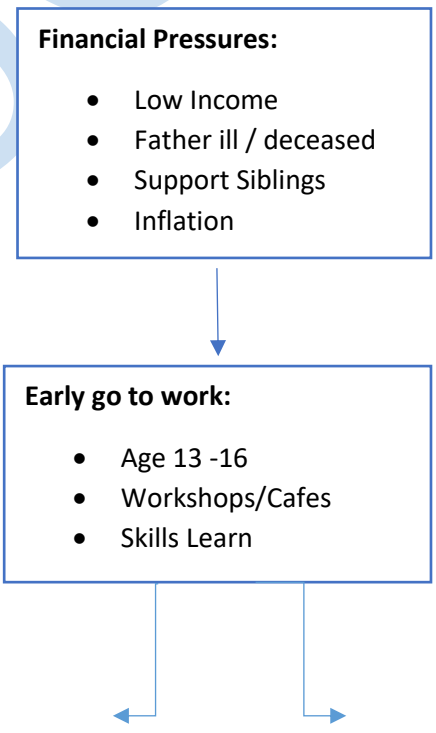
Overview of the Participants:

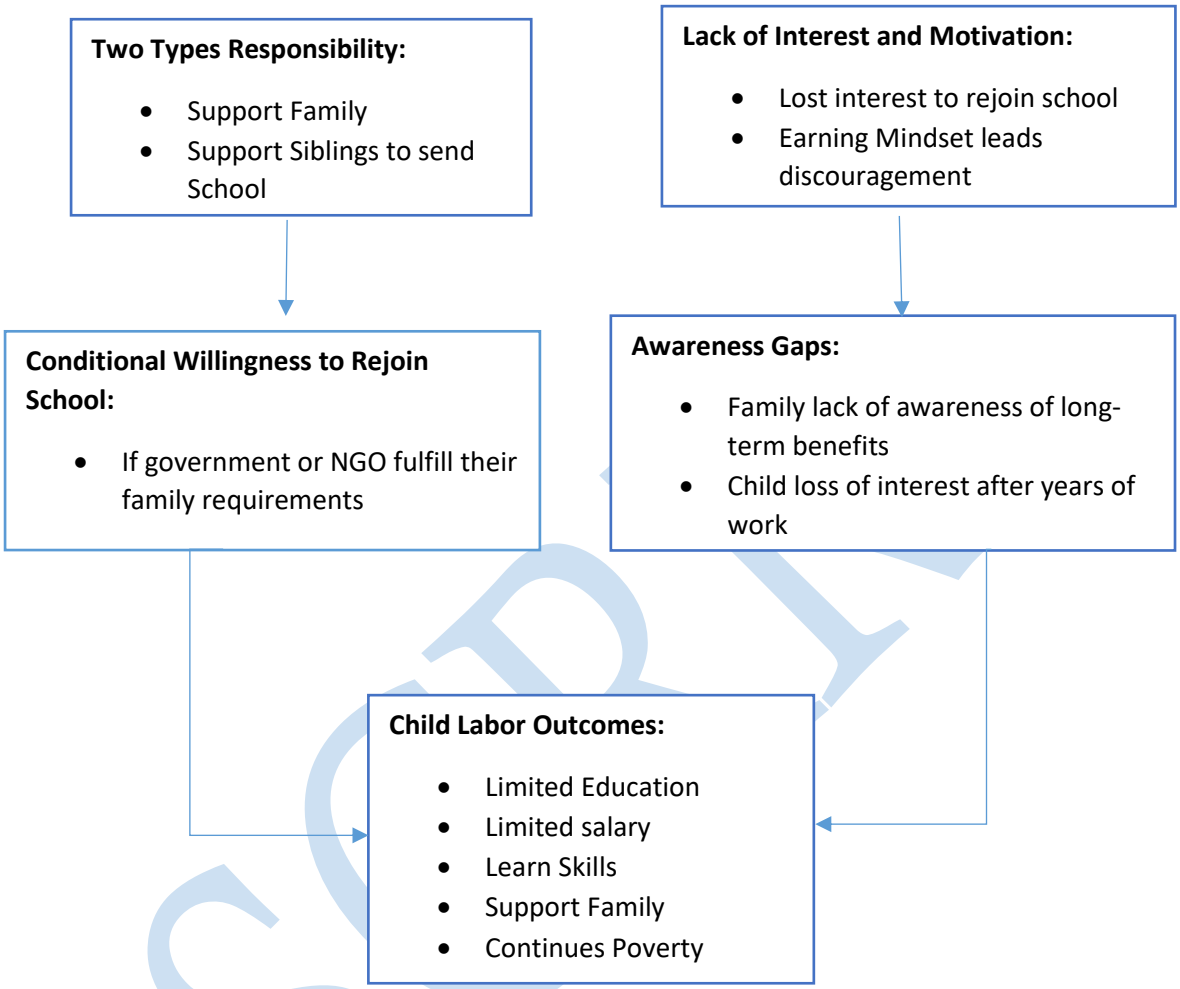
This chapter presents the research findings derived from interviews and observations conducted with 11 children from I-8 Markaz Islamabad, Mughal Market Islamabad, Commercial Market, Sader Rawalpndi, 6th Road Rawalpindi alongside 2 guardians residing in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and 2 employers. The interview is divided into three main groups of people who are interested, children, parents or guardians, and employers. The results show qualitative analysis to examine the reason for poverty, child labor, and drop-out from schools leading to poverty generation to generation.

S. No	Name	Workplace	Age	Designation	Code
1	Habibullah	Quetta Café Mughal Market, Islamabad	16 Year	Child	HMM1
2	Usman Karim	Quetta Café Mughal Market, Islamabad	15 Year	Child	UKMM2
3	Niyamat Khan	Street cart I-9 Islamabad	14 Year	Child	NK

4	Zulfiqar Ahmad	Street Cart, Commercial Market Rawalpindi	14 Year	Child	ZA
5	Sheraz Hussain	North Work Dabba, Commercial Market Rawalpindi	16 Year	Child	SH
6	Shahid Asghar	Quetta Dubai Darbar Café Rawalpindi	15 Year	Child	SA
7	Hassan Khan	Rawalpindi	25 Year	Guardian	HK
8	Muhammad Ilyas	London Bakery and Sweat I-8 Markaz, Islamabad	15 Yars	Child	MI
9	Karimullah Khan	Londa's shoe shop Sadir Rawalpindi	13 Year	child	KK
10	Muhammad Ummer	Ghowri Town	35 Year	Parents	MU
11	Ali Khan	Workshop, Ali Pur Islamabad	14 Year	Child	AK
12	Jameel Hussain	Bike Workshop, Ghowri Town Islamabad	13 Year	child	JH
13	Muhammad Sanaullah	Queta Café-Islamabad	33 Years	Employer	MS
14	Usman Ali	Vehicle Workshop, Islamabad	37 Years	Employer	UA
15	Kashif Ali	Motorcycle Workshop, Islamabad	14 Years	Child	KA

Thematic Map: Child Labor and School Dropout





Explanation of Map:

Financial Pressure:

Financial pressure is a main and primarily source of poverty. Most of the children left school and started to work at an early age due to financial issues because of his father being ill or deceased.

Eary Go to Work:

To support his family he joined workshops, cafés and other small businesses. Most of them are 13-17 years.

Responsibilities:

Most of the respondents said that he started job to support his family in the place of his father and took responsibility for sending his siblings to school.

Lack of Interest:

Children said that they have no interest in going to school. Obviously, earning mindset at early age prefers to earn more money rather than going to school.

Conditions Willingness to Go to School:

Those children who want to rejoin school show their interest if government supports his educational expenses and fulfills their family requirements.

Awareness Gap:

Parents show lack of awareness in educational benefits for long term. They think that education does not help to earn money. Similarly, children lose their interest in education after years of work.

Child Labor Outcomes:

The outcomes of the child labor are that children can support their family, send their brothers and sisters to school, learn basic skills but long-term bad impact is to remain in poverty due to limited education and salary. They never come out of poverty because their earning salary is very low and they can fulfill their family basic needs.

Economic Hardship is a Main Reason of Child Labor:

Most children and parents highlighted that poverty, inflation, school expenses and low family incomes are the main reasons for entering children to work and leaving school. Families had low and unstable incomes, which could be because one of the parents was sick, lost a job, or died. Kids' money was very important for the family to live.

"My father doesn't make much money, so I have to work to help the family." (HMM1)

"I never went to school because my dad is dead." I must work to take care of my family." (ZA)

Similarly, a respondent MI said that he left his 9th class to support his siblings. He said that if he does not leave school then his brothers and sisters could not go to school. One child KK working in Londa's shoe shop said that their father is in depth of debt of around 60 lacs, that is why he is working in early age. He said that his other brothers are also working in different areas and no one went to school just because of this debt. A manager MS of Quetta Café Islamabad said that most of the children come from poverty backgrounds. Most of them belong to those families whose father is either ill or deceased. These children want to support their family.

These statements show that economic problems can force children to work as child laborers to support their families and make ends meet.

Interest and Motivation to Rejoin School:

A prolong working shows that the children have no interest in going back to school, they think that education is not benefits for them. They prefer to do work on education. Majority of children see education as irrelevant. Some of the children who went to middle school didn't continue their education because they could easily get to school from home.

One children HMM1 said that his dad died when he was in 8th grade. He couldn't finish middle school because his father died. In the same way, other children UKMM2 who worked in Mughal Market in I-8 Islamabad said that he never went to school because his family didn't have enough money. One child SH who worked at the Quetta café commercial market also said that he dropped out of school in the sixth grade because his father was sick. He started working in different fields to help his family. He has been working at the café for the last three years.

One respondent KA said, "It is better to earn money rather than go to school." These shows that long gap from schooling killed the interest to get education in children.

Big Responsibility on the Shoulder of Eldest Son in a Family:

The eldest son in a family plays a critical role in supporting his family. He leaves school to earn money. Financial pressure urges the children to work as child labor. If he does not do the work his family may face different challenges like house rent, electric and gas bills payment and utility expenses. A respondent JH said that his income is a major source to run his family expenses. He quit his job then the survival of the family is very hard. Another respondent NK

who is running Street cart I-9 Islamabad said that he never attended school because his father is ill. Due to this health problem, he is supporting his family in the place of his father.

Similarly, Children who are eldest in his family have a responsibility to support his siblings. To provide education, fulfill basic needs, and help his father. Two respondents, ZH and MI, said that they left their school to send their brothers and sisters to school. If they do not leave their school, then their siblings face challenges to go to school. The cost of education, uniforms, notebooks, books and school fees are not paid by their parents solely because father could not afford all of these.

Most of the poor families highly depend upon children's income. Even if their salary is very low, it reduces the burden of family expenses on father.

Educational Cost and Structural Barriers lead to Dropout Children from Schools:

Although, the responsibility of government of Pakistan is to provide free primary and secondary education but hidden and indirect expenses hinder parents and children of low family incomes to leave schools. Expenses like uniforms, books, transportation, and examination fees put a heavy burden on household which is already facing to meet basic needs like rent, electricity, gas bill and utility expenses. These hand-to-moth families make it impossible to continue their children's schooling.

Parents want to send their children to school but structurally constraint by poverty. They wish their children to get education. Guardian highlighted that their children drop out due to unaffordability. One guardian HK said that if government facilitates 20000 to 25000 per month, he will send his children to school. This indicates that without financial assistance education is out of reach. This highlights a gap between education policy and ground realities that unable children of a low-income family remain out of school.

Every child said they wanted to go back to school if they could get financial help, even though things were hard. Children thought of school to have hope, respect, and a better future. This shows that the problem isn't a lack of interest; it's that structural and economic barriers keep children from going to school.

"I'll be very happy to go back to school if I get this chance." (Boy HMM1, Quetta Café)

Skill Acquisition and Early Entry into Informal Labor:

Millions of young people graduate every year but they are seeking jobs. Even if they have high degree, they cannot find jobs. Children think that they have lots of interest in learning skills instead of going to school. Their skills enable them to earn money and support their family. This reflects a pragmatic shift from formal education to skill-based work among working children.

One respondent JH said that he prefers to work in motorcycle workshop rather than going to school because these skills will help him to earn money. He said that within few years he will be able to earn more money after this skills acquisition. Similarly, another respondent said that he has no interest in joining school because of his interest in learning skills and earning money. Education takes time to earn money, but skill helps him to support his family. A motorcycle workshop owner UA said that skills help children to earn money. Within few years he will be able to support his family. The owner said he treats children in his workshop as students to teach how to learn mechanical skills.

Lack of Awareness About the Long-Term Benefits of Education:

In the low-income family, there is a lack of awareness and understanding about the deep and long-term benefits of education in their life. They think education is not helping to provide breed. Most of them give examples of their surroundings that their children got education but still they cannot support financially to their families. They do not understand that the

investment of time and money in education can get rid of poverty from generation to generation.

One guardian HA openly acknowledged lack of awareness about education. He said, "send children to school is not the solution of poverty, because education does not help to earn money." Similarly, one child KA said that his grades were low in his exam, disappointing him to carry his education dropout from school. Instead of academic and moral support to carry his education, he left school. This reveals how weak guardian system and lack of awareness leads to leaving school. However, most of the respondent ZA, SH, and NK said that they have interest in joining school if he gets financial support. A child UKMM2 said that he has keen interest in going to school. He said that his father was deceased when he was very small. He is working in the place of his father to fulfill his family basic needs.

Child Labor as a Self-Reinforcing Cycle of Poverty:

Child labor is a short-term strategy to get out of poverty. Low-income families think that their children earn money and support family. They are highly dependent on children's earnings. This is a trap that families stay in poverty generation to generation. Financial challenges lead to going to work with low salary. Additionally, their job providers exploit children's basic rights. They get very low wages. One child JH said that he is paying 13000 per month. This is less then one third of basic wages in Pakistan.

Similarly, some children go to school, but long hours duty cannot allow them to get education. Like a child SA in Quetta Dubai Darbar Café said that he has lots of interest in going to school but the timing and job do not allow him to go to school. His job duty is 12 hours daily. On the other hand, if child goes to school after work he cannot well focus on his academic performance and ultimately leaves dropout from school. This tragedy of dropout from school leads to work as a child laborer. Then these child labor exploit the basic needs and rights of children. Ultimately, they fall into a trap of poverty where they try to reach their full potential but never come out of this trap.

The lack of education limits the earning potential of a child. Without education and skills, they are unable to earn good salary, and upward mobility is nearly impossible. As they grow up as adults, their salary is confined, job insecurity, and informal jobs lead to his family in poverty. Even their children are also facing same economic challenges that they face in their child age like supporting family, education expenses, utility and electricity bills.

Education as a Tool that breaks the Intergenerational Poverty:

Education breaks the poverty cycle when it is easily accessible, supportable and linked to opportunity. Only sending children to school is not enough but there is need to provide quality education, learn market relevant skills, and career guardians to overcome the challenges. The first thing is to remove the barriers that drop out children from school. Training teachers, provide friendly learning environments, create awareness to parents and children, and financial support to families help their children to continue their education. These opportunities help to create motivation in children and parents to complete their education. One respondent claimed that financial support helps him to send his children to school. Most families are ready for their children when the government supports them economically. If a child gets well education, he can transform his family's condition. A well-educated child thinks differently compared to a dropout child. His vision is sustainable rather than getting a temporary benefit. When a child comes out from the poverty line then he can lead his generation towards prosperity.

On the other hand, a child who is dropped out from school and works as a child laborer thinks and works for temporary benefits. His goals revolve only in earning money that helps to fulfill

his family's basic needs urgency. When this child becomes a father, he has no money to send his children to school because he does not fulfill the household and educational expenses. Then his children work as child laborers at an early age. This cycle never breaks and poverty passes from generation to generation.

Conclusion:

This study reveals that child labor and out-of-school children in Rawalpindi and Islamabad are not a separate issue but the outcomes of deeply embedded cycle of poverty, lack of easy access to education, and weak governance. These findings show that poverty is a primarily source pushing children into labor at early age, because low-income families rely on children's earnings. In this condition, education becomes a secondary priority especially when the cost of education is high, lack of awareness and ignorance government support further increase the numbers of out of school and child labor.

The thematic analysis highlights that children and parents focus on temporary economic benefits over long term consequences. They prioritize earning wages even if it is very low, exploitation of rights, job insecurity and limited education ultimately push them into intergenerational poverty. When these children grow up, their low potential of earning does not allow them to invest money in their children's education. This self-reinforced cycle of poverty of generation to generation is due to weak governance and implementation of policies, lack of educational awareness among parents and children, less financial support from the government and absence of social protection mechanisms.

This study shows that most children and parents have a strong will to go to school. If government provides financial support, then children are ready to get education. Most of the respondents said that financial issues are a big reason that become a barrier in the path of education. Children go to work at an early age to support their family in the place of their father to meet the basic needs of family requirements and send their siblings to school. So, these findings reveal that child labor is not by culture, but the financial pressure and poverty forced on family to send their children to labor.

In conclusion, breaking vicious cycle of poverty and child labor does not happen by the made sole legal framework but there is need an integrated and sustainable strategies that help to alleviate poverty, improve education quality, and create a friendly educational environment in school, awareness among children and parents and effective enforcement of child protection laws. Without addressing the interconnected factors, the vicious cycle of poverty continues from generation to generation.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings of this study, it is cleared that, child labor and out- of the-school of children in Rawalpindi and Islamabad is not just a result of family choices, but it also a structural systematic issue, which is caused by due to poverty, poor implementation of policies, and lack of educational opportunities and weak institutional support. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

Financial Support for Poor Families

Poverty is the main reason leading to force children into labor. The government should provide direct financial help and facilitate the low-income families, especially those where the father is ill, or unemployed, or deceased or unable to earn money. Government should provide monthly cash support, conditional on children's school attendance, can reduce families, dependence on children earning and encourage schooling.

Reduce Hidden Costs of Education

Many of the low-income families can't afford uniforms, books, transport, and exam fees, while education is said to be free. All these hidden types of costs push/force children out of school due to financial burdened of their parents. To avoid all this hidden cost, government should fully cover basic school expenses for poor and low-income families and should fully facilitate and provide free learning materials to prevent dropouts.

Improve Quality and Environment of Schools

Many of the children left school due to poor quality teaching methods, and unfriendly school environments. Schools should be more supportive through properly trained teachers, flexible learning options, and child-friendly classrooms and providing friendly and interesting environment through practical and outdoor activities also, besides only a roadmap learning to attract and explore of the interest of children in school and non-formal and evening schools should be introduced for working or dropout children.

Strengthening Enforcement of Child Labor Laws

Pakistan has child protection laws, but unfortunately the weak and poor implementation and enforcement allow to continue the exploitation of the child rights. To protect their rights and avoid exploiting their rights regular inspections of workshops, cafes, and markets should be conducted. Employers using child labor must face strict penalties to discourage illegal practices.

Awareness Programs for Parents and Communities

In our Society many parents are not aware and don't understand the long-term benefits of education, so to spread awareness community level campaigns should be launched to teach parents how schooling can help break poverty across generations from its roots.

Link Education with Skills and Employment

Education should relate to practical skills and career guidance. Vocational training combined with schooling can motivate children and parents by showing clear future economic benefits.

Integrated Policy Approach

The vicious cycle of child labor can't be reduced only through education or laws alone, but to break this cycle seriously need an integrated approach combining poverty reduction, education reform, social protection, and better governance is essential to break this cycle permanently.

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