

CHILD LABORERS ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN KANDAHAR CITY

Salman Ali Nabavi

Lecturer & Chairman

Geography Dep. Faculty of Education
Kandahar University, Kandahar, Afghanistan
E-mail: nabavi.edu.kdh@gmail.com

Alinaqi Mohammadi

Lecturer

Pedagogy & Psychology Dep. Faculty of Education
Kandahar University, Kandahar, Afghanistan
E-mail: alinaqimohammadi2000@gmail.com

Jailani Achak

Lecturer & Chairman

Chemistry Dep. Faculty of Education
Kandahar University, Kandahar, Afghanistan
E-mail: jailaniachak11@gmail.com

Ezatullah Sail

Professor & Chairman

Geography Dep. Faculty of Education
Nangarhar University, Nangarhar, Afghanistan
E-mail: sailezatullah0@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study describes the child laborers' access to education in Kandahar city. We present the methodology followed in the study, study area and type of data collected to estimate to dimensions of child laborers access to education in the city. Data collected contains information about sociodemographic characteristics, Child laborer access to education, negative impacts of working on children's education and Head of household education. It is hoped that this study would intensify a debate on main barriers to education that could tie in with analysis and commentary on providing education and related facilities to marginalized groups like child laborers and girls in society. Readers are encouraged to consider how to understand the landscape that child laborers are confronting, while also asking critical questions about the socio-political circumstances and inefficiency of educational system in which we all participate as we fight to eliminate marginalization and illiteracy in the society. Finally, it is recommended that there is a need to re-vision of the schooling system in order to evolve ways and means of offering education that is inclusive and relevant for working children in Kandahar city and other similar context.

Keywords: Child Labor, Education, Kandahar City, Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION

Education have a dominant impact in addressing socio-economic problems in society and is fundamental in building human capacity and empowering people. Therefore, ILO stated that education is a right, not a privilege, and should be available to everyone (ILO, 2018b). For this purpose, various agencies such as UNICEF, World Bank, IPEC-ILO and UNESCO are fighting against child labour through providing access to education to all children (Osment, 2014).

Currently numerous countries have already reached the goal of universal primary education. However, the progress in low income countries are still very slow (Osment, 2014). In this context study shows that about 94% of out-of-school children of primary school age are in developing countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia (Education for All, 2007). Similarly, Understanding Children's Work (UCW, 2012) noted that about one-quarter of the world's out-of-school primary age population (15 million in total) is engaged in child labor. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, about 10 million out-of-school children are engaged in different types of work. Household chores is not included in these estimates (Brown, 2012), and in south Asia a vast majority of 16 million out of school are engaged in child labour (Pappu & Vasanta, 2020)

In Afghanistan, study estimates that 29% of total children aged 5-17 years are engaged in child labor, where children below the age of 15 made up above 47% of the entire population (ILO, 2018a). Moreover, when it comes to hazardous child labour, this country has been identified as one of the most difficult countries for children (ILO, 2018a), this phenomenon is highly prevalent in its western and southwestern parts (Lutf & Yasini, 2018).

Furthermore, based on the ALCS survey 2016-17 Afghanistan is the seventh-lowest country in the world in primary education (Mosadiq & Kaandorp, 2018). Painfully, more than 3.5 million children or one third of Afghan children were out of school at the start of the school year in March 2017 (World Bank, 2018). More specifically, provincial analysis shows that the proportion of children out of school exceeds 50% in 15 provinces including Kandahar. In Kandahar 76% of school aged children (89% female and 63% male) are out of school (World Bank, 2018).

In addition, the number of children enrolled in schools is much higher than the number graduated because the number of student decreases as they reach at the working age in Afghanistan. In this context, Save the Keeley and Little (2017) estimates that every day about 1000 students are dropping out of school in Afghanistan (Mosadiq & Kaandorp, 2018).

Kandahar city as a regional hub in southern Afghanistan, is a second large city, located in the southeastern area of the country, with about 523,259 populations (NSIA, 2021). Besides to urbanization and someway industrialization developed throughout the city, followed by ever increasing population growth mainly because of immigration of many people from various districts of Kandahar province, Urozgan, Helmand, Farah, Zabul and as well from other parts of the country (Saedi, 2019). All of these, along with unemployment, poverty, and population structure, have resulted in poor socio-economic conditions and fueled the expansion and prevalence of many vulnerable groups (such as children) throughout the city.

Though, previous findings indicate that child labor has been increasing across the country over the past years, specifically in south western parts of Afghanistan and it further increased the number of out of school children but, there is no empirical study carried out in this context. This research attempts to empirically study child laborers access to education in Kandahar city, the negative impacts of working on children's education and Head of household education. Thus, by exploring and analyzing of the status of child laborers access to education in Kandahar city and its other related aspects, this problem shall be addressed by development of a proper strategy and programs. This will lead to improve the access of child laborers to education in Kandahar city as well as the entire country in general.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lack of education and also poor quality education is regarded as one of the main factor that cause the high occurrence of child labour (Osment, 2014). Relevant studies indicate that children who work for a significant number of hours and days are likely to drop out of school, get lower marks/grades and have irregular attendance (AIHRC, 2006; Heady, 2000; ILO 2009; ILO, 2018; ILO, 2017 & Osment, 2014). Evidence further shows that most child laborers in school face elevated risks of dropping out before completion, grade repetition, and failure to make the transition to secondary education and the risks increase over time as children reach the higher grades (Brown, 2012). Study also illustrate that countless children combing work with school and most of them dropping out of school. For example, there are large drop outs in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan with 13 million children drop out-of-school and rising (Brown, 2012 & Osment, 2014).

In addition, there is also evidence that learning outcomes of school children are adversely effected by child labor. For instance, studies in Pakistan and Nicaragua observed that “an additional hour per day worked by children attending school has a non-trivial influence on grade repetition and learning outcomes” (Brown, 2012). Data from eleven countries in Latin America also shows around 16% disadvantage of test score for child laborers in language skills in third and fourth grades and also similar lose was found for math (Brown, 2012). Similarly, Emerson et al. (2017) on a study in Brazil followed the same children over time, observing the child’s performance in school and labor status. They considered two children with equivalent educational backgrounds, both were in the same year and have identical performance measures. The child who starts working while still attending school does not test as well; the working child’s lower test scores are equivalent to one quarter to three fifths of a year less knowledge accumulation than the child who did not start working (Edmonds, 2015).

Moreover, the household survey data shows that “there is a strong inverse relationship between household wealth and parental education on the one hand and child labor on the other the wealthier and better educated the parents, the lower the incidence of child labor” (Brown, 2012). Likewise, in Nigeria, child laborers from families where the household head has no education are almost ten times more likely to be out of school as those from families in which the household head has a secondary education (Brown, 2012).

In the same way, data shows that the future prospects for child laborers are also limited. For example, Ilahi et al. (2000) witnessed that “adults aged 18 and older who started fulltime work before age 13 have adult wages that are 13-17% lower than adults who entered the workforce later” (Edmonds, 2008). Alike, Khan (2007) stated that children who lack education or drop out of their school, generally lack knowledge and are more vulnerable to exploitation. As a result, they become uneducated or unskilled labour.

Though, there are different reasons in addition to child labour which affects primary school enrollment like, high cost of education, parental unemployment and poor quality of teachers in low income countries affected the enrollment rates (Osment, (2014). In this regard, Akarro & Mtweve (2011) found that “the number of primary and secondary school remains low in developing countries because millions of children are being forced to work instead of going to school”.

Considering the above evidences, the dropout rate is a challenging problem for all levels of Afghan education. Students drop out of schools for different reasons like, to pursue work, avoid attack, get married, or merely become too old to attend school (Adkins, 2016). On a similar study, Mansory (2007) interviewed Afghan students and educators and surveyed 72 schools. He observed that fifty percent of male students and 26% of female students dropped out for the reason that they were needed for work at home (Adkins, 2016).

More embarrassingly, Afghan students are situated in the middle of a violent war, social casualties and political unrests. As a result, they are facing with a wide variety of challenges

such as providing universal access, preventing drop outs, increasing enrollment for women, and attacks on schools (Adkins, 2016). In addition, a large number of school-aged children living in rural areas of the country do not have access to any organized educational programs and related facilities and also many of the existing schools do not have suitable buildings, safe drinking water, or sanitation facilities and for individuals with disabilities there no facilities at all (Trani et al., 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study uses quantitative research tools to provide experimental evidence on child laborers access to education in Kandahar city. Though, previous findings indicate that child labor has been increasing across the country over the past year, specifically in south western parts of Afghanistan, mainly due to rising unemployment and poverty but there is no empirical study carried out in this context. *Meanwhile the related studies in Afghanistan have faced serious validity and reliability shortcomings, mostly because of using secondary/official data which may lacks transparency.* However, to examine the status of child laborers access to education in the city; the data was collected through surveys (face-to-face) to child laborers from all the 15 districts of Kandahar city, Kandahar-Afghanistan during 2020. In absence of general census data in the country particularly in Kandahar city, we have carried out our study, considering population on the basis of simple random sampling designs.

The process of data collection involved visiting potential respondents in their districts/Children in their places of work and schools. The respondent for this study were selected based on their child laboring status, and the focal child's age (7-18) years old. Children that: (i) work full time and (ii) combine work and schooling. Within the districts, respondents were identified to participate in the survey based on our study objectives and the children were traced in their work places, on streets, workshops, shops, factories, schools and etc. In total, the questionnaires randomly administered to a sample of 212 respondents, equaling to roughly 14 in each district. For obtaining the desired information, a well-structured research instrument (questionnaire) was developed from the review of the literature, through which a sample size of 212 households has been surveyed.

Quantitative data was managed using a statistical software package. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM24 Version was used for data entry and analysis of the data. And then through descriptive statistical analyses the frequency and percentage of the data developed and presented by the related tables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the different proposed research questions will be addressed.

Child Laborer Access to Education in Kandahar City

Child laborers in Kandahar city face with multidimensional deprivation including deprivation from right to education, play and enjoying from their childhood. The first objective of the study is to find out the educational background of child laborers in Kandahar city. The findings are presented as in Table 1.

Table 1. Shows the educational background of child laborers in Kandahar city.

Education level	Frequency	Percent
Illiterate	70	33
Primary	52	24.5
secondary	53	25.0

High school	37	17.5
Total	212	100.0

Table 1 show that 33% of child laborers have never enrolled and are illiterate in Kandahar city. While 17.5% of them are in high school and the rest of them are in primary and secondary school.

Recent study also points out that in Kandahar 76% of school-aged children are out of school (World Bank, 2018). In general, data shows that about 3.7 million children aged 7–17 years are out of school in Afghanistan, of whom, 2.2 million are girls and others yet are at risk of dropping out (UNICEF, 2018b; UNICEF, 2020; World Bank, 2018).

Furthermore, evidence indicates that lack of education as well as poor quality education in Afghanistan is considered as one of the main causes of child labour, that along with family income have negative effects on children's education, as a result, children are compelled to work rather to go to school (Osment, 2014). In this context AIHRC (2006) stated that “the average annual expenditure of a student is estimated USD 150-200 (10 to 15 thousand Afs), while the annual income of a state employee (most of the working children have no parents, or their parents are jobless) is not more than USD 600-700”. The report further points out that “an average family has 3 to 5 children at the school age and their education expenditure is beyond the financial capacity of parents, even if they are state employees. Additionally, in most of the families, father is the only bread earner. In cases of his death or incapability to earn expenditure, the children are automatically forced to work” (AIHRC, 2006)

Moreover, increasing insecurity and school attacks puts Afghan children progress at risk. As UNICEF (2018a) reported that “181 schools were attacked between January and September 2018, more than double the 82 schools attacked during the same period in 2017”. Furthermore, over 1,200 schools are closed due to insecurity, and about 600,000 students have been deprived of their rights to education (UNICEF, 2018a). Recent reports also pointed out that nearly 1000 schools were destroyed in last 20 years (Ahmadi, 2021).

Negative Impacts of Working on Children’s Education

The second objective of the study examined the negative impacts of working on children’s education in the city. The findings are presented as in Table 2.

Table 2. Negative impacts of working on children’s education in Kandahar city

Does working have negative impacts on your education?	Frequency	Percent
yes	126	59.4
no	27	12.7
No idea	59	27.8
Total	212	100.0

Table 2 show that 59.4% of the respondents expressed that child laboring has negative impacts on children’s education, while only 12.7% of them said that working has no negative impacts on children’s education. Meanwhile, a considerable number of child laborers (27.8%) had no idea in this case.

Previous studies have also found that children who work for a large number of hours and days are likely to drop out of school, get lower marks/grades and have irregular attendance (AIHRC, 2006; Brown, 2012; Heady, 2000; ILO 2009; ILO, 2017; ILO, 2018 & Osment, 2014).

Specifically, evidence shows that only 43% of children and youth under the age of 24 actively attend schools in Afghanistan (World Bank, 2018). There are a large number of children who attempt to combine work and school, however, these children face many problems in attendance and performance. In these regards, respondents in a study in Herat and Kabul said that “employers did not allow children to attend school or spend time on homework, while teachers punished children who missed school or failed to complete homework due to their workload. Child respondents also reported feeling exhausted by the demands of work and school and shamed by teasing from their non-working classmates” (MacDonald, 2008).

In addition, another challenge is the dropout rate for all levels of Afghan education due to variety of reasons. Some students want to pursue work, avoid attack, get married, or become too old to go to school (Adkins, 2016). As Save the Children in March 2017 estimated that every day about 1000 students are dropping out of school in Afghanistan (Mosadiq & Kaandorp, 2018). All these are the contributing factors that have negative impacts on working children’s education and related performance.

Although children are increasingly entering school, but there is very few progress in reducing drop-out rates. Because “in a 2009 survey of 44 national education plans, only eight plans identified child laborers as a marginalized group and of these, only four plans offered specific strategies to reach them” (UNICEF, 2014). Thus, education strategies must be properly developed and applied to progressively ensure the enrolment and retention of excluded and vulnerable groups of children.

Head of Household Education

The third objective of the study considered the education characteristics of household head of child laborers in Kandahar city. The findings are presented as in Table 3.

Table 3. Education characteristics of household head of child laborers in Kandahar city

Is the head of your family educated?	Frequency	Percent
yes	49	23.1
no	163	76.9
Total	212	100.0

Table 3 show that 76.9% of child laborers household head in Kandahar city are illiterate; while on 23.1% of them have literacy.

Earlier studies in Afghanistan also showed that parental education and location play an important role in school enrolment and attendance decisions. For example, children of literate parents are three times more likely to attend school than children of illiterate parents (57 percent v. 19 percent) (World Bank, 2018 & UNICEF, 2018b). In this regard the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (2014) reported that in Afghanistan 45% of adult men and 18% of adult women can read and write (Adkins, 2016). In fact, several studies evidenced that child laborers are more likely to be parents of child laborers themselves. In Egypt, Wahba (2006) shows that “the children of child laborers are 10 percent more likely to be child laborers themselves, holding everything else equal” (Edmonds, 2015). Additionally, the household survey data shows that “there is a strong inverse relationship between household wealth and parental education on the one hand and child labor on the other the wealthier and better educated the parents, the lower the incidence of child labor” (Brown, 2012). Likewise, in Nigeria, child laborers from families where the household head has no education are almost ten times more likely to be out of school as those from families in which the household head has a secondary education (Brown, 2012).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Child laborers access to education, negative impacts of working on children's education and head of household education of Child laborers in Kandahar city were investigated in this study. Similarly, earlier studies found that children whose households are in the lower three wealth quintiles, children whose head of household has no formal education and children in insecure areas are less likely to attend school. The findings of this study show that 33% of child laborers have never enrolled and are illiterate in Kandahar city. Furthermore, we found that, 59.4% of the child laborers feel that child laboring has negative impacts on children's education, in addition, 76.9% of child laborers household head in Kandahar city are unsurprisingly illiterate. We recommend that there is a need to revise the schooling system in order to evolve ways and means of offering education that is inclusive and relevant for working children in Kandahar city and other similar context. It should also be noted that the elimination of child labour, however, is not too simplistic and is unachievable in the short term specifically in Kandahar city. While there is poverty, children must work to help with their own and their families' subsistence. There has to be a multidimensional approach. One that in one hand reduces the child laboring phenomena by addressing its root causes while, on the other hand, providing a flexible education system planned to meet the child laborers needs. Some specific options to cope this problem may be listed as the following:

- Enhancing the capacity of families and communities; Creating employment opportunities and social programs to support families in need and help them find alternative income to replace their child's employment will help prevent child labor, access to education and good educational achievements.
- The government should pay meaningful attention to enhance education quality to increase family's interest in education of their children.
- The government should provide compulsory basic education for those child laborers who have not completed elementary education, through organizing special programs.
- The Ministry of Education should identify child laborers as a marginalized group and design and implement effective strategies to ensure the access child laborers to elementary education.

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