

Note

Some Dimensions of Child Labour in Pakistan

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Child Labour between 5–14 years is prevalent in Pakistan. But no reliable and comprehensive data on this age group are available to tackle this issue. Though the Labour Force Survey, the main source of labour statistics, includes information on workforce above the age of 10 years, no study on the nature and extent of child labour between 10–14 years of age is available. Accordingly, this study, based on micro data of three labour force surveys from 1990-91 to 1992-93, has been carried out to fill this gap. The study indicates that the quantum of child labour age cohort of 10–14 years grew from 1.8 million in 1990-91 to 2 million in 1992-93. The growth of girl workers is higher as compared to boys. Industrial structure shows that at the national level and in the rural area, agriculture engaged the maximum number of children, followed by services, whereas in the urban area the services sector dominated. As for employment status, most of the children are unpaid family helpers. The occupational pattern indicates that the majority of them work on farms and on production activities. The data reveals that about three-fourths worked beyond the normal 35 hours per week. It is observed that in order to gain a deeper insight into the socio-economic characteristics of child labour, particularly that between 5–14 years, and the hazardous work performed by them, independent household and establishment surveys are imperative.

INTRODUCTION

In many societies like Pakistan, a significant number of children participate in economic activities and contribute substantially to household income. There is a wide range of economic activities performed by children aged 5–14 years. Some children may just help parents in house-keeping, some may sell newspapers or cigarettes in the streets, while some others may work in formal and informal establishments. So far, the extent of participation of these children has not been well-documented. Traditional household surveys and population censuses, the main sources of manpower statistics, usually set an age cut-off point of 15 years, below which participation in the labour force is not measured. Accordingly, reliable information on the numbers and the nature of economic activities performed by the working children falling between 5–14 years is not available. In Pakistan the main source of labour force statistics, the Labour Force Survey, sets an age cut-off point of 10 years. Nevertheless, in the perspective of child labour, no detailed study on the basis of available data for the age group 10–14 has been

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done.

This paper has been divided into 8 sections including the present one. Data source, concepts, and definitions are given in Section 2. Characteristics of child labour such as the participation rate, occupation, industry, employment status, and the number of hours worked are examined, respectively, in Sections 3 to 7. The summary and the conclusion are presented in the final section.

2. DATA SOURCE, CONCEPTS, AND DEFINITIONS

Labour Force of age cohort of 5–14 years is considered child labour. Because of the existing national laws and regulations on the minimum age requirement for entering the employment market, children under 10 years of age are excluded from the scope of the Labour Force Survey; therefore, the labour status of this age group in Pakistan, in totality, is not available. As a sizeable proportion of child labour is in the age group of 10–14 years, a proportion for which data are available, it may be useful to analyse the various characteristics of labour statistics of this group. Accordingly, the micro data of the latest regular Labour Force Surveys for the years 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93 are used for analysis of the child labour phenomenon in Pakistan.

To arrive at the concept and measurable definition of “the labour force” and “employed persons”, the population is categorised into two groups; those in the labour force and those out of the labour force. Persons 10 years and over who belong to the labour force group are those who, during the reference week (i.e., the week preceding the date of enumeration), held a job (i.e., were employed), both those working and those temporarily not working. Persons who did not have a job but are available for or are seeking a job (i.e., are unemployed) are also included in the labour force. A person is considered as employed if he/she has worked at least one hour during the reference week and was either a paid employee or was self-employed.

3. PARTICIPATION RATE OF CHILD LABOUR

Looking into the quantum of child labour of 10–14 years of age, Table 1 reveals that in Pakistan the volume was about 1.8 million in 1990-91, that it grew by 0.2 million in three years to about 2.0 million in 1992-93. However, addition to the labour force of girl workers is marginally higher than that of the boy workers. An analysis of the relationship between the labour force and the corresponding population, reflected in the participation rate of child labour, indicates that 13.39 percent of the child population of 10–14 years of age was engaged in the labour force in 1992-93. A clear gender differential is observed. The activity rate of boy workers (17.98 percent) is more than double that of girl workers (7.76 percent). This differential is more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas. For example, in urban areas, boys’ participation rate is five times (11.11 percent) that of girls’ participation rate (2.16 percent), while in rural areas

boys' participation rate (21.07 percent) is about two times that of girls (10.62 percent). This provides some insight into the

Table 1

Population, Labour Force, and Participation Rates of Children of 10–14 Years of Age, by Area and Sex 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93

Description	1990-91			1991-92			1992-93		
	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls
Population									
Pakistan	13.35	7.31	6.04	14.60	7.88	6.72	15.23	8.40	6.83
Rural	8.65	4.85	3.80	9.84	5.42	4.42	10.31	5.79	4.52
Urban	4.70	2.46	2.24	4.76	2.46	2.30	4.92	2.61	2.31
Labour Force									
Pakistan	1.82	1.40	0.42	2.13	1.59	0.54	2.04	1.51	0.53
Rural	1.45	1.10	0.35	1.76	1.28	0.48	1.70	1.22	0.48
Urban	0.37	0.30	0.07	0.37	0.31	0.06	0.34	0.29	0.05
Participation Rate (%)									
Pakistan	13.65	19.15	6.95	14.59	20.18	8.04	13.39	17.98	7.76
Rural	16.76	22.68	9.21	17.89	23.62	10.86	16.49	21.07	10.62
Urban	7.87	12.20	3.13	7.77	12.60	2.61	6.91	11.11	2.16

Source: [Government of Pakistan (1993, 1994, 1995)].

fact that socio-cultural and economic differences between areas tend to affect the propensity among children to participate in the labour force. A similar phenomenon is also observed during 1990-91 and 1991-92.

As for the participation-rate trend, with reference to 1990-91, the rates for Pakistan increased in 1991-92 but declined subsequently, in general, in 1992-93. A similar tendency was observed in rural as well as urban areas, except for girls in rural areas. This decline in activity rates seems plausible on the ground that child labour is decreasing due to higher enrolment aspirations in educational institutions. These facts may be attributed also to structural changes in the economy due to mechanisation of agriculture and increased industrialisation, which have reduced the demand for unskilled child labour. Such changes encourage individuals to acquire higher skills and education. An unexpected finding is the increase in the participation rate during 1991-92; it may be attributed to the market conditions in that period or to statistical inaccuracies.

4. INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE OF CHILD LABOUR

Table 2 reveals that in 1992-93, the majority (65.98 percent) of children of 10–14 years of age, of both sexes, were engaged in primary industries, i.e., agricultural and

related activities; whereas none has been reported in the mining and quarrying sector.

Table 2

Distribution of Employed Children of 10–14 Years, by Major Industry Division, Area, and Sex 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93

Industries	(Percent)								
	All Areas			Rural Areas			Urban Areas		
	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls
1990-91									
Primary									
(Agriculture & Mining)	65.07	63.91	69.32	76.39	76.77	75.10	13.19	9.91	30.84
Secondary									
(Manufacturing & Electricity)	15.00	13.55	20.26	10.82	8.65	18.16	34.15	34.11	34.30
Tertiary or Services									
(All Other Sectors)	19.93	22.54	10.42	12.79	14.58	6.74	52.66	55.98	34.86
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
1991-92									
Primary									
(Agriculture & Mining)	65.97	64.49	71.17	76.22	76.17	76.38	13.24	11.34	25.00
Secondary									
(Manufacturing & Electricity)	14.43	12.01	22.90	9.53	6.33	19.74	39.67	37.85	50.97
Tertiary or Services									
(All Other Sectors)	19.60	23.50	5.93	14.25	17.50	3.88	47.09	50.81	24.03
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
1992-93									
Primary									
(Agriculture & Mining)	65.98	65.03	68.77	76.07	76.64	74.57	9.23	9.69	6.55
Secondary									
(Manufacturing & Electricity)	14.06	11.23	22.34	9.69	5.83	19.92	38.63	37.01	48.27
Tertiary or Services									
(All Other Sectors)	19.96	23.74	8.89	14.24	17.53	4.61	52.14	53.30	45.20
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Annexure Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Tertiary and services industries are the next most important industries, absorbing 19.96 percent of child labour. This is followed by secondary industries, which employed 14.06 percent of the total employed children.

Urban and rural distribution is found as expected; in urban areas, in 1992-93 (Annexure Table 3) the 38.08 percent proportion of working children in the manufacturing sector and 52.14 percent in the services sector is higher than in rural

areas, where it is 9.69 percent and 14.24 percent respectively. Analysis of the sex differential in rural areas indicates that with the exception of the agricultural sector, in all other sectors the sex differential is quite visible. For example, in rural areas, for girls, the second most important group is the manufacturing sector, employing 19.92 percent in 1992-93, as compared to 5.83 percent for boys. In urban areas, a clear gender differential is also observed. A higher proportion of girl workers, (48.27 percent) undertook manufacturing activities than boys, the latter only 36.37 percent. Likewise the community, social, and personal services sector employed more girls (27.61 percent) than boys (16.94 percent). Nevertheless, trade and transport sectors were dominated by boy workers. As services industries in urban areas are still largely dominated by the informal sector, children with relatively low skills and education can easily be absorbed in these activities. This also supports the widely-held view that “in developing countries, because of lack of industrial development, the non-agricultural labour force find employment to a greater extent in the tertiary sector rather than in the secondary sector” [ILO (1963)]. The distribution pattern of employed children during 1990-91 and 1991-92 reflects more or less the same situation, which shows that the structure of child labour in the industrial sector has not changed significantly during the three-year period of 1990-93. Details are presented in Annexure Tables 1, 2, and 3.

5. OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF CHILD LABOUR

Since most children are family workers, their occupations tend to be those of their family-members for whom they work. Table 3 reveals that according to the Labour Force Survey, 1992-93, the majority of the children (65.20 percent) are working in the agricultural activities, followed by production activities (24.10 percent) and sales workers (6.23 percent). A similar pattern is observed in the rural areas. It seems that the rural household is not fully equipped with modern tools which could potentially reduce child participation in economic activities. In the urban areas, production and related occupation is the dominant group, under which the maximum child labour falls (60.48 percent), followed by sales workers (17.33 percent), service workers (10.28 percent), and agricultural workers (9.53 percent). The overall occupational pattern is the same for the years 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93. In the urban areas, a significant differential has been observed in occupational patterns. In the rural areas, agriculture is the main occupation, absorbing more than three-quarters of child labour. In the urban areas, about three-fifths of the child workers are engaged in production activities.

Further analysis shows some peculiarities in the professional and technical group in rural areas, and in agriculture and the related group in urban areas. During 1990-91 and 1991-92, in rural areas, about 0.74 percent and 0.44 percent, respectively, of girl workers have been reported under the professional and technical group, against none under this group in 1992-93. In boys, under this group, an increase of 1.26 percent in

urban areas is also observed from 0.54 percent in 1990-91 to 1.80 percent in 1992-93. Although these numbers are quite small relative to totals, care needs to be taken to derive any

Table 3

*Distribution of Employed Children of Age Group 10–14, by Occupation
Group and Sex 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93*

(Percent)

Occupation Group	1990-91			1991-92			1992-93		
	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls
Professional, Technical, and Related Workers	0.47	0.42	0.64	0.83	0.96	0.39	0.43	0.59	–
Administrative and Managerial Workers	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.09	0.12	–
Clerical and Related Workers	0.48	0.56	0.19	0.72	0.92	–	0.25	0.33	–
Sales Workers	7.33	8.96	1.39	6.75	8.14	1.91	6.23	7.78	1.68
Service Workers	3.49	3.59	3.16	3.30	3.54	2.44	3.70	3.95	2.94
Agricultural, Animal Husbandry and Forestry Workers, Fishermen and Hunters	64.75	63.59	68.95	65.43	63.78	71.17	65.20	64.70	66.68
Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers	23.48	22.88	25.67	22.95	22.66	23.99	24.10	22.53	28.70
Workers not Classifiable by Occupation	–	–	–	0.02	–	0.10	–	–	–
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Annexure Tables 4, 5, and 6.

inference, since, by definition, this major group consists of workers with several years of education and training experience. Likewise, in agriculture and related group, 30.84 percent of girls in urban areas in 1990-91 are reported, whereas this figure falls to 6.55 percent in 1992-93. Therefore, reporting, coding, and other errors must account for the greater part of the reported numbers under these groups. Details are presented in Annexure Tables 4, 5, and 6.

6. EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employment status indicates position or capacity of an employed person in an establishment. Analysis of the data by broad status in employment, sex, and the areas given in Annexure Table 7, indicates that, in 1992-93, 63.78 percent employed children of 10–14 years of age in Pakistan are working as unpaid family helpers; boys and girls accounting 63.22 percent and 65.41 percent respectively. The next major group are the employees of both sexes accounting for 26.36 percent; boys (26.10 percent) and girls (27.11 percent), followed by the self-employed, who are 9.86 percent—boys 10.68

percent and girls 7.48 percent. Urban areas reflect much higher proportion of employees (57.5 percent) as compared to rural areas (20.8 percent). About 59 percent of boys and 50 percent of girls in urban areas were employees, while in rural areas the figure was only 19.25 percent for boys and 24.98 percent for girls. On the other hand, much higher proportions of unpaid family workers were found in the rural population (69.80 percent for boys and 68.36 percent for girls) as compared to the urban population (31.84 percent for boys and 33.79 percent for girls). This shows wide prevalence of subsistence family enterprises, in the rural population. Employment patterns for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 are identical to the ones discussed for the year 1992-93.

During 1990-93 shifting of boy workers from "self-employment" to "employee" has been observed. However, this pattern is not observed in the case of girl workers. It is usually expected that "as economic development proceeds, the proportion of working population as employees will increase while the proportionate shares of self-employed, unpaid family workers, and perhaps employers will decline" [Nassef (1970)].

7. WORKING HOURS

Working hours show that in Pakistan most children are working more than the normal working hours, i.e., 35 hours per week. According to the Labour Force Survey, 1992-93, 71.68 percent of the total employed children worked for more than the normal working hours during the survey week. The percentage of boys who worked more than 35 hours (80.47 percent) was much higher as compared to girls (45.89 percent). The situation in urban areas was worse. Almost five-sixths of working children in urban areas (86.30 percent) worked for more than normal working hours. Similarly, nine-tenths of the working boys in urban areas (89.95 percent) worked for more than normal working hours, while about seven-tenths of the girls worked for more than normal working hours. It is worth noting that about 39 percent of boy workers and 14 percent of girl workers are those who worked for more than 49 hours during the reference week. A similar pattern is also observed for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92. Details are presented in Annexure Table 8.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of child labour in Pakistan and to analyse its various characteristics. As national-level survey data are not available on child labour age (5-14 years of age), the study is based on micro data of child labour falling between 10-14 years of age from the latest Labour Force Surveys, 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93. As the characteristics of child labour examined for the three years show somewhat similar patterns, accordingly the figures of the latest Labour Force Survey, 1992-93, are discussed in detail. The study reveals that the volume of

child labour, age cohort of 10–14 years, grew up from 1.8 million in 1990-91 to 2.0 million in 1992-93. The growth of girl workers is higher as compared to boys. Gender differential in participation is more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas, and may be related to the socio-economic differentials among areas, which tends to affect the propensity among children to participate in the labour force. A declining trend is observed in participation rates of child labour, which may be attributed to an increase in school enrolment.

The industrial structure by broad categories indicates that agriculture has engaged the maximum number of children (65.03 percent) boys and (68.77 percent) girls. Rural areas have followed the national pattern. This is partly because the rural household is not fully equipped with the modern tools which could reduce child participation in economic activities. In urban areas, the services sector has played the dominant role by employing 52.14 percent children, followed by the manufacturing sector, (38.08 percent). This is partly because the services sector in urban areas is still largely dominated by the informal sector. Therefore, children having low skills and education can easily be absorbed in these activities.

The occupational structure, in 1992-93, reveals that the majority of children are engaged in farm activities (64.70 percent boys and 66.68 percent girls), followed by production activities (22.53 percent boys and 28.70 percent girls). This pattern is also observed in rural areas, while in urban areas the majority of the children (59.51 percent boys and 66.21 percent girls) were employed in production activities.

Employment status indicates that most of the children are working as unpaid family helpers (63.22 percent boys and 65.41 percent girls). Urban areas in 1992-93 reflect a much higher proportion of employees (58.76 percent boys and 50 percent girls) as compared to rural areas (19.25 percent boys and 24.98 percent girls). A much higher proportion of unpaid family helpers is observed in rural population (69.80 percent boys and 68.36 percent girls) as compared to urban population (31.84 percent boys and 33.79 percent girls). This indicates wide prevalence of subsistence family enterprises in rural areas.

The number of hours worked by children during the reference week reveals that about 70 percent of them worked beyond the normal working hours, i.e., 35 hours per week. In 1992-93, about 80.47 percent boys worked for more than normal working hours as compared to girl workers (45.89 percent). Children worked for more than 35 hours per week, and the figure was higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

Since traditional household surveys and population censuses are not suitable for in-depth probing of the various aspects of the working and living conditions of young persons, therefore, a specialised survey needs to be carried out for this purpose. Flow of child labour statistics on a continuous basis is essential for the formulation and implementation of appropriate national policies, regulations, and programmes, which are aimed not only at

the minimisation of the negative consequences of child labour in the short-term, but most importantly, at the children's rehabilitation; and then the eventual elimination of the practice .

Anneure i

Annexure ii

Annexure iii

Annexure iv

Annexure v

Annexure vi

Annexure vii

Annexure viii

Annexure viii

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