

Child labour causes and consequences

Field study about the child labour in Guelma and Skikda towns

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout his journey from birth to death, a person goes through different life stages. Childhood is the first one. It is considered the most important of these stages in the organization of the person's personality. Therefore, all attention must be paid to this stage because the structure of the child is fragile and his psyche is delicate until he reaches growth and integration. The task of child care is entrusted to institutions and the family comes on top of them. Unfortunately not all families are able to perform this task with the required competence at the present time especially in the third world countries which suffer of several social phenomena with serious psychological and social repercussions, including child labour. This is due to the imposed economic conditions which may include the high requirements of living, luxuries have become necessities. The policies of social support for many products have declined and the level of income of some segments in society is low. In addition to these economic factors, there are social conditions that drive these families to push their children to work either permanently or partially during holidays and spare hours in order to help meet the needs of the family members although the laws are fighting this phenomenon. However, we daily notice this phenomenon and read about its studies that alarms its danger because of seeing children who are not in the right place where they are supposed to be at this stage (schools) . Instead, they are working although they are not yet qualified to face the manifestations and values of the adults' world . It may result in problems that hinder the psychological adaptation of these children in the future.

All these data prompted us to monitor the physical reality of these children through a close sample. We start by asking the following basic questions: - What are the characteristics of the working children at an early age? What are the driving reasons for a child to work at an early

age? What are the most important experiences encountered for a working child at an early age?

2. The importance of the study:

2.1 Theoretically:

-The importance of this study comes in an attempt to provide an addition in the field of studies that are concerned with the topic of child labour in particular and children in general.

-Developing awareness about the phenomenon of child labour in order to find appropriate mechanisms to deal with it by specialists and those interested in it.

2. Application:

-The work presents a physical reality about the phenomenon of child labour in terms of knowing the causes (the most important of them). Thus, we can understand and diagnose it more accurately which may lead to the stage of treatment.

-Being aware of some consequences of child labour, specifically the psycho-physical risks

3. The basic concepts in the study:

3.1 Child

Language: In the Arabic language, the child means the little one from everything. The origin of the word child is infantile or softness. It is said that the newborn is said to be soft. The source is childhood. (A.Abdel-Fattah, 2001)

Childhood is a stage of life that extends from birth to adolescence. Within this study the child is defined as human being, whether male or female, who still in need of care and protection by his family. Thus, he is in a stage in which his physical, psycho-emotional and mental development did not qualify him to join the world of adults and engage in the working world whether in the market, on the street or in farms. The child's age ranges from 10 years to up to 15 years.

Therefore, it is crucial to present the concept of child labour as well as some studies that have focused on this phenomenon. This is through

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our research by a theoretical focus on the concept including the causes and the implications (experiences) since they constitute the basic axes of the study problem. Then, we present some previous studies that dealt with the phenomenon of Child labour. Before that, a part of the study will be on the most important areas of child labour in Algeria.

3.2 The concept of child labour: There are several definitions of child labour which are presented below:

3-2-1- The negative concept of child labour: It is the work that burdens the child and threatens his safety, health and well-being, and misuse of the child's weakness and his inability to defend his rights. It is the work that exploits children as a cheap labour alternative to adult labour. This work exploit children and doesn't contribute in their development. In addition, it hinders a child's education and training as well as affecting his life and future. (A.Abdel-Fattah, OP. CIT)

3-2-2- The positive concept of child labour: This concept includes all voluntary and paid work that the child carries out which is appropriate for his age and abilities. It can have positive effects on his mental, physical and intellectual development, especially if the child enjoys the work that preserves his basic rights. Through this work the child learns responsibility, cooperation, tolerance and volunteering with others.(Scientific Centre for communication and development policy, 2012)

4- The most important areas of child labour in Algeria:

The economic and social level of the family and the place of its presence in an urban or rural environment have an important role in the kind of work that the children are engaging in. In general we find that the child is engaged in many different fields of work. In a recent study of the Ministry of National Solidarity on the phenomenon has found that children mainly work: «as sellers of cigarettes, various materials, and food. They work as guards for cars or washing them ... etc. They

work in the commercial fields, industrial workshops as crafts ».

(R. Al-Duwaidi. 2000)

The daily observation strongly shows that the phenomenon of child labour is prevalent in the following areas: cafes, restaurants, workshops, at the edge of roads, selling different kinds of food, popular markets, and at the bus stops. The phenomenon exists throughout the year, but its prevalence increases during the school holidays. During this period, a group of children who work has temporarily emerged due to their schooling.

There are other areas of child labour that are less noticeable for example at home, in weddings, parties or holidays in which children and even adolescents are exploited. In the countryside working in the fields to harvest agricultural crops, farmers may exploit their family members or other paid children to work long hours with low wages and under harsh conditions, the most important of which are temperatures.

5- Causes of child labour:

Opinions vary and differ regarding the reasons that drive the child to work. In what follows, we will try to put a summary of these reasons in light of what studies have reached.

5-1- Demographic factors: There are those who link the population growth rates because of the high level of health care and the migration from the countryside to the city with the spread of child labour phenomenon.

5-2- Economic conditions and situations: Most of the opinions derived from the conducted studies on the child labour argued that the economic factors including poverty, the spread of unemployment among parents, and the low family income pushes them to withdraw their children from school and force them to work in order to contribute in increasing family income.

Poverty leads to the inability of families to meet the needs of their members. The role of the family members is to provide the basic needs

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of food, clothing, and shelter. The family then is deprived from some needs which have become essential nowadays and in their absence may result in an individual and social psychological imbalance.

5-3- Educational factors: Child labour is related to the prevailing educational systems in particular in which it is unable to accommodate all of them at the needed age. Other factors include: the intensity of the programs, the lack of care about children with learning difficulties, and the harshness of the teachers (beating)

- Academic failure, school dropout. All of these factors may be associated with other economical educational factors including the cost of school tools and the expenses of the educational process, teaching activities and the widespread phenomenon of private lessons in all stages of the educational process in our country. In addition, the educational level of the parents; especially if it is low; may lead to deepening the idea of working at the expense of education in their children.

5-4- Social factors: There are multiple factors, but we will come to shorten them in the family disintegration due to divorce which has become one of the most prevalent manifestations in our Arab society. Also, the death of one parent especially the father may be the cause that drives the child to work at an early age. This decreases the importance of education and the child is obliged to be responsible for supporting his family. There are also negative customs and traditions that are prevalent, especially in rural societies which encourage the early joining of the child to the world of work at the expense of education.

6- The implications of child labour:

There are several implications for a child's work, including:

The exposure to the physical abuse and delinquency, the child is exposed to physical abuse in the form of wounding, beating, and burns. Its symptoms can be noticed. It may also be subjected to deviation as a result of this abuse.

Sexual Abuse: Child sexual abuse is associated with shame, self-blame, guilt. He often doesn't reveal the abuse.

Neglecting the Child: It is prevalent in many aspects, including failure to obtain all of his basic needs, such as balanced food, clothing and shelter, appropriate health care, as well as his emotional needs, the manifestations of which are as follows:

* **Physical neglect:** It includes child malnutrition and long working hours under the sun or in the cold weather without wearing appropriate clothes. In addition, he is transported long distances to the working place (children who sell on the edge of the roads).

* **Psychological neglect:** He doesn't receive the necessary love and tenderness for his emotional growth. Also, he doesn't receive the encouragement to build his self-confidence.

* **Educational negligence:** leaving school at an early age or being absent may be reflected in his cognitive and mental development which provides him with the required knowledge for mental advice and character building.

* **Some studies that dealt with the child labour:**

- **A study carried out by Sawsan Othman in 1990 entitled:** The social needs of the family and the phenomenon of child labour in the various slums in Cairo: A sample of children ranging in age from 10 to 14 years was chosen. One of the most important results of the study was : the work that the child practices neither commensurate with his physical built nor with his age. At the beginning, children prefer work to education. However, after the hard work experience they prefer education to work. In addition, the study has found that the families encourage children to work and leave school due to the financial return because the main motivation for the child to go to work is to financially help their families. (A.Abdel-Fattah, OP.cit)

- **Ahmed Abdullah's study (1999):** This study aimed at identifying the physical reality of child labour in the manufacturing and tanning of leather in Egypt. It was found that families with a low economic level

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are those who push their children to work instead of education in search of greater income to meet the requirements of living. (Scientific centre for communication and development policy, 2012)

The studies conducted in Algeria :

There is a study by Shorfa Samia (2011): This study has dealt with the causes leading to the phenomenon of child labour on a sample of 114. They are from the towns of Batna and Constantine. The most important result is that the economic and social reasons are among the main reasons which drive children to work. In addition, there may also be other reasons which are related to the child. (Scientific centre for communication and development policy, 2012)

We also mention other Algerian studies: These results and figures were based on a study carried out by the Nada Network for the Protection of Child Rights established in the period of 2017-2018. It used the questionnaire as a study tool on the topic of economic exploitation of children as labour. Among the most important results is that approximately 70% of economically exploited children are active in the commercial activities such as selling vegetables, bread, school tools and cigarettes. However, 19% are involved in workshops in which some of them are associated with the field of construction. 10% are active in agricultural activities. The study included five towns, namely (Algeria, Setif, Tipaza, Tizi Ouzou, Bordj Bou Arreridj). The sample of these children showed that they are temporarily active and some of them are orphans. (A.Abdel-Fattah, OP.cit)

4- Study methodology: The researcher has to determine his method and considering the nature of the subject before he conducted his study. We adopted the descriptive approach which “is a method of analysis that focuses on sufficient information about the phenomenon in order to obtain practical results. Then, we interpret it in an objective way which is consistent with the actual data of the phenomenon and

describes the studied subject. (Scientific centre for communication and development policy, 2012)

7- Study sample: The researcher gets to know his research community well in order to adopt the method of study. In cases of research societies of large sizes, the researcher must adopt the appointment in order to obtain a sample that represents the entire research community. Since it is difficult to prepare a list of the working children in Algeria to withdraw the sample, we have resorted to the use of chance method in choosing the vocabulary that makes up the study sample and without prior arrangement for these meetings. The study tool is applied on children from 10 to 15 years old who are engaged in the labour market whether temporarily or permanently. We reached 23 children who were distributed in the following form:

08 children are in Guelma town, in the countryside, where the first researcher was located. 15 children are in the state of Skikda, in an urban centre.

We faced difficulties in completing this study because many of the encountered cases refused to speak to us due to the great fear and the prevailing perception among some of them that we are journalists, since media have dealt with the matter before. The study period took place between August and September 2018.

- **The study tool:** The main study tool was the interview form which is consisted of two parts. The first was dedicated to the personal data of the research sample members. The ease was taken into consideration in the other five questions. It was formulated in an open form to leave the child with the freedom of expression, especially in some of the questions, including the following: what are the experiences that you encountered while performing this work? The questionnaire was applied through an interview that depends on direct contact between the researcher and the case study. This is what made us take advantage of the direct observation technique in this study and try to obtain more accurate data. The two researchers relied on their memory for

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recording. They avoided direct recording in front of the sample members in order not to raise their concerns because their thinking at this stage does not have sufficient capacity to understand the objectives of these interviews and its scientific research purposes.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the sample members (working children):

1- With regard to the gender variable:

We note that the members of the sample were mostly males and they constitute 93.33%. However, females constitute an estimated 3.4% of the total sample members. These numbers reflect what the daily observation of the child labour phenomenon brings. Females from the working children category have less noticeable works indoors and their presence on the street to work may be minimal because of the attack fears.

2- With regard to the social level:

- 95.65% of the sample members belong to low-income families; whereas; 4.3% belong to the middle-income families. These figures are consistent with studies that found that the characteristics of children who work at an early age are from families with low income.

3- With regard to the death of one of the parents (the father):

- 86.66% of the sample both their parents are alive. However, 13.33% of them lost one of their parents. For the members of the studied sample the deceased was the father. This is consistent with many studies that found that working children are orphans. This has already been referred to in studies mentioned in the theoretical framework (the study of the Nada network). Working at an early age is to cover their expenses after the deceased father who was taking care of them.

With regard to the variable of studying or discontinuing it:

The subjects' responses were that 91.30% were still studying, whereas, 08.69% had dropped out.

This is related to the part of the personal questionnaire form. The second part of the questionnaire contains preliminary questions before addressing the specific questions of the reasons driving to work and the experiences encountered during the practice of work. The preliminary questions were complementary to what was stated in the personal data of the individuals of the sample and they are related to their characteristics. We mention the following:

First: With regard to the practicing activity:

56.52% selling, 13.04% cleaning, 30.43% practice their activity in agriculture (harvesting).

Second: With regard to the practiced activity, whether it is seasonal or permanent:

-91.30% answered that it is seasonal by virtue of being schooled, and 8.69% answered that it is permanent because they have left school.

Third: With regard to satisfaction in the work or not:

- The respondents' answers were as follows: 93.33% answered "no" and 6.66% answered "yes". We may find this result somewhat compatible with the conclusion of Sawsan Othman's study (1999) which found that children after going through a harsh work experience prefer education in contrast to their opinion before going into the work experience. This is certainly a result of discomfort at work.

Fourth: With regard to compelling the practice of this activity by their families:

The respondents' answers were as follows:

-93.91% answered that they were forced. However, 26.08% said that they went out to work at an early age with their will. This result is consistent with Ahmed Abdullah's study (1999) which aimed at identifying the physical reality of child labour in the manufacturing and tanning of leather. This study has revealed that families with a low economic level are the ones that push their children to work instead of education in search of more income to meet the requirements of living.

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We can determine that the income level of the study sample's families is low by the social level indicator that was mentioned in the personal data. 95.66% of the sample respondents answered that they are from families with a low social level.

Fifthly: With regard to the most important reasons for working among these children:

The respondents' answers were that the most important reason was helping the family by 95.65%. 34.4% answered that: out of experience and curiosity, that is, the reasons are subjective and related to the child. This finding is consistent with the results of Samia's balcony study (2011) which concluded that among the causes of child labour are economic reasons and there are subjective reasons specific to the child.

Sixth: With regard to experiences encountered during the exercise of work:

The respondents' answers were as follows:

Moral violence, 43.48%

Physical fatigue, 34.78%

Physical violence, 17.39%

Sexual harassment, 4.34%

The most important recorded observations about the list of experiences encountered by the sample members are that there are not many and varied experiences. However, the most important characteristic of the accidental experiences recorded for the sample members is that they are painful experiences especially for the psyche of a child whose build is still fragile and his personality features has not yet matured and mechanisms of confronting the pressures and frustrations are not strengthened. The most important of these experiences was: First, the exposure to moral violence represented in insulting. Second, the physical fatigue due to the difficult climatic conditions represented in high temperatures especially that 90.30% of the sample work seasonally in the summer compared to 8.69% of the respondents whose

work is permanent. Third, Physical violence which is represented in fights and beating according to the answers of the subjects during the interviews. Finally, they experienced a small extent of sexual harassment.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of child labour is described as a social phenomenon that is spreading in our society. It is also described as the phenomenon that its social, psychological and cultural aspects overlap. In most cases, the economic causes are often the one standing behind it. It has repercussions and psychological risks on the child, as it was evident from the study sample. Despite the great efforts made to fight it through legislation and laws issued in this field to protect the child and make education compulsory and free of charge until the age of 16. These data make us firmly conclude that the attempt to confront them is not a simple matter at all. Thus, we recommend the efforts of everyone to confront them. This is from a legislative, educational and social system because the matter is related to the future of the nation. In addition leaving the child working in an unhealthy environment (the street and the world of adults) does not help his growth, advancement and maturity. This cooperation and synergy of efforts may contribute in the protecting of the child from economic exploitation and synthesizing those around him about the necessity of his presence in an educational environment and helps in his proper growth and advancement.

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Data form on child labour And study schedules

Personal data:

- Name:

-Gender:

- Age:

- Rank in the family:
- Academic level:
- The social level of the family:
- Are you studying?
- Does the father alive?
- What is the profession of the father?

Questions:

- What do you work?
- When did you start this job?
- Is it seasonal work?
- What are the reasons that pushed you to work?
- Are you comfortable doing this job?
- Is someone forcing you to go to work?
- What experiences have you encountered while performing this work?

Read data quantitatively:

First: In terms of personal data:

Age factor: from 10 to 14 years old

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
under 10 years old	00	00%
above 10 years old	23	100%
total	23	100%

Sex factor:

Answers	Duplicates	percentage
under 10 years old	00	00%
above 10 years old	23	100%
Total	23	100%

Social level :

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
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Low	22	95.65%
average	01	4.34%
Good	00	00%
total	23	100%

Study

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
Study	21	91,30%
Does not study	02	08.69%
total	23	100%

Father`s presence

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
Father is present	14	86,66%
father died	09	13,33%
Total	23	100%

Read the answers data

- What do you work?

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
sell	13	56.52%
Clean	03	13.04%

S. Brahmia, M. Souilah

Agriculture	07	30.43%
Total	23	100%

Is it seasonal work?

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
yes	21	91,30%
No	02	08,69%
Total	23	100%

What are the reasons that pushed you to work?

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
to help my family	22	95,65%
curiosity and experience	01	4.34%
Total	15	100%

Are you comfortable doing your job?

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
yes	01	6,66%
No	22	93,33%
Total	23	100%

Is someone forcing you to go to work as a member of your family?

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
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Yes	17	73.91%
No	06	26.08%
total	23	100%

What are the experiences that you encountered during the performance of this work?

Answers	Duplicates	Percentage
mental violence	10	43.47 %
physical fatigue	08	34.78%
physical violence	04	17.39%
sexual abuse	01	4.34%
Total	23	100%