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Analysis of Determinants of Child Labour in District Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the prevalence and determinants of child labour in District Chitral, an underdeveloped area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, recognized for its high literacy rate and the community's strong commitment to education. The study in hand attempted to identify the factors contributing to child labour and analyzed some theoretical underpinnings to eliminate child labour in the given context. To do this, close ended questionnaires were administered to working children followed by interviews. The targeted population was classified into 05 clusters and a sample of 150 subjects was randomly selected. 100 questionnaires complete from all respects were included for analysis using descriptive statistics. 25 in-depth interviews (20 children and 05 employers) were carried out to obtain insight and substantiate the quantitative data. Findings depict poverty, illiteracy, family size and skill learning intentions as determinants of child labour. The absence of intervention of state and regulatory bodies make vulnerability of working children more severe. Findings are consistent with the previous studies.

Key word: Child labour, Poverty, Education, Socioeconomic factors

INTRODUCTION

The child labour is a pressing global issue particularly in developing countries, where the socio-economic challenges and cultural factors contribute to its persistence. Despite international efforts and legal frameworks aimed at its eradication, child labour continues to thrive in many regions, including Pakistan. The issue is particularly complex in underdeveloped areas such as District Chitral, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Chitral, a mountainous and remote region, is characterized by its scenic beauty, rich culture, and a relatively high literacy rate compared to other underprivileged areas in Pakistan. The resident populace ascribes considerable importance to education, and collective endeavors within the community have traditionally bolstered educational initiatives. Nonetheless, the district's economic stagnation

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DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

and restricted access to resources engender a context wherein child labor emerges as an adaptive strategy for families facing financial hardship.

Child labour in Chitral presents itself in diverse manifestations, such as automobile workshop workers, carpenter work, domestic employment, agricultural work, and minor manual tasks. Although certain types of labour may be regarded as culturally acceptable or beneficial for skill acquisition, others are conducted under perilous circumstances that jeopardize the physical, mental, and educational growth of children. It is imperative to identify the underlying factors contributing to this issue in order to devise specific interventions and policies aimed at mitigating child labour and enhancing educational prospects for all children within the region.

This research endeavors to investigate the determinants of child labour in District Chitral, concentrating on socio-economic, cultural, and structural elements that facilitate its occurrence. By elucidating these factors, the study aspires to furnish practical recommendations for policymakers, community leaders, and developmental organizations committed to eradicating child labour and ensuring that every child in Chitral is afforded access to education and a more promising future.

LITERATURE REVIEW Defining Child Labour

Child labor is a multifaceted issue, and experts often disagree on how to define it. While there's no single accepted definition, most researchers tend to refer to the one put forth by the International Labour Organization (ILO). ILO in its (2002) report on child labour defines "child labour" as: "Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development". The definition of the child labour varies depending work type, age and working conditions, as outline in the ILO convention Number 138 (1973) the minimum age for working is 15 years (14 years in developing countries) and minimum age for any kind of hazardous works is 18 years. Whereas, the ILO Convention Number 182 (1999) focuses on the elimination of Worst Form of Child Labour (WFCL) and categorizes the WFCL as: (a) All form of slavery or similar practices, such as trafficking of children, serfdom, debt bondage, forced labor (b) The procurement and use of a child for prostitution. (c) The procurement and use of child for activities those are illegal such as, trafficking and production of drugs. (d) All working conditions (such as working in extreme temperature, unsafe environment, dangerous machineries and chemicals usually termed as "hazardous wok") that could potentially harm children physically, mentally and morally. While the definition provides a framework, its application varies across cultural and socio-economic contexts, making it necessary to analyze local determinants of child labour.

Legislation and Advocacy Efforts against Child Labour

Key discussions on ensuring a work-free childhood are encapsulated in policies of the international organizations and countries, with interventions focused on securing children's well-being (Abebe, 2009). The United States Congress in 1997 enacted "The Bonded Child Labour Elimination Act". Following its enactment, the import of goods manufactured using bonded labor by individuals below 15 years of age was banned. The constitution of Pakistan also addresses this issue as: "No

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DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

Child below the age of fourteen shall be engaged in any factory or mine or in any other hazardous employment." In Pakistan, there are several laws containing provisions baring on child labour, including: The West Pakistan shops and Establishment ordinance 1969, the employment of Children Act 1991, the factories Act 1934, the Bonded Labour system Abolition Act 1992.

Child labour is resisted and opposed through campaigns internationally (such as global march of 1990s by ILO) and the network of NGOs to combat child labour, which advocate for the benefits of work-free childhoods.

Statistics of Child Labour

As discussed above, global approaches struggles to ban it and make children labour free. However, child labour prevails in all countries of the world in different forms and varying proportions. Below is an overview of the recent statistics on child labour internationally, regionally, and specifically in Pakistan.

International Statistics

As of 2021, about 160 million children of 5 to 17 years age are engaged in child labour worldwide, accounting for nearly 1 in 10 children globally, marking an increase of 8.4 million over four years. In the poorest countries of the world, more than 1 in 5 children are involved in child labour. Furthermore, around 79 million children are involved in hazardous works which directly affects their physical, mental and moral health (UNICEF and ILO 2021).

Regional Statistics

South Asia is home to a significant portion of the global child labour population where about 12% of children aged 5 to 14 years are involved in child labour, totaling approximately 41 million. The prevalence of child labour varies across countries in the region. The child labour from 5 to 17 years of age is highest in India (5.8 million), followed by Bangladesh (5.0 million), Pakistan (3.4 million), and Nepal (2.0 million). Children aged 5 to 11 years constitute about one-fifth of the child labourers in South Asia (UNICEF and ILO 2021). In South Asia, factors such as lack of access to quality education, poverty, and societal norms significantly contribute to child labour (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005).

Pakistan Statistics

In Pakistan, approximately 3.4 million children aged 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour (UNICEF and ILO 2021). Studies conducted in Pakistan have identified similar drivers as in south Asian region, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas, where economic constraints compel families to rely on children's earnings for survival (Ray, 2000).

As per the National Child Labour Survey of 1996 conducted by the Federal Bureau of Statistics, about 3.3 million of the 40 million children of 5 to 14 years of age are economically active on full time basis. Out of the above 3.3 million children, about 1.94 million were active in Punjab, 1.06 million in NWFP (Now KhyberPakhtunkhwa), 0.3 million in Sindh and 0.01 million in Balochistan.

Further, the survey of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa conducted in January 2024-the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Labour Survey depicts the trends of child labour. As per the survey, 9% of the children aged from five to seventeen years in the province are engaged in child labours which are 745,440 in number.

www.thedssr.com

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Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

Out of them 73.8% are occupied in hazardous work. Out of them, 16.2% face abuses, 28.5% engaged in night work, 57.2% occupied in hazardous work hours, 15% are engaged in hazardous industries and 9.4% work with hazardous equipments. 11.7% of the boys and 5.9% of the girls are engaged in child labour and the rate increases with age in both the boys and girls. The elementary occupations (61.6%) and skilled forestry, agriculture and or fishing (16.5%) are among the common occupations in which children are engaged. As per the survey, the existence of child labour is highest in Bannu (11.4%) and Lowest in D.I. Khan (3.7%).

These statistics highlight the persistent challenge of child labour globally and within South Asia, including Pakistan. Addressing this issue requires continued efforts from governments, international organizations, and civil society to enforce child labour laws, provide access to quality education, and alleviate poverty.

Determinants and Impact of Child Labour

Poverty is consistently cited as one of the significant contributors to child labour. The families having low income often prioritize immediate financial gains over long-term benefits such as education (Basu & Tzannatos, 2003). Limited economic opportunities in underdeveloped regions exacerbate the situation, pushing children into labour to supplement household income. The poor families are mostly dependent on their children to earn livelihood, viewing child labour as a survival strategy (Basu & Tzannatos, 2003). Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) argue that children's earnings are often crucial for subsistence in low-income households, particularly in rural settings. In Pakistan, the lack of financial resources to meet basic needs compels families to involve children in laborintensive activities (Khan, 2003). However, research examining the correlation between poverty and the rate of child labour, measured by household income, has yielded inconsistent results within and across countries. Some studies have found a positive correlation (e.g., Patrinos and Psacharapoulos, 1995, Cartwright, 1999), while others have found a negative or insignificant correlation (Rosati and Tzannatos, 2006, Ray, 2000, Patrinos and Psacharapoulos, 1997). Consequently, there seems to be a growing agreement that the child labour rates may not be significantly related to household poverty (Bhalotra & Tzannatos, 2003), or that there is minimal evidence to suggest that such poverty leads to a child labour abundantly (Canagarajah & Nielsen, 1999). In fact, the study of the World Bank (2005) on Cambodia depicts that the children from the households in top three wealth quintiles started working earlier than those in the lowest two quintiles. The study also found a positive correlation between the households' land ownership and children's work rate.

Parental illiteracy is closely linked to child labour, as illiterate parents may undervalue education and prioritize immediate economic benefits from child labour (Hazarika & Sarangi, 2008). Lack of awareness about the long-term advantages of education exacerbates the problem, especially in underprivileged areas (Rena, 2009). In rural Pakistan, studies have shown that parents with little to no education mostly prefer sending their children to work rather than education (Ray, 2000).

In larger families, it's common for children to be pulled into child labor, as the limited resources at home are stretched thin across more mouths to feed. These families often struggle financially, which means kids end up having to help earn a

www.thedssr.com

ISSN Online: 3007-3154 ISSN Print: 3007-3146



Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

living (Grootaert & Kanbur 1995). In South Asian societies, like Pakistan, there's a stronger cultural push for children to contribute to the family's income, especially in households with many children (Mahmood et al., 2020). This mix of factors only deepens the child labor crisis. For instance, poverty and having a big family often come with poor access to quality education, trapping families in a cycle of illiteracy and financial struggle. Moreover, many parents might not be aware of the dangers of child labor or the benefits of education, leading them to rely on informal apprenticeship systems, which only reinforces the cycle of child labor.

Education is vital in the fight against child labour, yet many obstacles make it difficult for children to attend school. Factors like limited access to quality education, steep costs, and additional expenses such as transportation and uniforms can deter families from sending their kids to school, leading to an increase in child labour (Beegle et al., 2009). In rural areas, the absence of local schools and gender inequalities only make matters worse (Hazarika & Sarangi, 2008). For families struggling financially, the opportunity cost of education becomes a significant issue. Psacharopoulos (1997) highlights that families often choose the immediate economic benefits of child labour over the long-term rewards of education, which perpetuates cycles of poverty and illiteracy. In Pakistan, the lack of proper school infrastructure in rural areas has resulted in low enrollment and high dropout rates, pushing children into the labour market (ILO, 2021).

Cultural attitudes towards the role of children in both families and communities greatly affect child labor. In various societies, child labors is often regarded as a means for skill development or as a way to support family duties (Rena, 2009). Such norms often blur the line between acceptable child work and exploitative labour. In many developing countries, including Pakistan, apprenticeship is a common alternative to formal education. Parents often view apprenticeship as a way for children to learn practical skills and secure future employment, especially when formal education systems are perceived as ineffective (Rena, 2009). While this may provide some short-term benefits, it perpetuates the cycle of child labour and limits educational attainment (Basu & Van, 1998).

Child labour has profound implications for children's mental, physical and educational developments. Studies indicate that children engaged in labour often experience poor health outcomes, psychological stress, and limited future opportunities due to interrupted education (Psacharopoulos, 1997). Work is often seen as harmful to a child's development. This perspective aligns with "human capital theory" (Ennew et al. 2005), that suggests that child labour hinders the skills, healthy mental growth and knowledge that children need for future economic development. To address these impacts, a holistic approach is required which considers both long term and immediate consequences of child labour.

Research Gaps and Contextual Factors

While significant research has been conducted on child labour globally, studies focusing specifically on underdeveloped but educationally progressive areas like Chitral are limited. Most existing studies on child labour in Pakistan emphasize urban or highly impoverished rural settings, overlooking regions with unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics. Understanding the interplay between

www.thedssr.com

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Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

Chitral's high literacy rate, cultural values, and economic conditions can provide new insights into addressing child labour in similar contexts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the intersection of economic, sociological, and educational theories that explain the determinants of child labour. This framework offers a clear way to understand how various factors like poverty, illiteracy, lack of awareness, large family sizes, poor education quality, inadequate educational infrastructure, and apprenticeship practices all contribute to the ongoing issue of child labour.

The human capital theory suggests that investing in skills and education boosts productivity and earning potential, which can help reduce poverty over time (Becker, 1964). However, for families in low-income situations, the immediate need for money often takes precedence over the long-term benefits of education, resulting in child labour. This theory emphasizes the need to tackle educational obstacles and create incentives for families to choose schooling over child labour. From a sociological angle, structural functionalism sees child labour as a byproduct of societal structures. In families with many children and limited resources, kids often have to join the workforce to help their families survive (Parsons, 1951). This perspective sheds light on how family dynamics and societal expectations can perpetuate child labour, highlighting the urgent need for structural changes to ease these burdens.

The theory of intergenerational poverty sheds light on how poverty gets passed down from one generation to the next. When parents struggle with illiteracy and lack awareness of the long-term benefits of education, it severely limits their children's chances of breaking free from the cycle of poverty through formal schooling (Bird, 2007). This perspective highlights the ongoing cycle of poverty and underscores the need for targeted interventions to disrupt it.

The push-pull theory, commonly used in labor economics, helps us understand why families often involve their children in work. "Push" factors, like poverty and insufficient educational opportunities, force children out of school, while "pull" factors, such as the income from apprenticeships or informal jobs, draw them into the labor market (Lee, 1966). This theory offers valuable insights into the competing forces that shape decisions around child labor.

Amartya Sen's capability approach focuses on enhancing individual freedoms and capabilities, which includes ensuring access to education and providing children with a childhood free from exploitative labor (Sen, 1999). This approach serves as a framework for assessing child labor not just as an economic issue, but as a violation of children's fundamental rights and opportunities.

The conventions set by the International Labour Organization and local laws, like Pakistan's Employment of Children Act (1991) and other child protection regulations, offer a policy-based perspective. However, the weak enforcement of these laws and the poor implementation of educational policies worsen the child labor situation, highlighting the need for systemic changes to tackle the issue effectively (ILO, 2021).

Proposed Framework

This study brings together the theories mentioned above into a well-rounded framework:

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ISSN Online: 3007-3154 ISSN Print: 3007-3146

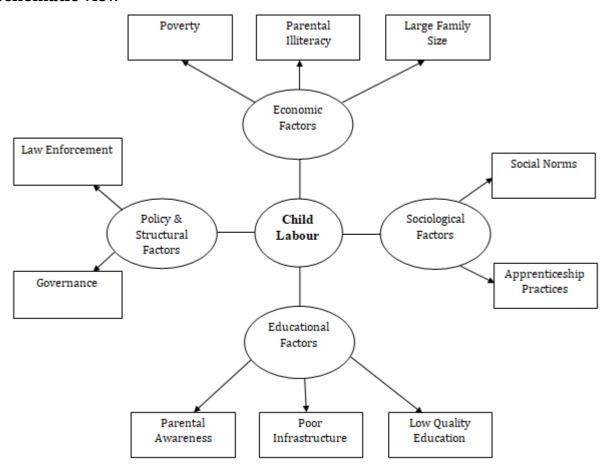


DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

- **Economic Factors:** Drawing from human capital theory and intergenerational poverty theory, this research looks into how elements like poverty, parental illiteracy, and having a large family size play a role in child labor.
- **Sociological Factors:** Structural functionalism and cultural norms are explored to understand the social acceptance of child labour and its reinforcement through apprenticeship practices.
- **Educational Factors:** The capability approach and push-pull theory are applied to analyze the impact of low-quality education, poor infrastructure, and lack of parental awareness on child labour.
- **Policy and Structural Factors:** Using ILO conventions and local laws as a guiding lens, the research investigates the role of governance and legal frameworks in addressing child labour.

Schematic view



METHODOLOGY

Survey method was used to collect first hand data through the personal administration of close ended questionnaires followed by in-depth interviews. To check the reliability of the questionnaire, a test representing a sample of 50 respondents was conducted by using a Cronbach's Alpha. The coefficient of the Cronbach's Alpha for overall questionnaire was found to be 0.85, showing reliability and suitability of the instrument for data collection and analysis.

www.thedssr.com

ISSN Online: 3007-3154 ISSN Print: 3007-3146



DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

District Chitral of KPK province comprising population of 515,935 individuals constituted population for the given study. The entire population was classified into five clusters and a sample size of 30 respondents (below 18 years of age) from each cluster was randomly selected. Response rate remained 80 percent and 100 questionnaires complete from all respects were included for analysis. Twenty children and five employers were interviewed. Work places from where respondents were auto workshops, shops, furniture workshops, hotels, and houses. 75 respondents were boys and 25 were girls. Girls were working in houses. Descriptive statistics using SPSS software were applied to analyze the data and findings were interpreted in percentages.

Results

Child labour is a worldwide phenomenon. All countries whether developed or under developed are facing this issue the root cause is the poverty but there are also several reasons of this socio economic problem, like large family size, education problem, poor literacy of parents and so many other reasons are there. Some of the findings and conclusions of this study are given below;

- 1. From the study, it is observed that 75% of the child labour in the project area is male and that of 25% of the Childs are female. It is concluded that the ration of male child labour are more than females.
- 2. 1 respondent out of 100 respondents being 1% belongs to age of just 11years. 9 respondents out of 100 being 9% belong to the age of 12 year. 30 respondents out of 100 being 30% belong to age of 13 year. 34 respondents out of 100 being 34% belong the age of 14 year. 14 respondents out of 100 being 14% belong to age of 15 year. 10 respondents out of 100 being 10% belong to age of 16 year. 2 respondents out of 100 being 2% represent the age group of 17 year respectively. So, it is observed that majority of the children that are involved in the child labour are belonging to the age of 14 year.
- 3. From the study, it is found that most of the child labour are Pakistani (84%) and 16% Childs are having Afghan Nationality.
- 4. From the study, it is found that most of the respondents i.e. 48% in the project area are illiterate, 34% are Primary pass, 17% are middle pass and 1% is Matriculate. So it is concluded that mostly illiterate Childs are forced towards child labour.
- 5. From the study, it is observed that the majority of the child labourers belong to the large family members that is 70% of the respondents have a family size between 8 to 14 members. 29% Childs have family members from 1 to 8 that is normal family size in Pakistan. So it is concluded that mostly large family size child are pushed into child labour.
- 6. From the study, it is found that most of the Childs have their own homes (77%) and only 23% of the respondents are living in the rented house.
- 7. From the study, it is found that majority of the children in the project area are working in the automobile workshops. 21% are working in the Hotel and 39% are working in other places like shops and houses.
- 8. From the Study, it is observed that most of the respondent's parents are alive and only 2% respondent's parents are not alive. And, 11% respondent's father is died and 20% respondent's mother is died.

www.thedssr.com

ISSN Online: 3007-3154 ISSN Print: 3007-3146



DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

- 9. From the study, it is found that 80% of the respondents fathers are illiterate and only 20% Childs father are educated. So it is concluded that mostly those Childs are involved in child labour whose parents are illiterate.
- 10. From the study, it is found that majority of the child labours in the project area are working upto 10 hours i.e. 53%. 20% are working 12 or more than 12 hours work in day 27% of the child works upto 8 hours in a day. So it is concluded that child labour working hours is against the child labour laws.
- 11. From the study, it is found that majority of the child feel tired after long working hours i.e. 67%. And 29% child feel mentally disturb and 4% feel socially uncomfortable. So it is concluded that due to long working hour they feel tired and mentally disturb, so there is a chance that they will face mental disturbance or any other diseases.
- 12. From the study, it is found that majority of the Childs are just given 80 to 100 rupees per day i.e. 34%. And 16% are just receiving 50 to 60 rupees per day. so it is concluded that these Childs are being exploit because 50 or 100 rupees for whole day work is nothing now a days.
- 13. From the study, it is Found that majority (53%) of the respondents have monthly family income of 8000 to 12000 thousand rupees per month. 24% of the respondents have monthly family income less than 8000 thousand rupees. Only 16% of the respondent's family income is more than 16000 thousand rupees. In present economic condition of Pakistan these income are in sufficient to full all of the family expenditure. So it is concluded that most of the Childs are pushed towards child labour because their parents are unable to afford the educational expenses of their Childs.
- 14. From the study, it is found that majority of the child labours in the project area are working due to poverty i.e. 90%. And 10% are working for other reasons like seeking technical education. So it is concluded that mostly Childs are pushed towards child labour because of poverty.
- 15. 19% respondent's fathers are Govt. servants, 23% respondent's fathers were Private servant, 23% respondent's father were small business holder, 25% respondent's father were daily wagers and 10% respondent's fathers were involved in any other occupation. So it is concluded that no matter where the fathers are working, the Childs of all occupational fields are involved in child labour.
- 16. It is found from the study that 59% of the respondent's income is supplementing their family income and 41% respondents is not supplementing their family income. So it is concluded that most of the Childs are supplementing their family.
- 17. From the study, it is found that there is no organization working for the welfare of child labour, no organization working for the education of child labour and no organization working for the health of child labour. So it is concluded that child are pushed towards child labor day by day because no any Govt. or private organization is working to reduce the child labour.
- 18. From the study, it is found that all the child are ready to leave the child labour if they are provided the chance of schooling, and they are interested in religious, modern and mostly in technical education. So it is concluded that the child labour can be reduce by providing schooling chance to these Childs

www.thedssr.com

ISSN Online: 3007-3154 ISSN Print: 3007-3146



Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

- 19. From the study, it is found that most of the bosses do not explain how to perform different works. So it is concluded that these Childs are exploit, these Childs learn the work after long time. Become expert after more time, till that time it is difficult for them to supplement their family.
- 20. It is found from the study that majority of the bosses punish the Childs. If they do mistakes. So it is concluded that if the Childs make mistakes they try to hide them and leads them towards criminal morality.
- 21. It is also found that most of the bosses use rough languages to their child workers. It is concluded that it makes the mind of the small kids bad, like their boss they will also use rough language with others.
- 22. It is also found from the study that most of the bosses do not keep friendly relationship with Childs. So it can depress the mind of the child. The will have no confidence because of strict relationship of boss.
- 23. From the study, it is found that 48% of the Childs are involved in the drug usage like cigarette and naswar. 52% Childs are not involved. So it is concluded that the environment of the workplace damaged the habits of Childs and they start using different drugs that are not good for health from the initial age.
- 24. It is found from the study that 78% of the Childs are being provided medical facility if they become ill and 22% are not.
- 25. It is found that majority of the project area one holiday is given to these Childs.
- 26. It is found from the study that 82% of the respondents are given allowance 18% are not given.

Conclusion & Recommendations Conclusion

The child labour is a pervasive issue in District Chitral driven by multifaceted interplay of economic, sociological, and educational factors. Poverty emerges as the most significant determinant, compelling families to rely on their children for income generation. Parental illiteracy and lack of awareness further exacerbate the issue, as families fail to recognize the long-term benefits of education. Big families often stretch their limited resources, which can lead to an increase in child labor. The shortcomings in educational infrastructure and the overall low quality of education contribute to kids dropping out of school. Plus, cultural norms around apprenticeships can keep the cycle of child labor alive.

To fight against child labor effectively, we need to take a multifaceted approach that addresses not just the economic struggles of families but also the structural obstacles to education and awareness. The findings from this study emphasize the urgent need for targeted actions that can break the cycle of poverty and labor, ensuring that children have access to quality education and the chance for a brighter future.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are grounded based on findings of the study to tackle the root causes of child labour and implement focused interventions to combat child labour with an aim to promote sustainable and child-centered development in the region.

www.thedssr.com

ISSN Online: 3007-3154 ISSN Print: 3007-3146



Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

- 1. To effectively curb child labour in Chitral, it is essential to provide economic support to families by implementing targeted poverty alleviation initiatives.
- 2. The government should prioritize the provision of inclusive, high quality and cost free education, particularly in vulnerable areas, by strengthening facilities and equipping educators with professional development.
- 3. Awareness raising campaigns should be conducted to educate parents regarding adverse effect of child labour and benefits of education.
- 4. The relevant authorities should ensure the enforcement of child labour related laws and make sure punishment of the offenders.
- 5. The government should establish monitoring and reporting mechanism for monitoring and reporting child labour practices.

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www.thedssr.com

ISSN Online: 3007-3154 ISSN Print: 3007-3146



DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

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Vol. 3 No. 6 (June) (2025)

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