



Traces of Exploitation in Childhood

Comprehensive Research on the Forms,
Causes and Consequences of Child Labour

Kameel Ahmady & colleagues



آوا یبوف | Avayebuf
avayebuf.com

Traces of Exploitation in Childhood

Comprehensive Research on the Forms, Causes and
Consequences of Child Labour

Kameel Ahmady & colleagues





avaye.buf@gmail.com

AVAYeBUF.com

Traces of Exploitation in Childhood:
Comprehensive Research on the Forms, Causes and
Consequences of Child Labour

Kameel Ahmady and colleagues

Published by: Avaye Buf

ISBN: 978-87-94295-16-1

©2024 Avaye Buf

avaye.buf@gmail.com

www.avayebuf.com

© 2024 Kameel Ahmady and colleagues

This book is published by Avaye Buf and can be downloaded free of charge from their website at <http://avayebuf.com>. The content is available for free use, provided that the author and publisher are properly and clearly cited.

Please note that while the content is available for free use, it is still protected by copyright law. Any unauthorised use or distribution is prohibited and may result in legal action.

List of Research Team

Developer and Coordinator:	Kameel Ahmady
Technical & Publishing:	Ghasem Gharehdaghi
Fieldwork Team:	Zahra Morsadi, Sara Hassami, Hesam Morteza Fard, Shahreh Dadashi, Chenar Azizi, Mehrdad Ghanbari,
Coding Team:	Parisa Mohajeri, Ameneh Mirzaei Alviri,
Editing and Content Analysis Assistants:	Farshid Khezri, Sayeh Rahimi, Chenar Azizi,
Research assistants:	Zahra Morsadi, Parisa Mohajeri
Research Methodology Instructor:	Dr. Payam Roshanfekar
Research Advisors and Supervisors:	Dr. Alireza Kermani, Mr. Harvey McKenzie, Professor Anna Aston Hafteh,
Tables and Charts Designer:	Parisa Mohajeri, Fateme Azari Rahvard,
Transcript Reviewers:	Sayeh Rahimi, Dr. Alireza Kermani
Book Design:	Esmail Yazdanpour

Some contributors wished to remain anonymous due to the political sensitivity surrounding this research topic.

Published by: Avaye Buf

ISBN: 978-87-94295-16-1

©2024 Avaye Buf

avaye.buf@gmail.com

www.avayebuf.com

Table of Contents

List of Tables	10
List of Figures.....	10
List of Pictures.....	11
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	15
FOREWORD	21
INTRODUCTION.....	29
CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH OVERVIEW	35
PART ONE: PROBLEM STATEMENT, IDENTIFICATION AND STUDY OF THE VARIOUS FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR.....	35
Importance and Necessity of Research	38
Research Objectives	40
Research Limitations.....	41
HISTORY OF CHILD LABOUR.....	43
GLOBAL CHILD LABOUR STATISTICS.....	48
Situation of Working Children in Developing Countries	52
Bangladesh	53
India	54
Kyrgyzstan.....	55
Chad	56
Democratic Republic of the Congo.....	56
Ethiopia.....	56
Kenya.....	57
Brazil	58
Senegal	60
Situation of Working Children in Developed Countries.....	60
Child Employment Law in Britain.....	61
Working Child's Conditions	63
Reasons for Child Labour.....	65
Child Labour in Iran.....	67
Child Labour in Iran's Laws	70

Traces of Childhood Exploitation	5
Social Security Insurance for Adolescent Workers	72
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH.....	75
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE OF RESEARCH.....	76
Categorising Child Labour.....	78
Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour	80
Convention on Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour	80
Action Programme of the Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour	81
Hazardous Work for Children	82
Different Forms of Child Labour.....	85
RESEARCH CONCEPTS	94
Working Children.....	94
Work.....	97
Worker.....	97
Employer	97
Labor Inspection	98
Workers in Family Workshops.....	101
The Situation of Child and Adolescent Labour in Iran.....	101
Adolescent Apprentice Contract.....	102
Workshop	104
Workshops with Under Ten Workers.....	104
Home-based Workshops	104
Underground Workshop	106
THEORETICAL LITERATURE OF THE RESEARCH.....	106
Sociological Approaches to Examining Social Issues	106
Social Disorganization.....	106
Symbolic Interaction Theory	108
Conflict Theory.....	109
Theories Related to Child Labour.....	110
Culture of Poverty	110

Traces of Childhood Exploitation	6
Socialization of the Child.....	110
Migration.....	112
Informal Economy	116
Underground Economy.....	120
Children as Family Assets	123
Labor Market Failure	123
Economic and Social Factors Creating Child Labour.....	124
Cultural Function	126
Theoretical Link Between Child Labour and Trade	127
Information Age and Black Holes	127
Excessive Exploitation.....	128
Migration, Marginalisation	130
Social Exclusion.....	131
Black Holes.....	132
PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES RELATED TO CHILD LABOUR.....	135
Mental Health	135
Disruption in the Natural Development Process.....	136
Leisure Time.....	141
Social Learning Theory.....	142
Child Abuse	145
Theoretical Research Framework.....	147
Review of Previous Studies.....	149
Review of Previous Studies in Iran.....	154
RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	165
Shoe, Bag, and Clothing Production.....	165
Agricultural Occupations	170
Tiran Transformator Intersection	172
Flower-Related Occupations	174
Behesht-e Zahra	175
Mahallati Flower Market.....	178
Imam Reza Flower Market.....	182
Brick kilns in Shamsabad	184

Traces of Childhood Exploitation	7
Child Labourers in Farahzad	187
Working children in Kan	192
Working children and the street.....	195
Types of street children	196
Nationality of street children	197
Street presence and hangouts	198
Behavioural Patterns of Street and Working Children.....	200
Street Violence Experience.....	202
Family Life of Working Children.....	203
Systematic Exploitation.....	204
CHAPTER THREE: EXPLORING THE CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND HAZARDS OF CHILD LABOUR.....	206
METHODOLOGY	207
Ethics in Research	208
CHILD LABOUR FORMS	212
Fruit and Vegetable Markets Works.....	215
Scavenging.....	219
Working on the streets	225
Selling Flowers	235
Working in Car Repair Shops and Mechanics.....	242
Work in welding and waste	249
Manual Cargo Handling	253
Working in brick kilns.....	259
Working in Agricultural Farms	264
Working at Home.....	269
Work in Grocery Stores	272
Working as a Shop Assistant	276
Working in a Car Wash	278
Work in Glassblowing Workshops	282
Domestic Work by Children	285
Housekeeping Girls	293
CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR.....	296

Traces of Childhood Exploitation 8

Poverty and social inequalities	296
Illiteracy and Low Literacy of Parents.....	300
Helping increase family income	304
Parents' illness and unemployment	307
Addiction of Parents.....	309
Debts and the Death of Parents.....	312
Parents' Imprisonment	313
Educational Inequality and Cultural Poverty	314
Marriage	315
Cultural Beliefs	316
Migration.....	318
Children's Inclination Toward Financial Independence	320
Informal Economy	323
Migration Issue	336
Age.....	354
Gender	373
Children's Attitudes.....	382
Overlooking and normalization.....	391
Surveillance and Protection	407
Labour Relations	416
Power Relations.....	436
School Dropout.....	449
Child Marriage.....	469
Peer Influence and Ineffectiveness of Education System.....	470
INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT, REDUCING OR INCREASING HARM	473
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	489
Prohibition of child labour and ineffective plans	513
CONSEQUENCES AND RISKS.....	526
Risks of Child labour in Various Forms	526
Experience of Violence and Harassment.....	573
Exploitation.....	597
Leisure Time.....	611

Traces of Childhood Exploitation 9

Nutrition..... 624

Location of Children’s Housing.....635

Strategies of Children for Increasing Success and Security in Work
.....645

Child labour and Health 662

**CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND STRATEGIES
FOR CHILD LABOUR REDUCTION.....677**

Overview..... 678

Summary and Conclusion 682

Executive Solutions for Reducing Child labour..... 690

List of Tables

Table 1 Estimated regional economic activity of 5 to 14 year old children in 2000	63
Table 2 Percentages of working children by gender, age group, and urban/rural in 1995-2010	68
Table 3 Examples of hazardous occupations for children and their impacts on child health.....	88

List of Figures

Figure 1 Theoretical Model Diagram of Black Holes	134
Figure 2 Distribution of children by working hours (N=311)	215
Figure 3 Parents' Education (Based on the number of individuals).....	302
Figure 4 The occupation of the mothers of working children (Based on the number of individuals, in per cent).....	304
Figure 5 Causes affecting the deprivation of children from family income (N=109).....	306
Figure 6 Migration patterns	349
Figure 7 Migration methods of children from Afghanistan to Iran	350
Figure 8 Age of starting work among children (N=294)	357
Figure 9 ethnic origins of working children (N=303)	369
Figure 10 Gender distribution of children based on two forms of work (number of individuals)	376
Figure 11 Gender distribution by type of work	378
Figure 12 Oversight and Care of Institutions for Child labour	413
Figure 13 Daily income of working children (in thousand Tomans)	430
Figure 14 Distribution of children based on time of receiving income....	431
Figure 15 Amount of weekly income and form of work.....	432
Figure 16 Distribution of working children's day off	433
Figure 17 Distribution of Children Based on School Level (N=233)	452
Figure 18 NGO activities for working children (N = 229)	510
Figure 19 Municipality prohibition and limitation (N = 19).....	516

Figure 20 Extent of oversight and supervision of child labour by institutions (N = 66).....	518
Figure 21 Distribution of children based on the type of work risks (N=211)	529
Figure 22 Distribution of Risks Based on Their Severity (N=211).....	529
Figure 23 Types of Experienced Harassments by Children (N=159)	593
Figure 24 Experience of Various Forms of Violence in Labour	596
Figure 25 Distribution of children based on having leave or absence from work.....	614
Figure 26 Ethnicity and Holidays	617
Figure 27 Quality of children's leisure time (N= 136)	620
Figure 28 Nutrition Pyramid (source: niddk.nih.gov)	626
Figure 29 Eating habits of working children based on the location and method of preparation (N=120).....	627
Figure 30 On-site food consumption based on the type of work (per individual)	630
Figure 31 Children Street Vendors' Nutrition Method (N=36)	634
Figure 32 Distribution of Children Based on Housing Location (N=318)	640
Figure 33 Household Structure of Labouring Children (N=293)	668
Figure 34 Grounded Model of Child Labour Forms	683

List of Pictures

Picture 1 Clothing and curtain production at Tehran Grand Bazaar (Original photo by research team).....	170
Picture 2 Image of a child labourer in Imam Reza flower market (from the study)	184
Picture 3 View of brick kilns in Shamsabad (from study)	187
Picture 4 Images of Farahzad neighbourhood and children (from Tehran Renovation Organization (2018), Farahzad Neighbourhood book)	191
Picture 5 Image of child labourers in car repair shops in Kan (from Virgul website)	195

Picture 6 Image of street children providing free car wash services to police in Kargar Shomali (from study)	196
Picture 7 Image of street children in north Tehran passages - Saadat Abad and Ferdowsi (from study).....	197
Picture 8 Street children at work, Azadi Square (from study).....	200
Picture 9 An image of street and working children at Valiasr Square (photo from the research)	203
Picture 10 Image of a teenage worker in the fruit and vegetable markets (photo from IRNA news agency).....	219
Picture 11 A view of urban waste in the Vanak area and a waste collector child in the Kamranieh area (photo from research).....	225
Picture 12 A scene of children working and present at intersections and city streets; the child on the right selling goods and the one on left tattooing his friend's foot (research photo).....	235
Picture 13 A picture of a child flower vendor (Photo from ISNA News Agency).....	242
Picture 14 Image of a working child in a repair shop (Photo from Nasim website)	249
Picture 15 A picture of a working child in a welding workshop using a milling machine (Photo from IRNA news agency).....	253
Picture 16 Picture of wheelbarrow-working children in the Grand Bazaar of Tehran (Photo from the research).....	259
Picture 17 Picture of brick kilns in the Shamsabad area and children working (photo from the study)	264
Picture 18 View of agricultural farms at Transfor Square (photo from the study)	269
Picture 19 A picture of a child along with her mother in the Khan region cleaning vegetables for sale (photo from Hamshahri newspaper)	272
Picture 20 A picture of a working child at a grocery store in Dibaji Street (Photo by the research team).	276
Picture 21 A view of apprentice children in the flower market of Mahallati and Imam Reza (Photo by the research team).	277
Picture 22 A teenage worker in a car wash (Image from Eqtesad Online)	280
Picture 23 A teenager working in a wood workshop in the Morteza Gerd district (Image from the research)	282
Picture 24 Images of a glassblowing factory in the south of Tehran and child labour in the Khayrabad area (Photos from the research)	285

Picture 25 Image of children engaged in domestic work (Photo from Hamshahri newspaper).....	293
Picture 26 Afghan adolescents working in a bag and shoe production workshop in the Nematabad district (photo from the research) .	307
Picture 27 A teenager working in a bag and shoe workshop in the Nemat Abad area (photo from the research)	311
Picture 28 Working teenagers in a curtain production workshop in the curtain market of Koche Madar (photo from the research)	315
Picture 29 a child apprentice in a curtain-selling shop in the Harandi region (Photo from the research)	323
Picture 30 teenagers working in a crystal-making workshop in Kheirabad (photo from the research)	328
Picture 31 child labourers in traditional glassblowing workshops in Rey City (photo from the research)	336
Picture 32 a teenager working in a bag and shoe production workshop in the Nematabad district (Photo from the study)	354
Picture 33 a young child selling flowers along the path to Behesht-e Zahra (Photo by the research team)	365
Picture 34 Flower-selling girls on the street (Photo courtesy of IRNA news agency)	382
Picture 35 A teenage labourer in an industrial crystal workshop in the Kheirabad region (Photo from the research)	386
Picture 36 Child labourers working in a traditional crystal-making factory in the Eslamshahr region (photo from research)	407
Picture 37 A photo of Tehran Municipality's urban advertising in Laleh Park regarding combating child waste picking (research photo)	415
Picture 38 Two windshield washing children in Sohrevardi area (research photo)	447
Picture 39 A working child (Courtesy of Young Journalists Club)	469
Picture 40 An adolescent working in a car repair shop (courtesy of Nasim News Agency)	473
Picture 41 An NGO school in south Tehran (Research photo)	487
Picture 42 Image of Yasir Center in the organization program for working and street children in 2019 (Photo from ISNA News Agency)	526
Picture 43 a child with a handcart in Tehran's Grand Bazaar (Photo from the research)	535
Picture 44 a child with a handcart in the Imam Reza Market (Photo from the research)	537

Picture 45 Image of urban garbage collected by children in the Jannatabad area (Photo from the research)	540
Picture 46 a working teenager in a woodworking workshop in the Ismailabad area (Photo from the research).....	541
Picture 47 a child flower seller operating a handcart in a local flower market (photo from the research)	543
Picture 48 A picture of a teenager working in a welding workshop in the Khalazir district (photo from the research).....	545
Picture 49 working teenagers in agricultural fields at the Transfor intersection (photo from the research)	546
Picture 50 working children in a traditional glassblowing factory in the Kheirabad district (photo from the research)	548
Picture 51 a bag and shoe production workshop on the outskirts of Tehran's bazaar and a working child there (photo from the research)	556
Picture 52 brick kilns in Shamsabad (Photo from the research)	562
Picture 53 working and street children (Photo by Bahar News)	597
Picture 54 a street vendor child (Photo by Fararu)	635
Picture 55 Images of the living and dwelling places of child labourers in the areas of Harandi, Grand Bazaar of Tehran, Nemat Abad, and Ghani Abad (Photos from the research)	645
Picture 56 Image of a working child (Photo from Etemad Online)	662
Picture 57 A picture of a working child in Mahallati flower market with his handcart (Photo from the research).	682
Picture 58 Image of a working child in an industrial crystal factory in the Khirabad region (Photo from the research)	685
Picture 59 Image of the residence of some working children with their families in the farms south of Tehran (Photo from the research)	688
Picture 60 Image of a child working in the scrap iron section in the Khalaazir region (Photo from the research).....	698

Acknowledgements

Throughout all the years I spent studying and researching social and anthropological issues in the field, I came across many instances where, as a human being, I sincerely felt sorry for the target community and those who had fallen victim to harmful traditions, beliefs, poverty and destitution. However, profound sorrow and anguish took hold in my bones when I encountered children across the world and in vastly different locales who had been condemned to backbreaking work during their childhood years, becoming weaker and feebler by the day in a world that claims to protect children's rights and ensure social justice for them. In recent years, I keenly experienced this sorrow during field studies for the *Stolen Childhood* research, a study on identifying, preventing and controlling the phenomenon of child waste picking in Tehran, for which I was the lead researcher on behalf of the Children's Rights Association. For the second time, I felt an even greater, more heart-rending pain, because through fieldwork I became familiar with the various forms of child labour which, despite their differences, had one thing in common: the exploitation of children and the suffering they endured in the vicious cycle of gruelling work. Therefore, the knowledge and understanding gained through the *Stolen Childhood* research prompted me to examine the bulk or entirety of the different types of child labour in a more comprehensive and thorough manner.

I am no stranger to working as a child. As someone who grew up on the margins of Iran in Kurdistan without access to the facilities and opportunities available in the centre during that period, I spent many days of my childhood summers in my paternal grandfather's village, helping with sheep herding and farm work. For a time, I also worked with my uncle, who was financially struggling back then, at brick kilns in Malayer and Qazvin, carrying

bricks from early morning to late evening. For a short while, I peddled goods and worked as an apprentice at a mechanic's shop and photography studio. Although my family was not destitute and did not need my labour or income, my circumstances and enthusiasm dictated that I work to cover my expenses and gain greater financial independence. A great deal of my knowledge and understanding about child labour is thus derived from my own lived experiences. As a child and teenager, working in the rural areas where I was born familiarized me with nature, animals and agriculture. I believe that working during adolescence, provided it is monitored, legal and meant to impart skills, can have positive impacts on a person's life and worldview. Indeed, much of my current standpoint as someone who cares about nature and animals and understands the workings of the food cycle and its importance is rooted in the awareness I gained during childhood. I am well aware that labour, especially in adolescence, can reinforce life skills in a person and prepare them for adulthood. However, I must confess that what I saw and experienced during fieldwork for the *Stolen Childhood* study and the present research defies any characterization other than the naked exploitation and bleeding dry of defenceless children. This is why I chose the title *Footprints of Exploitation in Childhood* for this work.

The economic straits that have lately peaked, state bodies that have diminished their sense of responsibility towards children and are locked in a vicious cycle of piecemeal actions, some NGOs that are dealing with budget shortfalls and even security pressures and have at times fallen into unhealthy competition, the media that has ignored its journalistic duty regarding children and opts for eye-catching headlines about them, citizens who walk past working children and their circumstances with indifference, an education system that does not follow up

on school dropouts, employers who exploit children, and above all, poverty, which has played and continues to play a role in the emergence, persistence and growth of child labour.

The present study seeks not only to identify the major forms of child labour, but also to paint a more tangible picture of the children who, despite being wronged and unprotected, fall victim to work. I hope this research's findings in Chapter 3 and proposed solutions in Chapter 4 can be used by relevant authorities and organisations for executive action and familiarize society at large with the types of child labour. This is particularly important since the various forms of child labour have not previously been examined in a single comprehensive study. This research has strived to identify, if not all, at least the major current forms of child labour in the metropolis of Tehran and its outskirts (which can serve as a microcosm of other major cities and the whole of Iran) based on a threefold classification of hazardous work, medium-risk work and less harmful work.

What distinguishes this research work and sets it apart from many other studies on children is that, owing to its methodology and qualitative approach, it belongs to the category of new studies on children which have little precedent in Iran. In new studies and texts, "research about children" is being replaced with "research with or by children", and the present work has also tried to make the target community, i.e. children, the narrators of their own lives and childhoods without intermediaries.

The first round of field studies for this research and interviews with the target community were conducted on hot summer days in 2020 at different Tehran locales at a time when the coronavirus had forced many businesses to shut down and exacerbated poverty. For many days, we researchers sat in the field alongside committed and dedicated interviewers, listening to the regrets and

dreams of these endearing working children and some employers. Coding and discussions about the theoretical model took a great deal of time. Subsequently, to address deficiencies and further complete the samples, some supplementary interviews were taken again from the field as per the supervisor and advisor's recommendation, and more expert interviews were conducted. Ultimately, content analysis, writing, editing and proofreading took months.

This research would surely not have borne fruit, and the work before you would not exist, without the presence and efforts of the field interviewers, coding researchers, drafting and analysis assistants, qualitative supervisors and advisors, proofreaders and editors. I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the field interviewers who consented to having their names included in this study: Ms Zohreh Marandi, Ms Sara Hesami, Ms Shahrzad Dadashi, Ms Chenoor Azizi and Mr Hesam Morteza-Fard and Mr Mehrdad Ghanbari, who accompanied me step-by-step through the first and second rounds of fieldwork, becoming more determined and kind-hearted by the day as they sat and listened to the stories of sorrow and dreams of these endearing working children under those difficult conditions and the hot weather at the height of the coronavirus pandemic. Ms Parisa Mohajeri and Ms Amenah Mirzaei Alavijeh joined the team for the coding and data analysis phase, for which I am equally thankful. I am also deeply grateful to Mr Peyam Rowshanfekr, the qualitative research supervisor and coding phase instructor, whose contributions significantly enriched this work and who provided invaluable thoughts and input for arriving at the final model. Mr Farshid Khezri, with whom I had the honour of collaborating again after the *Stolen Childhood* study, helped review and organize the initial theoretical literature, compile and analyse the content of Chapter 3, and assist with finalizing the proposed

solutions as a research assistant, for which I am hugely appreciative. I wish to thank Ms Saeedeh Rahimi for rereading the text, contributing to the writing and completion of several categories, reviewing more quotes for selection and providing advice on content analysis. I am grateful to Ms Zohreh Marandi for field coordination and to Ms Parisa Mohajeri for office work, helping reread the initial draft and designing the initial tables and diagrams. I wish to thank Ms Fatemeh Azari Rahvard for the graphical enhancement of the diagrams and tables. I am greatly indebted to Dr Alireza Kermani for overseeing and reviewing the final draft and providing expert feedback. I am thankful to Mr Harvey McKenzie and Professor Anna Stone Haftendorn for their invaluable consultation and perspectives on the research issue of “research with or by children” that go beyond Iran’s borders and for the significant help they provided. I wish to thank Ms Marzieh Nekookar for her editing and meticulousness, particularly regarding the content editing of this work. I am hugely appreciative of all the dignitaries who wished not to be named in this work for their cooperation and kindness throughout this research, especially the main fieldwork stage and initial literature review. I am equally grateful to all the NGOs, Welfare Organization, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, labour unions, municipalities and their research centres and all child and social activists and academics who helped complete this study by accepting and taking part in interviews, providing consultation, input and facilitating field contacts. Without a doubt, this book would not have come about had the children not been open and willing to be interviewed, and above all, had they not shared their views, perspectives and most importantly, their poignant stories. I sincerely thank them all and consider them the real heroes of this book.

The book before you is the product of several months of

extensive study on the various forms of child labour which, after two rounds of fieldwork, consultation and review, has been published on June 12th 2021, World Day Against Child Labour, as a small gift for the children of this land and all those concerned about this issue, made freely available to the public in the hope that its electronic and open access can be an effective step towards understanding child labour and proposing solutions. Here's to the day when no child in the world is deprived of childhood and condemned to forced labour.

Kameel Ahmady

January 2024

www.KameelAhmady.com

Foreword

Problems exist in two forms: individual and social. However, a “social problem” has three distinct characteristics: first, it has social origins; second, it harms a large number of people; and third, it damages society. These three criteria are usually interconnected - that is, if a problem has social origins, it will likely affect many people, and society will also be impacted. In other words, if a problem damages society, it likely has social origins. In addition to these three points, there is usually another characteristic considered for a social problem: that a large number of people recognize a situation as a “problem” in need of reform.

To clarify the concept of a social problem, we must distinguish between three concepts: social situation, social problem, and social issue. A social situation refers to specific, neutral conditions devoid of value judgements, such as globalization, marriage, divorce. When people discuss whether or not this situation is problematic, it becomes a social problem. And if those who have identified it as a problem can convince a number of people about it and this spreads among a large population, then the social problem transforms into a social issue.

Based on the defined criteria for a social issue, and according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, child labour is also a social issue that has existed in various forms since ancient times - an issue that is formally defined in different countries based on two components: first, the type of work, and second, the minimum appropriate age for that work. The type of work means the child is engaged in an activity that disrupts their natural development process. And appropriate age for work means the child performs work that, according to

international documents, is inappropriate for their age and considered detrimental. A child meeting one of these two components is called a working child, and child labour in today's societies is an organized issue with complex causes and roots that has made it a global problem across different sectors and cultures. Poverty and social instability, low education and lack of awareness, weak social programmes, and insufficient opportunity for proper employment are some of the reasons for child labour worldwide.

The 2018 International Labour Organization (ILO) report shows almost 218 million children worldwide are working, of which 150 million are child labour victims and about 73 million are engaged in hazardous and detrimental work. These statistics indicate that globally, almost 1 in every 10 children is a working child. Most working children live in sub-Saharan African countries. According to 2018 ILO statistics, 29% of children aged 5 to 17 in this region are working children, which is very different from the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, where 5% of children in this age group are engaged in hazardous work. The United Nations has stated that despite all efforts to eliminate child labour, 121 million working children will still exist worldwide by 2025. This becomes more worrying when we know that around 69% of these children work unpaid in households, which truly constitutes exploitation and bleeding dry of children. It is said that the rate of child labour in low-income countries is 19% higher than in other countries, and yet in other countries, this rate is by no means negligible. On the other hand, 9% of all children in lower middle-income countries and 7% of all children in upper middle-income countries comprise the population of working children. Statistics on the total number of working children in countries with different income groups show that 84 million working children, equivalent to 65% of all such children, live in

middle-income countries. There are also 2 million working children with high incomes.

These statistics clearly demonstrate that although lower-income countries need special attention, the fight against child labour cannot solely focus on poor countries. The common issue among poor, middle-income and wealthy countries is family and community poverty.

The present study examines various forms of child labour, including street work and peddling, factory work, car wash work, shop apprenticeship, waste picking, underground workshop work, domestic work, home-based work, brick kiln work, etc., using the grounded theory methodology.

What stands out in this research compared to other studies on working children is firstly the type and quality of the research, which is a qualitative methodology emerging from within the field. That is, the target community itself has taken a phenomenological, multifaceted look at the concepts of work, its forms, dangers and strategies, with their understanding and psychological experiences of work being noteworthy.

This research has examined the various reasons for child labour in each occupation and has separately analysed the variables of gender, ethnicity and age across twenty-two types of child work.

The hazards of child labour are a prominent subject in this study, causing varying degrees of harm based on the type of work and age conditions as well as other diverse factors.

The exploitation in child labour and the informal labour market are two core categories of this study, while development gaps, tensions and conflicts in Afghanistan, family poverty and unemployment, lack of guardians and orphanhood, and interest in work are causal factors of child labour herein.

Law enforcement and oversight, migrant networks, ethnic and gender discrimination, power relations, settlement (place of residence) and values and attitudes can be cited as intervening factors, and age, gender, ethnicity and family circumstances as contextual factors in the research.

Child monitoring and control, normalization, mediation, stakeholders, active and passive strategies are contextual model strategies in this study.

Deprivation of education, leisure and proper nutrition, health problems, experiencing violence and various hazards (as negative and undesirable consequences), meeting the primary needs of the family, and professional training and career advancement (as positive and desirable consequences) are the consequences of child labour and contextual model of the research.

Another point about this study is that it has tried to examine the concept of child labour from the perspective of all key players, namely the children themselves and their parents, employers, child activists and specialists, and governmental officials in organisations and agencies related to child labour (such as municipalities, welfare organisation and law enforcement). Therefore, it takes a multifaceted look at the phenomenon of child labour.

In fact, this study has sought to identify the various forms of child labour, the factors causing it, the mechanisms leading to the emergence of child labour, and the issues and consequences of work for children, in order to raise awareness among the individuals and organisations involved in the emergence of this phenomenon and remove obstacles and reduce harm.

Another point is that by examining the different forms and hidden aspects of work and children's work environments and describing child labour sites, this study presents a clear picture of the spaces where children work, elucidating the various unknown forms of child labour in

Tehran for the reader and enabling them to properly understand the hazards of child labour. It also opens a horizon for policymakers and authorities to be able to take steps towards eliminating child labour based on real awareness.

Therefore, the first chapter of this study explains the problem statement, background of child labour, limitations, significance and objectives, research questions, and details of the phenomenon of child labour, because global statistics from the International Labour Organization report high numbers of working children across the world who have been deprived of childhood and exploited.

Chapter 2 expresses the theoretical and empirical background of the research. This chapter has sought to firstly present definitions of the research concepts including child, child labour, working children, and various forms of child labour. Since child labour has a significant relationship with poverty and economic problems, this chapter has also comprehensively explained the concepts of poverty and child poverty, which may ultimately lead to child labour. The theoretical literature section first states the economic theories related to child labour and probable reasons for children entering the labour force from a theoretical viewpoint, after which social science approaches and theories with an emphasis on working children are reviewed.

Chapter 3 of this study contains a collection of the research's quantitative and qualitative data. In the quantitative section, results are presented through abundant charts and frequency tables related to the phenomenon of the various forms of child labour, encompassing nationality, ethnicity, age, working hours, causes of work, migration, settlement, gender, leisure time, and other factors. The qualitative section has extracted and fully explained the results obtained from

interviews with children in various occupations in the form of categories and main themes using the grounded theory method. The bulk of the themes obtained in this study concern the child and childhood circumstances. It also covers the hazards threatening working children, namely the economy and rights and work conditions related to child labour, governing systems and relationships, quality and type of life and nutrition of children, and the harms and consequences faced by children at work.

The final chapter of the research summarizes and concludes the subject in order to present a collection of solutions based on the results obtained from the research and contextual model to reduce or control the phenomenon of child labour. Primarily resolving economic issues and reducing poverty in the country of origin that supplies the human resources for this phenomenon can help eliminate child labour to some extent. However, since various factors and causes are involved in the formation and continuation of this phenomenon, this chapter has presented solutions commensurate with the existing opportunities and limitations in Iran and considering the causes of child labour in the country as well as reducing harm. In this sense, it can be said that this research also demonstrates some innovation, because the proposed solutions in Chapter 4 are derived from the experiences of the target community, the extracted research model, expert perspectives, and facts on the ground, also taking into account current economic constraints and problems. Therefore, this study can be considered a kind of analytical strategic report that could prove useful and effective in policymaking on child labour.

This research has also sought to present the most up-to-date situation of child labour in Iran, especially in large cities. While the field scope of this study was the

metropolis of Tehran and its outskirts, this model can be generalized to other major cities and even all of Iran. Another important noteworthy point about the present study is that it depicts a more accurate picture of the child labour population in Tehran. It also enables the reader to form a direct connection with the target community through quotes and ethnographic details, and is in effect a mirror of working children and their conditions and circumstances. Due to my anthropological studies and belief in the importance of fieldwork, in all my research endeavours I have tried to make the target community direct spokespeople to the reader, letting them tell the core narrative. The quotes in this study serve the same purpose, and it is possible that some forms of child labour introduced herein have gone unnoticed due to their covert nature, but the hidden aspects of these types of work and the harm they cause children have been illustrated through the target community and working children's quotes and details.

This research is distinct in other ways as well, as it attempts to express the less-told realities regarding undocumented migrant working children. This can prompt officials, like many other countries, to facilitate mechanisms for legal migration and work visa issuance, help reduce human trafficking and child trafficking, prevent migrant children from being deprived of schooling, and avoid further expanding the informal economy. This issue has gained added significance during the coronavirus pandemic, because many undocumented migrants will avoid getting the coronavirus vaccine for fear of falling into the hands of the law, thus being deprived of their right to health. Another issue that sounds a serious alarm is that in recent years, alongside migrant children falling victim to child labour, a large number of children from Iranian families have also dropped out of school and entered the labour force due to

spreading poverty and shrinking household budgets. We all know that completely eradicating child labour requires extensive prerequisites, chief among them eliminating poverty entirely. And as long as these requirements are not in place, planning to reduce child labour will lead nowhere. It is hoped that the final chapter's proposed solutions can serve as an action charter and provide officials with strategies.

Introduction

In today's world where the importance of social justice is proven to all and the global community has come to believe that one of the most important prerequisites for sustainable development in societies is the establishment of justice and the elimination of inequalities, child labour and efforts to reduce and stop it are very important. Because children, as the most vulnerable group in society without the power to defend themselves, if they become victims of social inequalities and for reasons such as poverty are deprived of education and forced into the cycle of forced labour, the path of society will also face difficult obstacles to move towards sustainable development.

Despite the understanding that child labour harms individual and social health and is against human rights, many children around the world are still victims of premature work. Child labour is a problem that arises in a society whose planners and decision-makers are unable to create equal opportunities for all classes as well as reduce poverty, or sacrifice such an important issue for their own political interests. That is why it is observed that despite international and national laws enacted to stop child labour, as well as global conventions, children continue to be harmed in the cycle of forced labour, especially since many of these forms of work are considered gruelling that disrupt the child's natural growth process and endanger their physical and mental health.

Global efforts to reduce and stop child labour began years ago. In 1999, the International Labour Organization adopted the Minimum Age Convention, which prohibited the employment of children under the age of fifteen, and for hazardous occupations, children under the age of eighteen should not have been employed. After the

adoption of this law, many countries, including Britain, amended their domestic laws to combat child labour. In 1973, the International Labour Organization also adopted the Convention on the Immediate Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, known as Convention 182, which prohibited the employment of children in difficult and detrimental occupations. In 2020, with all countries of the world joining this convention, the United Nations declared 2020 a historic turning point in the global effort to stop child labour and named 2021 the year to stop child labour. 2015 had previously been declared the year of combating child labour. Despite all these efforts, UNICEF and many other child rights organizations have stated that as long as poverty exists, ending child labour will not be possible. This statement means that while international and domestic laws in some countries have banned child labour, the mandatory nature of income and livelihood for children must also be considered. This raises questions like: Under what conditions is a child forced to work? What factors determine the type of work? If the current job is set aside, what suitable alternatives will be available?

In many countries around the world, it is prohibited for children to work until a certain age. However, in some other parts of the world there is not much prohibition on child labour. An important issue regarding child labour is the defined situation for their work. In some countries, children experience the worst conditions while working. For example, they may be assigned gruelling tasks, so-to-speak one of the “worst forms of child labour”, or it may lead the child towards inappropriate behaviours. Working children are formally defined in different countries based on two components: first is the type of work and the second is the minimum appropriate age for that work. A “working child” refers to a child engaged in an activity that is harmful to their physical, mental, social, moral and

personal health and deprives them of the possibility of natural growth, which includes the right to education and play. The second component is the appropriate age for each job and work, the effects and consequences of which are manifested on the child's health and growth. On this basis, ILO Convention No. 138 has set a minimum age for different occupations, so that if a child under the age of that occupation engages in it, that child is considered a working child.

In Iran, according to Article 79 of the Labour Law, employment of children under fifteen years of age is prohibited, and if an employer recruits people under fifteen years of age, they will be considered in violation and subject to punishment ranging from cash fines and imprisonment to sealing the factory and revoking the work permit. Article 84 of the Labour Law also stipulates that for occupations and tasks whose nature is detrimental to the health or morals of trainees and adolescents, the minimum working age will be eighteen full years, the determination of which is with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. According to Article 80 of the Labour Law, "a worker between the full ages of 15 and 18 is called an adolescent worker and must undergo medical examinations by the Social Security Organization upon employment". Based on Articles 80 to 84 of the Labour Law, the employer can use adolescent workers under certain conditions, which are: Adolescent workers are required to undergo medical examinations; the daily working hours of the adolescent worker must be half an hour less than the regular working hours of workers; referral of any overtime work and night work, as well as referral of hard, hazardous and dangerous types of work, manual load carrying beyond the permissible limit, and without using mechanical means are prohibited for adolescent workers; also, activities in occupations that are morally difficult and harmful for adolescents are

prohibited. In case of non-compliance with the above cases, the employer will be fined the cash equivalent of 5 to 100 times the daily minimum wage of a worker. In total, it should be said that despite requirements and restrictions, the exclusion of some home-based and small workshops from the scope of the labour law has made it possible to employ and exploit children. Regarding occupational accidents, after construction workshops, most accidents occur in small workshops, again due to non-compliance with safety principles and lack of thorough inspection. If an “accident” happens to a “child” in these workshops, due to their unawareness of the laws and their fear, they do not go anywhere and their rights are violated.¹

Working children live in very unfavourable conditions in terms of nutrition, hygiene, and performing dangerous and acute tasks. These children can easily fall prey to professional criminals such as thieves or drug trafficking gangs, agents of brothels, etc. Lack of education and training in science and technology has increasingly deprived these children of the ability to compete with other children to create a healthy life. In general, most working children, due to inappropriate emotional conditions and special living circumstances, have a sensitive spirit and are emotionally more vulnerable than their peers. Therefore, neglecting these children has led to the institutionalization of latent anger in their subconscious which leads to many abnormalities in society when they reach adulthood. On the other hand, child labour increases profit and capital accumulation for those who exploit children, and as a result, increases class gaps, poverty and destitution in society, prevents children

¹ Khodai, Ali. (2018). The Hidden Work of Children: A Red Alert for Institutions and Officials. ILNA News Agency.
<https://www.ilna.ir/fa/tiny/news-632083>

from attaining sufficient knowledge and skills, and reduces labour productivity. It also increases social harm such as addiction, crime, exploitation, discrimination and poverty, thus jeopardizing social health and hindering societal progress and development.

Given the different working conditions of children and the emergence of numerous problems and damages in different places and workshops, as well as the increase of child labour in enclosed spaces, this study seeks to examine and understand child labour and identify its various forms in Tehran and its satellite towns. It also pays attention to the consequences and damages children suffer in the work environment, as well as the causes perpetuating child labour and factors involved in increasing or decreasing it. Finally, alongside the final summary and conclusion, some executive strategies are presented to combat any form of child exploitation. It is hoped that this research, which is the product of months of field studies and investigations and hours of talks with working children, their employers and social workers, can serve as a beacon for fighting all kinds of exploitation of children and restore lost childhoods.

CHAPTER 1:

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Part One: Problem Statement, Identification and Study of the Various Forms of Child Labour

Child labour is a global phenomenon that has different forms, but according to the International Labour Organization's definition, child labour refers to activities that harm the child's physical, mental and emotional health and deprive them of the right to education. For example, it causes deprivation from going to school, forced dropout, or commitment to hard and long work simultaneously with education.²

The International Labour Organization's 2018 report shows about 218 million children worldwide are engaged in some form of work. Based on this report, it can be said that 1 in every 10 children in the world is a working child. According to the International Labour Organization, sub-Saharan African countries account for the highest number of working children, and based on 2018 statistics from this organization, 29% of children aged 5 to 17 in this region work, most of whom are also engaged in difficult and detrimental tasks. The situation is different in the Middle East and North African countries, where about 5% of 5 to 17 year olds are engaged in hazardous work, but the situation of working children in Southeast Asia has been reported as worrying. In countries like India and Pakistan, most children are sold into indentured servitude or

² ILO. (2017). *Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

kidnapped to be exploited on farms, in factories and workshops under difficult working conditions.³

The statistics provided by the International Labour Organization are an approximate estimate of the number and population of working children worldwide, because providing accurate statistics of working children is almost impossible, given the different forms and mostly hidden nature.

The simultaneous spread of poverty and globalization of economic activities in the world, and the impoverishment of large segments of the population and their families, force children to resort to any activity for survival. In other words, the aforementioned factors have led to the expansion of the informal economy sector. Overall, the informal economy has grown in different parts of the world over the past fifty years.⁴

Extensive efforts have been made to define the informal economy and different concepts have been used to refer to this sector, such as “shadow economy”, “parallel economy”, “underground economy” and “informal economy”. It should be noted that the informal economy is different from the illegal economy sector; activities in the illegal economy sector (such as production and trafficking of narcotics) are considered crimes by countries’ laws, but activities in the informal economy sector are not necessarily crimes or illegal. Basically, the informal economy includes “all income-generating activities that are not regulated by the state in social

³ Corsaro, William A. (2014). *The Sociology of Childhood* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Masoud Rajabi Ardeshiri). Tehran: Sales.

⁴ Innocenti, UNICEF Office of Research-. “Child Domestic Work.” UNICEF-IRC. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/265-child-domestic-work.html>.

contexts where similar activities are regulated”.⁵ Similarly, in Iran over the past one or two decades, the informal economy has grown remarkably and led to profound poverty and inequality.⁶

With extensive social change and shifts in the livelihood economy and expansion of the informal sector, poverty, inequality and extreme exploitation of the poor are simultaneously reinforced. The weaker groups in terms of gender and age, namely women and children, comprise most of the informal economy workforce. Many occupations in the informal economy entail significant physical and psychological consequences for children. Hidden child labour in enclosed environments is also considered a high-risk occupation, because children remain out of sight and it is unclear what might happen to them. As working in small workshops, home-based workshops and in many cases illegal workshops and in the informal economy sector entails significant harm, because children experience less freedom and have less ability to defend and protect themselves compared to the street environment. The depressing, suffocating and hazardous nature of underground workshops makes exploitation and child abuse more likely. On the other hand, children do not have the right to control their wages, so they are also exploited in this regard.

Overall, child labour has taken on various forms, which

⁵ Nadri, Salah al-Din. (2014). People-Centered Sociology and the Test of Castells' Theory in the Field of Child Labor (Practical Participatory Research with Afghan Children at the Loving Child Centre in Moshtagh). Sociology Department, Faculty of Literature and Social Sciences, Bahonar University of Kerman (as cited in the Society for the Support of Children's Rights, 2019, p. 88).

⁶ Arab-Mazayyar, Yazdi, Ali. (2019). Informal Economy and Inequality in Iran in *Social Issues and Inequality: The Second Report on the Social Situation in Iran (2009-2017)*, Vol. 2 (pp. 495-516). Tehran: Agah.

may include street peddling and flower selling, working in auto repair shops and mechanics, working in sewing factories and glassware, brick kilns, and even waste picking.

Little information is available about the various workshops and working conditions of children in these environments, as it is unclear how many hours per day they make children work and how much wages are paid to the child. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the forms of children's work and study its nature, conditions and risks. This is also the purpose of this study. In other words, the objectives of this study are: Identifying and examining the various forms of child labour in Tehran in terms of their nature, conditions and consequences for children, although the attempt has been to study this issue on national and global scales in general.

Importance and Necessity of Research

Children are the main human resources for the progress and development of any country. If children do not enjoy good physical, mental and social growth, they cannot have a good adulthood either, and will not have the necessary efficiency in leading society towards development. In other words, child labour not only prevents their continued education and separates them from their peers, but also negatively affects the child's physical and mental health. Because children are in stages of physical growth and their bodies are weaker than adults, they are more vulnerable to injuries and illnesses caused by work, and due to young age, are unaware of the dangers of some jobs or have little awareness. As a result, a large number of working children, and in some countries almost two-thirds of them, face serious hazards. Many children face injuries and harm such as wounds, fractures or limb loss, burns and skin diseases, visual and auditory damage,

respiratory and digestive illnesses, headaches caused by working in hot environments, and the like.⁷ Based on this and statistics from the International Labour Organization in 2005, on average 22,000 children die each year from work-related injuries.⁸ In addition to physical harm, working children also face non-physical harm which is usually irreparable and leaves irreversible consequences. For example, working children become cognitively impaired, which affects their learning, especially during education. Their emotional growth is also disrupted by working in mentally difficult conditions, and feelings such as sufficient self-esteem, self-confidence, family attachment, love and friendship are damaged in them. These children also develop various forms of depression and anxiety inconsistent with their age, and by having work responsibilities in a small workshop, due to lack of proper training and inability to plan, they are constantly anxious about the work environment, which will remain their constant companion in life.⁹

Despite the necessity and importance of examining the various forms of child labour, no comprehensive study has been conducted in this regard in Iran. Existing studies have only dealt with limited forms of children's work, even though in these limited studies, some jobs such as domestic work have not been studied and investigated despite their high prevalence. Studying this issue is important for various reasons: The psychological and physical effects of child labour involve not only the

⁷ Vameghi, Maroeh; Dezhman, Masoumeh; Rafii, Hassan; Roshanfekr, Payam. (2015). "Rapid Assessment of the Situation of Street Children in Tehran (Causes and Hazards of Child Labour on the Streets)." *Social Studies and Research in Iran*, 4(1), 33-57.

⁸ Kalantari, Samad, and Kiani, Mojdeh. (2006). A Comparative Study of Child Labor in Advanced Countries and the Developing World. *Political-Economic Information*, 231-232, pp. 282-295.

⁹ Boyden, J. (1991). *Children of the cities*. London: Zed Book.

individual but also society; working children are among the most deprived groups in society who are deprived of most of their fundamental rights; also, different aspects of this phenomenon such as children's working conditions, the number of working children in different workshops and workplaces, their wages, working hours, problems of working in different workshops and places and its advantages for the child and employer, etc. are unclear and due to lack of proper understanding of this phenomenon, no specific policies or measures have been taken. Therefore, addressing the issue of the various forms of child labour and recognizing the hidden aspects of this phenomenon as well as providing scientific and practical solutions can help reduce social harm in this area.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the various forms of child labour in Tehran and its outskirts, but recognizing the causes and determinants of the various forms of work, the nature and conditions of work, and the consequences of the various forms of child labour with an emphasis on work hazards for children have also been considered as secondary goals. To achieve these goals, questions were asked which answering each could provide a relatively complete picture of the situation of working children in Tehran and perhaps, due to the diversity and breadth of child labour forms in the capital, this complete understanding could be generalized to all of Iran and other major Iranian cities. These questions were:

- What are the different forms of child labour?
- What factors cause children to work in different occupations?
- What perceptions do working children have of their

work in different occupations?

- What are the consequences of children working in different occupations?
- What hazards and problems do children face in different occupations?
- What are the working conditions of children in different occupations?

Research Limitations

The research on child labour in both enclosed and open spaces faced several limitations that influenced the scope and depth of the study. One major limitation was the challenge of accessing the target community and understanding the extent of child labour in Tehran and its suburbs. The community of child labourers was dispersed, making it difficult to conduct comprehensive research across all areas. Additionally, the presence of undocumented migrants further complicated the research process, as their participation and experiences in child labour were less visible and accessible. Another limitation was the inability to interview children under the direct supervision of their employers. In many cases, the research team encountered difficulties in gaining access to the workplace and obtaining informed consent from both the employers and the children. This limitation restricted the ability to gather firsthand accounts and insights from children engaged in different forms of child labour.

Despite these limitations, the study made efforts to address various forms of child labour across different industries and activities. The research encompassed a wide range of sectors, including tailoring and sewing workshops, peddling, flower vending, glassmaking, technical works, waste collection, metalworking, production workshops, car washes, brick kilns, and

various street activities such as vending, window cleaning, fortune-telling, and flower vending. However, due to financial and time constraints, as well as limited human resources, it was not possible to conduct an in-depth examination of all these diverse forms of child labour. Instead, the study provided a general overview and understanding of the prevalence and working conditions in these sectors, offering insights into the challenges faced by child labourers in different contexts.

Given the limitations mentioned, the research faced certain constraints when studying particular forms of child labour, especially those involving home-based work. Home-based work, characterized by its hidden nature and the difficulty of accessing the target community, presented challenges in obtaining comprehensive data. Efforts were made to represent the situation of child workers engaged in home-based work, but the study's findings in this area were limited. The primary focus of the research was to investigate child labour in enclosed spaces under the direct supervision of employers. However, interviews with children in such workplaces were not always feasible. In some cases, employers were reluctant to grant access to the research team, hindering the ability to conduct interviews and gain insights into the working conditions experienced by child labourers. These obstacles underscored the complex dynamics and power imbalances involved in studying child labour.

The main limitation of the research was related to the identification of the research field and the challenges encountered during interviews with the target community. Most of the workshop spaces where child labourers worked were small and cramped, with children in close proximity to other workers and their employers. Conducting interviews in such environments proved challenging, as the privacy and comfort of the children had to be considered. Establishing trust and cooperation

with the children was another hurdle, as some may have been hesitant or unwilling to share their experiences due to fear, language barriers, or other factors. Consequently, the research team faced difficulties in gathering comprehensive data directly from the child labourers themselves.

Moreover, the timing of the study in the summer of 2020 coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This further complicated the research process, as health protocols had to be strictly adhered to during fieldwork. These protocols not only influenced the logistics of conducting interviews but also affected the overall dynamics and interactions within the target community. Additionally, ethical considerations played a crucial role in the research. Some children refused to be interviewed or discontinued the conversation during the interview, highlighting the need to prioritize their well-being and respect their agency. In order to protect the anonymity of the children, measures were taken to ensure their faces in photographs remained unidentifiable through graphic modifications during the editing process.

History of Child Labour

Child labour has existed for as long as the history of the emergence of the world and birth of mankind. From the time when man became occupied with building shelter and providing food to continue his survival, children were also employed in various ways and had to participate in tasks commensurate with their physical ability. With the passage of time and changes in human lifestyle, this participation has always become more extensive. As archaeological studies show, the use of children in hunting and food gathering communities was far less than in later societies that subsisted through agriculture. In

other words, after the Stone Age, with population growth, expansion of urbanization and permanent settlements, and the thriving of agriculture, the use of child labour also gained prevalence and continued in all historical eras and in different societies. In primitive societies, all family members performed their duties towards survival and social cohesion, and children also worked according to their capacity. In other words, work was part of the socialization process in such societies, and the age children started working can be estimated from when they were able to participate in some tasks and take on responsibilities, which increased as they grew older. Especially since in the past, there was no period called adolescence and after passing through childhood, each person entered adulthood and had to participate in occupations such as agriculture, animal husbandry, industrial work and household chores.

In some societies, the motive behind having children for many families was using them as labour force, in addition to continuing lineage. This did not differ much between girls and boys, only that more boys participated in work outside the home and more girls in domestic chores. Where children worked in industrial occupations, the relationships were defined as master-apprentice. However, “child labour” in past eras has fundamental differences with what became prevalent in the world after the Industrial Revolution, because until before the Industrial Revolution, although difficult and gruelling, child labour was the product of prevailing traditions and dominant culture of societies, but after the Industrial Revolution, the world encountered a phenomenon that systematically and purposefully exploited children and employed them as cheap, agile labour force.

The Industrial Revolution took place in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a period when the world experienced a tremendous thirst for production, and mechanical

machines replaced human labour to accelerate production, as large and small factories first emerged in Britain and then expanded in the United States and other countries. Factory owners had to recruit manpower to operate the machines, but working with those devices did not require any special skills or expertise. Therefore, employers developed a strong tendency to hire children who cost less than adults.

What took shape in the industrialization process was that children's work, compared to what existed before, took on a different nature, and wage-based employment relationships emerged, but these relationships did not have an equitable structure. Despite hard and gruelling work, children were paid very low wages. A child worker could work six days a week, 12 to 18 hours a day, just to earn one dollar. Many children started occupations like working with machines, metal lathes, or carrying heavy loads from before the age of seven. The atmosphere of factories was often dark, gloomy and dirty. Some children even worked underground in coal mines. These children had no chance to play or go to school, barely had any time to rest, and most became ill.

This issue has also been reflected in a critical, potsful manner in the works of great writers and thinkers such as Charles Dickens and Karl Marx. Describing the situation of children employed with the invention of new industries along rivers, in new counties such as Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lancashire in England, Marx writes: "Along with adult workers, employers also utilized young children, because their agility and tiny fingers greatly benefited their work. The working conditions of these hapless children were terrifying and their wages

meagre.¹⁰

The harm inflicted on children after the Industrial Revolution is so much that perhaps the 18th century AD can be considered the darkest century for poor children and child labourers. When parents could not afford the expenses of their children, they would hand them over to workshop or factory owners who employed the kids in slavery-like methods. For example, a glass production factory in Massachusetts was surrounded by barbed wire to prevent the escape of “naughty” kids, and these so-called naughty kids were the under 12-year-olds who carried loads of hot glass all night long in return for 40 cent or one-dollar wages.¹¹

In industrialized societies, the appalling and disturbing conditions of working children and employers’ tendency to exploit them, along with the ever-expanding poverty, turned the issue of working children into a social predicament. Eventually, the church, labour groups, teachers and many people protested against this oppressive treatment and insisted on reforms in this area. The advent of great writers who paid special attention to children’s needs and world also transformed the way children were treated, and the world underwent a huge change not only in its approach towards children but also in educational and training methods. In this path, the works of great writers like Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo, who depicted the afflictions of children in modern mega-cities full of greed and violence, were very

¹⁰ Marx, Karl. (2015). *Capital* (Translated into Persian by Iraj Eskandari). Ghoghnoos Publication.

¹¹ Website of the Society for the Support of Child Labor Rights. Reviewed on January 5, 2021

<https://apcl.org.ir/%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE%D8%A8%D9%87-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1-%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%AF%DA%A9%D8%A7%D9%86/>

influential. In his novel *Oliver Twist*, Dickens portrayed the dire circumstances of poor and working children, and as a result of all these efforts, laws were gradually enacted in different countries to improve the situation of working children.

England was the first country to enact laws regarding child labour. Between 1802 and 1878 AD, a series of laws were passed that gradually reduced working hours and improved the situation of working children in the workplace. Based on these laws, the minimum age for child labour also increased. After that, other European countries also enacted similar laws, but it took years for child labour to become illegal in the United States. For example, in 1813 a law was passed in Connecticut stipulating that working children should have some opportunity to continue their education. By 1899, 28 states in America had enacted laws restricting child labour. After that, many efforts were made to enact national child labour laws. The US Congress passed two laws in 1918 and 1922, but the Supreme Court ruled both unconstitutional. In 1924, Congress proposed a constitutional amendment banning child labour, but the states did not approve it. Then in 1983, Congress passed the Fair Labour Standards Act, which set the minimum age for children working during school hours at sixteen, for those working after school hours at fourteen, and eighteen for hazardous occupations.

The crisis of working children in industrialized societies and the spread of increasing poverty heightened concerns about the situation of children and their future, necessitating preventive action. In 1973, recognizing this situation and with the aim of ending all forms of child exploitation, the International Labour Organization adopted the “Minimum Age Convention”. This treaty allowed member states to hire 15-year-olds for light work

and set the minimum hiring age at 18 for difficult jobs that endanger the mental and physical health of the worker.

Although member states of this treaty were obliged to protect children from all forms of exploitation, the phenomenon of child labour took on new dimensions every day. And although children were not legally employed, their exploitation continued illegally. The 1999 International Labour Organization's exploitation of children led it to adopt the "Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention" to address child exploitation. Signatory countries to this Convention committed themselves to take immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. According to Articles 1 to 3 of this Convention, any member ratifying this global treaty must take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency. In this Convention, the term 'child' applies to all persons under the age of eighteen.

However, the global Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention also failed to put an end to the exploitation and abuse of children in the modern world. For this reason, in 2002 as its third action, the International Labour Organization proposed to the United Nations designating a day for the fight against child labour on the global calendar. This is how June 12 was declared "World Day Against Child Labour". But despite all preventive measures and global efforts, child labour still exists as a social issue in different societies.

Global Child Labour Statistics

In 2005, the International Labour Organization reported a global population of 246 million working children, stating that of this number, 73 million were under ten years old and around 22,000 children died each year due

to accidents caused by forced labour. The most important achievement of global efforts to eliminate child labour and laws in different countries around the world preventing and prohibiting the employment of children has been the significant decline in the number of working children under fifteen years old. As such, the 2018 report by the International Labour Organization showed this figure had dropped to 152 million worldwide. According to the statistics announced by this organization, about half of the world's working children, i.e. 72.1 million, currently live in Africa, 62.1 million in Asia and Oceania, 10.7 million in the Americas, 1.2 million in Arab States, and 5.5 million in Europe and Central Asia. In other words, 1 in every 5 African children is a working child, while this rate is 2.9% in Arab States, 4.1% in Europe and Central Asia, 5.3% in the Americas and 7.4% in Asia and Oceania. The International Labour Organization has stated that of the 152 million children who are victims of forced labour, around 73 million have been employed in a hazardous and detrimental occupation. The highest rate of hazardous work, almost three-fourths of it, pertains to children between 15 and 17 years old. However, around a quarter of children engaged in hazardous work, i.e. about 19 million, are under 12 years old. In other words, 48% of them are 5 to 11 years old, 28% are 12 to 14 years old, and 24% are 15 to 17 years old. Of these, 70.9% work in agriculture, 11.9% in industry and 17.2% in services.¹²

Based on this report, it can be said that 1 out of every 10 children in the world becomes a victim of forced labour. As mentioned, sub-Saharan African countries account for the highest number of working children, such that 29% of children aged 5 to 17 in this region work, most of whom are also engaged in difficult and detrimental tasks. The

¹² ILO. (2017). *Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

situation is different in the Middle East and North African countries, where about 5% of 5- to 17-year-olds are engaged in hazardous work. However, the situation of working children in Southeast Asia has been reported as worrying. In countries like India and Pakistan, most children are sold into indentured servitude or kidnapped to be exploited on farms and in factories and workshops under difficult working conditions. The exploitation of child labour is also prevalent in carpet weaving houses due to their delicate fingers.¹³

The statistics provided by the International Labour Organization also indicate the higher population of male compared to female working children, stating that around 64 million girls and 88 million boys currently work worldwide. Referring to these statistics creates the misconception that the population of male working children is higher than girls, while in poor developing countries, many young girls are mandatorily responsible for household chores within the home's four walls, but due to the hidden nature of this type of work and inaccessibility of field research to this target community, the statistics of these working girls are not counted among the child labour population. On the other hand, surveys by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2019 also showed that in countries with the lowest development levels, 1 out of every 4 children between the ages of 5 and 17 is engaged in work that hinders their growth and endangers their physical and mental health. UNICEF has stated that the highest number of working children can be found in sub-Saharan Africa, and in the Middle East and North Africa, 5% of children in the 5 to 17 age group are engaged in work that is extremely dangerous for their health. This figure has also been reported as 31% for West

¹³ Corsaro, William A. *The Sociology of Childhood*. Pine Forge Press, 2005.

and Central Africa, and the overall percentage of working children for underdeveloped countries is 29%.

The International Labour Organization has also stated that despite all efforts to eliminate child labour and the progress made, 121 million children worldwide will still be condemned to forced labour by 2025, of which 71% of these children work in agriculture and 69% work in households without pay. This means that a very high percentage of the world's working children are condemned to forced labour by their own families while receiving no wages [].

The statistics provided by the International Labour Organization are an approximate estimate of the number and population of working children worldwide, because providing accurate statistics of working children is almost impossible, given the varying forms and often hidden nature.

For example in India, based on unofficial statistics, the number of working children is about 10 times higher than official figures. Official statistics have put the population of child labourers in this country at 10 million, but trade unions speak of 100 million working children. This also applies to Iran, and despite varying and fluctuating remarks, there are no documented, accurate statistics on the number of working children. Nevertheless, it has been said that between 2 to 5 million working children exist in Iran in the 5 to 18 age range, and some statistics have estimated this figure up to 5 million by including "domestic child workers".

The lack of reliable information, which is somewhat due to the sabotage and indifference of authorities and official sources, also indicates that consensual definitions across the world on what constitutes work and who is a child still do not exist. In many countries around the world, it is prohibited for children to work until a certain age.

However, in some other parts of the world there are no restrictions on child labour. An important issue regarding child labour is their defined working situation. In some parts of the world, children experience the worst conditions while working. They are forced to work extremely hard in order to provide for their own and their families' material needs, based on the cultural and traditional norms prevalent in society, under very poor conditions that endanger their health, welfare and safety and deprive them of the possibility of education and natural growth at very young ages.¹⁴ For instance, gruelling tasks may be assigned to them or they may be led towards inappropriate behaviours.

Situation of Working Children in Developing Countries

One of the main and fundamental components of development is the immediate cessation of any child exploitation and creation of conditions for them to benefit from their natural rights. A society that has no commitment to its children and does not take steps to improve their situation will face failure in the path to development. However, stopping and eliminating child labour is also an issue that depends on various diverse factors.

UNICEF has identified poverty as the main cause of child labour, saying that as long as poverty is not completely eradicated in countries, there is no hope of putting an end to child labour. However, one of the important reasons for the continuation of child exploitation in many developing countries is the contradiction between laws and their

¹⁴ James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

implementation in these countries. As Cortright says, “Many countries, despite existing laws on child labour, have turned a blind eye in this regard and evaded addressing the fact that many children are forced to work full-time in difficult conditions. Moreover, since child labour often takes place illegally, children are increasingly exploited and the minimum existing laws on payment, working hours, work safety, and overall working conditions are not applied here, while these issues are monitored by labour unions when it comes to adult work.”¹⁵

Fighting poverty and strengthening families’ economic foundations is the most important solution to uprooting child labour, and alongside it some other measures can also be helpful. Paul and Bolton have proposed global condemnation of exploiting child labour force, enforcing economic measures against violating countries, and launching movements by NGOs to prevent child exploitation as two practical solutions to combat child labour.

Below, the situation of working children in some developing countries facing this phenomenon is examined.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, located in South Asia, many children work in garment factories, farms and various industrial works. However, finding work is very difficult for them as it is done informally. Poverty is one of the main reasons for working children under the legal age in Bangladesh. Although there are many laws in this country to protect

¹⁵ Korttobb, R. B. (1991). *Childhood and the World Around Us* (Translated by M. Eizayi). Tehran: Bazbin.

children, Bangladesh faces many challenges regarding working children.

India

More than 33 million children in the world's second most populous country work in mines, farms and orchards, and garment factories. Despite India's recent economic growth, much of its population still lives in poverty. Although the government has recently made great efforts to prohibit child labour, the number of these children, especially in the country's major cities, is increasing day by day.

According to a 1990 study (one thousand interviews with street children in Mumbai) in India, the main cause of street children is not poverty, but violence in the family.

Pomkara is a village in the Keralan region of southern India. In this village, changes related to educational expectations for children conflict with traditional views on child labour. In 1993, an anthropologist named Alga Bodeheur stated that going to school in Keralan and among members of lower castes has been welcomed, because they think going to school and getting a degree to work in public services is a way to escape caste discrimination. However, education policies in Keralan are such that rural children must work part-time to cover their and their families' expenses during their leisure time while attending school.¹⁶

These limitations impose great hardship on Indian high school students, as elders do not feel much responsibility for expenses. Children have to pay these costs out of the

¹⁶ Corsaro, William A. (2014). *The Sociology of Childhood* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Masoud Rajabi Ardeshiri). Tehran: Sales.

meager benefits they receive at school such as transportation, food, school supplies and clothing, which they receive in return for tasks performed for parents and other adults. In addition, parents also feel that helping with daily chores is one of children's core duties, although some address the positive aspects of this issue. For example, they say this combination (combining work and education) increases children's independence and self-confidence, and has enhanced competition among children. But this issue has many negative dimensions that threaten community cohesion. In these competitions, many children fail in education, which causes deprivation in them. However, as Neuhauss states, "The most distressing and destructive effect of this combination may be the great hardship that children face in completing schoolwork and tasks, a situation that leaves little time for play and recreation."¹⁷

Kyrgyzstan

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly established Republic of Kyrgyzstan included the expansion of child labour on an industrial scale in its program. This decision was made to increase the productivity of cotton farms as the main income of Islam Karimov's state. In this country, classes are suspended in September with the start of the school opening season, and students head to cotton fields to work. Around twenty to sixty kilograms of daily harvest quota is allocated per child. With the start of the weeding season in spring, the kids return to the cotton farms. According to a 2006 study, about 2.7 million children in Kyrgyzstan are employed in cotton farms.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Chad

In Chad, a landlocked country in southern Africa surrounded by land on all four sides, children usually work on farms, mostly in the private sector. In Chad, some children's employers may send them to oil-producing areas against their will or even traffick these children to work. According to UNICEF data, more than half of the country's children work, many of whom are used for military purposes.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country in Central Africa, are often forced to participate in the prevalent armed conflicts in the region as well as work in gold mines and some minerals such as wolframite and tantalite. According to the latest statistics, 3 million 328 thousand children in Congo are active in various sectors such as agriculture, industry and services. These children are often deprived of schooling, especially in the east of this country, or are forcibly conscripted into the army while studying. The lack of valid birth certificates and citizenship evidence for many children in this country has left them with no choice but to enter the labour market and earn meager income for their families. Child slavery is also very common in this country.

Ethiopia

Despite the recent efforts of the Ethiopian government to prohibit child labour, about 41.5% of the population of this country, between the ages of seven and fourteen, are employed in various activities. Only half of the children in this country successfully complete elementary school. Many children from underdeveloped parts of the country are sent to more developed areas to engage in activities

such as shoe shining, peddling, mining, and even unpaid work.

Kenya

In many Central and South African countries, children are increasingly turning to street life in cities to contribute to their families' economic survival. The poverty factors for these children are common with children in Central and South America. The main factor behind the increase in the number of working and street children in this country can be attributed to the economic recession of the 1980s and the heavy economic debt that resulted from it.

After gaining political independence in 1963, Kenya experienced relatively good economic growth, which continued until 1980, and the country's economy was one of the best in Africa. But in the early 1990s, economic growth stalled and dropped to near zero. At the same time, inflation rose to 40 percent, causing great hardship for many citizens. This economic recession prompted the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other financial institutions to demand repayment of their loans and imposition of harsh economic policies against the country. As with many developing countries, children make up a very high percentage of Kenya's population; 59 percent of the population of this country is under twenty years old and more than 27 percent are under five years old. As a result of economic problems, the lives of these children have been so affected that nutritional, health, education and other social support programs are declining. One of the impacts of the worsening economic situation has been an increase in the number of street children who either beg on the streets or clean car windows, or work in small workshops. Most of these children have dropped out of school and are usually exploited by adults. Most street children are boys, while

girls are usually hired for domestic work and have to spend long hours doing housework and caring for children. The rate of sexual exploitation of teenagers has also risen sharply, and most adolescent boys and girls suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. It is estimated that 20 percent of children with AIDS in Kenya are between the ages of five and fourteen, which is directly linked to the increase in the sexual exploitation of children. This statistic seems even darker when one considers that 8 to 9 percent of Kenya's total population is infected with HIV and this rate continues to grow.

Brazil

The problem of street children in Brazil must be examined in light of the economic crisis in this country. This country experienced rapid economic growth from the 1960s to the 1980s, with a ten percent growth rate that led to profound and varied changes over that period. But the 1980s saw a period of severe recession, with gross national product (GNP) falling to 6 percent and average minimum wages dropping 33 percent. At this time, the Brazilian economy was experiencing 50 percent growth each month. All these changes were accompanied by rapid population growth as well; thus, from the 1980s to the 1990s, Brazil's population grew from 119 million to 144 million, about 40 percent of whom were under 17 years old. It is therefore no surprise that all these factors combined to make conditions harder for the poor and especially children.¹⁸

In his book, Corsaro discusses the painful and tragic situation of Brazilian children who have been sentenced to death due to extreme poverty and homelessness. He refers to Rizzini's study, noting that 457 children were killed or executed on the streets of Rio, Sao Paulo, and

¹⁸ Ibid.

Recife over a six-month period in 1989. Most victims (33 out of 39) were boys between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, of whom only 11 had a criminal record and 13 were suspected of drug trafficking. Most of these victims lived with their parents, and importantly, none of them carried weapons.¹⁹

In a 1998 study of street children in the city of Recife in northeastern Brazil, Hecht describes the complexity of local cultures and street life and its connection to global economic forces. Almost all the children Hecht studied loved their mothers, homes and neighbourhoods, but chose street life for the independence it gave them, allowing them to beg and engage in petty street crimes like theft and violence to make money. Almost all the children Hecht studied met bad fates, with many killed on the streets. However, Hecht argues that focusing solely on this violence overlooks the social and economic forces that positioned street culture as the only option for these children. Hecht contends that the presence of street children outside the homes of all wealthy Brazilians and five-star hotels frequented by development consultants highlights the contradictions of contemporary social life – the enormous wealth of a few versus the poverty of the many, reflecting huge profits on one hand and the destruction of opportunities on the other. Hecht also argues that working children represent the ineffectiveness and failure of a hidden system of social discrimination that tries to keep the poor out of sight. Street children, both at home and on the street, serve as painful reminders that the world we live in is dangerous.²⁰

The appalling situation of working and street children in Brazil, and the domestic and international reactions

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hecht, T. (1998). *At Home in the Street: Street Children of Northeast Brazil*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

expressing public outrage, ultimately led the government to enact new, potentially effective programs, actions and laws. Many of these measures have been implemented by non-governmental civic organizations. As Rizzini et al. note, enforcing these laws to create meaningful change in the daily lives of street children in Brazil remains a challenge for stakeholders.²¹

Senegal

Regarding the situation of children in Senegal, long-term solutions exist, and as in Brazil, the greatest hopes come from locally-rooted NGOs that can profoundly transform children's lives. Supporting these organizations, especially from global financial communities, as well as government reforms, can lead to meaningful change in the lives of children.²²

Situation of Working Children in Developed Countries

Between welfare programs like retirement and old-age insurance and other types of social security in many developed countries, there are no significant differences. In these countries, primary nutrition, health services, maternity leave, and childcare costs are provided. In short, while industrialized countries face the problem of the ever-increasing costs of providing social security for the elderly, they have also invested in children. These countries have less market-oriented policies than the United States, and their citizens are more willing to pay

²¹ Ibid. As quoted in Corsaro, William A. (2014). *The Sociology of Childhood* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Masoud Rajabi Ardeshiri). Tehran: Sales.

²² Ibid.

taxes in return for services received. In 2001, Timothy Smeeding, Lee Rainwater, and Gary Burtles researched child poverty rates in the United States and seventeen other industrialized countries over the 1990 to 1997 period. The findings of this study showed that in countries with high inequality, such as the United States and Italy, vast and diverse geographical countries like the United States, Australia and Canada, and countries without a developed social security system, the rate of child poverty is higher. On the other hand, lower child poverty rates are seen in smaller European and Scandinavian countries with a developed and generous social security system. Also in countries with high unemployment benefits and greater support for single mothers and working mothers, and where citizens enjoy greater primary social protection, child poverty rates are lower. Indeed, the situation of poor children in Swiss, Norwegian, Danish and Swedish families is 27 to 57 percent better compared to children of poor American families, and this figure reaches 20 percent in other Western European countries like Belgium, France and the Netherlands.²³

Child Employment Law in Britain

Britain was one of the first countries where countless children fell victim to forced labour and were exploited by employers after the Industrial Revolution. At the same time, it was one of the first countries to enact laws aimed at protecting working children, but these national and local laws, the last of which belonged to 1930, had gaps and ambiguities. To resolve these confusions, England also passed the Child Employment Act in 1973, precisely in the same year that the International Labour Organization adopted the Minimum Age Convention.

²³ Ibid.

According to this law, which tries to resolve the ambiguities of previous laws, working hours for children were restricted and they could not be at work before 7 am and after 7 pm. They also could not work more than two hours before school hours or on Sundays. At the same time, this Child Employment Act prohibited the employment of children under thirteen years of age, and any employment of children under thirteen was considered a violation and had to be reported. Despite the strictness of this and similar laws in many other countries, what happens in practice is the overt violation of the law and the employment and exploitation of children at young ages.

For example, in Britain, children perform jobs like milk or newspaper delivery, salesmanship and domestic service. Boys are more involved in distribution jobs and girls in sales and domestic jobs. Most of these jobs are done illegally. Sometimes the type of job is illegal or the working hours exceed those specified in the 1973 law. Of course, in most cases, the actual working conditions of children are not really registered and reported, and they are not treated as determined by the law. The findings of Pound and Surry's 1991 study showed that around 72% of working children are outside legal and necessary conditions, and this figure increased to 92% in Walt's 1994 study, indicating that children received meager wages for the work they did.

Pound and Surry found that some jobs also raised concerns about children's safety, health and well-being. For example, children engaged in milk delivery had to start work every day at 4 am and then go to school. And since most of these jobs were performed illegally, it deprived the government of the ability to identify these children and seriously inspect and reform, which meant that even legal child workers were in a worse situation than adult legal workers. For instance, the law specifies

and limits the amount of load an adult postal worker can carry, but such laws and restrictions simply do not exist for children. It has been observed that girls or boy newspaper hawkers sometimes carried far heavier loads than the specified amount for an adult postal worker.²⁴

Table 1 shows the estimated 2000 regional economic activity of 5 to 14 year old children.²⁵

Table 1 Estimated regional economic activity of 5 to 14 year old children in 2000

Region	Number of working children (million)	Prevalence rate of child labour
Developed Countries	2	5.2
Transition Economies	4	4.2
Asia and the Oceania	127.3	19
Latin America and the Caribbean	17.4	16
Sub-Saharan Africa	48	29
Middle East and North Africa	13.4	15
<u>World Total</u>	<u>211</u>	<u>18</u>

Working Child's Conditions

In the southern hemisphere countries, the only way a poor urban family can make a living and survive is to send as

²⁴James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

²⁵ ILO. (2004). *Global estimates of child labour*. The International Labour Organization. UN publication

many family members as possible into the labour market. With no government welfare payments and prevalent low, unstable individual incomes, child labour is a necessity, which is especially evident when the family head is unemployed. In Mumbai, children were paid only half or a third of adult wages. Nevertheless, in over half of families, children increased family income by up to a quarter, and only in around over a third of these cases did children's income result in a 50 percent increase for the family.²⁶

On the other hand, there is also the possibility that a huge proportion of working children are not subject to proper scrutiny and protection. Most working children are on the margins and outskirts away from formal laws and inspections, and are often employed with other family members. Some others live under pre-designed conditions by employers that minimize their contact with the outside world, like Thai child workers who are truly in a prison-like situation, with the letters they send to family also facing heavy censorship.²⁷ These children are often employed in small shops doing trivial, mundane tasks, so knowingly or unknowingly, employers can deny having coerced them into hard physical work.

Due to the significant economic and social benefits they receive, most employers somewhat evade legal controls and inspections. Sometimes bribes are paid to officials to turn a blind eye on potentially highly profitable unlawful physical acts. Although this also applies to some industries like carpet weaving in India (Kanbargi, 1988)

²⁶ James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

²⁷ Boyden, J. (1991). *Children of the cities*. London: Zed Book. As quoted in James, Alison et al.

or leather tanning in Egypt (Abdullah, 1988), the meagre wages received by child workers ensure their continued presence in global competitive markets. At the same time, parents may also actively refrain from providing inspectors with accurate information about their children's work situation. Late 19th and early 20th century America and Europe, when much stricter government controls were enforced, also had such circumstances. Poor families of today's world believe the harm that physical work may have on one child should be weighed against the survival of the entire family members overall.²⁸

Reasons for Child Labour

Although almost all studies on child labour identify poverty as the main reason, it seems this social problem also exists, however little and insignificant, in prosperous societies. The reasons for child labour can be examined from the two perspectives of supply and demand. In terms of supply, all studies and research identify poverty as the main factor. Among the factors related to the demand for child labour, the families of working children play the most important role (especially in rural communities). In 2007, the ILO referred to the factors of supply and demand for child labour as follows:

Supply factors include: poverty, livelihood status in the family, social and cultural norms, flood, earthquake, illness, unemployment, war risk theory, family debt and loans, unfair income distribution and inequality.

Demand factors include: nimble finger hypothesis especially in employing children in gold and diamond mines, labour market structure, employers' profit, and

²⁸ Ibid.

lower wages.²⁹

From a more comprehensive perspective, the reasons for child labour are divided into the following three general categories mentioned by the ILO in an article titled “A Future Without Child Labour”:

- 1) *Direct causes*: Lack or shortage of money or food, rising prices of essential goods, family debt, family shocks like death or illness of breadwinner, crop failure, lack of school or low-quality schools with poor or irrelevant curriculum, demand for cheap labour in small informal workshops, imbalance of family farm business and labour cost.
- 2) *Underlying causes*: Breakdown of extended families and informal social support systems, uneducated or poorly educated parents, high fertility rates, cultural expectations from children regarding work and education, discriminatory attitudes based on gender, caste, ethnicity, nationality, religion, race, perceptions of poverty, desire for consumption of goods and better living standards, pressure felt by children from families and poor people from the wealthy.
- 3) *Structural causes*: Declining national income, inequality between nationalities and different regions and unfavourable business climate, social shocks like war, financial and economic crises, migration and AIDS, inadequate political or financial commitments to basic services, education and social protection, poor and weak governance, social exclusion of marginalized groups, and lack of

²⁹ ILO. (2007). *Child domestic labour information resources*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

rule of law or ineffective enforcement.³⁰

Contrary to what is often assumed, child labour is not solely a problem of developing countries. Working children are found in all parts of the world. Nevertheless, ILO reports and researchers' studies have shown that the higher the development level, the less child labour there is.³¹ The following sections will extensively examine the reasons for child labour and the factors and causes perpetuating it.

Child Labour in Iran

Obtaining accurate statistics on the number of working children in Iran is very difficult. By referring to the database and publications of the Iran Statistical Center and also research conducted on child labour in Iran, approximate figures can be reached. In the 1986 census, out of the total population of 55,837,163, about 400,000 children aged 6 to 14 were working. According to the ILO's International Labour Review, in 1997 children aged 10 to 14 constituted 4.71% of Iran's economically active population. However, the ILO did not include working children aged 5 to 9 in this figure. In the 2007 census, whose information is included in that year's statistical yearbook, 185,268 children aged 10 to 14 were employed and 75,071 were seeking work.³² Vameghi and Yazdani also provide the following figures for working children

³⁰ Lack of suitable employment for adults, ILO, cited in Safaei, Manijeh, and Nazem, Nazfar. (2007). *Child Labour*. Tehran: Institute of Labor and Social Security.

³¹ Kalantari, Samad, and Kiani, Mojdeh. (2006). A Comparative Study of Child Labor in Advanced Countries and the Developing World. *Political-Economic Information*, 231-232, pp. 282-295.

³² Safaei, Manijeh, and Nazem, Nazfar. (2007). *Child Labour*. Tehran: Institute of Labor and Social Security.

based on studying three population and housing census periods:

Table 2 Percentages of working children by gender, age group, and urban/rural in 1995-2010³³

<i>Year</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural Boys</i>	<i>Rural Girls</i>	<i>Urban Boys</i>	<i>Urban Girls</i>
1995	73.5	26.5	60	40	71	29	84.7	15.3
2005	77.8	22.2	51	49	84	26	81.7	18.3
2010	82.5	17.5	50	50	82.2	17.8	82.8	17.2

Child labour in agriculture and livestock farming has also been common in Iran, but unlike in the West, the process of industrialization did not occur in the twentieth century in Iran for children to enter industrial workshops. This happened in the early Pahlavi era, in the next century. Since the Iranian economy was integrated into the global economy and a new division of labour had emerged, children in Iran became engaged mostly in the kinds of work that fell to Iran’s share, according to this division of labour. One such job was working in carpet weaving workshops as a new form of child labour. The work in these workshops was extremely difficult and arduous and the environmental conditions were very inappropriate. Despite the significant boom in the carpet industry in Iran, carpet weavers lived in absolute poverty. Regarding the working conditions of child weavers, it has been said:

The afflicted weavers usually work in a closed, unsuitable space. Their workplace is closed in summer,

³³ Vameghi, Maroeh, and Yazdani, Farshid. (2019). Report on the Status of Child Labor in Iran: Social Harms and Inequality (Second Social Status Report of Iran 2009-2017). Vol. 2, pp. 95-150. Tehran: Agah.

so that excessive heat does not come in. In winter it is closed so that the workplace does not lose heat. That is why the weavers look sickly. Of course, there is another reason for this sickly appearance, which is working for long hours and six days a week.³⁴

With the beginning of the Pahlavi era and the establishment of some new industries in several provinces of the country, the use of child labour became somewhat prevalent in the industrial sector. Historical evidence shows that in the 1920s there were long working hours, low wages, and exploitation of women and children, with observers likening the working conditions to “slavery”.³⁵

The fight against child labour began during this same process, with England taking the lead. In Iran, the first law concerning child labour was passed in 1923. This law was enacted by the governor of Kerman and Baluchistan provinces to protect working children and adolescents in Kerman carpet workshops. According to this law, the work of boys under 8 years old and girls under 10 years old in workshops was prohibited. In 1946 a law was passed which in Article 18 prohibited the employment of children under 12 years old, except in apprenticeship cases, and even then, for less than six hours. Also in Article 19, night work for children under 16 years old was prohibited, except in cases where they were working with their parents. The 1950 Labour Law also prohibited the employment of children under 12 years old, except in apprenticeship cases. The 1968 Labour Law set the minimum age for child employment at 12 years old and

³⁴ Saif, Ahmad. (1994). *The Economy of Iran in the Nineteenth Century*. Tehran: Cheshmeh.

³⁵ Foran, John. (2001). *Breaker of Chains: A History of Social Movements in Iran from the Safavids to the Years after the Islamic Revolution* (Translated by Ahmad Tadayon). Tehran: Rasa Cultural Services Institute.

prohibited even the apprenticeship of children under 12 years old. Also, night work between 10pm and 6am was prohibited for women and workers under 18 years old (except for nurses in hospitals and other jobs determined by the Ministry of Labour).³⁶

Iran also committed in 1993 by signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child to implement the articles of this international treaty, one section of which is combating all forms of exploitation of children and forced child labour. Also in 2001, by joining the International Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, it numbered among countries that had pledged to take immediate steps to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

Child Labour in Iran's Laws

Iran's Labour Law also sets limits regarding the employment of children and adolescents. According to Article 80 of this law, employing or hiring any person under 15 years old is prohibited. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines anyone under 18 as a child, since Iran signed this Convention with conditions, the age limit of childhood is determined by Islamic laws. Based on them, a child is someone who has not reached puberty. Article 1210's Note 1 sets the age of puberty at 15 lunar years for boys and 9 lunar years for girls. Labour laws regarding children are also defined based on the age limits of childhood in Iran's Civil Code, and according to Article 80 of the Labour Law, no employer can hire individuals under 15 years old, and any employer violating this law will be sentenced to pay a fine of 200 to 500 times the daily minimum wage of a worker. But in practice, if a

³⁶ Safaei, Manijeh, and Nazem, Nazfar. (2007). *Child Labour*. Tehran: Institute of Labor and Social Security.

worker is under 15 years old, they cannot file a case against the employer in legal bodies, and they have no way to complain, since employing children under 15 years old is prohibited. However, there are also special conditions regarding the employment of 15- to 18-year-olds. According to Article 81 of the Labour Law, adolescent workers must undergo a medical examination at the beginning of employment, and these examinations must be renewed annually and the documents be kept in the individual's file. The doctor also comments on the suitability of the type of work for the adolescent worker's abilities, and if they deem the work inappropriate, the employer is obliged to change the worker's job as far as possible. Article 82 of the Labour Law also states that the daily working hours of adolescent workers is half an hour less than the normal working hours. According to Article 83 of the Labour Law, referral of any kind of overtime work and night work as well as difficult, harmful, dangerous work and manual load carrying above the permissible limit and without using mechanical means is prohibited for adolescent workers. Finally, Article 84 states that in occupations and jobs whose nature or working conditions are detrimental to the health or morals of apprentices and adolescents, the minimum age will be 18 lunar years. Determining this is the responsibility of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare.

Some of these jobs include: working in mines, working in enclosed tanks, working in tanning and gut workshops, working in sewage channels, working in municipal waste collection, transportation and burial, spraying orchards and trees and farms and disinfecting poultry houses and pens, diving, working at heights of more than five meters on scaffolds and mobile cabins and scaffolding, construction work, metal casting, glassmaking, carrying and transferring molten material from active furnaces,

working near porcelain and pottery kilns, working in industrial livestock farms and slaughterhouses, working in morgues and burial of the dead, working in bakeries, and working in bakeries.

Although Iran's laws prohibit the employment of individuals under 15 years old and the employment of 15- to 18-year-old adolescents is conditionally permitted, many children are still seen to be employed in various age groups and sectors, from agriculture and farms to manufacturing workshops. The main and most important reason for using children in different jobs is the lack of serious supervision of children's conditions and their work environments, so employers can easily hire children without fear of the law and families also send their children into the cycle of work prematurely. If these children are abused and exploited by the employer or if employers do not pay their wages, they think they have no possibility of complaining and legal follow-up, because they started working under the legal age and their work is not legal. This situation also applies to migrant children working in the country without legal permits, who, due to lack of legal documents, cannot go to legal bodies if they encounter any problems at work.

Social Security Insurance for Adolescent Workers

According to the Social Security Law, the mere establishment of an employment relationship between the worker and the employer obligates employers to insure workers. Therefore, adolescent workers must be covered by social security insurance from the beginning of employment, and employers' violations in this regard will entail legal punishment. However, what seems necessary and important to point out is the status of social security insurance for individuals under 15 years old who have

been illegally employed. Some think that since such individuals cannot be called workers due to the inapplicability of this title to them and the punishment hiring them entails for the employer according to Article 79 of the Labour Law, they cannot benefit from social security insurance advantages. This perception is apparently based on legal grounds. The Social Security Law was passed in the early 1970s and the Labour Law was approved by the Expediency Council in 1990. Therefore, it seems the new law should override and limit the previous law, but in practice no such approach exists. The Social Security Organization has obliged employers to insure their workers, even if the workers are under 15 years old. Obviously, such workers, except for some facilities such as pensions and unemployment benefits before age 15, can use the advantages of their insurance background and any facilities the legislator has envisaged for workers. For example, if an adolescent worker has been insured before age 15, they can use their insurance background after reaching the legal age to benefit from retirement advantages or they can provide this background after reaching the legal age to make more use of unemployment insurance benefits. Therefore, employers should note that the illegal nature of the work of children under 15 years old alone does not deprive them of the right to social security insurance.³⁷

³⁷ Khorasan Daily, 17 March 2021

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FOUNDATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Theoretical Framework and Literature of Research

In many industries in the developing world, child labour is often rooted in complex historical and livelihood practices themselves linked to broader issues of poverty and society. The International Labour Organization, by developing the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), has undertaken a global, persistent campaign against all forms of the child labour phenomenon. This programme has succeeded in attracting close to one hundred countries worldwide, and by December 2001 the total value of its schemes and projects amounted to over \$200 million.³⁸

Even symbolically this organization named 2015 and 2021 the Year of Alliance for the Elimination of Child Labour, declaring that close to 168 million children worldwide are engaged in work instead of education and schooling, deeming the work children do contrary to the growth and excellence of children, and declaring a state of emergency in this regard. The 89th General Assembly of the International Labour Organization on 1 June 1999 (1378 Solar Hijri) in Geneva addressed the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The worst forms of child labour are a phenomenon of child labour with various forms. Article 3 of ILO Convention 182 defines the worst forms of child labour as including the following:

- a) All forms of slavery or similar practices like the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including the forced

³⁸ ILO. (2008). *Global Child Labour Developments: Measuring Trends from 2004 to 2008*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

- b) The use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances
- c) The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties
- d) Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Various forms of child labour exist in different industrial, domestic, services and agricultural sectors, and in recent decades work in the informal labour market or informal economy has also expanded significantly. Children work in various services and manufacturing workshops and each of these jobs has its own particular and unique conditions, and accordingly children are also in different work conditions. The aim of this study is to understand and address the various forms of child labour in Tehran. Also based on the agreement of the ILO General Convention, which prohibits the worst forms of child labour, this study also seeks to identify the worst forms of child labour.

In this section, first the theoretical concepts of this research are defined. Then the empirical and theoretical background of the research is studied and reviewed. Afterwards, using existing theories, the theoretical framework and theoretical model of the research will also be presented. Finally, some forms of child labour in Tehran and the environments in which children work will be introduced.

Categorising Child Labour

Rogers and Standing consider the category of labour part of the broad realm of children's activities. They introduce ten parts regarding children's activities: domestic work, non-domestic work, unpaid work, group or band work, wage work, marginal economic activities, education, physical education and unemployment, recreation and leisure, and productive and reproductive activities. While this realm of activities seems extensive for children and can thus encompass a wide range of children's activities, all these categories are completely informal and arbitrary. Moreover, none of them are mutually exclusive. On the other hand, UNICEF is perhaps overly limited and relatively reductionist in this area, considering only three main sectors for children:

- 1) *Unpaid work within the family*: This sector itself is divided into subsections of domestic work, agricultural and pastoral work like cultivation, livestock farming, and handicrafts or cottage industry-related crafts like carpentry or leatherwork and weaving.
- 2) *Work within but outside the family*: Work in this sector includes pastoral or agricultural work – which may be full-time, seasonal, or migratory – domestic services when a child finds a place for themselves within the family relations of another family but must also perform housework, and productive and employment work or personal work in the informal economy.
- 3) *Work outside the family*: This sector may include being hired and employed by others, like domestic service jobs and bonded labour performed to pay off debt, apprenticeship, professional trade, commerce, non-professional industrial jobs and the like in mines etc. and domestic work. This sector may also include begging or submitting to immoral and indecent sexual

acts. In this group children may also be personally engaged in a wide variety of extensive informal jobs like car washing and cleaning, waxing etc.

As can be immediately understood from the appearance of this categorisation, the criterion for categorising work in this taxonomy, i.e. performing work within or outside the family, is a very controversial perspective. As White pointed out in 1995, it is by no means obvious that in all cases where children work with or for the family they are exposed to lesser risks. Those seeking to understand the situation and position of working children in some notional place must grapple with a wide variety of complex factors: Is the work done in an urban or rural area? Is the work salaried or not? Is this salary paid in cash or in kind? And many other questions.³⁹

James presents another categorisation of child labour as follows:

- 1) Domestic work like cleaning the house, preparing food and looking after younger siblings;
- 2) Work for subsistence on farms or in shops whereby goods are obtained that can be exchanged for other goods in the market;
- 3) Work as an apprentice which obliges the child to work in a home or other place while learning a craft;
- 4) As slaves or indentured labourers who are sold to others and work for their benefit;
- 5) As beggars who work for themselves or as part of a group, whether family or gang, on the streets;
- 6) As labourers working on farms, in factories, or in shops

³⁹ James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

who receive wages.

The International Labour Organisation has estimated that around 250 million working children exist in developing countries. The ratio given for children active in domestic work is not specified, but their number is certainly high. Based on evidence from the International Labour Organization, girls under sixteen are the most active group in this sector. Given the covert nature of domestic work, having reliable statistics on the number of children involved in domestic work is difficult. The statistics derived from existing research only show the tip of the iceberg, which also indicates concerns about this phenomenon in many countries worldwide.

Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour

In 1999, the International Labour Organization in its 87th General Assembly passed the Convention on the Immediate Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. This law, passed after the 1973 resolution on determining the minimum age of employment in countries worldwide, sought through national and international measures to prevent the exploitation of children and prohibit their employment in difficult and harmful jobs. Among the important points emphasised in this convention were free education and attention to the basic needs of children and their families in order to prevent child labour. In November 2001, this 16-article convention, recommendation, preamble and single annexed article were approved by the Iranian parliament and ratified by the Guardian Council.

Convention on Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour

According to Articles 1 to 3 of this convention, any

member adopting this convention must take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency. In this convention, the term “child” applies to all persons under the age of eighteen years. According to this convention, the term “worst forms of child labour” comprises:

- a) All forms of slavery or similar practices like the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.
- c) The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties.
- d) Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Action Programme of the Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour

Action programmes under Article 6 of the convention must be targeted at:

- a) Identifying and denouncing the worst forms of child labour;
- b) Preventing the engagement of, removing, and rehabilitating children engaged in the worst forms of child labour, protecting them from reprisals and

foreseeing their social integration through measures considering their educational, physical and psychological needs;

- c) Giving special attention to very young children, girls, addressing the hidden nature of the situations in which girls are at special risk, other groups of children in vulnerable or special need situations, identifying, gaining access to and working with communities in which children are at special risk, raising awareness, sensitizing and mobilizing public opinion and concerned groups, especially children and their families.

Hazardous Work for Children

Hazardous work, according to the articles of the Child Labour Convention, is work that exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse. It also includes: work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces, with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, work that involves carrying heavy loads manually or transporting them, work in an unhealthy environment that may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging their health, work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the workplace.

Based on the executive regulations of Notes 1 and 2 of the single article of the Act Ratifying the Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and its Supplementary Recommendation, the list of work detrimental for persons under eighteen years is as follows:

- Work in mines, whether underground or surface, and work in tunnels and corridors or mine shafts;
- Work in enclosed tanks;
- Work in tanneries, salamander workshops, and gutting workshops;
- Work in sewage channels, municipal waste collection, transportation and burial;
- Spraying orchards and trees and farms and disinfecting poultry houses and pens;
- Diving;
- Work at heights of over five metres above ground level on scaffolds, mobile cabins, scaffolding, and skeletons;
- Work in high noise environments (above permissible limit);
- Work on power transmission lines and posts with 63 kilovolts pressure and higher;
- Jobs involving sandblasting, manual asphaltting, tar application, and grouting;
- Working with high vibration equipment (above permissible limit);
- Digging canals, wells, sewers and underground tunnels;
- Work whose continuation provides the conditions for contracting diseases from radiation, such as working with radioactive materials and being exposed to ionizing radiation;
- Construction work;
- Driving and working with light and heavy vehicles and also road construction and agricultural machinery;
- Metal casting, glassmaking, carrying and transferring

- molten material from active furnaces and working near porcelain and pottery kilns;
- Working at oil terminals, power plants, refineries, petrochemical plants, and other oil and gas units;
 - Working in carpet weaving, felt making, kilim weaving, spinning, and weaving workshops;
 - Working in asbestos product manufacturing factories and cement product manufacturing factories;
 - Working in forests, forestry, logging and transporting trees;
 - Working in industrial livestock farms and slaughterhouses;
 - Working with flammable and explosive materials;
 - Working in asphalt plants, stone crushers, stone cutting, road construction;
 - Chlorination and purification of water tanks;
 - Working in morgues and burying the dead;
 - Sailing and working in ship engine rooms or shipbuilding;
 - Working in water processing industries;
 - Working with hazardous machinery such as drilling or pressing, impact, hydraulic, etc. machines;
 - Working in brick kilns;
 - Working with fibreglass materials and manufacturing related products, transporting and storing them;
 - Insulation, installing and producing isogamic materials, and tarring roofs and floors;
 - Blacksmithing, welding, stone carving, and painting;
 - Metal sheet and stone cutting for construction;

- Working in hospitals, medical and psychiatric centres, nursing homes, radiology centres and laboratories;
- Working in bakeries;
- Working in workshops and factories that produce, package, formulate or store chemicals and toxins in some way.

Note – If the work under clauses 18 and 20 of this article is performed to assist parents and within the child's ability and in traditional family workshops, it is exempt from this article.

Different Forms of Child Labour

The relative distribution of children among occupations may vary from country to country, and some types of work may be unusual, only existing in limited areas. However, overall the working conditions of employed children in most countries are concentrated in a few main areas:

- 1) Agriculture on farms;
- 2) Small factories, small companies, rural industries, family businesses, and home-based work;
- 3) The services sector including domestic services in households;
- 4) Marginal productive activities in the informal sector.⁴⁰

The International Trade Union Confederation 2008 refers to a list of forms of child labour that includes the widest and worst forms. Of course, this list does not include all existing forms of child labour. These forms are:

- 1) Domestic work: A very common and sometimes

⁴⁰ Forastieri, Valentina (1997). *Children at work: Health and safety risks*. ILO Child Labour Collection. Geneva: International Labour Office.

acceptable form of children's work; this work is either done at home or outside the home. When domestic work is done outside the home, children often work long hours, have minimal chances of going to school, and this kind of work separates them from their family and friends.

- 2) Agricultural work: Many children work in the agricultural sector. They usually work on family farms along with their families as a production unit or work for another employer.
- 3) Work in industries: Work in the industrial sector can be formal or casual, legal or illegal, and as part of family work or for another employer. Work in this sector often includes carpet weaving, precious stone finishing, garment production, chemical production, glasswork, match production, and production of a wide range of other products. These jobs expose children to chemicals that can result in poisoning, respiratory and skin diseases, heat stroke, fire and explosion, vision and hearing damage, burns, and even death.
- 4) Work in mines: Child labour is used in the mining sector in many countries. In this sector children work for long hours without training and protection. Child miners suffer from physical exertion, fatigue, as well as disorders of the muscular and skeletal systems.
- 5) Slavery and forced labour: This form of work is more prevalent in rural areas and is done by oppressing ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. Children are also often victimised in these conditions and used in armed conflicts.
- 6) Prostitution and child trafficking: This type of work is one of the worst forms of child labour. The risks children face in this sector are extremely severe, encompassing a wide range of harms from moral corruption to transmission of sexually transmitted

diseases and death.

- 7) Work in the informal economy: Work in this sector also covers a wide range of activities like shoe shining, begging, rickshaw pulling, selling newspapers, or scavenging, some of which are covert from public view while others are done openly. The work environment in this sector is generally streets and alleys, although some of these jobs are also done at home.

Some types of children's work, recognised as the "worst forms of child labour" under Article 3 of ILO Convention 182, lead to children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to various serious hazards and illnesses, or cause children's presence on the streets of metropolises especially at young ages. What specific form of work is considered child labour depends on the child's age, type of work, working hours, and the objectives of different countries. While various forms of child labour exist, eliminating without delay those forms of child labour deemed the "worst forms of child labour" under Article 3 of ILO Convention 182 takes priority. These forms are:

- All forms of slavery or similar practices like the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties.
- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health,

safety or morals of children.

In the following sections, examples of hazardous child occupations, duties, risks and impacts on child health will be explained. Overall, children’s jobs are divided into agricultural work, construction work, mining and small workshop manufacturing work. In this categorisation, small manufacturing and workshop work makes up the largest subsection, including textile workshops, carpet weaving workshops, leatherwork and shoemaking workshops, glass and crystal production workshops, match factories, stonemasonry, metalworking, brickmaking, button making, and the stone industry.

Table 3 Examples of hazardous occupations for children and their impacts on child health

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Duties</i>	<i>Hazards</i>	<i>Health Impacts</i>
Agriculture	Working with agricultural tools and machinery / Processing and spraying agricultural materials / Looking after farm animals and livestock herds / Harvesting produce and weeding / Gathering fodder / loading	Imperfect, unprotected machinery and tools / Tractor driving and farm vehicle accidents / Noise and vibration / Risk of falling and suffocation / Dangerous animals / Toxic biological agents / Exposure to hazardous chemicals / Arduous work / Working without proper equipment and personal protective equipment /	Fractures / Lacerations / Injuries and death / Fractures and amputations of fingers, limbs and toes / Head injury or other defects from farm equipment and machinery like hearing loss / Eye damage / Parasites and other infectious diseases / Acute and chronic poisoning

Sector	Duties	Hazards	Health Impacts
		Exposure to high temperatures and heavy load carrying	
Automotive workshop	Repairing battery tanks / Minor mechanical repairs / Tire repair / Washing and fuelling vehicles	Exposure to carbon monoxide / Gasoline / Noise / Unsafe tools and machinery / Carrying heavy objects / Inadequate ventilation / Risk of fire or explosion	Burns / Injuries / Carbon monoxide poisoning / Potential falling / Pain from excessive work / Lead poisoning / Burns / Injuries from carbon monoxide
Carpet weaving	Preparing yarn / Sorting wool / Washing / Spinning and weaving / Dyeing	Inhaling polluted wool dust containing biological materials / incorrect work postures, squatting / Insufficient lighting / Hazardous chemicals / Inadequate ventilation / Repetitive motions	Skeletal and muscular disorders / Eye strain and visual impairment / Respiratory diseases / Chemical poisoning / Fatigue
Ceramic and glass factory	Sorting and cutting glass / Staining glass / Molten glass design / Carrying hot glass	Exposure to lead / Hazardous dusts / Poor ventilation / High heat	Burns / Cuts from broken glass / Eye injuries / Heat stress / Respiratory diseases / Lead poisoning

Sector	Duties	Hazards	Health Impacts
Stevedore	Stevedore duties	Lifting and carrying heavy objects / Falling from heights / Arduous work / Long hours	Injuries from falling / Burns / Respiratory diseases / Exhaustion / Physical strain / Musculoskeletal disorders / Working in heat
Footwear, leather, tanning and shoemaking workshops	Cutting / Embossing / Sewing / Dyeing / Tailoring / Hammering	Inadequate ventilation / Noise / Exposure to glue and solvents / Exposure to formaldehyde and dyes / Flammable materials / Overcrowded workspace / Risk of fire / Excessive electrical equipment / Wires and fuse boxes / Unsafe machinery and sharp tools / Working without personal protective equipment / Varying tasks and long working hours	Cuts and injuries from machinery and cutting tools / Burns / Losing fingers / Fatigue / Electric shock / Chemical poisoning / Fire accidents / Musculoskeletal disorders
Home-based manufacturing	Sewing / Assembling / Making jewellery etc.	Hazards depend on the type of work; Poor lighting and poor	Fatigue from long working hours and specific injuries depending on

Sector	Duties	Hazards	Health Impacts
		working conditions	the type of work
Metalwork	Welding / Soldering and melting lead metals / Engraving / Electroplating	Exposure to extreme heat / Exposure to lead and other hazardous metal gases	Eye injuries / Heat stress / Burns / Neurological disorder / Lead poisoning
Mines (open pit and underground)	Carrying rock / Transporting stone slabs or other heavy objects / Drilling and mining / Bending, kneeling or lying in narrow, cramped underground work	Risk of falling / Injuries from falling objects and fatal accidents / Risk of methane explosions / Exposure to harmful dusts / Gases / Carbon monoxide / Pressure to carry heavy loads / Arduous work / Poor hygiene / Inadequate nutrition / Noise	Fractures and injuries from falling objects / Death / Respiratory diseases / Physical exertion and contusions / Musculoskeletal disorders
Prostitution	Sexual relations	Exposure to drugs / Violence / Abuse / Slavery / Health and moral hazards / Deprivation from family and society	Sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis, hepatitis, HIV etc. / Psychosocial disorders / Unwanted pregnancy
Scavenging and junk selling	Reusing usable materials from waste piles	Cuts from glass or metal / Exposure to hazardous materials including	Lacerations / Burns / Tetanus / Chemical poisoning / Infectious

Sector	Duties	Hazards	Health Impacts
		hospital waste / Inhaling harmful smoke and gases / Exposure to insects / Temptation to eat discarded food / Unhygienic conditions / Living near garbage	diseases like HIV, hepatitis / Tuberculosis / Respiratory diseases / Food poisoning / Malnutrition / Injuries / Death
Street work	Hawking and selling goods / Carrying drugs / Selling newspapers / Shoe polishing / Cleaning car windows / Traffic light performances / Delivering goods / Messenger	Exposure to drugs / Violence and criminal activities and prostitution / Vehicle-related accidents / Health and moral hazards	Injuries from traffic accidents / Drug addiction / Long working hours / Malnutrition / Sexually transmitted diseases / Psychosocial disorders / Unwanted pregnancy
Textile workshops	Spinning / Weaving / Finishing dyeing	Unsafe machinery / Noise / Inhaling polluted dust / Asbestos dust / Poor lighting / Exposure to chemicals / Inadequate ventilation / High humidity / High temperature / Working without personal	Cuts and injuries from machinery / Chemical poisoning / Lung diseases / Hearing loss / Musculoskeletal disorders / Physical strain

Sector	Duties	Hazards	Health Impacts
		protective equipment / Lifting and carrying heavy loads / Risk of fire	
Small-scale marginal productive activities Home-based services / domestic work	All forms of domestic work including childminding	Under master craftsperson's supervision and mercy / Long working hours and lack of adequate rest / Lack of minimum accommodation for sleeping and resting / Physical abuse / Sexual abuse / Corporal punishment / Malnutrition / Irregular meals	Impacts on health from long working hours and inadequate rest / Physical injuries / Psychological stresses
Construction-related work	Earth excavation / Load carrying / Sand and cement shovelling / Working with metals / Working with wall boards and pipe connections / Crushing / Screening and mixing clay in brickmaking / Carrying bricks	Injuries from falling objects and debris / Exposure to harmful dusts / Respiratory problems / Working without personal protective equipment / Exposure to extreme weather conditions / Exposure to lead from glaze / Excessive heat from kilns /	Musculoskeletal disorders / Fatigue / Injuries from falling objects / Falling / Burns / Poisoning

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Duties</i>	<i>Hazards</i>	<i>Health Impacts</i>
		Carbon monoxide from kilns	

Research Concepts

The concepts in this study are “child”, “forms of child labour”, and “workshop”. By combining these concepts, other research concepts will also be addressed, such as child labour, worst forms of child labour, different types of child labour, types of workshops, and underground workshops. Since this study also considers work in workshops, this concept gives rise to other concepts such as employer, working conditions, etc. and for this reason, the legal articles of the Labour Law will also be studied and reviewed in this regard.

Working Children

Working children are a group of children who are employed outside the home. This type of activity encompasses a wide range including various real and pretend labour, unskilled labour, begging, shoe shining, selling low-value goods, etc.⁴¹ According to the definition of the International Labour Organization and UNICEF, any human under the age of eighteen who is engaged in an activity to earn income or whose activity is for the purpose of exploitation due to family debt is called a working child. Based on the ILO’s theoretical classification, working children include children who perform the worst forms of

⁴¹Imani, Nafiseh; Nersisians, Emilia (2011). *A Humanistic Study of the Phenomenon of Street Working Children in the City of Karaj*. Iranian Social Issues, 3(1), 7-32.

child labour or are employed at ages lower than the legal minimum age of employment. The term child labour is not used for children performing light work. On this basis, light work includes non-hazardous work performed by children aged twelve to fourteen and for less than 14 hours per week.

Article 79 of Iran's Labour Law refers to individuals under fifteen years old as working children and considers any kind of exploitation of these children contrary to the Labour Law and punishable by law, and refers to individuals aged fifteen to eighteen as "adolescent workers". In general, child labour refers to work that deprives children of the world of childhood and human dignity and is detrimental to their mental growth and development. According to some definitions, the term child labour "is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity and is harmful to their physical and mental development", and refers to work that has the following characteristics:

- They are dangerous physically, mentally, socially, and morally and are harmful to children.
- They hinder children's education in the following cases:
 - Deprive them of the opportunity to attend school.
 - Force them to drop out before completing their education.
 - Or force them to combine school attendance with excessive and arduous work.⁴²

In the same context, the "worst forms of child labour"

⁴² ILO. (2017). *Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

include slavery, separation of the child from the family, exposure to serious hazards and illnesses, or abandoning the child on the streets of metropolises. What specific forms of “work” can be called child labour depends on the child’s age, type and hours of work performed, its conditions, and the objectives pursued by different countries. Therefore, the response to child labour varies from one country to another and also in different sectors within countries.⁴³

In its annual reports entitled “The State of the World’s Children”, UNICEF has a special section called “Child Protection” which announces statistics of working children by age and gender in most countries around the world – countries whose official statistics on working children have been published by their governments. In these same reports, children subject to “child labour” in terms of age and working hours are also categorized as follows:

- Children aged five to eleven who perform at least one hour of economic activity per week or a maximum of 28 hours of domestic work per week.
- Children aged twelve to fourteen who perform at least 14 hours of economic activity per week or a maximum of 42 hours of economic activity along with domestic work per week.⁴⁴

ILO Convention 138, Article 7, emphasises that light work should have the following two characteristics: First, it should not harm the health and development of the child, and second, it should not interfere with the child attending school and vocational training and generally, with their education and educational abilities. In

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ <http://childinfo.com>

statistical terminology, light work for children aged twelve to fourteen is work that is not hazardous in nature and is not over 14 hours per week. What should be kept in mind in the standards set by the ILO is the minimum permissible age for light work, which can be twelve or thirteen years old, but children can perform work that is exempted by law for a specific age group. For example, participating in housework and working in family businesses that are considered part of work training. Also, the minimum age of employment or work is determined by national law and can be fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen years old. Likewise, it should be noted that all hazardous work and worst forms of child labour, as identified by the ILO, are prohibited for all children of any age.

Work

Work refers to those economic activities that are performed for the purpose of earning income, whether cash or non-cash, with the aim of producing goods or services.⁴⁵

Worker

According to the Labour Law, a worker is someone who works in return for remuneration, including wages, salary, share of profits, and other benefits, at the request of the employer.

Employer

The employer is a natural or legal person for whom and

⁴⁵ These definitions are borrowed from official Statistical Organization of Iran:

https://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/0/Files/fulltext/1395/n_ank_sal95.pdf

on whose account the worker works in return for remuneration. Managers and officials and in general those in charge of managing the workplace are considered representatives of the employer, and the employer is responsible for all obligations that the aforementioned representatives take on towards the worker. If the employer's representative makes a commitment outside his authority and the employer does not accept it, he is liable to the employer.

Labor Inspection

Based on Article 96 of the Labour Law and in order to properly implement the law and technical protection regulations, the General Inspection Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has the supervision duty of "monitoring the implementation of regulations governing working conditions, especially protective regulations related to difficult, harmful and hazardous work, working hours, wages, workers' welfare, employment of women and adolescent workers".

Labor inspectors and occupational health experts have the right, within the scope of their duties, to enter institutions covered by Article 85 of this law without prior notice and at any time of day or night for inspection, but labour inspectors' entry into home workshops requires written permission from the local prosecutor.

Iran's Labour Law is the most important law that addresses child labour in detail. In addition to determining the minimum legal working age, this law specifies the conditions for employing adolescent workers as well as exceptions in this regard by the legislator. Following international labour laws, Iran's Labour Law prohibits forcing individuals into certain work and exploiting others, and in this regard all members of society are equal. Following international labour laws,

Article 79 of Iran's Labour Law determines the minimum permissible working age, and according to this article, the minimum age for employment in Iran is fifteen years and the employment and hiring of children under fifteen years old is prohibited. Iran's Labour Law addresses labour inspection in Chapter Two, whose important articles are reviewed below.

Article 96 - In order to properly implement this law and technical protection regulations, the General Inspection Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is formed with the following duties:

- a) Supervising the implementation of regulations governing working conditions, especially protective regulations related to difficult, harmful and hazardous work, working hours, wages, workers' welfare, employment of women and adolescent workers.
- b) Supervising the proper implementation of the Labour Law and related regulations and guidelines on technical protection.
- c) Training on issues related to technical protection and guiding workers, employers and all individuals at risk of injuries and losses resulting from work accidents and hazards.
- d) Reviewing and investigating problems arising from implementing technical protection regulations and preparing necessary proposals to modify the related criteria and guidelines, appropriate to technological developments and advancements.

e) Investigating work accidents in covered workplaces and generally and statistically analysing such cases for accident prevention.

Article 98 - Labour inspectors and occupational health experts have the right, within the scope of their duties, to enter institutions covered by Article 85 of this law at any time of day or night without prior notice for inspection, and they can also refer to the related books and documents in the institution and if necessary, obtain copies of all or part of them.

Note - Labour inspectors' entry into home workshops requires written permission from the local prosecutor.

Article 99 - Labour inspectors and occupational health experts have the right to take samples, in return for receipts, to the extent necessary for testing in order to be informed of the compositions of materials with which workers are in contact or which are used in work. They shall submit them to their direct superiors.

Article 104 - Employers and others who prevent labour inspectors and occupational health experts from entering workplaces covered by this law or obstruct their duties or refrain from providing them with necessary information and documents shall be sentenced to the punishment stipulated in this law, as applicable.

Article 105 - If during the inspection, the labour inspector or occupational health expert determines the likelihood of an accident or danger in the workplace, the labour inspector or occupational health expert is obliged

to immediately and in writing inform the employer or their representative as well as their direct superior.

Workers in Family Workshops

According to Article 188 of the Labour Law, family workshops where work is solely and exclusively performed by the owner and their spouse and first-degree blood relatives are exempt from the Labour Law.

The Situation of Child and Adolescent Labour in Iran

Today the challenge of child labour remains a widespread problem in many countries around the world. Aside from providing economic support and resolving financial problems in society to overcome this challenge, the existence of laws protecting children also plays an important role in combating the problem of child labour. This section examines Iran's domestic laws regarding combating child labour and protecting what is recognized as working children. It also briefly reviews the Child and Adolescent Protection Bill and its articles related to child labour.

Although the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran does not directly and explicitly refer to children's rights and related subsets, especially rights related to working children, it emphasises in two principles the role of influential factors in eliminating child labour. These two factors are the "right to free education" and the "prohibition of forced labour and human exploitation". Paragraph 3 of Article 3 of the Constitution recognises the right to free and accessible education for all members of society and considers providing it one of the government's duties. Also, paragraph 4 of Article 43, by recognising the right to freely choose an occupation, prohibits forced

labour and human exploitation and bases the economy of the Islamic Republic on these principles.

According to the Labour Law in the Islamic Republic, a child between 15 and 18 years old is considered an adolescent worker and the provisions in Article 79 and Article 84 of the Labour Law apply to adolescent workers. These legal articles state that employing individuals under fifteen years old is prohibited. A worker between the ages of fifteen and eighteen is called an adolescent worker and must undergo all medical examinations approved by the Social Security Organization at the beginning of employment.

Adolescent Apprenticeship Contract

Considering the provisions of the Labour Law, part of which relates to apprentices and employment contracts and applies to children between fifteen and eighteen years old, during the apprenticeship period the apprentice's wage shall not be less than other workers. In other words, the conditions provided for the worker are also provided for the apprentice, and therefore if any issues or problems arise for these children, they also have the possibility to complain against the employer. Articles 112 to 118 of the Labour Law address the working conditions of adolescent apprentices. An apprentice is someone who, by virtue of an apprenticeship contract, in order to learn a specific craft for a specific period not exceeding three years, is engaged in on-the-job training in a particular workplace, provided that they are not less than fifteen years old and not more than eighteen years old. The worker's rights also apply to the apprentice and the apprenticeship period is counted as part of the apprentice's work background. During the apprenticeship period, the apprentice's wage shall not be less than the fixed or base wage. The aforementioned apprentices in paragraph (b) of Article

112 are subject to the provisions relating to adolescent workers in Articles 79 to 84 of the Labour Law, but their working hours shall not exceed six hours per day. In addition to the specifications of the parties, the apprenticeship contract must contain: the obligations of the parties, the apprentice's wage, the place of apprenticeship, the profession or job being taught. Also based on Article 157 of the Labour Law, any individual dispute between the employer and the worker or apprentice arising from the implementation of this law and other labour regulations, the apprenticeship contract, workshop agreements, or collective bargaining agreements shall first be settled through direct compromise between the employer and the worker or apprentice or their representatives in the Islamic Labour Council and if there is no Islamic Labour Council in the unit, through the workers' union or the workers' and employer's legal representative, and in case of failure to compromise, it shall be investigated and settled by dispute settlement boards in the following order. Given these conditions, children between fifteen and eighteen years old have the possibility to complain about working conditions (although not observed in practice). Also based on Article 85, to protect human resources and preserve the country's material resources, adherence to the instructions developed by the Supreme Labour Council (for technical protection) and the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education (for prevention of occupational diseases and provision of occupational health for workers and work environment) is mandatory for all workshops, employers, workers and apprentices. Family workshops are also subject to the provisions of this chapter and are required to observe technical and occupational health principles.

Workshop

A workshop is a place where the worker works at the request of the employer or their representative, such as industrial, agricultural, mining, construction, transportation, passenger transport, services, commercial, production, public places, and the like. All facilities belonging to the workshop as required by the work, such as prayer rooms, dining halls, cooperatives, daycare centres, kindergartens, clinics, baths, vocational training centres, reading rooms, literacy and other educational classes and places related to the Council and Islamic Association and mobilization of workers, gym, transportation, and the like are part of the workshop. With this explanation, it is clear that the definition of a workshop in the Labour Law is very broad and in order to protect workers, most places that may be made available to workers as required by the work are considered workshops.

Workshops with Under Ten Workers

According to Article 191 of the Labour Law, small workshops with less than ten workers may temporarily be exempted from some of the provisions of this law as deemed appropriate. Determining the appropriateness and exemptions will be by regulations proposed by the Supreme Labour Council and approved by the Council of Ministers. The exemption period from the aforementioned provisions is determined as three years.

Home-based Workshops

Home-based workshops refer to those activities carried out by family member(s) in residential space in the form of a business plan without disturbing the peace of neighbouring residential units, and lead to the production

of services or marketable goods outside the residential environment. Home business workshop employees are active in the following ways to make profit:

- 1) Performing work on wages for an employer outside the residential environment;
- 2) Performing independent work from providing raw materials to selling the product outside the residential environment;
- 3) Performing work cooperatively, in associations, or in partnership with upstream enterprises supplying raw materials and marketing their products in the market, preferably in the form of cluster businesses.

Therefore, a family workshop is one where first, the workers have close familial relationships of father, mother, child, spouse. Secondly, the work is performed by the owner along with their relatives. Thirdly, no other person is present in the aforementioned family group. As a result, if the owner does not work in that workshop along with other family members or if someone other than family members is among the workers, it falls outside the definition of a family workshop, even if they are the owner's grandchild. It should be noted that if there is another worker without the aforementioned degree of kinship in such a workshop, all the workers fall outside the exception and come under the coverage and jurisdiction of the Labour Law. This exception is limited to the cases specified in the Labour Law and does not prevent fulfilling other duties stipulated in different chapters regarding the aforementioned cases. For example, adherence to technical and health regulations in family workshops is mandatory under Note to Article 85 of the Labour Law, even if not subject to other provisions of this law.

Underground Workshop

An underground workshop refers to one not registered anywhere and not subject to the minimums of the Labour Law such as insurance, employment contract, health inspection, and labour inspection. In other words, due to their informal nature they are not subject to any kind of supervision.

Theoretical Literature of the Research

In this section, first sociological theories in examining social issues are discussed, and then theories related to child labour are explored. At the end, the theoretical framework and theoretical model of the research will also be presented.

Sociological Approaches to Examining Social Issues

Social Disorganization

Social disorganization occurs when all components of the social system do not adapt harmoniously to functional needs and environmental changes, and on the other hand, during rapid social change, equal opportunities for all strata of society to adapt to environmental changes are not provided, and therefore in such circumstances the emergence of vulnerable social strata in society becomes inevitable.⁴⁶

According to Merton, anomie is the breakdown of a cultural structure, and this situation arises when there is

⁴⁶ Zahedi Asl, Mohammad. (2014). *Social Problems from the Perspective of Social Work*. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaee University.

a huge discrepancy between cultural goals and norms and social needs and values and the possibilities available in the context of each social stratum. In a stable society there is a balance between social-cultural goals and means accepted by the general public to achieve them. Anomie begins when this balanced relationship is disrupted.⁴⁷

Nisbet also emphasizes the inevitability of social issues as the socio-cultural costs of the rapid growth and development process. According to this view, the deviation and marginalization of sections of social groups and strata from the rapid wheel of growth and development is inevitable. In their rapid transition towards what is called modernity and modernization, societies face the prevalence of values of progress and instrumental rationality in society, followed by developments such as complex division of labour, rapid population growth and urbanization, social differentiation, and growth of individualism, which lead to the emergence of numerous social issues and problems.⁴⁸ The flow of societal transformations and the growth of urban values leads to an influx of population into large cities and highly concentrated, uneven development in developing societies, causing issues like traffic, environmental pollution, marginalization, theft, murder and violence, prostitution, poverty, addiction, and occasionally physical and mental illnesses and various types of crime and social deviance. Since developing countries lack the necessary structures for generating employment, educating the growing population, low per capita income and gross domestic product, lack of industrial and production sector growth due to huge

⁴⁷ Rafieepour, Abdullah. (1998). *Adolescence and Its Challenges*. Isfahan: Nashr-e Ofogh.

⁴⁸ Zahedi Asl, Mohammad. (2014). *Social Problems from the Perspective of Social Work*. Tehran: Allameh Tabatabaee University.

expenditures on childcare and education, economic-social dependence, illiteracy or semi-literacy, unemployment, and housing problems have confronted this growing population.⁴⁹

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Another view in explaining social issues is the symbolic interactionism perspective. In contrast to structural functionalist and conflict theories that emphasize structures and functions, this view focuses on the interaction between individuals and social groups. It emphasizes the subjective, intersubjective dimensions of actors who construct social reality, and considers social issues resulting from the mental interpretations and constructions of actors regarding situations and social conditions, which are also relative and continuously evolving. Since this approach also emphasizes actors' purposeful motivations and choices in constructing social realities including harms and social issues, examining children's motivations and reasons for working, from their own viewpoint and their individual and group situations and actions in the environment, is possible within this paradigm.⁵⁰

Now, based on the child-centered theory, the question arises as to how children's work takes place and how the work done is administered and made meaningful. This theory can also pay more attention to the reports of the children themselves and accord their ability and competence in deciding about their lives and future a special status. Child-centeredness relies on agency in

⁴⁹ Moeedfar, Saeed (2010). *Social Problems in Iran*. Tehran: Amin Publishing.

⁵⁰ Hosseini, Seyyed Hassan. (2004). "The Situation of Working and Street Children in Iran". *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 5(19), 155-173.

social organizations of work.⁵¹

Conflict Theory

Based on the conflict approach, there are two Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories regarding social issues, with the Marxist theory focused on economic conflict and the Neo-Marxist theory emphasizing social conflict arising from conflicting values and interests of social groups. In light of such a view, contradiction and conflict are intrinsic to human societies. Advocates of conflict theory emphasize inequality of wealth and power in society among social classes, races, ethnicities, genders, and even age and generation. As Karl Marx considers the origin of social issues to be private property and exploitative social classes, declaring that the way out of this situation is dismantling capitalism, realizing a classless society, and liberating man from bondage. According to conflict theorists, the emergence of social harms in societies' transition to development is inevitable, and social reality is contradictory in nature and evolving from the present situation towards a desirable one, and many social issues and harms stem from the internal crises of capitalism being externalized. Capitalism has hindered human creativity, innovation, and freedom. Therefore, social issues are fundamentally "economic" in origin, nature, and character [7]. Based on this theory, child labour has arisen due to economic issues and crises created by capitalism.

⁵¹ James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

Theories Related to Child Labour

Culture of Poverty

In their socio-psychological studies, Veale, Taylor, and Linehan [8] examined existing theories and hypotheses. Oscar Lewis [9] presented these theories in 1996 in the form of the “culture of poverty” theory and critiqued it. This theory has four main hypotheses: The first hypothesis refers to the neglect and abandonment of these children by their families. The second hypothesis relates child labour to poverty and considers abandonment a passive consequence of poverty. According to this deterministic view, due to poverty these children’s families are unable to fulfil their moral duties towards their children and as a result are forced to direct and abandon them outside the home. The third hypothesis considers child labourers a consequence of migration from rural to urban areas and its consequences, including poverty and marginalization, and changes in family structure, in which case child labour is the result of marginalized slum families. The fourth hypothesis considers child labourers as arising from highly marginalized and deviant urban subcultures. Lewis believes that the culture of poverty is characterized by fatalism, hopelessness, helplessness, dependence, low self-esteem, and the inescapability of poverty.⁵²

Socialization of the Child

The key concept in the sociological theory of childhood is socialization. “Enculturation” may be a good synonym for this process, as this term implicitly indicates that children

⁵² Hosseini, Seyyed Hassan. (2004). “The Situation of Working and Street Children in Iran”. *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 5(19), 155-173.

come to accept and gradually absorb and acquire the culture of the human groups they find themselves in. Children should not be seen as individuals fully equipped to participate in and intervene in the complex adult world; rather, they should be considered as beings with the necessary potential for gradually and gently establishing connections with other humans.⁵³

The structural sociology of the child begins its work with the obvious insight that children are a fixed and stable feature across all social worlds. In this theory, children constitute one of the constituent elements of all societies, concrete, persistent, ordinary individuals. In effect they represent all social characteristics, realities and facts. Of course, their outward form and manifestations may differ from one society to another, but within each particular society they are uniform and isomorphic. To this extent they constitute part of social structures. This theory starts with the premise that children are not defective creatures but form a group of social agents, citizens with specific needs and rights. In the model of the socially developing child, we saw a structured society composed of rational, logical adults along with children waiting to someday undergo a set of special rituals and customs necessary to become a member and be socialized in that society through various processes and enter society. In structural sociology, the stability and persistence of the child and the necessity of this trait are emphasized and confirmed. With such a beginning, different theorists of this theory try to examine both the necessary and sufficient conditions for childhood within a particular society or in effect for children in general. From another perspective, children are largely considered a general category, and it is

⁵³ James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

presumed that they emerge from the pressure and constraints that the particular social structure provides for them. Therefore, children are a set of minds, but their mentality is neither arbitrary nor licentious. This is specified by society and thus childhood is seen as a social phenomenon.⁵⁴

Migration

This theory emphasizes the process whereby capitalist industrial revolution intensified labour migration from rural areas to cities, resulting in surplus labour in cities. The inevitable consequence of this situation was increased unemployment and underemployment and channelling human resources into the unorganized economic sector and low-paying service activities. As a result, many families become marginalized and consequently exposed to various harms and social issues.⁵⁵

In analysing the adaptation process of migrants in the city, Turner, while examining the phenomenon of marginalization in cities which is the most evident product of migration to cities, concluded that marginalized communities are not only fully organized but also have a normal range of fluctuating familial aspirations and priorities. To demonstrate how these conflicting priorities change as low-income households become more securely settled in the urban economy, John Turner devised a simple model. According to this model, in the first “arrival” stage, access to temporary work is the most important goal, and any nearby shelter will suffice. Once steady, regular, reliable income is achieved, the main goal will be consolidating one’s position by

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Zanjani, Habibollah. (2001). *Migration*. Tehran: SAMT.

obtaining legal ownership of housing in the city. Finally, once legal tenure is secured, priority and value will be given to enhancing lifestyle by developing access to other amenities. According to John Turner and other researchers, urban sprawl only covers one aspect of the lives of the marginalized. The diverse facets of marginalized life, often comprised of rural migrants, are so varied and in some cases so distressing that it seems no solutions can be envisioned for improving the situation of these enormous populations, who sometimes constitute a huge percentage of the total population of metropolises. Maladjustment to unfamiliar and completely different urban environments from the native culture of migrants continues for subsequent migrant generations as well, even on international and intercontinental scales, and causes numerous psychosocial effects and disorders in the mechanisms of urban planning in migrant-receiving areas. Below, some examples are examined of how adaptation and migrants' interaction with new living environments in different parts of the world with varying geographical traits occur.

According to the Todaro theory, migrants are well aware that high unemployment among them has created a wall relative to urban wages, but they continue migrating as long as they receive less in rural areas than they expect in cities. Their expected income is: the wage they will likely earn in the city multiplied by their income opportunities. For example, let us consider a hypothetical country where average income in rural areas is \$100 and average urban income is \$250, but the urban unemployment rate is 20 percent; that is, eight out of ten can find work. Therefore, the expected income is eight-tenths of the average urban income, which is eight-tenths of \$250 equalling \$200. So, migration is cost-effective for them. In this hypothetical country, rural residents will continue migrating until the urban unemployment rate reaches sixty percent, a rate

existing in some highly populated areas. One might doubt that ultimately with the rising urban unemployment rate, the migration flow will completely stop, but its ominous effects cannot be ignored. As long as greater wealth exists in cities, migration from rural to urban areas will continue for a long time.⁵⁶

In his theory of migration in the Middle East, Castells argues: Although the phenomena of migration, urbanization, and adaptation of migrants in the Middle East have commonalities with other parts of the world, in some cases, distinctive prominent regional characteristics influenced by local cultures are observed in this region which must be recognized and evaluated for urban and regional planning purposes. In the Middle East, migration to cities has led to the collapse of the extended family structure. Usually, the younger generation moves to the city, and since male children settle in the city, they are no longer financially dependent on familial assets or the traditional family occupation, and are even more likely to send subsidies to their rural hometown, thus changing the direction of relationships in the dependency model.⁵⁷

Geographical mobility of migrants in the city has a significant impact on their adaptation. Where the migrant lives, whether alongside relatives or alone, whether able to find work or not, as well as the individual's background and personality altogether determine whether the migration process causes disintegration of the social organization or not. Research in Tripoli, Libya shows that some migrants suffer from social disorientation. The

⁵⁶ Harrison, Paul. (1985). *In the Third World* (Translated into Persian by Shadab Vajdi). Tehran: Fatemi.

⁵⁷ Costello, Vincent Francis. (1989). *Urbanization in the Middle East* (Translated into Persian by Parviz Piran and Abdolali Rezaei). Tehran: Ney.

relocation of old and native migrants from Tripoli's old section of the city has severed the connection between old migrants and newcomers entering the old part of the city for the first time. The diversity of new urban occupations in the public sector, oil industry and other sectors, which prevents regional concentration of migrant groups with a single occupation, has itself accelerated this process. As a result, a kind of uprooted feeling arises among migrants, especially newcomers, which has led to the loss of a sense of social belonging [14]. The considerable cultural differences between the origin and destination of migration play a very important role in migrants' adaptation process. The Middle East may have a special trait globally in terms of cultural differences between the countries of the region as well as between the urban and rural communities within those countries. Ethnic, religious, linguistic, social, economic, and political diversity has further complicated the phenomenon of migration and adaptation of migrants especially in the region's metropolises. Middle Eastern culture emphasizes personal contacts and connections based on kinship gatherings, which expand the boundaries of relationships with others to include hundreds or even thousands, so that individuals do not feel estranged in their local community.⁵⁸

The traditional structure of kinship groups plays a vital role in the adaptation of migrants in Middle Eastern cities. Kinship groups can help newly arrived poor migrants in urban areas consolidate their economic and political position. Among old families in Lebanon, poorer members maintain their ties with wealthier, more influential relatives in a kind of patron-client relationship [14]. Demographic factors like the migrant's age and gender also affect their adaptation to urban

⁵⁸ Ibid.

environments. Researchers believe that the older the individual, the less they participate in urban life, and the more one expands their relationships in the city, the more they replace their beliefs, perceptions and views of society with modern-inclined beliefs, perceptions and views. Provided that employment opportunities are available in the city and economic disability does not hinder the individual, those migrating from rural to urban areas can adopt urban culture.⁵⁹

Informal Economy

The informal economy is a part of the economy that still has many ambiguities surrounding it and no consensus on its definition and scope. Many researchers avoid defining and delineating its scope. Some thinkers in this field include illegal activities within this sector and some define it as another separate sector. Some studies, instead of defining this sector, have divided it into homogeneous subgroups. The statistics presented by the Italian National Institute of Statistics divided activities in the informal sector into three categories based on their reasons and people's motivations: The first category of informal economic activities includes illegal activities. Examples of illegal activities forming this sector vary according to time and place. For instance, some activities like the sale of alcoholic beverages have been defined as illegal in some times and places. Another part of the informal economy comprises unregistered activities. This sector encompasses legal economic activities that are not included in official statistics due to underdeveloped production processes or their small scale. Money is exchanged in part of this activity, such as peddling, transporting passengers in private vehicles, and in

⁵⁹ Ibid.

another part, money is not exchanged, in other words the economic activity does not have a commodity nature, such as production of some goods in households for family consumption which is very common in rural areas. The third part of the informal economy has a nature similar to formal economic activities; this sector is referred to as the “shadow economy” which includes legal activities hidden from the state’s view for economic motives. Economic activists sometimes evade formal registration in statistics in reaction to excessive state regulations, state capture, or rent-seeking by lobby groups. In this case, the shadow economy is considered an alternative to corruption or an alternative to rent-seeking and influencing the state. Sometimes the shadow economy is not an isolated or alternative activity but an actively complementary strategy to corruption and rent-seeking. The type of motive or the relationship of the shadow economy with corruption and rent-seeking can only be partially understood by focusing on the type of hidden activity. That is why studies typically further narrow the sphere of activities and only concentrate on part of the shadow economy or one type of its activities like smuggling, tax evasion, etc.⁶⁰

According to some other definitions, the informal economy is fundamentally different from the illegal economy. Illegal activities refer to those recognized by law as illegal activities, so committing them is defined as a crime, such as drug trafficking or child trafficking.

The informal economy, also referred to as the shadow, underground, hidden, etc. economy, gained attention after World War II following the widespread presence of states in the economic arena, and consequently, creating

⁶⁰ Khandaan, Abbas. (2019). *Informal Economy in Iran*. Tehran: Higher Education Institute for Management and Planning Research.

strong incentives for economic actors to move towards the informal sector. Using the new institutionalist approach, Feige divides activities of the underground economy into four types: illegal, unreported, unregistered, and informal. Illegal activities include all income-generating criminal economic activities such as theft, prostitution, and drug trafficking which are illegal and punishable in countries' formal laws if committed. Unreported activities include those mostly performed in response to the economic policies of governments; tax evasion, nonpayment of insurance premiums and smuggling are examples of such activities. Unregistered activities include those like housework, self-service, and volunteer work which exist to some extent in all economies. The informal sector also includes some minor productions and services which decrease relatively in size with the advancement of information registration systems. Tanzi believes the informal economy arises due to the existence of certain difficult-to-measure and tax activities like domestic work and illegal, hidden activities [16].

In analysing the effect of the informal economy on economic growth, F. Schneider and R. Klingrnair conducted a study on 109 developing, transitional, and industrialized countries over the 1990s.⁶¹ Based on their findings, industrialized, developed countries showed a positive relationship between the size of the informal economy and economic growth, while developing countries showed a negative relationship between the two. Therefore, there is an inverse relationship between the level of development and the size of the informal economy. Schneider believes the increase in tax burden and social security burden along with increased legislative

⁶¹ Schneider, F. and R. Klingrnair (2004). "Shadow Economies Around the World: What do we Know?", University of Link Department of Economics Working Paper, No.0403.

and regulatory activities of governments are among the main factors for the global increase in the informal economy size.⁶²

Louisa has analysed the determining factors and effects of the informal economy in the framework of an endogenous growth model, where production technology is dependent on publicly provided services. In this model, it is demonstrated that making changes in policy parameters and improving the quality of government institutions, leading to a relative increase in the informal economy, ultimately results in a reduction in economic growth rates. Additionally, in an empirical study on Latin American countries, she has found that an increase in taxation burden, labour market constraints, and the low quality of government institutions have an increasing effect on the informal economy. The expansion of informal activities through reduced access to public services and an increase in the number of activities utilizing public services with low efficiency will lead to a decrease in economic growth.

Louisa considers the choice of engaging in informal activities within the informal sector as the result of a rational choice by economic agents. The summarized impacts of the existence of the informal economy include effects on gross domestic product, tax revenue, income distribution, planning and policies, and social welfare. Based on this, the reasons for the expansion of the informal economy are listed as follows:

1. Tax burden and the social security system are mentioned as the most important reasons for the existence of the informal economy.
2. Stringent regulations, the major cause of reduced freedom and individual choices in the formal economy.

⁶² Ibid.

Labour market regulations, trade barriers, and other constraints are examples of regulatory stringency.

3. Government intervention and legal disruptions that involve the politicalization of economic activities, meaning the expansion of control over economic enterprises by politicians and bureaucrats. The general assumption is that the presence of a left-leaning government leads to a reduction in economic activities.

4. Corruption, rent-seeking, and the role of the law are considered important factors in the expansion of the informal economy.⁶³

Underground Economy

The underground economy includes economic activities that are carried out legally or illegally and are not registered anywhere.⁶⁴ Thomas divides the underground economy into four categories:

1. Household sector: This sector produces goods and services consumed within the household. The distinguishing feature is that its products are less supplied to the market, and the lack of prices for its products makes it difficult to assess their value. Therefore, it is disregarded in national accounts.

2. Informal sector: This sector includes small-scale producers, as well as self-employed individuals and traders without employees in commercial, transportation, and other informal services.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Esfandiyari, Ali-Asghar, & Jamaalmanesh, Arash. (2002). Underground Economy and Its Impact on the National Economy. *Journal of Economic Research*, 2(6), 13-48.

3. Irregular sector: All classified activities in this sector have an illegal nature, such as tax evasion, regulatory evasion, and fraud in social insurance. The main feature of this sector is that, despite the legality and legitimacy of the production of goods and services, illegal and unlawful practices occur in their production or distribution.

4. Illegal sector: The production of the irregular sector is legal and legitimate, but the production of the illegal sector includes illegal activities such as smuggling, theft, extortion, the production and trafficking of drugs, obscenity, etc. Authorities in every country primarily seek to end irregular productions to collect taxes.⁶⁵

In general, the underground economy includes four sectors: household, informal, irregular, and illegal.

In this context, it should be noted that the causes and effects of the underground economy in Iran include:

1. Effective tax rates: An increase in effective tax rates leads to more tax evasion, and the volume of the underground economy increases. Johnson and colleagues have stated that an increase in the tax burden is one of the three reasons for the presence and activity in informal markets.

2. Urbanization: The expansion of urbanization and population concentration, along with specialization, increases the need for exchange. The rapid fulfilment of diverse needs necessitates the use of means of payment other than cash. Therefore, with the increase in rural migration to cities, marginalization increases, and individuals, unable to be absorbed into the formal economy, enter the informal economy. Thus, with the increase in urbanization, the informal economy grows.

⁶⁵ Hosseini, Seyyed Hassan. (2004). "The Situation of Working and Street Children in Iran". *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 5(19), 155-173.

3. Human Development Index: The Human Development Index reflects the level of development of countries. The larger this index, the more developed the country is in terms of education, health, and income levels, which indirectly leads people towards a more modern lifestyle and a more professional business environment. As a result, the production of households and self-consumption processes of more modern individuals decrease, and the underground economy related to the household sector decreases.⁶⁶

4. Government regulations: The increase in the intensity of regulations, often measured by the number of approved laws and regulations, is one of the main reasons for the reduction of freedom and individual choices in the formal economy and, consequently, the reduction of the underground economy.

5. Unemployment: Unemployment is one of the biggest and most pervasive economic problems in societies in the 20th century. In advanced industrial societies, unemployment imposes high costs on society, and in developing countries, widespread unemployment in conjunction with economic poverty can pose serious dangers to society and the economy. The growth of unemployment increases the motivation for activities in illicit and prohibited areas, contributing to the increase in the volume of the underground economy.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Shakibayi, Alireza, & Shadmani, Qasem. (1393/2014). Estimation of Iran's Shadow Economy from 1970 to 2007 Using Multi-stage Fuzzy Modeling. *Quarterly Journal of Economic Research and Sustainable Growth*, 14(1), 3-77.

⁶⁷ Sameti, Majid; Sameti, Morteza; and Dalaei Milan, Ali. (2009). Estimating the Underground Economy in Iran (1965-2009) using MIMIC Method. *International Economics Studies*, 20(2), as cited in Hosseini, Fahimehalsadat. (2018). Investigating the Impact of Tax Evasion on

Children as Family Assets

Family behaviour theory assumes the family is a primary unit where decisions are made about children's education or work. In poor families, to supplement family income, provide family livelihood, replace adult wage labour in family units, and provide security in old age and disability, special attention is paid to children. Some of these family behaviour theories pay attention to fertility and number of children as an important explanatory variable in the prevalence of child labour. According to the model proposed by Becker in 1960, fertility/childbearing behaviour is the product of parents' economic evaluation based on analysing the cost-benefit equation of the child and allocating time to the child, but for children the flexibility of quantity of demand is less than the flexibility of quality of demand. Of course, larger family size may also justify the high prevalence of child labour.⁶⁸

Labor Market Failure

Research on child labour points to the fact that child labour is directly related to the structure or failures of the labour market, the wage differential between child and adult work, and low adult wages. In competitive markets where wages are flexible, child labour can easily replace adult labour, which may help perpetuate child labour. Although wages paid to adults for higher productivity do not comply with minimum wage laws and similar laws, still, the child worker is not an appropriate offer for the labour market. The developed model of Basu and Van in

Economic Growth in Iran. *Scientific-Research Journal of Danesh-Pajoochan*, 14(46, 47, and 48).

⁶⁸ Srivastava, J. (2003). Child Labour in South Asia: Are Trade Sanctions the Answer? Research paper. Centre for Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi. ISBN 81-87222-82-4.

1998 made the negative correlation between child labour and parental income a principle. In the labour market, child labour can replace adult labour despite its low returns, which reduces adult wages and thus reinforces such child labour.⁶⁹

Economic and Social Factors Creating Child Labour

According to Mendelievich's view, economic, social, and cultural factors play a significant role in creating the conditions for child labour. In developing countries, the cause of the increase in this phenomenon is poverty and economic weakness. Also, established traditions in less developed countries are another of these factors. The lack of formal education and a strong economic infrastructure has led parents to find suitable jobs for their children to prevent idleness and pastime.⁷⁰

The perspective of Rodgers and Standing states that by providing an analytical framework in low-income countries, the determinants of child labour are divided into two categories: first, the economic and social contexts, and second, the individual behavioural factor. In discussing the first category, the structure of the production and labour market process is considered, and it is believed that in primitive societies all family members perform their duties towards survival and social cohesion, and children also work according to their capacity. In other words, work is part of the socialization process in such societies. According to their view, although industrialization and urbanization processes initially increased certain types of children's work, in the long run

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Mendevich, Elias. (1979). Child Labour. *International Labour Review*, 118

they have reduced their amount of work. In discussing the second category, the discussion is about the role of the family or household in the nature and pattern of children's work, because the size and structure of the household plays a decisive role in children's employment or lack thereof. In general, three factors are involved in increasing children's activity in low-income countries:

- a) Conditions in which the fertility rate has declined and most children in these families are in adolescence and early adulthood;
- b) Household occupational industrial bases with the likelihood of child labour in households where the main adult worker works in agriculture, services, and especially self-employment;
- c) Family income as well as parents' education, which are important determinants of children's activity.⁷¹

Grootaert and Kanbur examined the factors of child labour from an economic perspective and divided them into two categories of factors of labour supply and demand: In their view, the determinants of child labour supply are:

- 1) Household size and time allocation: How the child's time is allocated to work by the household depends on the size and structure of the household, the child's production capacities, and their parents, mainly the degree of substitutability of work between the child and their parents, mainly the mother. Therefore, household size plays a major role in children's employment.
- 2) Household reactions to the risk of job loss: The main reasons for employing children by families are on the one hand increasing household income and on the other hand

⁷¹ Grooter, Chiritia and Ravi, Kanbur. (1995). Child Labour: Economic Perspective. *International Labour Review*, 134 (2), 187-203.

better managing conditions and feeling at risk of losing income.

The determinants of child labour demand are as follows:

- 1) Labour market structure: The labour market in turn determines the role of employment in household income.
- 2) Technology: The level of technology affects the extent to which a child can substitute working adults [22].

Cultural Function

According to Fyfe, child labour is not solely a response to economic processes, but is also considered reflective of children's specified cultural functions. On this basis, the values associated with children's activities express the nature of socialization processes, and this set of economic-cultural factors are deeply interrelated. Child labour has a mechanism by which gender roles are learned and made eternal. It is also a response to a wide range of kinship expectations that the child must employ throughout life. Apart from what has been said, child labour within the extended family includes a way of socializing them that is inherently exploitative. Child labour is also affected by economic changes such as economic recession. The effects of this process include increased poverty, unequal income distribution, and adult employment, which directly affects children.⁷² Writers such as Boyden, who have empirical and practical knowledge about the daily realities of children's lives in southern countries, do not explicitly state that economic necessity is the whole story. They act cautiously in this regard. For example, her research in Bangalore showed that many parents, believing that early learning of a profession is the best way to equip children to cope with

⁷² Fyfe, Alice. (1989). *Child Labour*. New York: Polity Press.

the demands of future life, sent their children to various jobs. Schilkraut, using her research on Muslim children in northern Nigeria, stated that children's work is necessary and important for cultural and social production.⁷³

Theoretical Link Between Child Labour and Trade

This theory was examined by Jeffrey and Lahiri in 2002 regarding the theoretical link between child labour and trade. They showed that trade sanctions may actually increase rather than reduce child labour. Researchers imagine that in a low-income country there are goods produced with low skills. In a country with a comparative advantage where the good is exported, this unskilled sector is also where child labour is located in the economy. Therefore, the trade embargo affects the unskilled sector and consequently child labourers. At first glance, it seems that these sanctions reduce demand for such goods, i.e. goods made with low skills, which ultimately leads to reduced child labour in this sector, but trade sanctions can also have other effects, such as reducing the value of school tuition limiting access to credit, which in turn can reduce investment in education.⁷⁴

Information Age and Black Holes

In his famous study *The Information Age*, Castells, using extensive empirical studies and evidence on a global scale, analysed how global capitalism was restructured and information capitalism emerged, as well as the negative

⁷³ James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

⁷⁴ Lahiri, Taher. (2002). *An Investigation on the Economy of Iran*. Tehran: Aryana Ghalam.

effects of this restructuring. According to Castells' theory, one of the negative effects of the restructuring of global capitalism and the emergence of the "network society" is the emergence of the processes of "social differentiation and exclusion" and the "black holes of the Fourth World" on a global, national, regional, and local level. Castells argues that since the late 1960s, with the information technology revolution and the transition from industrial capitalism and statist societies to informational capitalism and networked societies, changes have occurred in global economic relations that have been accompanied by the weakening of nation-states and the welfare state, transformations in the traditional nuclear family structure, the emergence of new forms of poverty and marginalization, and the "geography of social-territorial exclusion" in different parts of the world. He attributes the set of processes that generate social exclusion and differentiation to changes in two areas: the sphere of distribution-consumption relations and the relations of production. Inequality, polarization, poverty and destitution all relate to the sphere of distribution-consumption relations or different levels of wealth acquisition, which is produced through collective effort. On the other hand, individualization of work, extreme exploitation of workers, social exclusion and degraded linkage are characteristics of the process of production relations.⁷⁵ Castells explains that the most important labour issue in the information age is not the end of work but the conditions of workers.

Excessive Exploitation

According to Castells, inequality refers to the unequal acquisition of wealth by different social groups and

⁷⁵ Castells, Manuel (2001). *The Internet Galaxy, Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

individuals. Polarisation is a particular process of inequality that occurs when, at the two extremes of the spectrum, the distribution of income or wealth grows faster than the middle part of this spectrum. Thus, the middle of the wealth distribution spectrum shrinks and social differences between the populations at the two sides of the spectrum are exacerbated. Poverty is a criterion that has an institutionalised definition and relates to a level of resources that is lower than the minimum required to access living standards considered normal in a given society at a given time. Destitution refers to a phenomenon that social statisticians call "extreme poverty"; that is, the lowest level of the distribution of incomes/assets or according to some experts, "deprivation", which encompasses a wide range of economic and social deprivations. What Castells means by extreme exploitation is the set of conditions and work arrangements that allow capital to systematically delay payment/allocation and impose harsher conditions than regulations (standard practices in a given formal labour market at a given time and place) on a given group of workers. This term refers to inequality against migrants, minorities, women, youth, children or other groups of workers who are discriminated against and whose oversight institutions allow for or are permissive of this. One significant trend in this area is the resurgence of child labour worldwide under conditions of extreme exploitation, defencelessness and abuse.⁷⁶

Castells sees another factor in the use of children as their defencelessness, which enables the employer to impose on them the lowest wages and the most inhumane working conditions. Since children have no unique skills and are usually not much cheaper than adults, it seems that the most important reason for their employment is non-

⁷⁶ Ibid.

economic issues. There are various non-financial reasons for this, but apparently the most important one is that children are less aware of their rights, cause less trouble, more readily execute orders, and perform repetitive tasks without complaint, are more reliable, less likely to steal, and miss work less often. In informal sector industries, where workers are informally and randomly hired and therefore a full contingent of workers is needed every day, lower absenteeism is very valuable to employers. The roots of child exploitation must be sought in the mechanisms that lead to poverty and social exclusion worldwide. As children are caught in the grip of poverty and countries, regions and neighbourhoods are deprived of wealth and power and information circuits, the collapse of traditional family structures shatters the last line of defence for children. In some parts of the world, destitution in rural areas as well as shantytowns tears families apart in such a way that they sell their children or send them into the streets to help support their families.⁷⁷

Migration, Marginalisation

It is the collapse of traditional societies around the world that draws children into the jaws of the impoverished outskirts of the defenceless mega-cities of their countries. These include the forced migration and movement of children with their families to other areas and countries, which itself has led to the disappearance of the protective system and the traditional patriarchal system.⁷⁸ One of Castells' analytical concepts is the notion of "social exclusion". Social exclusion is a process, not a status. Therefore, its boundaries change and may differ at different times depending on education, population characteristics, social discrimination, work practices and

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

practical policies, that is, which individuals are included in social inclusion and which are excluded. Moreover, although the lack of regular work as a source of income is ultimately the main mechanism for social exclusion, why and how individuals and groups have difficulty meeting their needs due to structural constraints and lack of opportunity depends on a wide range of different types of poverty.

Social Exclusion

Castells also believes that the process of social exclusion in networked society relates to people and lands, in some conditions causing some countries, regions, cities or neighbourhoods to be completely excluded, pulling all or most of their populations along. Therefore, the institutional developments that have taken place in the political economy of contemporary societies as part of the restructuring of the global economy have led to the emergence of a process of social exclusion based on power relations and exploitation that operates differently at the intermediate and micro levels according to social variables such as gender and age, in such a way that the weakest groups in terms of age and gender suffer double exploitation and exclusion, a manifestation of which is child labour and the various forms of exploitation and abuse of children. Castells' studies show that the incomplete and unequal economic relations of the Third World and developing countries with the global economy through structural adjustment programmes have brought about profound social changes in these societies which in many countries have been accompanied by the weakness of nation states, and in particular the gradual weakening and decline of the welfare state, changes in the livelihood economy, and the expansion of the informal sector of the economy.

These institutional developments in the political economy have contributed to increased poverty, inequality, destitution, individualisation of work, extreme exploitation of the poor, women and children, social exclusion, and the emergence of criminal economies in such societies. The transformation of the relations of low class and stratum families with the political economy and the social stratification system changed the pattern of the family economy and, consequently, the traditional structure and functional pattern of lower class and stratum families. It also provided greater scope for women's and children's work in the informal sector of the economy and their exploitation, leading to the emergence of the "Fourth World" on a global, regional and neighbourhood scale.

Black Holes

According to Castells, networked society consumes itself, because it so corrupts its own children that the meaning of life's continuity between generations is lost, thus creating a future with no human compassion, which Castells refers to as "black holes."

The function of fourth world black holes is to absorb the excluded and at the same time help reproduce social exclusion. Although often interconnected, these black holes are socially and culturally disconnected from mainstream society. Economically they are connected to special markets such as the criminal economy, and administratively to centres like the police and social security that are designed to contain them.⁷⁹

The fourth world emerges from multiple black holes of social exclusion across the globe. It includes vast areas of the planet like sub-Saharan African countries and

⁷⁹ Ibid.

impoverished regions of Latin America and Asia, but this world can be seen in almost any country and city in this geography of social exclusion. It consists of millions of homeless, prisoners, criminals, prostitutes, ruthless, infamous, sick and illiterate people. In some areas they are the majority, in others a minority, and in better conditions a small minority, but their numbers are increasing everywhere as the current informational capitalism and the political breakdown of welfare states intensify social exclusion.

In summary, Castells believes there is a structural link between the logic of unlimited market forces in the global informational networked economy, strengthened by advanced information technologies, and the phenomenon of child labour. Supply and demand factors also include the collapse of states and societies and large-scale uprooting of populations due to war, famine, epidemics, and banditry as sources of extreme exploitation and destruction of children. Illiteracy also leads to unemployment, poverty and ultimately social deprivation.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Ibid.



Figure 1 Theoretical Model Diagram of Black Holes

Psychological Theories Related to Child Labour

Mental Health

There are different perspectives on mental health, such as behaviourism, humanism, social network theory, social psychology, the direct influence model, the compensatory hierarchical model, and more. The humanist perspective believes that mental health means satisfying basic needs and reaching self-actualization. Any factor that holds the individual at the level of lower needs satisfaction and prevents their flourishing will lead to disorders. According to the behaviourist view, maladjusted behaviours like other behaviours are learned through repetition. Mental health also involves learned adapted behaviours. Therefore, the behaviourist view sees defective learning as the main cause of mental disorder, believing that mental health is impacted by failing to learn the necessary adapted behaviours or failing to gain mastery of social situations successfully.

Chauhan (1991) interprets mental health as a state of psychological maturity, which is: achieving maximum effectiveness and satisfaction in individual and social interactions, including positive feelings and feedback about oneself and others.⁸¹

The compensatory hierarchical model states that if individuals lack primary supportive relationships, they seek out lower order relationships to gain support.

⁸¹ Ventis, L. (1995). The relationship Between religious and mental health. *Journal of Social Issues*, 15, 33-44; as quoted from: Amini, Yousef, and Amini, Mohammad. (2011). *Investigating the Effect of Divorce on the Mental Health and Self-Esteem of Male Middle School Students in the City of Boukan*.

Theorists of this view believe that intimate relationships with close individuals have the greatest impact on one's spirit, so they prefer primary intimate groups over other people. These theorists believe that in the absence of primary family relationships, lower order relationships like friendships can serve as compensatory substitutes for family relationships.⁸² Studies influenced by this model show that individuals embedded in the supportive network of family are less depressed and generally have better mental health.⁸³

Additionally, from Adler's perspective, mental health means having specific goals in life, having a solid life philosophy, having desirable and stable family and social relationships, being useful to fellow humans, having courage and decisiveness, having control over emotions and feelings, having the ultimate goal of self-perfection, and accepting shortcomings while striving to solve one's mistakes to the extent possible.⁸⁴

Disruption in the Natural Development Process

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French philosopher and founder of modern educational methods, was the first to separate adolescence from childhood. In his novel *Emile*, he tried to shift the teacher's attention from academic subjects and skills to be learned to the child him/herself who needs to learn these subjects and skills. By

⁸² Cantor, M. H. (1979). Neighbors and Friends: An Overlooked Resource in the Informal Support System. *Research on Aging*, 1(4), 434-463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016402757914002>

⁸³ Thoits, P. (1982). Conceptual, methodological and theoretical problems in studying social support as a buffer against life stress. *Journal of health and Social Behaviours*, 23(2), 145-159.

⁸⁴ Bakhshandeh, Mojtaba, & Nikpour Ghanavati, Leila. (2016). *Not Every Street's Pavement is Made of Gold*. Tehran: Sociologists.

introducing the idea of “child-centeredness”, he sought to reform society’s attitude towards children. In his view, children are neither irrational animals nor adults, only children who should go through the natural development process. Rousseau, considered a pioneer in child psychology, sees childhood as different from adulthood. He believes children should be aware of their differences, weaknesses and inabilities but should not suffer from them. They should learn dependence but not be absolutely obedient. He repeatedly emphasized that children should be treated according to their age, because nature sees the child as a child before maturity. If we disrupt this order, we will have tasteless, perishable premature fruits.

If we compare Rousseau’s ideas to the situation of working children, we come across exactly those premature fruits that entered adulthood before going through the natural growth process. These children, at an age when their main job should be learning, acquiring skills, playing and gaining experience, have to worry about bread like suffering, deprived adults. They have to forfeit their childhood in the workplace or on the streets to earn income.

Shima Sattari, a child and adolescent psychologist and therapist, also referring to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that every person under eighteen is a child, said:

If we want to examine the issue by referring to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we must say that imposing forced labour on children before age eighteen is illogical, because the only duty defined for the age range of zero to eighteen is play and learning, and anything other than that can be harmful, as working deprives the child of the opportunity for cognition,

learning and gaining experience. In fact, it destroys the child's childhood.

Play and recreation are among children's basic needs and greatly impact their physical, mental and cognitive health and development. Play has been defined as a combination of speech, thought and action that creates a sense of satisfaction and delight in children. In other words, play is a spontaneous act by children that in addition to having positive effects on children's dynamism and growth, shapes the learning process. Therefore, providing the opportunity for play for children, both at home and outside, is essential. But the first thing working children are deprived of is the chance to play and gain experience through it, because instead of playing like their peers, they have to work. In addition to disrupting the child's natural growth, this will reduce their cognitive power, and its consequences will not leave the individual until the end of their life. The second opportunity taken away from working children is the right to education, because due to forced labour they cannot attend school and class on a regular schedule like other children their age. Working children also suffer from other deprivations including family welfare, the right to safe shelter, health and hygiene. The combination of these deprivations creates emotions in the child that can negatively impact their interactions with the surrounding community and even themselves. Many criminals have spoken of childhood memories of deprivations and the many pains they endured, and it is likely the desire to obtain what they were deprived of led them towards criminal behaviour. Shima Sattari, child and adolescent therapist, related:

Freud considers the beginning of adulthood to be the time when the individual enters the workforce. This could be at age ten or twenty-eight. But exactly from when they start work, their childhood has ended and

they have entered adulthood. While an individual under eighteen is considered a child, when forced to enter the workforce, it means their childhood has been stolen from them. This theft has consequences that are damaging both for the individual and for society, because they may want to use the compensation mechanism for their lost childhood in adulthood, which can be dangerous and will definitely impact their adulthood experiences and memories.

Child abuse encompasses a wide spectrum of harmful behaviours, categorized in four groups: psychological, verbal, sexual and physical abuse. According to the World Health Organization's definition, child abuse refers to all forms of physical or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity. The effects of some abuses like a child enduring corporal punishment are obvious, but the consequences of much of the abuse inflicted on children are hidden, manifesting in the individual's attitudes towards life, behaviours, interactions and relationships in adulthood. Children are usually abused by family members, school staff, or individuals in the community and surrounding environment. When the child lacks a support network and is unprotected, such abuses also increase. Therefore, working children, due to their insecure presence in the work environment, whether on the streets or in enclosed spaces without shelter and support, also face heightened risks and abuses. In fact, the working child knows that much of these harms are due to their deprivations, and if they had a guardian, these events would not happen to them. A fifty-year-old man who had worked in a car repair shop from age ten and now has two teenage apprentices in his repair shop in Darvazeh Farahzad said about this:

I couldn't study; my mom got sick and laid in the corner of the house, my dad beat us every day. I dropped school. My uncle took me to his friend's repair shop, put me as an apprentice. The garage owner brought his and his friends' cars every day in the winter cold and said I had to wash them; my hands and feet would freeze. One time I said I can't, it's cold, I won't wash. He came after me, severely cursed my mother. My nerves broke, I picked up a hammer and threw it at him, he went and heated a wrench, put it on my hand. Then he and his friends laughingly mocked me. The flesh on my hand had peeled off. That day I wanted to take revenge on the whole world. I came home, told my dad, he said go to hell, you should have listened; I mean, you know, I wished my dad would go after him, make him pay for taking the flesh off my hand like that, but nothing!

A child who is humiliated by the employer, other workers, and citizens in the workplace and endures psychological, physical and sexual harm, finding himself unprotected and alone, may reproduce the violence endured in society and the family as an adult. But if he had a guardian and shelter, his mental health would also be ensured to some extent. Shima Sattari (psychologist) said about this:

As a therapist I can say when someone comes and supports the abused child, in fact stands behind them, 40 to 50 percent of the treatment is done, because this alone saves the child from feeling rejected and unprotected. But unfortunately, many working children lack this family and social support network and are also not supported by responsible supervisory institutions. So, when facing abuse and humiliation, they feel unprotected. Of course, the degree and level of these abuses differs depending on what environment the

children work in. For example, a child who does homework at home with family is at lower risk, but a child working in an enclosed space surrounded by the employer faces greater danger and has less security.

Shima Sattari believes the harm begins when the individual compares themselves to their peers and realizes that while they were condemned to forced labour, others were studying. The suffering the individual endures from deprivation and poverty, rejection and lack of shelter, humiliations, psychological, emotional, verbal, sexual and physical abuse that working children constantly face, leads to feelings of being victimized, anger, vengefulness and lack of self-confidence in them. And since they also lack skill training, throughout adulthood and different life stages they negatively impact their own life, those around them and society under the influence of these negative emotions, because they always feel they have been victims of something they had no role in.

Leisure Time

In simple terms, leisure time can be defined as activities an individual engages in willingly and eagerly after being relieved of occupational, familial and social commitments and responsibilities, as a method of rest, recreation and knowledge expansion, self-actualization, bringing out talents and creativity, and ultimately free participation in society.⁸⁵ The social phenomenon of leisure and how it is spent has a long history, and it seems leisure and how it is

⁸⁵ Zarei, Ali, & Tandanavis, Faridoun. (2003). A Comparison of Leisure Time Activities of Medical Sciences Students with Students of Non-Medical and Open Universities. *Journal of Motor Learning and Sport Sciences*, 1(2), 18-25.

used emerged with the advent of prosperity in society. In general, leisure as one of the main areas of lifestyle studies and one of the domains of individual free choice, especially among adolescents and youth, has enhanced importance. Lifestyle refers to the pattern of social and individual behavioural traits of an individual or group, encompassing activities related to family, relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues, leisure consumption behaviour, and academic, social and religious activities.⁸⁶

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory sees the influence of others in citizens' daily lives as going beyond reinforcing or changing attitudes and behaviours, and potentially leading to the acquisition of values, attitudes and behavioural patterns. One such theory is Albert Bandura's social learning theory. According to this theory, people do not learn most of what they need for life guidance and action purely through direct experience and observation, but indirectly and especially through their environment. Bandura's main claim is that most human behaviour is learned by observing the behaviour of others through modelling.⁸⁷

The social-cognitive theory presented by Albert Bandura is rooted in the same body of research based on which the social learning theory took shape, but focuses more on human thought processes. The core idea of cognitive social theory is that people learn by observing, and rewarding or punishing a behaviour will impact that behaviour and expectations from it in similar situations.

⁸⁶ Veal. (2000). *All We Need to Know about Child Mind*, ABB press.

⁸⁷ Ayozi, Gholam-Hosseini. (2009). Lifestyle, Television, and Consumption. *Quarterly Cultural and Defense Journal of Women and Family*, 5(16), 143-167.

Also, learning is more likely to occur when the individual highly identifies with and has high self-efficacy in relation to the model. Social cognitive theory explains how people learn and are influenced when they observe. It states that individuals are more likely to be influenced by models or message sources they identify with. Therefore, developmental research can identify these models for future use in messages. Social cognitive theory also emphasizes the importance of incentives and disincentives - campaign messages can promote the positive outcomes of following campaign advice or the penalties of disregarding the advocated action or belief.⁸⁸

According to Albert Bandura's theory, social institutions like peers, social groups and mass media have a determining, extensive and profound role in creating and shaping individuals' healthy and unhealthy traits. By emphasizing latent learning and reinforcement through learning, he believes learning through observation turns into performance.⁸⁹

Bandura considers the four main processes of social learning as "attention", "retention" and "recall", "production" and "motivation". The observation of an event directly or indirectly by a person is the starting point of learning. In fact, "given an event that can be observed, the first step in social learning is paying attention to that event. Clearly until we pay attention to an event and are able to perceive important aspects of it, we cannot learn anything from that event." In other words, we pay attention to anything that relates to the institutions of life, our needs, and personal interests. What we have learned

⁸⁸ Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2010). *Theories of Human Communication*. Waveland press.

⁸⁹ Tan, Alex S. (2009). *Theories and Research in Communication* (Translated by Naeem Badiie). Tehran: Hamshahri Publications.

we remember and add to our existing cognitive reserves to recall when needed. If we do not remember the observed action, modelling will not be possible. The production process means the practical application of learnings leading to reward and punishment, and the correct reproduction of trial-and-error results. Ultimately, motivation to continue or discontinue increases or decreases. Motivation, which is important for performing the action, depends on encouragement.

People's socialization by others happens through modelling and learning the acceptable values and norms in society. Others often act as a bridge between personal life and the social world, and are a powerful factor in our socialization. We understand ourselves and our position in society through others and institutions, and for this reason, we inevitably need to pay attention to others' messages and understand their message content. In other words, we all learn how to behave in specific social situations and role expectations in society. Factors like the model and learner can impact the success or failure of social learning. Some steps and actions that are effective in observational learning are:

Attention: To learn, you need to pay attention. Anything that diverts your attention will have a detrimental impact on observational learning. If the model is engaging or there is a novel aspect to the learning situation, you are much more likely to devote your full attention to learning.

Retention: The ability to store information is also part of the learning process. Retention can be affected by numerous factors, but being able to pull out the information at later times and act on it is a vital process in observational learning.

Reproduction: Once you have paid attention to the model and retained the information, the time comes to execute

the observed behaviour. More practice of the learned behaviour leads to skill improvement and enhancement.

Motivation: Finally, for observational learning to be successful you need to be motivated to imitate the modelled behaviour. Reinforcement and punishment play an important role in motivation. While experiencing these motivations directly can be highly effective, observing others receive the same reinforcement or punishment can also impact this process. For example, if you see another student receive a reward for being on time to class, you will also start coming to school a few minutes earlier every day.

Now the question that comes to mind is: What application does learning theory have in studies on working children? Learning is a micro-level mechanism, and children are one source of learning from each other. When some children in neighbourhoods enter the workforce, they become a source of inspiration for other children. Also, children who have entered the workforce serve as a chain of transmission to other working children, because they learn work techniques and skills from each other and other individuals working with them.

Child Abuse

Child abuse, according to different definitions, generally takes four forms: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Physical child abuse refers to any act that causes bodily harm, such as beating, punching, kicking, biting, or burning. Psychological child abuse means emotional or psychological mistreatment, occurring when the individual conveys to the child that they are worthless, defective, and unloved. Emotional mistreatment includes verbal aggression (such as humiliation, yelling, threats, blame, ridicule, or verbal hassling), exposing the child to domestic violence,

inflicting harm on the child through excessive demands, and encouraging or training the child to engage in antisocial activities. Child sexual abuse encompasses a wide range of sexual behaviours, including touching or fondling the child's genitals, making the child touch adult genitals, and more.⁹⁰

Child neglect or indifference is the most common form of child maltreatment, consisting of a lack of provision of adequate care and protection for children. Neglecting a child means falling short in providing the care and necessities appropriate to the child's age, such as shelter, food, clothing, education, supervision and medical care essential for the child's physical, emotional and mental capacity development. Most cases of neglect or indifference happen to infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Neglect has various types, including physical neglect, educational neglect, emotional neglect, and medical neglect. Physical or bodily neglect includes abandonment, eviction from home, inadequate supervision, and inattention to the child's security and wellbeing, being the most common types of neglect.⁹¹

Due to their complex circumstances, working children and street children may face multiple and diverse forms of child abuse. The fundamental assumption of this topic is that the various abuses against children are interrelated, reproducing each other in a network structure. What is noteworthy is that various forms of physical assault and aggression against working children exist in society. This encompasses a wide spectrum of violent physical

⁹⁰ Kamal Abbasi and Aghamohammadian Sherbaf. (2010). Quoted in: Bakhshandeh, Mojtaba, & Nikpour Ghanavati, Leila. (2016). *Not Every Street's Pavement is Made of Gold*. Tehran: Sociologists.

⁹¹ Kaplan and Sadock. (1375/1996). Quoted in: Bakhshandeh, Mojtaba, & Nikpour Ghanavati, Leila. (2016). *Not Every Street's Pavement is Made of Gold*. Tehran: Sociologists.

behaviours, from pushing and hitting to deadly blows with heavy, sharp objects. In addition, street children encounter various groups who may commit such abuses. Parents (both active and inactive at the child's workplace), family members, adult colleagues, employers, work rivals (especially for individuals like peddlers, beggars and street vendors) and other groups and individuals also play a role, including the cultural structure of society and condescending or demeaning attitudes towards these children. Unlike other visible, identifiable groups, this group cannot be examined and identified, and receives less attention, but the wounds resulting from their looks and various abuses, especially sexual ones, permanently damage them. Psychological child abuse encompasses a great variety of abuses, such as verbal, non-verbal, threats, mockery, intimidation, expectations and behaviours inappropriate to the child's age, profanity, humiliation, and more. What impacts the minds of street children is the alteration of the mental, emotional and cognitive space of these individuals in a way that negatively affects their individual and social functioning. More abuse may occur against street children compared to other children.⁹²

Theoretical Research Framework

To scientifically obtain an accurate, coherent analysis of a phenomenon's data, we need a theoretical, conceptual framework to identify the dimensions of the variables and categories related to that phenomenon and how they interrelate, and then describe and analyse the data based on them.

⁹² Bakhshandeh, Mojtaba, & Nikpour Ghanavati, Leila. (2016). *Not Every Street's Pavement is Made of Gold*. Tehran: Sociologists.

The theory of social disorganization has good explanatory power for describing the issue of working children and street children in Iran. Based on this theory, it can be hypothesized that working and street children reflect the living conditions of impoverished, vulnerable marginalized groups who have been unable to adapt to social developments, at least in the past two decades in Iran. In other words, this theory is a model of how deprived, marginalized families adapt and reconcile with the process of wealth, power and status in an unequal social order. Using this theory, the social and economic factors behind child labour in underground workshops can be explained (assessing parents' jobs, education and income; parents' addiction and divorce; violence against children; reasons for working in workshops; age starting work, etc.)

In this study, using symbolic interaction theory, the child's perception of working in workshops and their interests and motives to continue and be present there, as well as the child's understanding of and satisfaction with working in workshops, are considered. In other words, using this theory, the child's tendencies and perceptions of their work in underground workshops are studied and examined. Paying attention to Castells' theory in explaining children's working conditions and employers' reasons for hiring children in workshops is helpful. In other words, assessing conditions of extreme exploitation (irregular pay, harsh conditions imposed on the child, the child's unconditional obedience, etc.) as well as the exclusion process (lack of regular work for income) is made possible using Castells' theory. Migration, marginalization, poverty and income inadequacy can also be studied using this theory. Finally, job choice theory and labour market failure have been used to understand the child's working conditions in workshops. Additionally, social psychology theories like leisure time, child abuse,

and mental health have been used to assess the child's psychological state.

Review of Previous Studies

Regarding child labour, most prominent works have been done by international organizations like UNICEF and International Labour Organization. UNICEF or United Nations Children's Fund is a leading organization for children, active in 191 countries worldwide to promote children's rights and support child-centred development programs. UNICEF collaborates with its partners to remove barriers to poverty, violence, disease and discrimination against children, and advocates for actions that kickstart a good start in children's lives. The Convention on the Rights of the Child guides UNICEF's work. This convention has inspired fundamental changes in laws, policies and programs in many countries to improve children's lives. UNICEF estimates that around 150 million children aged 5 to 14, or about 1 in 6 children in this age group, work. UNICEF helps countries develop and implement comprehensive programs on child labour, covering aspects from legal and policy frameworks to building government capacity, promoting positive social attitude change, and challenging cultural norms that validate child labour. UNICEF has also stated the most important actions needed to eliminate child labour as follows:

- 1) Immediate elimination of hazardous and exploitative child labour;
- 2) Provision of free, compulsory education;
- 3) Expansion of legal protection;
- 4) Collection and monitoring of relevant information;
- 5) Reform of codes of conduct and purchasing policies (including preventing child hiring in workshops and

not purchasing goods made by children from exploitative profiteers).

In addition to global organizations like UNICEF, WHO and ILO which conduct extensive annual research on the child labour situation globally, many researchers have studied the causes and persistence of child labour. The findings of all these studies are noteworthy, given their specific focuses. Some of these studies and their results are reviewed below:

- The study “Child labour in Small Scale Industries in Penang, Malaysia” by Ah Eng finds child labour a product of economic and social conditions in the third world. Accordingly, in a social organization where individuals work to sustain the group’s livelihood and survival, child labour is part of socialization and future labour force needs, also fulfilling their economic necessities. Still, poverty is the main driver of child labour.⁹³
- In his study on “The Daily Life of Child Workers in Southern Countries”, Boyden shows that economic necessity is not the whole story. Many parents believe that early apprenticeship of a profession is the best way to equip children to meet life’s future demands, so they employ their children in various works. Boyden argues that inappropriate reactions to child labour rather than improving solutions offered for its actual social degradation, make things worse. The 1993 dismissal of child workers from Bangladesh’s garment industry and the subsequent dire conditions for children illustrate such reactions. Despite the legal stance in Bangladesh, around one tenth of the 750,000 workers in garment workshops were under 14,

⁹³ Eng, Ah. (2016). *Me and My Childhood*. Tehran: Agah

mostly girls doing relatively light, non-physical work like trimming loose threads and hems and spinning garment sections with knitting wheels. The government threatened workshop managers with international sanctions on goods made with child labour. In response, managers dismissed the children. As subsequent research showed, the dismissed children kept working, none resumed schooling, but now in much riskier informal, street activities (including sexual exploitation). Compared to the minority of children who kept their garment industry jobs, this group had poorer health, nutrition and lower incomes. Some children told the press themselves that light workshop labour along with two to three hours of school and study was the best solution to alleviate their poverty. This led to a new scheme linking child hiring to education and career prospects.⁹⁴

- Bonnet's study "Child labour in Africa" shows the unemployment crisis has led parents to see education as just a pathway to a diploma, not a means to ensure future jobs. Rather, survival in the economic environment depends on working in the informal sector.⁹⁵
- In the book "Children at Work: Health and Safety Risks", Forastieri examines different forms of child labour, assessing hazardous types of child work in agriculture, small industries, domestic work and informal activities.⁹⁶
- In the 2006 book "Child labour in Different Industries", Wall studies child working conditions

⁹⁴ Boyden, J. (1991). *Children of the cities*. London: Zed Book.

⁹⁵ Bonnet, Liz. (1993). *Theorizing Youth*. Karaj: Faragh Publications.

⁹⁶ Forastieri, Valentina. (1997). *Children at Work: Health and Safety Risks*. ILO Child Labour Collection. Geneva: International Labour Office.

in various industries in India, first providing a quantitative overview then describing conditions in industries like glasswork, farming, poultry, handicrafts and more.⁹⁷

- In his 2017 paper “A Review of Child labour in Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Asia and Africa”, O’Driscoll rapidly reviews academic, policy and NGO data on child labour in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) in Asia and Africa. ASM refers to small groups engaged in low-cost, low-tech, labour-intensive, high-energy mining operations, clearly distinct from large, mostly licensed industrial mines. The paper also describes types of child mining labour in countries like Tanzania, Philippines and Indonesia, including pit digging, underground work, carrying and crushing ore, cooking for adults, and selling goods and services to adults, with various associated physical and psychological damages.⁹⁸
- Songa’s 1996 report on Chinese and English children working in Chinese restaurants reveals children are surrounded by familial categories and emotionally-driven intentions forcing them to work to help others.⁹⁹
- Maro’s 1994 report on why children work clarifies the different meanings that work carries for children. She states that in the UK, some working children come from relatively affluent families,

⁹⁷ Wall, S. (2006). *Child Labour in Various Industries*. India: Sarub & Sons.

⁹⁸ O’Driscoll, D. (2017). *Overview of child labour in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector in Asia and Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

⁹⁹ Songa, Jichagsong. (1996). *Child Labor in the World Today*. Tehran: Azad University Press.

concluding that child labour cannot be purely associated with family poverty. Although some Western and Northern American families undoubtedly value their children's income contributions like families in developing countries, Ms. Maro believes child labour motives should be asked from the children themselves, suggesting participation in new youth consumer markets and keeping up with peers may be influencing factors.¹⁰⁰ This issue also emerged differently in the study by James and Jenks, identifying the main reason for children's desire to work as gaining experience and boosting self-confidence: "Although some children saw work as a means of enhancing self-esteem and gaining experience for adult working life in the future, for most children the reward and motivation for working was that they were able to buy luxury items which their parents would not buy for them."¹⁰¹

- As Maro stated, Neon Hayes said in 1994 that poorer families' children may have far fewer work opportunities, traveling to work may be very difficult, hence they may receive fewer opportunities and commissions for local suburban and rural families for babysitting, car washing, newspaper delivery etc.¹⁰²
- In 1996, Kruger established a negative correlation between per capita income and child labour force

¹⁰⁰ Maro, Pejy Badi,. (December 4, 2019). "Upside-down World". *Iran Newspaper*, Social Section.

¹⁰¹ James, Alison; Jenks, Chris; and Prout, Alan. (2004). *Sociology of Childhood (Theorizing Childhood)* (Translated into Persian by Alireza Kermani and Alireza Ebrahimabadi). Tehran: Sales.

¹⁰² Noon, Hayez. (1994). "Anger and the New Economy." *Politica Journal*, 19, 19-24.

participation, rejecting child labour as a factor in moving from low to high income status, believing economic development leads to child labour's non-acceptance. For instance, the highest 10- to 14-year-old labour force participation is in the world's poorest countries, nearly 49% in Burundi and 42% in Rwanda. Also, no prevalence of child labour has been reported in countries with over \$5,000 GDP per capita.¹⁰³

Review of Previous Studies in Iran

In Iran, some researchers, sociologists, and psychologists have studied and examined the issue of child labour from various aspects in books, articles, and theses, including:

- In his 2010 master's thesis in sociology entitled "Child labour and Reproduction of Social Inequality", Nader Talebi explains the issue of child labour from a Marxist perspective, emphasizing that like other social phenomena, child labour is ultimately influenced by the economic structure which acts as a determining factor, but alongside this, the prevailing ideological and political structures are also mentioned as constituents and reproducers of this phenomenon. According to him, the economic structure as the determining factor, and the ideological and political superstructures together reproduce phenomena like child labour in a social system.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Srivastava, J. (2003). Child Labour in South Asia: Are Trade Sanctions the Answer? Research paper. Centre for Contemporary Studies, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi. ISBN 81-87222-82-4.

¹⁰⁴ Talebi, Nader. (2010). Child Labor and the Reproduction of Social Inequality. Tehran: Sociology Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, Allameh Tabatabai University.

- “Exploring Child labour” by Fariborz Raissdana is a study that has examined this phenomenon more from a macro and structural perspective through analysis of statistical data. Similar to many other studies and based on GNP statistics, its findings show that child labour is more prevalent in poor countries compared to wealthy ones, and poverty, injustice and lack of government oversight to defend children’s rights, which are interdependent and linked factors, are the main causes of the emergence of child labour within a country’s socio-economic system. Also, market-oriented policies, extreme structural adjustment, eliminating responsibility, and the state’s social and human stewardship have exacerbated child labour, increasing associated human bodily and psychological disasters and social harms. According to him, child labour has highly exploitative, distressing, pathogenic aspects, disregarding human rights and inhumanity.¹⁰⁵
- In 2006, Seyyed Hassan Hosseini studied the “Situation of Working and Street Children in Iran” across five provincial centres (Tehran, Mashhad, Ahvaz, Shiraz and Rasht). The findings show factors like the inadequacy of socializing institutions like family and school, families’ economic poverty and inability to adapt to the lifestyles of large cities, the harmfulness of urban marginal areas, lack of adequate measures by responsible organizations, and improper patterns of interaction between citizens and street children have collectively led to the phenomenon of street children (since most working children are street wanderers), which continues to pose an intractable

¹⁰⁵ Raeesdana, Fariborz. (1382). Exploration of Child Labor. *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 2(7), 231-248.

problem in many of the country's large cities.¹⁰⁶

- In 2013, Maroeh Vameghi et al. conducted a study entitled “Rapid Assessment of the Situation of Street Children in Tehran (Causes and Risks of Children Working on the Streets)”, examining child labour. The target community and samples were Tehran's street children and experts. Data was collected through literature review, qualitative methods including 16 in-depth expert interviews and 13 focus group discussions with street children, and 286 quantitative questionnaires completed by street children across 28 hangouts (work locations). Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and quantitative data using statistical analysis. The findings show earning income to help the family livelihood is the main cause of children working on streets, but for Afghan children, lack of access to education, adverse family conditions like violence and addiction, and cultural attitudes also play different roles in making various ethnic groups of children take to the streets. Children on the streets and in families face multiple physical, sexual and psychological harms and abuses, especially violence. In conclusion, while families' economic problems play the primary role in children becoming street dwellers, this is not the only cause. Hence, planning for different groups of children must also consider other background causes. It is noteworthy that the researchers finally recommend focusing on children's labour in places other than the streets.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Hosseini, Seyyed Hassan. (2004). “The Situation of Working and Street Children in Iran”. *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 5(19), 155-173.

¹⁰⁷ Vameghi, Maroeh, and Yazdani, Farshid. (2019). Report on the Status of Child Labor in Iran: Social Harms and Inequality (Second Social Status Report of Iran 2009-2017). Vol. 2, pp. 95-150. Tehran: Agah.

- In 2014, Maroeh Vameghi et al. published an article entitled “Combined and Rapid Assessment of the Situation of Street Children and Characteristics of Their Work in Tehran”, again studying the characteristics of child labour in Tehran using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This rapid assessment study was conducted in 2012-2013 using qualitative (focus group discussion, in-depth interview) and quantitative methods to collect data from key informants and street children. In the qualitative phase, key informants and street children were purposefully sampled, and in the quantitative stage, hangout sampling was used to include 289 street children. Qualitative findings were analysed using content analysis and quantitative findings using Chi-square tests. According to the findings, most Tehran street children are engaged in conventional work like peddling or semi-conventional work like scavenging. The highest frequency of children’s work locations is in Tehran municipality districts 2, 12 and 1. Half of the children, 49%, work two shifts a day and one-fifth work all day. The average street children’s income is 20,000 tomans a day, and 79% give all or part of their income to their families. Street children’s income plays an important, fundamental role in meeting the child’s and family’s living needs, posing a serious barrier to stopping their street work. The findings emphasize the need to address the root causes of child labour in relevant strategies to reduce it, prioritizing this over elimination actions like roundups.¹⁰⁸
- In 2011, Zahra Mahdavi Mazinani and Mojtaba

¹⁰⁸ Vameghi, Maroeh; Dezhman, Masoumeh; Rafii, Hassan; Roshanfekar, Payam. (2015). “Rapid Assessment of the Situation of Street Children in Tehran (Causes and Hazards of Child Labour on the Streets).” *Social Studies and Research in Iran*, 4(1), 33-57.

Mazinani published an article entitled “Legal Pathology of Child and Adolescent Labour in Family Businesses” studying the legal challenges concerning adolescent labour in home businesses and workshops with under ten workers. For instance, Articles 188, 191 and 189 make it possible to exempt workers in family workshops and small workshops with under ten workers, and some agricultural and livestock activities are excluded from parts of the Labour Law. These exemptions mean many adolescent and youth workers in the non-governmental sector, comprising most adolescent and youth workers, are deprived of the welfare benefits envisioned in the Labour Law. Therefore, it is suggested that by modifying Article 188, the legislature should guarantee adolescent workers’ rights considering this group’s particular sensitivities, including in family businesses and other contexts like small workshops.¹⁰⁹

- In 2012, Alireza Afshani et al. published an article entitled “Analysis of the Situation of Street and Working Children in Isfahan” studying the general situation of children including lifestyles, activities, experiences, family backgrounds, educational characteristics and behavioural traits like crime. For this purpose, using survey methodology and tools of questionnaire plus interview, a sample of 122 six- to fourteen-year-old children working on Isfahan city streets was studied. The findings indicate that most studied working and street children were male, immigrants, low-income, with addicted parents, who had experienced parental physical abuse, and were mostly engaged in peddling. The findings also show

¹⁰⁹ Mehdevi Mazinan, Zahra; Mazinani, Mojtaba (1390/2011). Legal Pathology of Child and Adolescent Labor in Family Businesses. *Family Research*, 7(2), 125-143.

most street children had engaged in deviant behaviours, experienced sexual assault, been arrested by police, and some had even been jailed. Ultimately, the results demonstrate a significant correlation between parental addiction, child abuse, and imprisonment and the type of children's work.¹¹⁰

- In 2019, Ali Imanzadeh published an article entitled "The Lived Experience of Loneliness in Working Children in Tabriz" conducting a descriptive, explanatory study of working children's experiences of loneliness using a qualitative, phenomenological approach and purposeful sampling, through in-depth interviews with fifteen working children. The findings of children's experiences with loneliness revealed four main themes of "perceived emotions," "types of loneliness," "consequences of loneliness," and "ways to overcome loneliness." Working children face various types of loneliness, especially existential loneliness. They also feel meaninglessness, hopelessness and abandonment in life. Accordingly, policies like improving social interaction, providing education, teaching social skills, and spiritual therapy can help overcome this feeling in working children.¹¹¹
- In 2009, Safoura Davarpanahe and Hossein Raghfar published an article entitled "Child Poverty and the Labour Market in Iran" studying the labour market structure to understand the relationship between type of job, place of residence, head of household characteristics, and child poverty, aiming to provide a

¹¹⁰ Afshani, Alireza; Askari-Nadooshan, Abbas; Heydari, Mohammad. (2012). An Analysis of the Situation of Street and Working Children in Isfahan. *Applied Sociology*, 23(48), 85-102.

¹¹¹ Imanzadeh, Ali, & Alipour, Sareh. (2019). Life Experience of Working Children in Tabriz: Loneliness Sensation. *Social Research and Studies in Iran*, 8(2), 279-304.

clear picture of poverty occurrence considering its correlation with the labour market in Iran. Notable findings include that the vast child poor population, 80.58%, live in households headed by men employed in the formal private sector. 4.35% of child poverty is in female-headed households working in the private sector. Child poverty is 3.5 times higher when the head is employed in the informal versus formal sector. The informal sector share is 3.5 times the formal sector in cities and 4 times in villages. Urban children are poorer than rural ones in both formal and informal sectors.¹¹²

- In 2014, Salahuddin Naderi completed a thesis entitled “People-Oriented Sociology and Testing Castells’ Theory in the Realm of Child labour (Participatory Action Research with Afghan Children at Moshtagh Friendly Children’s Centre)”, studying the situation of Afghan children and using Manuel Castells’ theory to portray their state of unsalvageably falling into what he calls “black holes.” In this, migrant children are always at higher risk than others of falling into these black holes, while the ideal of people-oriented sociology is to help such individuals by making them aware of their circumstances. In this study, activities were conducted using a project-based approach and child-to-child approach to educate, raise awareness and empower children. 23 girls and 33 boys participated at Moshtagh Friendly Children’s Centre during the research process.¹¹³

¹¹² Davarpanah, Safora; Raghfar, Hossein; Nakhaee, Manijeh. (2009). Child Poverty and the Labor Market in Iran. *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 9(35), 139-159.

¹¹³ Naderi, Salahuddin. (2014). People-Centered Sociology and Testing Castells' Theory in the Field of Child Labor (Practical Participatory Research with Afghan Children at the Mosharekat Child-Friendly Center). Sociology Department, Faculty of Literature and Social Sciences, Bahonar

- In 2012, Tavallaei et al. published an article entitled “The Relationship Between Child labour and Human Development in Underdeveloped and Developing Countries”, examining the phenomenon of child labour and the human development index. They argue that countries with a high human development index have lower rates of child labour, and vice versa - higher child labour rates correlate with lower human development indices. The study examined the relationship between child labour and human development across 65 underdeveloped and developing countries. The findings show that the higher the human development index, the lower the child labour rate, and vice versa. They also state based on the results that achieving a high human development index, which directly relates to desirable quality of life, requires reducing and eradicating child labour in societies.¹¹⁴
- In 2011, Payam Roshanfekar and Delaram Ali published an article entitled “Zoning Social Harms Threatening Children in Tehran”, studying the most vulnerable areas for children. Based on this, Tehran municipality districts 17, 18 and 19 have the highest numbers of internal and foreign migrants along with the most prevalent child labour, addiction and violence against children. The article states that NGO focus is mostly on child labour and abuse, with few organizations addressing addiction. It suggests facilitating and supporting the establishment of NGOs and

University of Kerman, cited in the Children's Rights Advocacy Association, 2019, p. 88.

¹¹⁴ Tavallaei, Hossein; Rafiee, Hassan; Biglarian, Akbar. (2009). The Relationship between Child Labor and Human Development in Underdeveloped and Developing Countries. *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 9(35), 301-336.

community-based organizations aimed at local community empowerment, public awareness-raising, and making relevant government institutions responsible for protecting children from addiction.¹¹⁵

- In 2012, Parnfar conducted a study entitled “Appropriate Social Policies for Working and Street Children” examining various preventive, supportive and structural policies. For instance, in preventive policies it is suggested that low-income, at-risk families be identified through institutions like Welfare Organization, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, the Prisons Organization, and schools. Identifying poor neighbourhoods, supporting and empowering families, enhancing the role of schools and the education system, reforming laws, effectively implementing major national policies in society like poverty alleviation, job creation to tackle unemployment, providing adequate social and support services, social insurance, extensive and accurate implementation of universal social programs, education for all, implementing cultural and social development programs in deprived rural areas to reduce migration to large cities, and attention to local economies are other proposed solutions. In supportive policies, it is stated that identifying and evaluating the situation of street children, obtaining accurate statistics and appropriate policymaking and planning for this group are essential steps. Attracting working children to support them, establishing effective communication, and providing suitable services in areas of security, education, individual health and

¹¹⁵ Roshanfekar, Payam, & Ali, Delaram. (2012). Categorization of Social Threats to Children in Tehran (with a Focus on Services Provided by Non-Governmental Organizations). Tehran: Iranian Sociological Association, Second National Conference on Social Harms in Iran.

hygiene, employment and free, accessible nutrition are among points emphasized. Stating that child labour cannot be fully eliminated yet, supportive care methods should be strengthened. It is suggested to establish centres near children's commuting routes that they can access in times of danger. For working children's security and effective communication, police, municipality and welfare staff should receive necessary training to interact properly with them. Parnfar also identifies creating job opportunities and skills training for adolescents as solutions that can provide appropriate conditions for 15–18-year-olds to gain skills and suitable employment. The Technical and Vocational Organization's capacity can be utilized for this. Workshops should also be set up specifically for working street children's skills training and employment. Collaborating with organizations like municipalities, welfare, Ministry of Labour and other relevant bodies can establish such workshops in fields suited to the children's physical and mental conditions and where labour market demand exists. Other suggestions include: education and opportunities for children to study alongside work, involving working children in plans and programs, and following up the child's situation until they reach independence.

- In 2022, Alireza Ghanbari completed a thesis entitled "Sociological Study of Child labour in Qom Province" using a qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews with 20 working children under 15 years old. The findings extracted seven main themes encompassing the causes, experiences and consequences of child labour. The causes include family poverty, unemployment, addiction and divorce, large family size, and lack of family support for education. Experiences include fatigue, loss of leisure and play, loss of educational opportunities, violence

and abuse in the workplace, sense of inferiority to peers and discrimination. Consequences involve school dropout, lagging behind peers, lack of learning and skills development. Suggestions based on the findings include addressing root economic causes of families sending children to work, changing social attitudes that see child labour as normal or even beneficial, enacting deterrent laws against child employment and abuse, activating responsible organizations' oversight, and providing social support to vulnerable families.

- In 2021, Hossein Jafari et al. published an article entitled "Grassroots Children's Perceptions of the Consequences of Migration and Work: A Case Study of Afghan Children in Iran". Using semi-structured interviews with 25 working Afghan children in Tehran, the key findings show the children believe their work and migration have led to lost access to education and play, school dropout, child rights violations, experiences of violence and discrimination, and a range of psycho-social consequences including feeling inferior, isolated and different from local children. The children expressed a strong desire to change their situation and gain access to education and legal protections. The study recommends approaches to fulfil these children's rights should focus on addressing their needs and perceptions, providing bridges to education, and countering discrimination.¹¹⁶

In summary, academic research on child labour in Iran has covered various aspects using diverse quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. While findings corroborate poverty as a primary driver, especially for

¹¹⁶ Parnfar, Shima. (2012). *Appropriate Social Policies for Street Working Children in Tehran*. Tehran: University of Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences.

migrant and street children, studies emphasize the multidimensional socio-economic, cultural and policy factors enabling child labour's persistence. Experts highlight the impacts on children's development, mental health and socialization, and the need for social support, empowerment and rights-based approaches placing affected children at the centre. Suggested strategies encompass economic aid to vulnerable families, expanding educational access, reforming laws and oversight, changing cultural attitudes, skills training and job creation for at-risk youth. Continued research giving voice to working children themselves is called for.

Based on previous studies on child labour in Iran, the majority of research conducted in Iran has focused on child labour and street work. However, there has been a lack of studies specifically investigating the various forms of child labour with a focus on workshops. Therefore, the current research aims to study the different forms of child labour in order to gain a better understanding of the working conditions of children in various occupations.

Research Findings

This section describes the workshops and other places where children work. The findings are based on the research team's participatory field observations.

Shoe, Bag, and Clothing Production

Berlin Street is the name of an old, famous alley in central Tehran located south of Jomhuri Islami Avenue between Lalezar South and Ferdowsi Streets. It is called "Berlin" because the south gate of the German embassy opens onto this alley, so it borrowed its name from the country's capital. For decades, Berlin Street has been known as one

of the main centres for distribution and sale of shoes and bags in Tehran. Although the flashy clothing stores and street peddlers lining the street have always been notable features of the area.

Sepahsalar Garden is the name of one of Tehran's old gardens that belonged to Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar Qazvini, the Prime Minister of Nasser al-Din Shah. Now, nothing remains of it except Sepahsalar Garden Street, known today as Saf Street in Baharestan Square. Sepahsalar Garden Street has also become one of the most important centres of shoe and bag production in Tehran. It can be said that in recent years it has surpassed Berlin Street, which is not far away, in production and distribution of shoes and bags. This is especially so after 2006 when the street became a pedestrian street, doubling the shine of shops selling shoes and bags, and enhancing passersby's enjoyment of walking this old street.

Shanzelizeh [a local transcription of Champs-Élysées] Shopping Centre on Jomhuri Avenue is also a major clothing production hub in Tehran, housing many small and large workshops. Additionally, parts of Oudlajan Street in the Pamenar neighbourhood and Shapour Bazaar in Tehran Grand Bazaar also have numerous shoe and bag production units. Tehran Grand Bazaar is the throbbing heart and economic hub for Tehran residents and those of other cities.

A common dominant feature of all these workshops and production units in the aforementioned areas is the presence of under 18-year-old labour for unskilled jobs like errands and odd jobs. On entering these workshops, the smell of glue, leather, etc. is noticeable. In shoe workshops, the sound of hammers is constantly heard, and in bag and clothing workshops, the sound of sewing machines. It is noteworthy that these trades are family businesses, with many producers hereditarily engaged in the profession. Some bring their children along to work, just as they came

with their own fathers, especially in summer for apprenticeship. This may be one reason for the weak presence of migrant labour in these occupations. The children present at the workshops are mostly those working alongside a family member (father, uncle, cousin, etc.)

In parallel with family-run production units, there are also workshops where owners have prevented their children from entering these occupations for various reasons, including market recession and lack of business prosperity. If any children are employed in such workshops, they are often immigrants, mostly Afghans.

[Photo: Child working in a shoe/bag production unit located in Na'matabad Passage (research photo)]

What distinguishes these workshops and production units from other areas and children's workplaces is the weak presence of migrant labour, except for Oudlajan Bazaar. Based on information from shopkeepers, most of the labour in this area are Afghan immigrants, and besides them, children brought in for work who have migrated from different parts of Iran like Ahvaz, southern Lorestan, Mashhad, Sabzevar, Kerman, Zanzan and elsewhere. They usually work and live in the workshops, which lack basic living facilities. Some of these workers are fellow countrymen of the employer, coming to Tehran for work through an acquaintance.

Afghan immigrants generally work illegally in Iran, so have to accept difficult jobs with low wages, and lacking legal residence, cannot demand insurance from employers.

Afghan workers, many of whom are under 18 children, are employed in various jobs like services, construction, poultry and cattle farms, agricultural farms, and scavenging. This book will refer to some of these occupations.

These children constantly live in fear of deportation from Iran and forced return to Afghanistan. Therefore, they prefer to work in workshops away from the city centre to avoid the eyes of Labour Ministry and Social Security inspectors. For this reason, in some areas like Jahan Square where production workshops are transparently located in the city centre with clear information, either very few children work or they work completely covertly.¹¹⁷ They mostly live and work on farms, unfinished buildings, cattle sheds or small rooms without living amenities. They cannot afford proper, furnished housing rents, since they work in Iran for low wages. Therefore, most live at their workplaces.¹¹⁸

Like any other commodity, the shoe and bag market has its own peak seasons, when the number of workers in these production units increases. Also, when the market is sluggish, the number of workers decreases. Therefore, it can be said the number of workers in this trade depends on market prosperity.

In production requiring more skills, experience and expertise, like luxury clothing and some specialized shoe manufacturing, there are no child workers.

Although during the field observations for this research, a large part of this workforce was not working due to the corona outbreak and workshop closures, this does not mean these workers will never return to their workplaces.

The raw materials for most shoe and bag production workshops are imported from China, and some workshops employ migrant labour like Afghans, but as stated, most of the labour in these workshops are children and migrants

¹¹⁷ Ashna, Farokhondeh. (May 23, 2019). *Kar-o Kargar Newspaper: Work and Worker, Analysis of the Workers' Situation in the Past Year.*

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

who have come to Tehran in chains, through family or groups, from different parts of Iran like Ahvaz, southern Lorestan, Mashhad, Sabzevar, Kerman, Zanzan and elsewhere, working in workshops. They usually spend nights in the small workshop space, and during breaks sewing tables are lined up together to serve as beds; this was commonly observed in Kashani, Amin and Sajjad Passages. The type of work done by children in these workshops varies by their acquired skills, but most are engaged in assembly, moulding, gluing and sewing buttons. According to the children themselves, their work hours are long, over 15-16 hours a day, commonly working until 3 or 4 AM then sleeping until 11 AM before waking up to resume work.

The nature of this work constantly exposes them to chemicals while often working without safety measures like gloves, putting them at risk, especially as glues are flammable and even a small accident could endanger workers' safety and health. Also, in Oudlajan, Tehran, behind the main Oudlajan Bazaar, there are narrow alleys housing shoe and bag production workshops. The daily wage workers of these workshops also sleep at their workplace, in conditions similar to other production units in District 12 of Tehran Municipality.



Picture 1 Clothing and curtain production at Tehran Grand Bazaar
(Original photo by research team)

Agricultural Occupations

In the areas around Tehran and Rey city, there are many villages hosting large Afghan immigrant populations. Based on residents' statements, the population of some villages like Qamsar is up to 95 percent Afghan. Many of these villages host recently arrived Afghans without the means for city life and expenses. Baqershahr is a neighbourhood near Behesht-e Zahra that is no exception, hosting many better-off Afghans. The southern Tehran villages have different conditions, but a common feature of all is the Afghan population. Another such village is called Golhesar.

Golhesar is a village in Kahrizak District located 5 km from Rey city. Until 1991, this area consisted of two villages called Ghochhesar and Salambar, but in November 1991, they were merged by government decree into present-day Golhesar. Over the past decades, the area has seen tremendous population growth and experienced profound social and economic transformations.

This area has vast, numerous farms that used to grow wheat and barley but have now turned into expansive vegetable and produce farms, becoming one of the largest supply centres for produce to Tehran and surrounding cities. In other words, the multitude and vastness of produce farms is such that most residents' livelihoods revolve around vegetables and produce. Some work in vegetable planting and harvesting, and some in vegetable processing and packaging workshops and factories. Moreover, the farm expansiveness has increased the labour need up to 12-fold. This is one of the most important reasons the area is chosen for settlement by immigrant nationals. Over 40 percent of the inhabitants are Afghan immigrants, with some Pakistani immigrants also residing here. Most immigrants lack legal residence permits in Iran. The majority of nationals living here work on farms.

In addition to produce farms, the area also hosts oil industry establishments and refinery activities. Due to weak environmental regulations, some polluting and even unauthorized workshops like construction operate easily in the area. What has turned the area into a relatively safe haven for illegal immigrants and unauthorized activities and jobs is the possibility to evade regulations and law. Located 5 km from Tehran, Golhesar grapples with poverty, water scarcity and lack of welfare and health facilities, and its residents cannot make demands due to illegal residence. The indigenous inhabitants, who host many immigrants, complain that the village faces numerous problems and foreign nationals have created

issues with shantytown construction, but the reality is that the residential fabric is highly dilapidated and lacks any basic standards for safe habitation. The immigrants comprising the bulk of farm labour often work on the lands in chains and groups of relatives, as observed, with most farm workers of one land being family. This has led to children of these families also working long hours on the farms alongside adults; boys work on the lands, sorting vegetables, wrapping them with string and rope, washing, loading vans, while girls work in workshops peeling, processing and packaging vegetables. The wages of children working on these farms are very meagre compared to the long, difficult working hours and start from around 500,000 tomans, with some possibly receiving higher amounts based on acquired skills and rank. As stated, Golhesar lacks necessary infrastructure and is built far from communities, and its residents cannot make demands due to migration and illegal residence. All these factors have caused the area to face double deprivation.

[Photo: Agricultural farms around Tehran and children working on them (research photo)]

Tiran Transformator Intersection

Tiran Transformator Intersection is an area in south Tehran before the old Qom Road, accessible from Azadegan, Shahid Rajaei and Imam Ali Highways, part of Rey city and close to Behesht-e Zahra. It is called such because it is located on Iran Street and houses Iran Transformator Company, manufacturer and exporter of transformers, established in 1966. Besides this company, other large companies' warehouses are also located here with huge warehouses constructed in the area. However, what is most noticeable here are the vast vegetable farms stretching from Azadegan and Imam Ali Highways to Tehran Behesht-e Zahra.

A different lifestyle is visible at Tiran Transformator Intersection rarely found in today's urban living. There are vast agricultural lands situated next to large cattle, poultry and livestock breeding sheds. Various vegetables are planted and harvested on these farms, with most inhabitants being Pakistani immigrants who have illegally entered Iran, living in shacks built from waste in farm centres alongside their large families.

These people's income source is the vegetable and fruit farms, usually working on the lands as families, with children forming a huge part of the farm workforce, working over twelve hours daily from 4 AM to 4 PM. They start work early morning by sorting vegetables, cutting their ends, wrapping string and rope around them to be ready for loading on vans and trucks in the early morning hours. The vans usually load the prepared vegetables from these farms in two rounds, taking them to fruit and vegetable markets. After loading the vegetables, the farm children start peeling and chopping vegetables.

Based on Boris' interactive acculturation model, the host community members may implement five acculturation approaches towards immigrants: integration, separation, assimilation, segregation and individualism. Integration means the immigrant adheres to their original culture while also relating to and adhering to the host culture. Integration involves real biculturalism where loyalty to both cultures creates a kind of social cohesion. Therefore, according to this model, it can be said the Pakistani immigrants living here take this approach, since they have maintained their clothes, jewellery, language and also live and work on farms alongside Iranian hosts, being accepted.

These farm owners are mostly Iranian and have employed Pakistani immigrants without residence permits, paying them very low wages of 1-2 million tomans due to their lack of legal status, with their children who work on farms alongside families also receiving negligible wages.

Pakistanis undertake these jobs out of compulsion since lacking legal status, they cannot find other jobs, and even if they could, cannot afford housing costs, so working and living on these farms is more affordable and suitable for them.

Based on the concept of urban ecology - the study of population distribution and relationships between population and services, industries and open space in the urban environment – it can be inferred that in terms of living amenities, the area lacks any of the necessary infrastructure (even rural or township amenities). Farm residents often lack drinking water, using well water, heating water in kettles over fire for hot water needed for bathing and other uses. Most shacks either lack electricity or have illegally wired power from streets. Given the area conditions, these families' children are also deprived of health, medical and especially education services due to the distance from the city. Most families have high numbers of children. According to themselves, if they are not caught crossing the border during their stay in Iran, they see this period as an opportunity to earn and save money to pay smugglers to take them from Iran to Turkey and Europe. Therefore, some see Iran as a crossing point to facilitate their migration to the destination country. When seasonal jobs slow down, many families send their children to beg at intersections, and if conditions become unbearable and difficult, they return to Pakistan.

[Photo: Tiran Transformator Intersection and agricultural farms
(research photo)]

Flower-Related Occupations

Flower selling and related occupations have attracted many children as they do not require much expertise. These children sometimes sell flowers to people on city streets and passages, and sometimes in places like

Behesht-e Zahra and the highways leading to it. Some also carry customers' purchases and shopkeepers' goods on handcarts in flower markets. This section introduces some of these places and examines the conditions of child flower sellers there.

Behesht-e Zahra

In terms of area, Behesht-e Zahra is the second largest Muslim cemetery after al-Baqi, located in south Tehran, with Azadegan Highway leading to it. In addition to sections where ordinary people are buried, the cemetery has some special sections, for example Section 33 belonging to pre-Revolution political activists. Some sections hold the graves of executed social or political prisoners, and Section 10, known as the Martyrs' Garden, is the burial place of Iran-Iraq war martyrs. The mausoleum of the assassinated 7th of Tir president is located in Section 24, and the mausoleum of the Islamic Republic's founder, Ayatollah Khomeini, is in western Behesht-e Zahra. The artists and celebrities section also holds the graves of famous artists and figures.

There are rumors about grave prices in Behesht-e Zahra, fueled by unofficial advertisements on sites like Divar offering graves for tens of millions of tomans in certain special sections. However, Behesht-e Zahra officials firmly announced in 2019 that the highest grave price does not exceed 16 million tomans, pertaining to Behesht-e Zahra Phase One sections. According to them, in Phase Two each grave is priced at 9 million tomans, and in Phase Three 3 million, with free graves provided to citizens in day sections.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Borna News Agency, Interview with Saeed Khal, CEO of Behesht-e Zahra Organization, May 7, 2019.

As Behesht-e Zahra is currently Tehran's only official cemetery for its huge population, large numbers of mourners from all over Tehran converge there. While some visit on normal weekdays, most people choose weekends for visiting the deceased, due to Islamic beliefs. It is customary to take flowers and rosewater as gifts for the dear departed when visiting their grave, and laying flowers and sprinkling rosewater on graves is an ancient tradition among Iranians and Muslims. Hence, flower selling has now become a major trade in the vast Behesht-e Zahra cemetery and other cemeteries, with hints of child exploitation in its hidden layers.

The end section of Azadegan Highway, as the most important route to Behesht-e Zahra from different parts of Tehran, is filled with flower sellers on weekends, standing along the highway waiting for customers, most of them children. As soon as a car stops, large groups of child flower sellers rush to sell their flowers. This is the first sight of child flower sellers near Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra.

These vendors set up stalls in spots called hangouts belonging to longtime figures, mostly Iranians. The veterans either set up their own flower stalls at the hangouts or rent out the hangout. If they set up their own stalls, they hire children to sell flowers for them, and if they rent out the hangout, the tenant also uses children to sell the flowers. The children may be their own or migrant child labourers paid daily wages. The daily wage for child flower sellers, working from early morning to 7-8 PM, is 50,000 to 70,000 tomans, also depending on sales, with employers deducting from the children's wages at their discretion in case of low sales. Another work model is the hangout owner entrusting the entire stall to a child, giving them 25% of profit at the end of the day.

Notable field findings are that some older children rent hangouts and hire younger child labourers at daily wages,

gaining profit from flower sales. In other words, the child hiring continues in a chain. Another case is children themselves renting hangouts and independently selling by procuring flowers from the flower market.

Some points are noteworthy about flower seller children's conditions at cemeteries: Most are Afghan immigrant children living in areas like Kahrizak and Karimabad. While Iranian children are also among them, mostly from Baqershahr, the difference between Iranian and immigrant child sellers is that Iranian children are relatively protected by family support, while immigrant children lacking legal status are much more exploited, especially those without capital to rent a hangout and stall who have to work as daily wage earners. Violence and mistreatment of flower seller children is common, especially when they have low sales or play instead of working diligently. These children face many environmental hazards including traffic noise pollution, traffic accidents (from standing along highways and running after cars), extreme summer heat and winter cold with no shade or shelter at work. However, children working at permanent hangouts are slightly better off, enjoying shade and shelter and more security. Permanent hangouts differ in being open all week, while others only operate on weekends and holidays. As stalls are laid out a few steps from each other, children often fight over sales, beating each other up. These disputes also happen between individuals claiming hangout ownership. According to child and adult flower seller accounts, hangout owners pay municipal agents weekly sums to continue operating, and if one delays or refuses payment, agents specifically confiscate their stall and flowers. However, if owners themselves have disputes, they are usually resolved through the agents' mediation. The systematic child exploitation in cemetery flower sales largely stems from taking advantage of people's emotions,

with most cemetery-goers preferring to buy from very young children. Some buyers have the notion that making a young child happy by buying from them gladdens their departed loved one's spirit. People's inclination to buy from children is the foremost reason for employing child flower sellers at cemeteries. Many individuals also bring votive offerings when visiting a grave, a large part of which goes to the child sellers. Hence, most children's stalls contain an array of packaged fruit juices and edibles brought for them. Sometimes children sell their unconsumable edibles to shopkeepers at low prices. Some people also give them cash gifts which hangout owners often take from the children.

The common trait of cemetery flower seller children, whether immigrants or Iranians, is that they provide for and subsidize their own impoverished families, usually retaining little of their daily earnings and output. Immigrant children mostly live in Kahrizak and Karimabad, and Iranian children in Baqershahr, working 7 AM to 7 PM. Some children only work weekends while others are at hangouts and green spaces all week without permanent spots.

[Photo: Child flower seller on the way to Behesht-e Zahra,
Persian Gulf Highway (research photo)]

Mahallati Flower Market

The largest flower market in Tehran is known as the "Mahallati Flower Market" due to its location on Mahallati Highway in Zamzam neighbourhood of District 14 of Tehran Municipality. This market was built on a 10,000 square meter area in 1996. There are nearly 600 stalls in this market and it is said that about two million flower stems are sent to different parts of Tehran daily for wholesale and retail sale. The Mahallati Flower Market opens around 4 am and continues until noon, although on

weekends and holidays the stalls remain open for a few hours in the afternoon as well.

Despite its name and function, the Mahallati Flower Market has neither an elegant nor modern appearance, nor is it an organised commercial market as one would expect; the ground under the feet of visitors is often muddy, the sheds lack proper space, and the movement of handcarts has exacerbated the crowded environment. However, the fragrance of the flowers creates a pleasant atmosphere, especially since flower enthusiasts can purchase anything they need here at more affordable prices, from apartment plants and natural flowers to pots, earthenware, shrubs and gardening tools and equipment.

The visitors to the Mahallati Flower Market are the public and flower sellers. Several hundred workers are employed in the flower market to transport goods and pull handcarts. Some of these workers are underage children, who, despite their small statures, carry heavy handcarts. Of course, those under 18 have not been allowed to do this kind of work for some time now, unless their physique and body are suitable for the job.

There are about 180 registered carts and a number of unregistered ones that work exclusively for warehouses and shops in this market. The child workers visit various stalls with customers using carts and accompany the flower buyers outside the flower market. This process takes between half an hour to one hour and the children are paid 10,000 tomans.

Most of the child workers in the Mahallati market are originally from Maymana in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. According to themselves, they have all come to Iran with one or two elder family members like uncles, cousins, brothers, etc. In other words, they are all considered related. Therefore, it seems chain migration is more prevalent in this area. For example, in the Grand Bazaar

there were many migrants from different cities of Afghanistan like Kandahar, Herat and other places, but in the flower market they were all connected like a chain and were considered compatriots and relatives.

What drew attention to child labour in the Mahallati Flower Market was the fact that almost all these children had procured work clothes or uniforms with the market council logo, which can be seen as a kind of formalisation of child labour. For these clothes or jackets, which are usually too big for their small frames, they initially pay 400,000 toman and then 300,000 toman monthly in order to be allowed to work in the flower market and get number plates on their carts. During Nowruz, if someone wants to get their first number plate, this amount goes up to 800,000 toman. The cart belongs to the children themselves, so to speak, and they are responsible for buying and selling it. Since they work long hours, these children usually wake up around 2 or 2:30 am to be at work by 4 am. They complain about their working hours and are often sleep deprived, making their health vulnerable. They work all seven days of the week and are busier at weekends. They work in the flower market from 4 am to noon and after closing, the cleaning starts behind closed doors. Apparently before, the number of children working there was higher but due to the spread of corona and inspections by the municipality, officials removed children with very small statures from cart pulling and made them apprentices in shops, which has made conditions more difficult for children. The children were very dissatisfied with this and one of them expressed his discontent as follows:

The income of cart pullers is higher and their work is easier; we have to carry stuff, change the soil of pots, water the flowers, bring water, but with cart pulling we could work more easily and earn between 80,000 to 120,000 toman daily.

The children earn lower wages in this part and meanwhile have to work in a more enclosed space with more rules which causes them harassment and dissatisfaction. Although the Mahallati Flower Market is a busy market, this bustle does not make a difference in the children's income because it is usually the wholesale sellers who use carts.

Another point is that some Afghan families who had worked in the flower market for years have themselves rented a booth and become shop owners, bringing other Afghan children or their own children to work for them. This shows that more established migrants have entered the cycle of larger and more organised economic institutions, which is less noticeable in other professions.

It should also be noted that almost all the workers who work there live in a garage called "Seyed Garage" which is about fifteen minutes away from the flower market. Part of that garage is used for car repairs and mechanics and the whole place is run by an individual who has rented out rooms to these workers. The residents said they pay between 100,000 to 200,000 tomans per month depending on how many people share a room. All the rooms are small and dirty, located next to the garage workshops. Usually when the children finish work earlier in the afternoon, they cannot rest or sleep in the rooms due to the high noise. A large population lives there, estimated between 600 to 800 people according to the residents. This mixed population includes adult men and children living together in these rooms. The current situation raises the question and concern whether the population density in such an environment puts children at risk of sexual abuse.

Another group of migrants in the flower market had rented rooms in the same area themselves and said it was better than Seyed Garage. They usually paid higher rents, around 400,000 tomans for a room and 300,000 tomans

for a cart, saying they could save between 700,000 to 1 million tomans which they would send to their hometowns of Mazar-e-Sharif and Maymana through exchange shops.

Another notable point about the Mahallati Flower Market is that the stall owners and workers, including children, have milder manners and behaviour. There is a kind of kindness and tranquility in the shop owners' interaction with child apprentices, while in other environments like workshops and waste sites, employers behave more harshly toward children. Perhaps the fragrant, gentle environment of flowers and plants has an influence, while in other workplaces like manufacturing and waste, employers behave more harshly toward children.

Imam Reza Flower Market

In the southeast of Tehran, after Mashhadiyeh township on Khavaran Road, lies one of the largest flower and plant markets in Iran called the "Imam Reza Flower Market", also known as "Khavaran Flower Market", named after its location on Imam Reza Highway. This market opens at 3:30 am and continues until 11 am. The carts in Imam Reza flower market, like those in Mahallati, are all registered and organised, operating in exchange for monthly fees.

The Imam Reza Flower Market is neither elegant nor modern. The stalls are set up in the simplest possible way with temporary materials, but due to the freshness of the products and reasonable prices, it is a destination for many wholesale flower buyers in Tehran. A few things distinguish the Imam Reza Flower Market from the Mahallati Flower Market:

First, due to its distance from the city, fewer people come for minor personal shopping. The second distinction is the

lower number of working children; apparently before, there were more working children but due to municipality inspections and crackdowns, children have been removed from the cart pulling system and absorbed into apprenticeships in shops like in Mahallati market, which has made conditions more difficult for children.

A noticeable point about the Imam Reza Flower Market is that because of its distance from the city, most of the workers spend the night right there in the market in shacks they have built themselves. These shacks lack any amenities of city life. Besides, the dense environment poses risks, especially for children. Still, in conversations with the research team, workers expressed satisfaction that they were allowed to rest there at night, saying that since their workplace is far from the city and they have to be at work by 3 am, staying there is the best and most affordable option. Most workers stated in interviews that sometimes days would pass without them leaving the market and seeing the urban environment.

One thing that was noteworthy about both the Khavaran and Mahallati flower markets was that both stall owners and workers including children had milder behaviour and manners. There was a kind of kindness and tranquility in shop owners' interaction with child apprentices, while in other environments like workshops and waste sites, employers behaved more harshly toward children. Perhaps the fragrant, gentle environment of flowers and plants has an influence.

Imam Reza Flower Market is visited by many children who come early in the morning to buy flowers in bulk and then sell them on street corners and intersections. This group works independently and separately from the organised child workers. For example, children who sell flowers in Behesht-e Zahra come early on weekends to buy flowers. Therefore, a large percentage of customers and buyers in the Imam Reza flower market are street flower-

selling children.

Apart from the street corner flower sellers and children working in the flower market, another group of children are also involved in the flower trade but remain unseen: children working on flower farms and gardens, usually outside Tehran on flower fields and farms. This is something most stall owners in the flower market acknowledged, saying that when they go to flower gardens to procure flowers, they see many children working there with their families. These children are said to be mostly Afghan immigrants whose fathers rent or sharecrop the land, and in order to reduce labour costs they work as a family. Others work as labourers with their families.

Another point is that working in the flower and plant trade, like working on vegetable farms, is more of a family affair.



Picture 2 Image of a child labourer in Imam Reza flower market (from the study)

Brick kilns in Shamsabad

Shamsabad is an area located between Eslamshahr and

Tehran-Saveh and Azadegan highways, near the villages of Goldeste, Firuz Bahram and Golshahr. It is known for its ancient brick kilns and is recognized as one of the most vulnerable areas of Eslamshahr. There are 28 brick kilns built at set distances from each other that make up the Shamsabad area. Most of them have now changed function or closed down, and the number of active kilns does not exceed 10. Between 10 to 15 households live in some of the Shamsabad brick kilns, most of which are crowded, with each family living in 15 to 30 square meter huts made of substandard materials that lack any of the features of a safe habitat and are not resistant to natural disasters like floods and earthquakes.

These huts belong to the kiln owner. The locals call the kiln owners “landlord”, who rents one of these huts to each family working at the kilns and receives rent. Usually 10-15 households living in a kiln share only one bathroom and even one toilet. They lack access to safe drinking water and either use the extremely unsanitary well water or the landlord brings water for them in tanks.

Around 70 percent, maybe more, of the residents of Shamsabad kilns are undocumented Afghan immigrants who lack even basic healthcare and welfare facilities.

Most families are crowded, with 3 to 6 young children who mostly work in the kilns in summer. Some of these children, due to lack of valid identification documents, have no access to education and are deprived of schooling. What is undeniably evident in the Shamsabad brick kilns is extreme cultural and financial poverty. Most families start work early morning until around 5 pm (although it was stated that fathers start at 4 am and children at 7 am). Their wages depend on the number of bricks they make. Children are also engaged in activities like brickmaking and stacking bricks according to their abilities, receiving very meagre wages for their work.

The media attention to the area and the constant presence of charities and philanthropic groups has led some individuals to position themselves as intermediaries between aid groups and beneficiaries. Like tour guides, they take visitors around the area, provide explanations, and then receive donations which they claim to distribute among the real needy, but according to local residents, these individuals receive the aid items and only distribute a small portion to the needy while selling the rest on the open market. The Afghan children of Shamsabad kilns, most of whom are from Herat, either go to nearby villages like Goldeste for education or are deprived of schooling due to lack of legal status. The area also lacks healthcare and medical facilities. The situation is even worse in the abandoned kilns; these kilns are rented out with minimal amenities to some migrants who are either single or extremely poor, infested with insects and venomous creatures like scorpions and spiders. Most who rent abandoned kilns are waste pickers who also use them for sorting waste and spending nights.

A notable point about the Shamsabad kilns is that this area has been famous since before the revolution for visits by guerrillas who went there to understand and feel the suffering of the working class, and is therefore well known. As a result, charity groups may visit the area weekly and bring aid items for the residents. But this constant presence of charities has led to an unhealthy relationship on the part of the target community. In some of these shacks, amidst extreme poverty and vulnerability, expensive LCD televisions can be seen that are inconsistent with life in that area. On the other hand, the influx of charities has eroded the spirit of cooperation and solidarity that has always existed among the working class, causing local residents to compete for more aid. Some of the roots of this issue can also be sought in the problems present in the area, like addiction. While

charities feel good about aiding residents of this area, the way aid is provided here can foster corruption.



Picture 3 View of brick kilns in Shamsabad (from study)

Child Labourers in Farahzad

In the northwest of Tehran, on the southern slopes of the Alborz Mountains above Pounak and Saadatabad neighbourhoods in Districts 2 and 5 of Tehran Municipality, lies a pleasant and verdant valley long known as Farahzad Valley. Farahzad Valley stretches west to Pounak and Kan, east to Golpad Street and the old Imamzadeh Davood Road, and southeast to Shahrak-e Gharb. This valley has diverse, lush, pleasant nature, starting from the mountains and penetrating 10 kilometres into the city (Yadegar-e Imam Highway). There are various opinions about how Farahzad neighbourhood was named. Some attribute it to Farah

Pahlavi, saying it was named Farahzad after her. Some say “Farahzad is the family name of a family that lived there from long ago.” But Abbas Eghbal Ashtiani wrote this in his article “Geography of Cities and Regions” in Yadgar Magazine about Farahzad: “Farahzad is located northwest of Tehran, between Tajrish and Kan... The author says: “Farah” (pronounced with a short first ‘a’ and long second ‘a’) means glory and prestige, and “zad” means provision, so together they mean “provision of glory.”¹²⁰

Although the traditional rural fabric of this area has remained relatively untouched, Farahzad is no longer known as a pleasant rural area in the Alborz foothills, but rather as a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Tehran with increasingly evident social problems. However, the dual existence in this area precludes any definitive judgement about the nature of this region. Without doubt, Farahzad can be considered Tehran’s most unique neighbourhood in terms of the coexistence of two completely different classes; the wealthy driving million-dollar cars yet also vulnerable groups grappling with extreme poverty and addiction who even die on street corners. On one hand, Farahzad Valley is a pleasant recreational area for affluent Tehranis, with its green gardens and dense mulberry groves, yet on the other hand, it is considered a vulnerable area due to immigrant residents often dealing with poverty and addiction.

It can be said that Farahzad is one of the neighbourhoods that has accommodated a significant portion of Iranian and Afghan immigrants and consequently, child labourers. Three groups live in this neighbourhood: the first are Farahzad natives, most of whom live in villas. Some own gardens where they have employed workers.

120

<https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AF>

The second group are Iranian immigrants from various parts of the country who migrated there decades ago, including Kurdish, Turkish and Lur ethnic groups. Finally, the third group are Afghans who have migrated there. One reason poor migrants and groups are attracted to this neighbourhood is that parts of it are informal settlements. Notably, the poorest ethnic groups live in the worst, lowest quality parts of the neighbourhood. A significant portion, if not all, of the child labourers in Farahzad are from immigrant families, especially Afghans. Another point is that the pattern of single households settling in Farahzad is very common, and many working children live in these households. They rent a room in groups of 4-5, and sometimes more than one household lives in a house.

Working children in this neighbourhood are engaged in three major categories: a considerable number work in street jobs in Tehran's northern areas, especially District 2, doing squeegeeing, peddling, windshield wiping, etc. Some enter street jobs with their families. Another group work in construction jobs. It can be said a significant portion of the workforce in the construction sector is supplied by Farahzad residents and children. Finally, many work in mechanics and auto body shops. There are numerous mechanics with various specializations active around Farahzad neighbourhood. A huge number of the area's working children are employed in these workshops as apprentices, working long, difficult hours without adherence to labour regulations, benefits or insurance. Most initially start working without any pay and then receive variable wages according to the skills they acquire.

Another group of children from this area get absorbed into seasonal jobs, sometimes accompanying a family member or sometimes alone or with a crew leader as seasonal labourers: fruit picking, tree pruning, garden cleaning, etc. Yet another group is assigned to daily jobs and receive

daily wages, working as industrial or construction labourers. Every morning they wait with a family member or alone at intersections in Shahrak-e Gharb, Saadatabad or on Dodman Blvd, hoping to be picked up for construction work. In addition to the above, various other common forms of child labour exist in Farahzad, including shop keeping and errand running at local groceries. Field observations show the manpower of groceries and food stores in west Tehran is supplied by Farahzad neighbourhood. These children also work from the early morning until late. Another group, although working from home, work very long hours: children involved in vegetable selling. This group starts collecting, cleaning and sorting vegetables early morning and sells until the end of the day. Girls are engaged in various jobs, from peddling at intersections to sewing and vegetable chopping at home, as well as seasonal pea and bean shelling which causes numerous skin and health issues. Overall, large-scale vegetable chopping takes place in Farahzad, with many small and large workshops, some family-run, employing many girls.

Since Farahzad is a recreational area, a considerable number of restaurants have opened but their owners refrain from employing local residents and children.

Another notable feature of Farahzad is the high number of young children visible playing inside the alleys, as there are few recreational spaces and sports facilities. These children play in alleys and sometimes in demolished buildings. There is noticeable contrast between the ethnic groups and children; for example, Iranian children rarely allow Afghan kids to join their games. Afghan children are often occupied with spinning tops, marbles and football. Due to the high number of working children, several NGOs like Rooyesh Nehal Institute, Mehr o Mah, Khane Doost, Khane Elm, Golnar Charity, and state organisations like Social Services Outposts and the

Neighbourhood Development Office provide services to children and working kids, which will be discussed in the NGOs section.



Picture 4 Images of Farahzad neighbourhood and children (from Tehran Renovation Organization (2018), Farahzad Neighbourhood book)

What is true about the dominant child population among immigrants in Farahzad, especially Afghan immigrants, is that families' attitudes and prevailing culture do not really recognise a "childhood age". For this reason, child labour

is an accepted practice based on a traditional approach that has always existed among them. In many interviews, fathers in their 40s who had retired were discussed, whose under 18 year old children had taken over the responsibility of providing for the family, because the father himself had started working at say, age 10. Among children who have no choice but to undertake difficult work to provide for the family, those whose parents have substance abuse issues or illness face double pressure, as they have to provide for parental treatment or addiction costs too.

Working children in Kan

Kan and Solghan are the names of two villages in west Tehran which were separated by the raging Kan River, now dammed. This area is over 2,000 years old and was previously part of Rey County. The locals of Kan, called “Kani”, spoke the “Tati” language. Kan-Solghan, currently part of District 5 of Tehran Municipality, is located in the Alborz foothills surrounded by many mountains. To the east it stretches to Tohid Sq. and Setarekhan and Ariashahr, west to Garm-Dareh and Vardavard and Ghal’eh Hasan Khan, north to Shemiran and Farahzad and Imamzadeh Davood, and south to Firuzbahram River and Mehrabad and Tehransar and Azadegan Highway.

Kan’s local fabric used to comprise clay, mud and wood constructions, remnants of which can still be seen in some of the winding alleys, but most homes have gradually attained an urban fabric similar to Tehran. Construction of Hemmat, Hakim and Abshenasan highways and Tehran-North freeway has greatly transformed Kan from a village into an urban area, damaging many old gardens and houses. For example, Kan’s mulberry groves were destroyed by rampant construction and being located on the freeway route.

Regarding Kan's lands and properties, those with title deeds are very few, most being informal and endowment deeds. Kan is similar to Farahzad in many ways, one being that it is a recreational area for some Tehran residents. Its mulberry and apricot gardens still supply most of the capital's mulberries and apricots, plus fruit orchards remain verdant, used recreationally by owners and sometimes rented out for special events. The valleys also fill up with tourists on weekends, smoking hookah and grilling kebabs under trees and on hillsides. The ideal climate has created a green restaurant district in Kan and recreational amenities like Kowsar Jungle Park, making it a unique area.

Kan's native residents belonged to three groups: those still living there, those who left for other parts of Tehran but kept gardens and holiday homes in Kan, and Kanis who left the area permanently. The exodus of natives coupled with the area's remoteness and cheaper rentals has led groups of undocumented immigrants, like in Farahzad, to reside here too, mostly Afghans migrating to Tehran.

Regarding child labour in Kan, field observations show that many children here, both native and immigrant, have to work, as if child labour is an accepted fact for families. Most working children are immigrants. The jobs depend on the child's skills and family situation; some work in restaurants and garden restaurants, even staying overnight. Some undocumented immigrants do jobs like janitorial work, gardening and fruit picking, often involving children alongside family. Some reside permanently in Kan while others are seasonal workers who return home after summer. Child peddlers in the metro and intersections who commute daily from Kan are also a significant group. Others participate with family in jobs like vegetable cleaning and chopping. Additionally, a large auto repair centre in Kan has absorbed many children into mechanics and auto body work. Apart from

those working as labourers in gardens and restaurants, some children set up stalls and sell fruits, nuts and corn in Kan's recreational areas or in front of shops and restaurants. Grocery shop apprenticeships are another type of work Kan children experience, but they all share meagre wages and similar socio-economic situations. Immigrant children are often school dropouts devoid of welfare facilities. Although some NGOs try to fill the gap through educational classes, many still cannot continue school and have to be breadwinners.

A noticeable point about Kan and Farahzad compared to other neighbourhoods is that given the areas' urban layout, children perceive class discrimination and inequality more and as immigrants, try to gain acceptance per labelling theory. Also per the Chicago school, such marginal areas contain many risks and temptations for children towards harm and risky behaviours. Many other Tehran neighbourhoods like Shush, Darvazeh Ghar and Bagh Azari also host Iranian and Afghan immigrant families whose children typically work and face similar hazards.



Picture 5 Image of child labourers in car repair shops in Kan
(from Virgul website)

Working children and the street

Working children of the streets are those who spend many hours daily working on urban roads and passages, more visible in big cities. This is the most well-known child labour form, such that many equate working children with street children, unaware of the myriad child labour forms beyond those seen on streets and intersections, whose sizable presence across the city points to a persisting issue without clear, effective solutions.

No accurate statistics exist of street children's numbers in Iran, varying across cities, but a substantial number visibly work on streets, passages and intersections, becoming an urban nuisance lacking infrastructure to address it.

Every now and then, Welfare Organization with municipalities and other bodies conducts “organising” drives for street children but ultimately, lacking proper infrastructure to solve this, there is no organisation and children are briefly collected, held for a few days, and returned to families who send them back to the streets.



Picture 6 Image of street children providing free car wash services to police in Kargar Shomali (from study)

Types of street children

Street children can be divided into three main groups:

1. Those selling goods like fortune telling, socks, flowers
2. Those providing services like car window cleaning
3. Beggars insistently seeking items or services from public

The first two usually frequent crowded intersections, earning based on their goods or services. The third frequent pedestrian routes, carrying items like fortune cards or socks as a cover to avoid legal action for begging, but actually rely on the sympathy they can evoke. They persistently take citizens into shops to buy them items, refusing refreshments, ice cream or food, asking instead for rice, tea, detergents etc. to resell at lower prices, another income strategy. For them the items are a cover, income depends on eliciting sympathy.



Picture 7 Image of street children in north Tehran passages - Saadat Abad and Ferdowsi (from study)

Nationality of street children

Children of Afghan immigrant families, Iranian Gypsy children in some northern and northeastern cities, and Baloch Pakistani migrant children comprise the vast majority of street children in Tehran. The main difference between Afghan street children and other migrant working children is that these children usually have a longer history of residence in Iran and have therefore managed to obtain some identification documents and residence permits.

A noteworthy point about all groups of working and street children, whether they are migrants or Iranian children, is that most of them have come to Tehran as a group, either as a family or relatives, and they remain together on the streets and work in the same manner. Field observations indicate that most of these children are either fellow citizens, relatives, or members of the same family. However, there is a significant difference between Iranian street children and migrant children: most migrant children are present and working on the streets without the accompaniment of their parents, while Iranian children mostly work on the streets accompanied by older siblings or their parents.

The age range of street children covers almost the entire childhood, from 4-5 year olds to those nearing 17-18, but according to the children themselves, 10-14 year olds are most successful in street work since they can better manipulate people's emotions.

As mentioned, working and street children who gather together in specific locations are usually members of the same family or relatives. They come to their workplace collectively in the early hours of the morning and return together in the evening. For this reason, there is a significant support network within their peer group, and these children take care of and support each other.

Street presence and hangouts

Busy intersections where children sell goods or provide services are called "hangouts" controlled by veterans who regard themselves as owners, charging newbies 30,000-50,000 tomans daily for access. Some hangouts have become hereditary, passing from older to newer child family members. In some cases, owners hire children to work and take their entire earnings, paying 20,000-40,000 tomans if the daily income is satisfactory.

Hangout owners establish rules and respond violently if children encroach or don't pay. They have multiple hangouts, some rented, some personal. For example, on Saturdays as Gypsy rest day, the hangout goes to other groups who evidently rent it. Gypsies usually work Fridays, taking Saturdays off and renting the hangout just for Saturday.

Some hangouts have 8-10 year veterans, passing hereditarily from older to younger family children, indicating long-term family residence in Iran and likely permit obtainment.

There are also lesser known hangouts not yet controlled. In non-central areas like Saadat Abad, around Vanak, Aryashahr and Sadeghiyeh many such uncontrolled hangouts exist where newbie children work without paying rent but earn less due to the obscurity.

Street children spread from north areas like Zaferanieh and Kamranieh to the northernmost areas, down to Shahrak-e Gharb, Saadat Abad, Yusef Abad, central areas like Shariati, Seyedeh Khandan Bridge, Enghelab, Jomhuri, Motahari, Vanak, Punak and Sadeghiyeh. As we move southwards in the city, the number of these children decreases because the southern areas of the city are not favorable in terms of income for these children.



Picture 8 Street children at work, Azadi Square (from study)

Behavioural Patterns of Street and Working Children

Street and working children often come from impoverished and densely populated families, with many of them having parents entangled in addiction. Consequently, they lack the necessary support and care from their families for healthy child development, making them more vulnerable compared to other children. On the streets, they encounter various forms of abusive behaviours, including humiliation and insult. Their prolonged presence on the streets predisposes them to early maturity, leading to observable differences in behavioural patterns compared to other working children. These children, on one hand, do not acquire essential life skills and, on the other hand, experience numerous unhealthy mental and physical interactions on the streets. Consequently, it is natural for them to replicate and perpetuate these behaviours.

The prolonged exposure of street children exposes them to various risks such as addiction, diseases, exploitation, and criminal activities. Research findings and field observations indicate that some of these children have been exposed to substance abuse at least once and are familiar with various stimulants. Some have experienced sexual and physical abuse, and the constant threat of diseases like AIDS, hepatitis, and recently, COVID-19, looms over them. Due to their presence on the streets and their living conditions, they are also prone to mental illnesses and criminal activities. Their familiarity with poverty and class disparity is profound, and the criminal treatment they face, often justified under the guise of organizational plans, plays a significant role in instilling a vengeful attitude towards society.

These children, due to their street life experiences, tend to exhibit more audacity, courage, and awareness compared to other working children. Even in their interactions with each other, they display recklessness and boldness, exchanging inappropriate jokes and vulgar language during conflicts or playful moments. This raises a fundamental question about whether these children exhibit entirely different behaviours at home and on the streets, given the traditional and conservative backgrounds of their families. However, it should be noted that their risky and audacious behaviour on the streets may stem from limitations and fears they experience at home. Many of these children are subjected to violence by family members and elders, and upon encountering any disagreement with peers or colleagues, they often attempt to reproduce the same violence.

Often, these children have experiences and behaviours that are perilous, and they adhere less to societal norms. For example, most of them have a comprehensive awareness of various drugs and substances, with some having firsthand experience in using these substances.

Due to their street experiences, many of these children possess an intriguing understanding of social groups. For instance, they knew which individuals with specific characteristics were more likely to provide money. It was said that drivers of SUVs or elderly individuals were not generous, but younger people, especially when a young boy and girl were together in a car, particularly on weekends, were more likely to give or pay them. Additionally, some of these children were adept at tricks to extract more money from people and taught these tricks to others. Further details on these working strategies will be discussed in later sections. Street and working children exhibit a lower level of personal hygiene and appearance compared to other working children. Notably, they are challenging to approach and interview, as their focus is more on their surrounding environment.

Street Violence Experience

Street and working children encounter a wide spectrum of anti-child behaviours, ranging from physical and sexual violence to verbal abuse. They face harassment and violence on the streets, sometimes from ordinary people, other times from other groups of children, older individuals, and even from the owners of hangouts. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, most of these children also face abuse and violence at home. Younger children are particularly vulnerable as older ones usually bully and physically assault them.

In interviews, street and working children complained about the behaviours of some people. Some people insulted them at times, passing by them with their cars, opening their car doors on their sides, asking them to clean the car windows, and not paying them after the job was done, or giving them flowers without payment. Some of them had complaints about being trapped in programs

allegedly aimed at organizing them, where they experienced harassment and sexual assault, even from some municipal officials. It is worth reflecting on and lamenting that some of these children have experienced sexual violence, ranging from assault to sexual contact or at least proposals for sexual relationships. This phenomenon was more common among girls.



Picture 9 An image of street and working children at Valiasr Square (photo from the research)

Family Life of Working Children

The commonality among most street and working children is that they live within the family context. These families are often impoverished and densely populated, relying on the income generated by the child's work to meet household expenses. Some children working for themselves contributed their entire earnings to the family, while others working for someone else gave all their income to that individual and received a negligible amount in return. It appeared that independent children who worked for themselves were more open to interviews,

while others behaved more conservatively. Many of these children lived in areas such as Herandi, Shush, Farahzad, Kan, and Pasgah Nemat Abad.

Systematic Exploitation

The findings of this research highlight the systematic and exploitative nature of the work carried out by street children. The field observations reveal that these children engage in their activities in a highly organized and mechanized manner. It has been observed that they are often picked up by vans or vehicles in the evenings to return home. For example, a Peugeot 405 car has been witnessed arriving around 10 PM to collect them, and it is observed that they cram around ten to fifteen children into a single car. Similar patterns can be observed when Afghan migrants enter the country through the border, or when working and street children in the Yousef Abad area utilize a fifteen-seater van for transportation. However, it is even more alarming to note that up to thirty children can be squeezed into the same vehicle, with each child receiving a meagre payment of approximately 4,000 to 5,000 tomans.

While it may be commonly assumed that these children work as part of a gang or engage in gang-like activities, it is important to clarify that this is not the case. Rather than operating as a cohesive group with shared goals and support, these children primarily function as a collective out of necessity. Their cooperation and shared transportation serve as a means to ensure their safety against potential threats from thieves in the city and along their routes, as well as to minimize their transportation costs. This exploitative arrangement exposes these vulnerable children to hazardous conditions and denies them fair compensation for their labour. The systematic nature of this exploitation underscores the urgent need for

effective interventions and support systems to protect the rights and well-being of street children.

CHAPTER THREE: EXPLORING THE CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES, AND HAZARDS OF CHILD LABOUR

Methodology

This chapter represents the result of research on “Child labour in Workshops and Various Forms of Child labour.” In this chapter, the research methodology is initially explained, followed by an examination of the collected data by addressing research ethics.

This research was conducted based on qualitative methodology and using a field study approach at workshops and other workplaces where child labour occurs in Tehran and Rey cities. Since this study was conducted using the grounded theory, the number of interviewees was initially unspecified, as the researcher was unsure of the research path. The concept of theoretical saturation was used to determine the number of interviews during the research process. Consequently, several interviews were conducted with child labourers in various workshops, as well as with employers and experts in the field. These experts included individuals active in the area of child labour, labour activists, and representatives from the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security. Considering the diversity of tasks performed by children and the broad concept of workshops, which refers to a workplace where at least one worker and one employer are present, and also the different conditions of children in workshops, this research aimed to visit various workshops to ensure the comprehensiveness of the study. The working conditions of child labourers in different workshops vary, and a child who works in a shop, so to speak, has different circumstances than a child who operates a machinery. Therefore, this report attempts to demonstrate child labour and their working conditions in different workshops.

The semi-structured and semi-deep interview method was

used in the interviews, using an interview guide. The interview guide served as a guidance tool for the interviewer, who conducted in-depth interviews with the children to understand various dimensions of child labour and their lives. The research interviews were conducted with groups of four to six individuals present in the field. The interviews took place in the summer of 2020, coinciding with the conditions of the COVID-19 virus. The workshops for visiting and interviewing children were randomly selected.

After completing the observations and interviews, the research findings were described and analysed based on field studies and interviews, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter. The respondents' answers were transformed into the main concept after data analysis and coding in three stages. The extracted model contains core phenomena as the main essence of child labour in workshops. Causal, contextual, and intervening factors are considered as factors contributing to the emergence and spread of child labour, workplace, and the context of this phenomenon and have an impact on it. Strategies are considered as responses to child labour in workshops, derived from the core phenomenon, and consequences represent the ultimate stage of completing this model. Since gaining a better understanding of this phenomenon and its intensity requires a quantitative examination of the data, the quantitative results of the research, such as the number of interviews categorized by the type of workshop, nationality, age, city of origin, working hours, wages, the level of education of the child and their parents, etc., are presented in the form of tables and statistical charts.

Ethics in Research

Qualitative research is often designed to be open and

adaptable to what is happening in the research field. In this context, qualitative methods are less concerned with quantitative measurements. This makes it challenging to design research protocols that are acceptable to ethical committees. Sometimes, obtaining the consent and satisfaction of study participants in research conducted in public spaces such as stores, train stations, and similar settings can be difficult. Research ethics is an important topic in the design and implementation of research.

Ethical guidelines have been formulated to regulate the relationships between researchers and the individuals and fields they intend to study. The principles of research ethics raise the question of whether researchers have taken precautions to avoid harming participants by respecting their needs, interests, and benefits during the research process. These ethical guidelines stipulate that research must be based on informed consent (participants must agree to participate based on the information provided by the researcher). They also require that research should refrain from harming the participants. This principle includes avoiding the violation of their privacy and deceiving them about the goals of the research.¹²¹

Respecting children's rights in data collection: Researchers must refrain from harming the participants. Therefore, in interviews, if the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with a question and did not want to answer, the interviewer would skip the question and move on to the next one. If the interviewee did not want to continue the interview, the interviewer would respect their decision and refrain from further interviewing.

Autonomy or self-determination: The values and

¹²¹ Flick, Uwe. (2012). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (Translated by Hadi Jalili). Tehran: Ney.

decisions of the participants must be respected. For this purpose, the interviews were conducted in a way that did not involve any value orientation, and the interviewer refrained from expressing any value judgment in response to the interviewee's opinion.

Justice: All individuals must be treated equally. In this research, all interviewees had equal value to the researcher, and the interviewer made every effort to respect the dignity and rights of the interviewee, avoiding any harm to them, and ensuring the satisfaction of all interviewees.

Dignity and rights of participants: Preserving the dignity and rights of participants is intertwined with gaining their satisfaction, which should be achieved through the provision of sufficient and voluntary information. Additionally, researchers must ensure that the identity of participants remains completely confidential, and their information is used in a way that others cannot identify them, and no entity uses this information against the interests of the participants. In this regard, at the beginning of the interview, the interviewer provided explanations about confidentiality and non-disclosure of information to children, and the recording of children's voices was subject to their consent. In other words, whenever a child did not want their voice to be recorded, the interviewer did not record the voice and only relied on note-taking during the interview (recorded voices were only used to facilitate the implementation of the interviews and identify powerful and emotional points in the interviews for selecting quotations, and to maintain confidentiality, even the names mentioned by the interviewees were removed from the quotations).

Informed Consent: By accepting the principle of informed consent, we encounter the following criteria for the participation of individuals in the research:

- Consent should be obtained from eligible individuals: In this study, since it was not possible to communicate with and obtain consent from the parents or guardians of the children, consent was only obtained from the children.
- The consenting person should have sufficient information: For this purpose, at the beginning of the interview, explanations were provided to the child according to their age. For example, for children under the age of ten, simpler and more comfortable explanations were given, such as “Just like in school, when we ask older people or those who have more knowledge than us about birds or insects for research, now we are researching children who work. That’s why we want to talk to you.” And for children who were older, discussions were held about the reasons for conducting this research, examining their working conditions, and discussing the challenges they face.
- Consent should be voluntary and based on free will: After providing explanations by the interviewer, at this stage, if the child expressed a desire to be interviewed without any coercion, the interview would proceed. It is also necessary to mention regarding the photographs that this research has sought to provide a real and documentary image of children’s work in Tehran and its surrounding areas. It is self-evident that some parts of documenting this research depend on the images obtained from the research field. The publication of children’s photographs has always had both opponents and proponents. UNICEF, as the world’s leading organization supporting children, also publishes photographs of children in the target community for documentation and raising awareness. However, in this research, photographs of children were taken and shared while observing ethical standards, respecting the dignity of children, and

protecting their identities. Most of these images were taken remotely, and some of the reflected images in this research are official media photos with their sources mentioned, and the faces of all children have been blurred in the graphic stages of the work to prevent identification.

Child Labour Forms

Not all the work performed by children falls under the category of the worst forms of child labour or the common form of child labour. Some part-time, light work, and participation in certain household tasks are considered acceptable as long as they do not hinder the child's growth and education or harm their well-being. Some tasks also not only promote teamwork and responsibility in children but also contribute significantly to their growth and skill development. Unfortunately, many of the tasks performed by children are considered forms of child labour and are among the worst forms. As mentioned, based on the definition in Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, any activity or work that may be harmful to the child, disrupt their education, or cause harm to their physical, mental, moral, or social development is considered child labour. According to the International Labour Organization's classification, the major forms of child labour include: domestic work (which may not necessarily be performed within the child's own home), agricultural work, work in mines, work in industries, servitude and forced labour, trafficking and involvement in armed conflict, and work in the informal economy sector.¹²² Each of these categories encompasses various

¹²² International Labour Organization Portal. Accessed on January 24, 2024:

types of work. For example, work in the industrial sector includes carpet weaving, garment production, chemical production, glassmaking, matchstick production, and a wide range of other products. Work in the formal economy sector includes activities such as waste picking, street vending, shoe shining, domestic work, newspaper selling, and so on. Some of these tasks are visible and can be seen by the general public, while others are completely hidden and not easily observable. For example, they may occur in underground workshops or within covert networks involved in drug trafficking.¹²³

Furthermore, according to Article 182 of the International Labour Organization Convention, known as the “Worst Forms of Child labour,” the worst forms of child labour include:

- 1) All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, serfdom, and forced labour, including the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- 2) The use, procuring, or offering of a child for pornography, obscene performances, or any other form of indecent exploitation.
- 3) The use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, particularly for the production and trafficking of drugs, as defined in relevant international treaties.

<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/informal-economy/lang-en/index.htm>

<http://www.ilo.ch/global/topics/employment-promotion/informal-economy/lang-en/index.htm>

¹²³ILO. (2008). Global child labour developments: Measuring trends from 2004 to 2008. International Labour Organization Geneva.

- 4) Work that, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.

These categories indicate that some forms of child labour may pose fewer risks to children, while others jeopardize the well-being of children in all dimensions.

This research, for the first time, has relatively comprehensively and courageously examined all forms of child labour in Tehran. It is not claimed that all types of child labour have been identified and investigated in this study, but it can be said that major and common types of work have been addressed, in which a significant number of children are engaged. Furthermore, the findings of this research can be extrapolated to a larger context of child labour in Iran. The more recognized forms of child labour, which have been mentioned in the literature and have become a public concern, and are particularly harmful, have been examined in this study. In the following section, each of these forms will be examined in terms of their nature, conditions, characteristics, and risks.

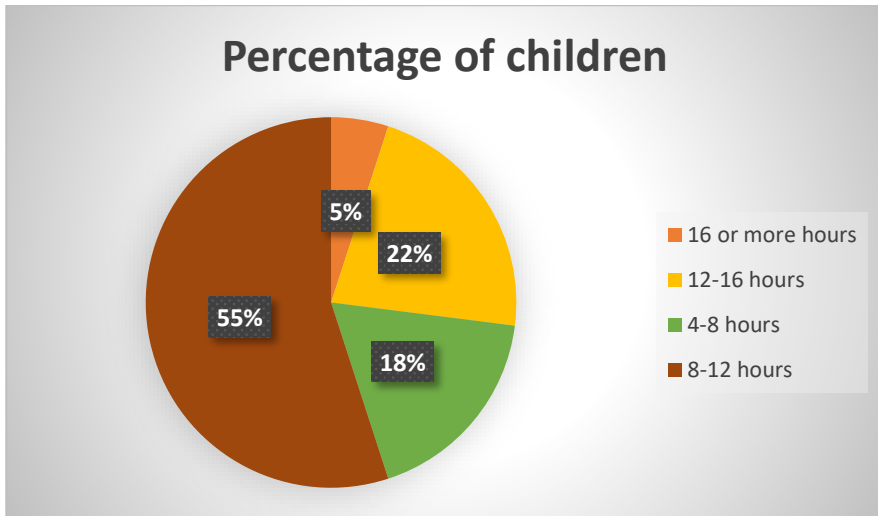


Figure 2 Distribution of children by working hours (N=311)

Fruit and Vegetable Markets Works

Working in the fruit and vegetable markets involves organized activities under the supervision of the Tehran Municipality's Fruit and Vegetable Markets Organization. In Tehran, there are approximately 200 fruit and vegetable markets located in different neighbourhoods. Children working in this industry are mostly migrants who work away from their families. Many of them have come from Kurdish regions, particularly from the Kurdistan province to Tehran. However, migrants from other cities, such as Nishapur, who work in the vegetable sector, as well as migrants from Arak and even Afghan children, also work to some extent in this field. Some of the working children in this sector responded about their ethnicity as follows:

We are originally from Divandarreh.

We came from Sanandaj, Kurdistan.

As mentioned, the work of these children strictly adheres

to the regulations of the fruit and vegetable markets. During the summer, when field data was collected, the official working hours for children were from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. These markets are closed for lunch and rest from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. In addition to the official working hours, children are also engaged in work during other hours. For example, depending on the type of work, they unload empty crates from trucks during the night, typically from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. In the morning, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., they engage in loading goods, and after 8:00 p.m., they perform cleaning tasks inside the shops or booths. Unlike many other trades, they also work on Fridays until 1:00 p.m. and then focus on cleaning, personal matters, and rest. These pieces of evidence indicate that children work long hours throughout the day and night, as described by a working child in the Sadeghiyeh fruit and vegetable market:

There are no working hours in this market.

Or, as several working children in the Shahrān fruit and vegetable market stated:

We wake up at 6:00 a.m., and we start arranging the goods until 7:00 a.m., sometimes until 7:30 a.m. We have breakfast until 8:00 a.m. Then the market opens until 1:00 p.m. After 1:00 p.m., if new goods arrive, like watermelons or melons, we have to unload them until 1:30 p.m. Then we have a break until 3:00 p.m. At a quarter to 3:00 p.m., we go downstairs because the employer tells us to unless the workers don't listen. Then we work from 3:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., sometimes until 8:40 p.m., doing cleaning or similar tasks. After that, I sleep until 12:00 or 1:00, and then the goods arrive again.

Goods arrive multiple times until morning, and we have to wake up and empty them. It comes once, twice, or four times.

Their place of residence is in halls or separate rooms inside these markets, and people of different ages live there. On some official holidays, such as days of martyrdom or festivals, the market may be completely closed or operate part-time. Children's wages are paid on a weekly basis, although they don't receive money from the employer every week. On days when the market is completely closed, they do not receive any wages. The weekly income of children varies from 500,000 to 800,000 tomans, depending on their skill level and "expertise." Some of these children said the following:

The workers receive 600, 700 tomans per week.

Whenever I feel like it, they give me my wages. For example, I receive 700 tomans per week. It depends, my friend doesn't know and receives 600 tomans per week.

Their activities are supervised by market inspectors, and if they commit any violations, such as behaving improperly with customers, not wearing a uniform, or having low-quality fruits and other items in their sales baskets, the inspectors deal with them. One of the children at the Enqelab Terminal mentioned:

They get on our case about everything. Like we have to wear uniforms, have good fruits, behave well with customers. But they don't care about our sleep, how the employer treats us, our wages, and many other things.

In many cases, the work of these children is temporary, and they may work for several months and then go to their hometown for a visit. On days when they take leave, they

do not receive any wages. All of these children see this work as temporary. However, some of them may remain in the same profession and rent their own stalls, as was revealed in an interview with one of the employers who has been working in these fields since childhood. Some children only do this work in the summer, and when school reopens, they return to their city to continue their education, although there are children who have dropped out of school and only work. The accounts of some of these children about their work are as follows:

If it's a day off, we don't get any wages. If it's a half-day, we get full wages.

Taking leave is up to us. I'll tell them tomorrow that I won't come anymore. I settle my account and say goodbye.

Some of the difficulties that children face in this profession include separation from their families, long working hours resulting in excessive fatigue, working at night, receiving low wages compared to the amount of work, handling heavy loads, lack of leisure time, inhaling dust during unloading of goods, and working in warehouses, especially potato, onion, and garlic warehouses. Other challenges include dealing with a large number of customers in some markets, which forces them to work continuously, inappropriate behaviour from market inspectors, standing for long hours, observing class differences and the psychological harm that results from them, sympathetic looks from customers towards the workers, inappropriate living conditions, communal living, and the habit of flattery to attract customers.

The nutrition of these children in this work is somewhat adequate because employers and stall owners hire cooks to prepare meals for them. Additionally, since these

children work in fruit and vegetable stalls, they always have access to various fruits to eat. One of the working children in the Saadat Abad fruit market said the following about their nutrition:

Our employer provides us with food. The head chef comes to the front of the stall and asks how many workers we have. The type of food varies. For example, on Saturday mornings, they give us cheese, and on Mondays, they give us cream. It's different every day. For example, on Thursdays, we have a stew, and on Fridays, they make minced meat. It's up to the head chef to decide.



Picture 10 Image of a teenage worker in the fruit and vegetable markets (photo from IRNA news agency)

Scavenging

Waste collection is among the highly detrimental activities in which a significant number of children have been engaged in recent years, working under harsh and

alarming conditions.¹²⁴ Existing studies indicate that approximately 5,000 children are involved in this sector in Tehran alone. The work of children in this sector is carried out based on a set of predefined rules and mechanisms. Although the guidelines of the Tehran Waste Management Organization prohibit child labour in this sector, child labour remains prevalent despite these prohibitions. Most of the children working in this sector are Afghan immigrants from the city of Herat. However, there are also Iranian children from various ethnic backgrounds involved in this field. The Tehran Municipality has delegated the collection and sorting of dry waste in different areas to contractors. Contractors may manage waste collection themselves or delegate it to other individuals, such as Afghan workers referred to as “masters” or “supervisors.” To maximize profit, employers have divided waste collection into two shifts, morning and evening. In the morning shift, waste is mostly collected by individuals working in waste management areas under the supervision of the district municipality. Therefore, fewer children are utilized during this shift. In the afternoon shift, most of the children are engaged in waste collection. They start working around 4 PM and continue until midnight or even later. Some of them pay a monthly fee to their employers as a “custom” to be allowed to work, while others are forced to sell the waste to their employers at a predetermined rate, which is usually very low. Individuals working in this sector usually carry an identification card, or their photos are stored in the contractors’ mobile phones for monitoring purposes, to prevent unauthorized individuals from entering this field for work. One of the waste collection children in the

¹²⁴ Children's Rights Support Association. (2010). *Childhood Yawn: A study on the recognition, prevention, and control of the phenomenon of child scavenging in Tehran*.

Zafaranieh district explained how they enter these areas as follows:

We pay customs here; we give them 3 million tomans to let us work. If we don't pay customs, they will come and beat us. See, whoever hasn't paid money, they catch him and beat him.

Another waste collection child in the Shahrak-e Gharb district talked about the prices of different types of waste:

Each type has a price; plastic is 700 tomans per kilo, PET is 900 tomans per kilo, metal is 400 tomans, cardboard is 350 tomans, glass is 250 tomans, bread is 400 tomans, nylon and plastic bags are 700 tomans.

Two waste collection children in the Vanak district discussed the supervision of children:

Well, they don't come anymore; we have an ID card, we have a photo. Our photo is recycled now. If we don't have a photo, we have to pay them 4 million tomans or give them a bribe.

For example, I'll tell them the name of my employer, which garage, which wheel. I mean, I say, 'I work at Mr. X's garage, and they don't bother me anymore.'

I used to have an ID card, but I don't have it anymore.

Children who work as waste collectors spend part of the night collecting garbage from trash cans and then take them to recycling sites with rented trucks. When they wake up in the morning, they sort the waste based on its type, such as cardboard, PET, plastic, iron, etc., because the purchase prices vary. Waste collector children, like children working in fruit and vegetable fields, work long

hours in very difficult and unsafe conditions. Here are some accounts from these children:

The difficulty of this work is sleep deprivation; it's all tiring. Then you have to carry these sacks on your shoulders, go after all the rubbish, collect the garbage. It's all hard. Lack of sleep makes a person irritable. Now we go until 10 PM, study until dinner, have dinner, and it's already 1 AM. We sleep at twelve or one and wake up at six in the morning. The difficulty is in this sorting.

The difficulty is also sleep deprivation; you have to walk a lot. You get tired because you're constantly on the move. Sleep deprivation bothers me more in this job.

The number of working hours in waste collection has an impact on the income of children, and those who work more hours earn more because they collect more dry waste. If for any reason they start work late, it's possible that other people may enter their area and collect the waste before them. A waste collector child mentioned:

Sometimes when our employer's car is broken, we come to work late and we suffer losses because those other kids collect all the loads, everything. When we arrive, there's nothing left. The kids... those guys take them.

The tools used by children in this type of work are usually shoulder bags (a type of sack for carrying garbage) and hand carts. The residence of these individuals is usually inside waste separation sites in the southern, southwestern, and eastern areas of Tehran. They usually come from these areas to the city of Tehran to collect garbage with the rented trucks and later, after finishing their working hours, the same trucks take them back to their residence. During the outbreak of COVID-19 in the

country, child labour in this sector was banned, and the municipality also conducted extensive advertising campaigns to prevent child labour. However, after some time, the previous routine was resumed, and children returned to this field. Some of the children mentioned that due to recent inflation and the increase in the prices of goods, the production of dry waste has decreased. As a result, their income has also decreased. Two waste collector children in the Sadeghieh area stated:

Now there is less trash; there is less plastic and PET. We don't work as much as before.

Now, after COVID-19, when you go to the trash bin, you mostly find masks and such things thrown in these bins. And sometimes, it's just empty, without anything, without plastic.

Waste collector children are very calm and have the least interaction with their environment, including citizens, during work. Because their interaction with society is very limited, they submit to the harassments they experience, which might be due to their fear of the citizens and the city of Tehran. As mentioned earlier, their residence is in the southern part of the city, which is very dangerous compared to other forms of child labour and their residence. Sometimes, judicial authorities, along with municipal inspectors and law enforcement officers, attack these places and demolish their homes. Employers in this profession, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, have not provided even the slightest safety equipment such as work clothes, gloves, masks, etc., for the workers. A waste collector child who was collecting garbage in Palestine Square narrated:

No, we don't have work clothes. We come with these clothes. We have to buy gloves ourselves; they don't buy anything for us. We have to buy them ourselves.

Regarding their residence, waste collector children said:

We live in Hakimiyeh... in containers. We sit on the other side of Zeynoddin Bridge. There are many of us, almost 300 to 400 people.

Where we live, all the kids are like me; they collect garbage. They are all like me.

The place where we sleep is the same place where we collect garbage. It has two bathrooms and two showers.

In general, the difficulties and dangers of waste collection work include experiencing violence from employers and municipal inspectors, long working hours and excessive fatigue, working in cold and hot weather, long walking distances while carrying heavy loads, separating waste from inside garbage bins and wet waste, the very bad and repulsive smell of garbage and bins, the possibility of getting injured while collecting garbage, being away from family and homeland, living in unsafe and dirty housing, repeated demolition of housing by the municipality and judicial authorities, pitiful looks from citizens and the formation of negative emotions in children, conflicts with other waste collectors and homeless people, lack of access to proper welfare and sanitary facilities such as toilets and bathrooms at the place of residence, lack of suitable tools and work clothes, living with adults, and hundreds of other issues.

This work can be seen as a form of bondage that is common in Tehran, as children are exploited in various forms of this work and their health is endangered for

various reasons and in various dimensions. The accounts of some of these children about their experience of work, nutrition, and waste collection problems in the Azadi and Jomhuri areas were as follows:

Here, in recycling, we sleep right there. Our recycling place is near Azmayesh factory in Hakimiyeh... We are three. We have to work from six in the morning until ten at night.

Lack of sleep bothers you, carrying the load on your shoulders from morning till night, you have to walk.



Picture 11 A view of urban waste in the Vanak area and a waste collector child in the Kamranieh area (photo from research).

Working on the streets

Street children work in various places and spaces, such as streets, intersections, sidewalks, public transportation, parks, next to malls, and recreational areas. These

children are engaged in various street jobs such as selling goods, smoking cigarettes, selling flowers, weightlifting, selling vegetables, cleaning car windows, begging, fortune-telling, selling CDs, selling mobile devices or accessories, selling tissues, glueing wounds, playing music, and singing. Both girls and boys are present in this category of work. Usually, most of these children entered these jobs for the first time through a family member or friend. Because children can evoke sympathy from others and earn more income, parents are more motivated to utilize their children for such work. In research fields, children often narrate that they entered this work accompanied by their parents:

My mom brought me to work; she said come with the other kids, there are many of them.

One of the social workers of a non-governmental organization in the Shoush district explained the difference between working on the street and working in workshops as follows:

In workshops, the wages are much lower than when working outside. A child working in a workshop, the employer claims that you will learn something here, you don't know. The wages are very low there, maybe they give you 60 thousand tomans [Iranian currency equal to \$1.20] per week, for example. Now I don't know if it has increased or decreased after the COVID-19. But the children who go to intersections, with the attention of people, they make more money. They may earn 50 million tomans per day.

A social worker of a non-governmental organization in the Farahzad neighbourhood discussed the work of children in the streets and how they entered this form of work:

The number of workshop workers in the Farahzad area is small. When they come here, they don't know about centres, they don't know about resources, and based on repetitive patterns among their own relatives, their own peer groups, their own age groups, they mostly do street work rather than workshop work. Most of them are fortune-tellers, gum sellers, sock sellers, mostly they do window cleaning, do you know why? Because when you clean the glass with that device and cloth, they are forced to give you 1000 tomans.

In some cases, parents may be present on the street, keeping an eye on their children from a short distance. The narration of a child interviewed in the theater park confirms this point:

I came with my grandmother; she is standing over there.

Unlike many other jobs, working on the street is not subject to specific organizational rules; children can start and finish work whenever they want. In other words, children have more freedom of action in this category of work. However, this applies to children who are also supported by their families. A child who worked in the Kohn neighbourhood shared the following about this:

I come every day when I want to, and I don't come when I don't want to.

Of course, sometimes these children are forced to work every day because their families, for various reasons, including covering some living expenses, require them to work. The following narration confirms this:

I work every day. My mom pushes me and tells me to go to work; we are poor. She hits me to make me go.

Approximately, it can be said that there are three categories of children involved in street work: the first category includes children who are forced into this work mostly by their parents. They usually occupy specific spots or intersections and do not allow other groups to enter their territory. On days when they don't work, such as Saturdays, they rent out their spots. The second category consists of Afghan migrant children who have been residing in Iran for a long time and may belong to the second generation of migrants. The third category includes individuals who have recently entered this line of work. Territory disputes are very common in this line of work. For example, two children working at the Park Way intersection narrated the following:

They forced and asked us, 'Give us 11 tomans, how much will you give?' I say, 'I don't have it, I'm not working, I'll go somewhere else.' When I want to work at the intersection, they don't let me. Then they say, 'Give this much and you can go work at the intersection.' I give it to some of them, but not to others. They say if you want to work at the intersection, you have to pay.

... They say we have been working here for ten years, this intersection belongs to us. I ask, 'Where is the document?' Then, because of that, another fight broke out. We didn't used to work at this intersection before. We used to go to the municipality intersection. We were there for a week, and then... He went towards the car, wanted to clean it... He was a motorcyclist, he came;

suddenly he kicked this boy. When it happened like this, because of that, we came to this intersection.

Territory disputes also exist in the metro, and a significant portion of street vendors and addicts have turned to the metro and face this dilemma. A child street vendor who was interviewed in Laleh Park described such conflicts:

One day, I got upset with them on Line 5, and we had an argument; they ruined my customer. I argued with my friends. They both have tissues and fortunes. My friend had my fortune. A customer was taking a fortune from me, and my friend came and said, 'Come, I'll open this one for you for free.' Don't buy from me. The boy came and asked for my money, I said 2 tomans, he said 5 tomans. He bought from him, not from me. Because of this, I argued. The customer didn't ruin, he didn't, I didn't argue.

Fights and physical violence among the children themselves are also very common, and they may even steal each other's goods or money. Often, the smaller and weaker children are more likely to get beaten, especially if they lack support from family or older individuals. A child working on Sohravardi Street described the following:

They are older than us, and we are younger, sometimes they hit us. My older brother hits me, and this one also hits me. Sometimes he hits me, says it's his car. He says it's his car, anyone who comes cleans it. This kid also hits us; this boy came and kicked and broke my leg. This boy is at the municipality intersection, this very intersection. This boy came and demanded my money, I said 2 tomans, he said 5 tomans.

Children, especially those who have been working more on the streets and intersections, know their customers well and know which groups of people or car owners are likely to buy from them or allow them to clean their car windows. A child working on Valiasr Avenue said:

They don't all give money; those who are with their spouses or friends give better money when they come out.

A child working in Mellat Park said the following about the same matter:

Some, these SUVs, are stingy people. The cars that say don't clean, we don't clean. Those who say clean, we clean. The higher the model of the car, the stingier it is [laughs]. If it's a lady, well, she tells us to clean. The we clean, and they give us money.

Citizens' encounters and interactions with these groups of children vary: Some may act violently against them, from verbal and physical violence to sexual and indecent exposure. Others interact with them kindly. Still others pass by them indifferently. However, the children's judgments about people depend on the experiences they have had interacting with people on the street. In this regard, here is what some working children in Saadatabad, Shahrak-e Gharb, Sadeghiyeh, Farahzadi, and Shishehgar streets had to say:

There is every kind among them; good, bad. Some curse, some give good money, give food, give money, give fruit.

It's like people are afraid of us because of the corona situation, not before.

It's good, it's not bad. People don't care, man. People are good, they cooperate very well. For example, sometimes when I'm upset, they buy from me. We fight, they come to help.

Some of them also have good morals; they sit and talk, confide. For example, some of them, if you run into them a little, say Lady! Go away, what's wrong with you.

Some of them are bad, some good. One yells not to clean, another says clean.

It's very bad, they think who they are themselves now. For example, if on the subway, if my foot touches them, they fight; Lady! Go away, you filthy, while my clothes are clean, well-dressed and very tidy. Lady! Go away, your foot touched me. Lady! Your stuff touched me. For example, many times I have fought, Lady, what part of me is dirty?!

Children's income in this work is more noticeable compared to other jobs, and their and their parents' view of the job is more about earning income than vocational training. Of course, income fluctuations in this job are very high. A child may have no income one day, or a citizen may encounter him and give him 100,000 tomans. Some children working at Valiasr, Kargar, Si Tir, and Naser Khosrow intersections described:

The last time I came, it was Friday, I hadn't made any sales; I got very upset, threw my stuff on the ground, went home.

One day so far, one day a woman, I went to her, gave me 100 tomans like this. Right then, with laughter and joy, my brother and I went home.

I work from 9-10 am to 7-8 pm. When I was in middle school, I used to come on Thursdays and Fridays, but now I'm studying, I only work in the summers and holidays. The profit is 150 to 200 tomans per day. I come at 6 am until whenever it's done.

The commuting of these children from home to work and back is one of the notable points. Some who are familiar with Tehran may commute by subway or taxi. Another significant group rents a taxi or van and commutes with it. This group may be children working at several intersections or hangouts along the same route, doing this to reduce their costs. Since these children are more in public view, citizens know them more as street children. A wide range of research has also studied this group of children. For example, Vameghi et al. estimated the number of street children in Tehran to be 26,000 in 2014.

In this work, and unlike some other jobs, children start working at very young ages, for example from age 5. In other jobs, children cannot work and earn income at very young ages, because many other jobs require physical and bodily capacity. One of the children working on Keshavarz Boulevard said about the age he started working:

I've been working since I was 5 years old, everyone here knows me since I was 5.

Starting work at a young age can bring many risks for children, one of which is getting lost, because in a metropolis like Tehran, identifying routes and landmarks, especially for young and illiterate children, is very difficult. A child interviewed at Daneshjoo Park narrated:

The first day I came to work, I got lost. They took me to the police. I sat there and cried until night, I cried until morning.

Territorial disputes are also very common in the metro, and in many cases children do not allow newcomers entering their territory to work and may even act violently against them. Here is the account of a working child interviewed at Arm Sabs metro station:

Now they don't say anything to me because I've been working for 7 years. But those who come new in the line, get off line 1 and come into line 4, they either take their stuff or beat them not to come here because it gets crowded.

One noteworthy thing in the metro is that children may divide metro lines among themselves according to ethnicity and not allow children of other ethnicities to enter their work territory. Here is the account of two working children on metro lines 2 and 4 in Tehran:

These ones (Kermanshahi people) for example stand in a line here, for example if someone from another line comes and stands here, they say why did you come here, go to another line, we don't let strangers in.

Just one station back they were fighting, cursing and saying very bad curses to each other. A guy punched and kicked another guy. And it's in turns; well for example one says my turn is Javadiyeh, everyone should come get a turn at Javadiyeh. For example one gets on from Zamzam the station before, the other one says why did you get on my train, they argue and beat each other up, they fight over work.

Of course in other jobs there is also division of work based on ethnic groups; as a child peddler working at Ferdowsi Square said:

They are forced ones [into this work], older, selling flowers..., napkins... They bother us. Yeah, they said don't let me see you in another intersection again, or I'll beat you up. Then we said okay, we fought with them. Some of the kids grabbed and beat him up, one broke his hands.

A number of other children narrated about peddling work at Enqelab and Tajrish squares and the difficulties of this job:

My feet hurt, I still come. My feet hurt a lot, it's hard.

They curse, they are very rude. The girl went towards the man, and he pulled down his pants. Then when he pulls it down, she goes and tells her mom, her mom doesn't care, she says go away and lost! This has happened a lot to Afghanistani people, but not to me.

I saw it here myself, I don't know, a girl was standing in front of the restroom, she said a man came and tried to molest me, she was crying.



Picture 12 A scene of children working and present at intersections and city streets; the child on the right selling goods and the one on left tattooing his friend's foot (research photo).

Selling Flowers

Another form of street work performed by children is flower selling, and because it has significant differences compared to other forms of work, it is separately addressed here. There are three distinct categories of flower sellers that can be distinguished from each other: the first category consists of those who sell flowers on the streets and at intersections; the second category includes children who sell flowers in some recreational centres, such as Darkooh and Ken; the last category involves children who sell flowers in cemeteries, such as Behesht-e Zahra, and on paths leading to cemeteries. Children who sell flowers in cemeteries or Behesht-e Zahra are further divided into several categories based on the occasions for which they sell flowers. The first category includes children who sell flowers to the owner of flower-selling spots for a specific amount. Usually, the owners of these

spots are Iranian and have owned the spots for a long time, often having favorable relationships with municipal authorities, which protects them from legal issues. These spot owners employ children and pay them a modest amount for their daily sales. One of the child flower sellers on the Tehran-Qom highway explained his work as follows:

I work for my employer; the spot is his. For example, if I make 100, 70 is his.

The way flower-selling children work, as mentioned earlier, varies among them. Some have rented spots and work for themselves, while others receive a salary, and some take a percentage of the sales, which is a meager amount. Several children working as flower sellers on the Tehran-Qom highway, Shahrak Gharb, Shush Square, and the South Terminal, described their conditions and working methods:

We buy flowers and sell them here. Sometimes we work for someone, and sometimes for ourselves. On that sign, it says Afsharieh; after that, go to Afsharieh, it's full of flowers. Then there's a sign that says Imam Reza, I think it has something written on it. From there, you bring flowers to sell. This week, we sell for ourselves.

They have larger mats; they don't let us sit here now. Weeks ago, it was good, but not now. For example, they don't let us, just now he came here and argued because they don't let us; he says don't sell flowers here. The one who gave him this place, then tells him no, not here, go to Einstein. There's a man with a larger mat. He has given these places for us to use. Then he comes and says, don't let the mat be here, put your workers on it.

I used to work for a man, he used to say. Firstly, when I went, I was younger and didn't know the job, I used to get 40 thousand per day. Then I grew up, he gave me 50 thousand.

It's our own mat. We get flowers from Imam Reza Bazaar. My dad goes there and brings them. To be able to sit here, we used to pay 100 thousand before, but now it has gone up; it's 300 thousand. We give it to the man with the white van. We give him the 300; if the municipality and others come, it's okay, he allows us to work here.

Sometimes, children may work for the owner of the spot on a daily wage basis. However, since weekends and some days of the year are busier in cemeteries, the income of children on these days may be higher. A child selling flowers in one of the spots on the Tehran-Qom highway mentioned his income:

If it's for ourselves, the rent is 50 thousand per day, 100 thousand for two days. If it's not for us, he gives us 100 thousand.

Finally, there is a category of children who may rent the spot alone or mostly with their families. Since the employers have reached an agreement with the municipality's executive officers, this group of children does not face any disturbances from municipal inspectors. These children also know which spot owner to work for to avoid problems with municipal officers. As one of the children working on the Tehran-Qom highway pointed out:

We are guaranteed; no one works with us. They don't bother us anymore.

There is also a significant conflict over territories in these areas. It is crucial for the owners of flower-selling spots and children working for them or renting spots from them not to enter the territories of others and sell flowers in their areas. Physical confrontations between spot owners often occur over this issue. Two children selling flowers in Behesht-e Zahra talked about it:

There are quarrels too. For example, they come here to sell flowers. We say this is ours, don't come here, or our employer goes and argues with their employer; he says your kids came here to sell flowers.

Yes, on these mats; just now, they came; they wanted to fight, right here, why did you rent this place? You rented it to your own workers because the municipality doesn't allow, the traffic police don't allow.

For children who sell flowers in Behesht-e Zahra, the experience is different from other street jobs. A considerable part of the offerings made by mourners is allocated to these children, including various offerings such as dates, sweets, halva, fruit juice, food, and some groceries. Because places like cemeteries evoke stronger emotions and feelings, one of its consequences is helping child labourers through the donation of food items. Some of these children may also sell items like fruit juice or groceries to earn income.

Children who sell flowers on the streets and intersections are divided into two main categories based on their flower-selling events. The first category includes those working under the supervision of the employer. Their employer, usually situated a few steps away on the side of the street, categorizes the flowers, arranges them in baskets, or wraps them with ribbons, preparing them for sale. The children receive their compensation mostly as a

percentage of the sales. A child selling flowers on Imam Khomeini Street commented on his payment:

It's not like they give you 100 tomans per day. The more you sell, the more you earn.

Some children may also receive a daily wage. For example, the employer might pay them 100,000 tomans for the day's flower sales. When children work under the supervision of an employer, the employer gathers them in a specific location and brings them to the desired intersection or workplace by car. The narrative of three children selling flowers in Imam Reza Flower Market and nearby areas is as follows:

He takes us to the flower market, and we come back from there. We get on at the metro station. He brings flowers from Qasr, and he takes us there.

The expression of emotions plays a significant role here. Children are aware of which group of drivers is more likely to be their customers. For instance, young couples or friends driving high-end cars are more likely to buy their flowers. Moreover, children in this group usually sell specific types of flowers, such as red or white roses. Finally, these children use specific tricks to sell their flowers. A flower-selling child in Saadat Abad explained:

We sell more to couples or siblings. For example, we say, 'Don't you want to buy flowers for your love? How much do you love them?' [with a smile].

Another group of children works for themselves. They go to the flower market early in the morning, buy flowers, categorize them at home or at the selling location, and then sell them to their customers. However, children selling flowers at intersections face several major

challenges. According to one child selling flowers in Darakeh:

I gave them the flowers, told them to pay. They didn't give money, grabbed the car's gas, and left.

The most significant problem they face is not receiving payment for the flowers. Some drivers may take their flowers without paying, and throughout the day, one to several drivers might do this. In some cases, this leads to the child changing their work location. Another major issue is the confiscation of their flowers by municipal authorities or their agents, aiming to clear the passage. A child working at the Poonak intersection stated:

Sometimes the municipality takes our flowers, takes our buckets, takes everything away. Our employer scolds us, asks why we didn't escape. We had a lot of flowers; we said we couldn't escape.

Haggling with customers and customers requesting discounts pose additional challenges for these children. A flower-selling child on Khaleej-e Fars Highway shared his experience:

Everyone is bargaining now. Everyone wants to get the flowers at a lower price.

Inappropriate behaviour from citizens is another problem. A flower-selling child in Poonak explained:

Some say you might have COVID; don't come close to us, go away. But some people are nice; they buy flowers.

Finally, if they sell flowers at a price lower than the standard rate, the employer may deduct the reduced

amount from their daily wages. A child working in the Khaleej Fars Highway area mentioned:

He scolds us, reduces our salary. For example, if we give a 10-toman discount, he deducts 10 tomans from our wages; he gives us 90 tomans.

And one of the working children on the Khaleej Fars Highway (Tehran-Qom Highway) spoke about the challenges of flower-selling as follows:

In the morning, we go to get flowers, and here we stand under the sun until the flowers are sold.

Ultimately, it should be mentioned that there is another group of children who sell flowers at some recreational centres, such as Darakeh and Farahzad and Kan. These children mostly enter those places with or without the permission of restaurant owners and sell their flowers inside these restaurants or at their entrances. In some cases, when they don't get permission from the restaurant owner or management to sell flowers, restaurant staff may confront them with verbal or physical reactions.



Picture 13 A picture of a child flower vendor (Photo from ISNA News Agency).

Working in Car Repair Shops and Mechanics

Families of children working in this profession generally have a somewhat optimistic view of their children's future. This means that by entering this professional field, they aim to learn a trade and hope that in the future, their children will become skilled professionals, earning a livelihood. This perspective is in contrast to many other jobs, such as street work, where this type of outlook on work is absent. Here are some narratives from working children in repair shops in Ken and Farahzad regarding their jobs:

My dad said, 'Go, learn a skill; too much studying is not beneficial.'

I want to learn a skill; I'm growing up, can't always be on the crossroads.

I came on my own. Mom and Dad told me to go for technical work. I saw technical work... It's better than studying. So, I continued with this work.

Children's interest in this profession is one of the main reasons they enter this line of work. Some boys entering this profession always dreamed of having good and expensive cars. Unable to achieve their dreams and aware that they lack the purchasing power for a car, they turned to this profession. A sixteen-year-old teenager working in a workshop in the Shush area talked about his interest in owning a luxury car:

Every night, I dreamed of having an expensive car. Sometimes, I would calculate that if we don't spend my dad's income, it would take several years to be able to buy an SUV. At first, I thought when I grow up, I'll finally buy it myself, but now I don't think I can. It requires a lot of money. I knew the technical specifications of all the cars; I had information about any car you wanted.

An Afghan child working in one of the mechanical workshops described how he got into this job:

At that time, I was young, we were in Afghanistan... I told my dad I liked that star... it was a Mercedes. Then my dad went, found one, and brought it for me. With this, I became more interested in cars; we learned the engine, learned about cars. After that, I said I want to work in a repair shop. I really like it.

Interest in technical work has also been influential in boys' inclination towards mechanical work. A child working in one of the workshops in Naserkhosrow talked about his interest:

You work with wrenches and stuff; it's a lot of fun.

Some children also enter this work because one of their family members is in this profession. A social worker from a non-governmental organization in the Herandi area talked about the reason for children entering workshops compared to street work:

Most of them are like this, they go with one of their family members to that workshop where their father or, for example, one of their relatives works. Their entry is like this, but being a street child, whether a street vendor or an addict, whichever it is, being a street child is hard; it requires certain specific qualities that not all children have. In the end, they think that the children in the workshops benefit because the children in the workshops learn a skill that will be useful to them later. If you talk to them, they know that a child on the street has a higher income, but they say I am learning something; let me become a tailor in a few years, let me become a repairman in a few years.

It should also be noted that when parents believe that their children may not find a job through education in the future, they introduce them to such work from childhood. Even in some areas where job opportunities, especially those requiring education, are lacking, this belief is more prevalent among parents. Children working in this profession are both Iranian and Afghan. They are mostly engaged in areas such as Farahzad, Ken, Azadi, and some other southern areas of Tehran. An interesting point is that work in this profession is no longer carried out in a traditional manner, as in the past; it requires completing vocational courses and obtaining certification. Therefore, Afghan immigrant children, especially those illegally present in Iran without identity documents, are unable to

participate in these courses and obtain certificates. Children entering this profession initially engage in more manual tasks, such as cleaning the shop, tying up the tools, handing tools to the employer, collecting used oil, bringing car parts from other shops, etc. After some time, they gradually perform some simpler mechanical tasks, such as tightening screws, until, ultimately, after acquiring certain skills, they enter more professional mechanical work. In this way, they do not receive any wages at the beginning. Narratives from some working children in workshops in areas like Ken, Farahzad, Azadi, 15th Khordad, Sadeghieh, and Sadi are as follows:

The employer doesn't pay me. I receive tips from people here.

Now they give 2 tomans; firstly, I worked here for nearly three months for free, then they came like this until now that it reached 2 tomans.

I receive 800 tomans per month.

I earn 100,000 tomans per week. I used to work here before... I went out, then came back again... Helping tie up, lifting, we know how to do these things.

As children continue in this work and acquire more skills, the likelihood of earning higher income increases. Initially, when they start, they don't receive much, and they are told they are apprentices. After working for a while, maybe a few months, they finally get something.

Contrary to the general belief that street children experience more violence, these children also face significant violence from their employers. Depending on the situation, experiences may vary. It seems that there is a certain culture entrenched in this profession, where

children are expected to learn the trade through verbal and physical violence. A working child in one of the repair shops in the Darakeh area described his experience as follows:

We had a boss who used to scold us harshly. We couldn't argue much with them; we'd say it's okay, it's life, it passes. They used to say, 'You're not working well, you're ruining the job, you don't listen to me.'

The working hours in this profession are also extremely long. Children start working from eight in the morning until around nine at night. Since this work is of a service nature, they also work on Fridays until one in the afternoon. Therefore, they have no weekends or vacations. Consequently, children working in this sector have very limited leisure time, which plays a significant role in depriving them of their childhood. Some narratives from working children in car repair shops in the Farahzad and Darakeh areas shed light on this:

Here, everyone is working; I come on Fridays until one or two in the afternoon, then we go home, sleep. Maybe play football.

I come at eight and a half in the morning until six or seven. Only Fridays are our day off.

In the summer, from nine in the morning until nine at night, at noon, I go home for lunch. But when school opens, I come from one o'clock onwards.

I come every day. On Fridays, I come at nine until two. On holidays, I go play, go to the park.

A social worker involved with these children in a non-governmental organization in Rey commented on their working hours:

Usually, mechanics start from nine in the morning and are there until seven or eight at night. Those who go to school go in the morning and come to work in the afternoon. Among these are children who work for their own pocket money, and some, who are in dire need, give all the money to their mothers for living expenses.

In this job, a considerable part of the work is not done inside the shop but outside. As a result, children experience both summer heat and winter cold. They usually lack safety equipment and work clothes because suitable attire and safety equipment are not available for them. These children are not covered by accident insurance, and if an accident occurs, the employer does not accept any responsibility. In some jobs, such as oil changing or polishing, their hands and clothes get extremely dirty, and this might lead to abandoning the job. A child who worked in one of the mechanical repair shops in the Tajrish area shared his experience with oil changing:

Oil changing is dirty; your clothes and hands get covered in oil. I went home; everything smelled of oil. I said it's not worth it and quit.

Due to their small and delicate hands, these children can be very useful in some tasks in this profession. For example, their small and delicate hands are useful for filling drill holes, or they can do well in polishing, or opening screws in the engine compartment where the hands of adults may not fit. Employers, in some cases, support these children and wish for them to continue their education. They even feel good about teaching them a

professional skill. A shop owner in the Farahzad area expressed it this way:

We were in this profession ourselves from childhood, like these kids. We've experienced all of these.

In some cases, employers verbally and physically abuse the children and demand work through coercion and harassment, causing much suffering to the children. This undoubtedly has negative psychological effects on them. A child working in one of the repair shops in the Pasdaran area shared the following about his previous experience working in an oil change:

The store owner behaved badly. For example, he wanted to say, 'Bring me that wrench,' he would say, 'Hey, with you!' and curse. Once I threw the wrench and came out. Before, I used to get 70 tomans a week, and he wouldn't even give half, saying he would give it next week.



Picture 14 Image of a working child in a repair shop (Photo from Nasim website)

Work in welding and waste

Since these two types of work have similarities, they are collectively examined. Most children entering the welding section either see this work as an opportunity to learn a profession for the future themselves or their families do. The narratives of some working children in this sector in the Khalazir region are as follows:

My dad said it's good; you learn something, it will be useful for you in the future. At first, they pay very little, like 200, 300 per month. Once you get through a bit, learn the job, it gets better; it becomes 700, 1,000.

I work because my father raised us here. Now I want to have my own income. I came to welding to learn something.

The goal of these children and their parents in entering such jobs is for the child to progress from apprenticeship to mastery during a period and be able to work for themselves. Children initially start with simple tasks, such as moving iron parts and working on doors and windows, and then they learn to work with welding machines. Most children working in this sector lack safety equipment, and many of them do not even use special glasses during welding, which could cause eye injuries. Apparently, this is part of the usual routine in this job. Due to working with other machines, such as cutting machines, the workplace of these children, especially in the summer, is very hot. In many cases, the children's living quarters are part of the shop or a small room above the shop, which is very dirty, soulless, harsh, and unsafe. Overall, the learning process for these children is difficult, and since they also lack sufficient physical strength, they are under a lot of pressure when moving iron parts. A fourteen-year-old child working in one of these workshops in the southern part of the city reported the damages caused by this work:

Most nights, when I go home, I can't sleep until morning because of the burning in my eyes, and I cry... My mom grates potatoes, ties them on my eyes with a cloth, and I feel a bit relieved. Every night, I say I won't go to work tomorrow; I suffer so much. But what can I do? My mom alone can't pay the rent and household expenses.

Another child working in a blacksmith shop in the Kahrizak area also said the difficulties of his work:

I unload iron; you have to empty it. I have to move these inside the shop. All of them are heavy; it's very hard; it puts a lot of pressure on a person.

Since the living quarters of some of these children are the same as their workplace, they are always available for work and do not have vacations or leisure time. Activity in the waste sector is also present alongside welding and cutting. Children active in this sector may collect waste inside the city, take what they have collected to the Khalazir area, located in the southwest of Tehran, and sell it. Khalazir is a large market for buying and selling waste in Tehran. Sometimes children may rent a cart from the employer or shopkeepers and engage in collecting waste themselves. Children working in this profession usually sleep in separate rooms alongside waste, which are very dirty, soulless, harsh, and full of pollution, and have undoubtedly had a negative impact on their mentality. Those who work inside waste shops also deal with different types of waste, such as iron, aluminum, copper, lead, cast iron, etc. During work, they may fall on the ground, or iron alloys may hit them and cause injuries. The amount of wages they receive is usually in percentage terms; that is, if they collect more waste for the employer, they get more money. Sometimes they may also receive a bonus from the customer. Two children working in the waste market in Khalazir talked about their income:

If there is more work, [income] will be more.

It's our own work now; the more there is, the more income you have.

Children working in waste garages may hire other children to collect waste for them or do this work themselves and increase their income by selling waste. When they take the waste to the Khalazir market, they offer their goods to different shopkeepers and sell the waste to whoever offers a higher price. Therefore, these children learn to negotiate from an early age and sell their goods at a higher price. A child who was looking for a

customer to sell waste in the Khalazir market talked about his marketing strategy:

We give it to whoever buys more. For example, we go to a few shops, ask about the prices, and give it to whoever buys more.

Two children working in this sector described the most significant risks of their work as follows:

Loading is difficult, and we get hurt. They are heavy; moving them is very difficult. Now, of course, I'm used to it.

The machine is dangerous. For example, you may see your smashed hand inside it. After all, iron is different; it's dangerous.



Picture 15 A picture of a working child in a welding workshop using a milling machine (Photo from IRNA news agency)

Manual Cargo Handling

Manual cargo handling using hand carts is another task that many children engage in. Three major points can be identified where children work with hand carts: in the large Tehran market, where a significant number of children work; inside flower markets, such as the Imam Reza flower market in southeast Tehran; and at transportation terminals where a few children work. Like many other jobs, children enter this work through friendship and family networks. Most children working with hand carts are Afghan children. However, Iranian children from various ethnic groups, including Kurds, Turks, and Lurs, especially from the Kuhdasht region, are also involved in this work. Iranian children working in this sector are mostly employed in the large market.

Work in this sector is relatively organized, meaning that some municipal contract companies oversee hand carts in the large market and flower market. For example, they mark the carts with license plates or provide specific work

uniforms, formalizing the work of children. The work uniforms given to children are usually oversized, causing discomfort. However, this issue is prevalent in all professions requiring children to wear uniforms, such as working in loading areas. If we observe children working under the supervision of municipal contractors on the streets, we easily notice this matter.

To work in this sector, children must pay a monthly fee to these companies, which, in a way, formalizes child labour. A child working with a hand cart in the Imam Reza flower market stated:

There is a person who sits at the entrance of the market, in that room called the council. He gives us these clothes, and at first, we pay 400 tomans to take these vests. Then we pay 300 tomans each month to work here.

Another child, working with a hand cart in the large market, mentioned the payment for work clothes:

We rent them from those guys. For 700, they give us a shirt so we can work.

Most interviewed children cited two major reasons for entering this work: one is that this work does not require specific skills, and since they lack such skills, they cannot enter other jobs that require minimal skills. Also, this work provides immediate cash income for children. Another reason is the relatively significant freedom they experience while working. Some of them left other jobs, especially workshop jobs, due to the lack of this freedom and restrictions imposed by employers or their previous work.

Children engaged in cart-pulling in the Imam Reza flower market and neighbourhoods expressed:

This is another job. There is no job; what should I do? I don't have any skills; I know how to do this cart-pulling.

Well, I don't want anyone to boss me around. Here, people work for themselves.

As mentioned, this work is almost organized, and children who violate the work rules may face consequences. For example, company patrols in the market monitor and supervise their work, dealing with children who do not comply with the rules. In this work, too, the shadow of the municipality and its agents is on the children, giving rise to various issues. Two children working in this sector shared their experience:

They took my cart once while I had a load on it. Another time, they didn't give it back and said to show where I carry the load. I didn't give it to them.

With this money, how can I cover 40 thousand tomans? Every time they take my cart, I have to hustle to gather 70, 80 thousand tomans to buy a new cart. And these carts are cheap; beware of the bigger ones!

Alternatively, some initiatives may prohibit child labour, as narrated by a child working in the flower market:

They didn't give us shirts and carts, saying we are too small.

And sometimes, monitoring initiatives on carts may be discontinued, and no further supervision may occur.

They used to be plated before, and we paid 30 tomans for each load. Now they don't plate them anymore. It's been two years since the municipality collected and took

them away. Now they don't have plates anymore. Yeah, now they're plating them again. Plating doesn't matter. If they didn't have plates, the municipality would take them. Now it's municipality property; it won't take them anymore. They're gone.

Children working in this profession in the market operate in two ways: either they buy the carts themselves or rent them and work for themselves. In the first category, children gather in a specific location and wait for customers to hire them for a certain period to move goods or wander inside the market, looking for customers. The income of these children varies during the day and depends on the number of loads they carry. However, children working for shop owners usually have a fixed monthly income, and the employer provides them with a cart. If, for any reason, their cart is confiscated, they may face reprimands and rebukes from the employer. Two children working in the large market shared their experience:

They take our cart, put it in the car, and take it away. The employer comes and says it's your fault; you are responsible; you're the one doing this job.

He says here and there... We give them money, and then they're gone. They left quickly.

Or, in the market, due to significant supervision on children, harsher reactions may occur for any mistake, and supervisors or officials may have highly inappropriate encounters with them. A child working in the large market shared his experience regarding how his supervisor dealt with him:

The supervisor hits us. For example, he says the cart should go. They quarrel and take off your shirt.

An interesting point in this work is that experienced individuals may hire newcomers and ask them to work for them. Therefore, a percentage of the newcomer child's daily income goes to the experienced ones. Two children working in the curtain seller's section of the Harnandi area talked about this:

We receive 40 tomans, give 20 tomans to me, and he keeps 20 tomans for himself.

For example, if it's 10 tomans, 3 tomans are his, and 7 tomans are ours.

There is intense competition in this work, and children compete to see who can move more loads for a higher income throughout the day. A child working in the Naser Khosrow market shared the following:

I came yesterday to carry my load, and a cart came. I told him to go; I took the load. He said no, I'll take it for 5 tomans. I said I took my load, passed by, and told the lady. She said no, ma'am, wherever you want, I'll take it for 5 tomans. Okay, I gave him my load.

This competition sometimes escalates into fights and physical clashes among the children. In some instances, certain children may become outcasts, and it is usually Afghan children who end up in this position. There is almost significant friction between Iranian and Afghan children, with Iranian children often reluctant to allow Afghans to carry the loads, leading to confrontations. The narratives of some working children in the Grand Bazaar regarding competition, conflicts, and ethnic tensions were as follows:

Yeah, there's a fight every day. Now, I had an argument with someone; he comes and starts swearing. I say

20,000 tomans, he says 10,000 tomans. Then our argument starts...

Lors and Kurds annoy us; even if we have a load, they won't let us carry it, saying this is our country, and they force us to leave. They say this is their own country.

Iranian wheelbarrow pushers bother me; they insult us, calling us Afghanis.

We don't argue with Iranian kids; it's not our country anymore. They talk, and we lower our heads, and we move away. They eventually give up.

The living arrangements of working children in this sector fall into two categories: some live with their families in the southern districts of Tehran and return home at night. When they return home, they leave their wheelbarrows in the market, possibly tying them to a fixed spot or storing them inside one of the passages, paying monthly rent for them. The second group consists of children who work away from their families and sleep inside the passages at night. Some may even sleep on the same wheelbarrows during the warm seasons. This group of children often holds two jobs. Some may work with the wheelbarrow in the morning and engage in security or caretaking jobs inside the passages at night. Two children working with wheelbarrows in the Kuwaiti Bazaar described the hardships of working in this profession as follows:

The load is heavy... I got tired of it. I lifted it once, and my back hurt a lot. I threw it twice more, and I couldn't pick it up anymore.

It's exhausting, the load is heavy, and you get tired. You have to get up at nine in the morning and be here until nine at night; it's tough.

You put a ton of load on the wheel; in this heat, you sweat, you pull, it's distressing.



Picture 16 Picture of wheelbarrow-working children in the Grand Bazaar of Tehran (Photo from the research)

Working in brick kilns

Working in brick kilns is an activity that children have been involved in since the past and has drawn considerable attention from the media and child labour activists. These kilns are mostly located in the south and southwest of Tehran. In the past, neighbourhoods like Darvazeh Ghar or Harandi were the locations of these kilns, but with the city's expansion, the kilns have been moved outside the city. Shamsabad brick kilns in the southwest of Tehran are one of the places where many working children live and work. Mr. Ghasemi, the CEO of the Hemayati Foundation, commented on the situation of the Shamsabad brick kilns to the Berna news agency:

About 150 families live in the Shamsabad brick kilns. This area is located within the boundaries of District 18 of Tehran. The population of these 150 families is about

600 individuals, of which approximately 220 are children aged two to eighteen. On average, each family has three to four children. Nearly 18 brick kilns are active in the Shamsabad area, with about 6 of them currently in operation. Sixty to seventy percent of the families working here are Iranian, and the rest are Afghan. Iranians working here mostly come from the provinces of North Khorasan, South Khorasan, and Razavi Khorasan. Kurds and Lurs are other minorities present in this area.

Many of these kilns have moved away from traditional forms and, so to speak, have been mechanized, requiring less involvement of children and women. However, a significant portion of them still operates in a traditional manner, with families working together. This arrangement results in children having little control over their income, and the employer directly pays their wages to the head of the household or their father. Two children working in the southern kilns of the city shared their income experience:

I don't know about my money; my dad takes it. He takes it and spends it on the house.

My dad comes at three until seven or eight in the morning. He comes at eight, has breakfast until nine, and then goes to the field until one. We also come from nine to one. We work until three, [then] take a break until five, and work again until eight. We drink tea for an hour and work until midnight. I don't know how much my wage is.

One of the working children explained the reasons for their work in the Shamsabad brick kilns:

In winters, because my mom buys notebooks for me, we work for that. My dad takes my money... They count the bricks, then give money.

The brick production process in traditional factories involves four stages: brick making, transporting bricks to the kiln, baking the bricks, and transforming them into final bricks. Children mainly work in the first stage, where a significant number of them bring the bricks inside molds and arrange them in rows. As mentioned earlier, work in these kilns is mostly a family affair, with children working alongside their families. A teenage girl working in one of the Shamsabad kilns described her work:

It's a family thing; they are all grown-ups, and it's like this... it was, the big aunt, who is my age, just a month or two older than me. Her sister also stacks in the warehouse... Then there is a tall guy, we call him Karbalai; he stacks in with his son, who is a year or two older than me. After that, it's us, and we stack in the warehouse. In total, we have four stackers.

Working hours in these kilns are also very long. Children are often forced to wake up early and engage in work at the kilns. One child's narrative supports this:

We work from five in the morning until eight or nine at night.

Since the residence of these children is at the workplace, they are always available to the employer, who can assign work to them whenever desired. The construction season is mostly in spring and summer, so the kilns are more active during these seasons. Working during these

seasons comes with high temperatures, and the intense heat poses one of the difficulties for children in this work. A kiln employer in this regard stated:

The job is very hard, the working hours are long, and it's all under the sun.

Some working children in this sector shared their challenges and difficulties of working in the Shamsabad brick kilns:

For example, if we put wet bricks in the warehouse, in the middle of the year when they catch fire (ignite), they spill the soil; it gets ruined, cracks, and then breaks. When they want to turn the kilns for brickwork in the middle of the winter, it cracks, it breaks from the middle. Here you see it, there you have to pour water, you have to take water all around it. Sometimes they wet it; it becomes muddy under our feet. Sometimes they don't do it, dust and dirt go into our eyes.

Sometimes, for example, bricks break badly, our nerves get damaged. We get blisters on our hands and feet. Bricks break badly. When we want to stack in the warehouse, debris falls on our feet; it gets injured. Afterward, they don't sprinkle water on the kiln when the tractor drivers come.

All our hands and feet are wounded, look. I can't hit my hand anywhere; it burns. We have to lift heavy loads; our strength doesn't reach. We can't even afford proper food.

These kilns are mostly located outside the city, and those working in these kilns have very little connection with urban society. As a result, their geographical distance has

led to the social exclusion of these individuals. Due to the lack of access to schools and the absence of non-governmental organizations in these areas, most children in these areas remain uneducated. In some cases, they may travel to villages or nearby towns for education, which, due to costs and difficulties, is limited. Moreover, many residents of these kilns face challenges in meeting various daily needs, from water to food. They are forced to go to nearby towns and villages for small purchases. Occasionally, one or a few individuals are appointed to make purchases, and they visit the city for the daily needs of the residents. Benefactors or non-governmental organizations may also visit these kilns and provide items for those working there. Regarding people's help, one of the Shamsabad residents stated:

For example, some people bring things. There's a gentleman who brings new clothes and food, groceries, and stuff. Then some take themselves, saying I brought this, I did this work. Fights break out over these; they don't give it to some. Fights break out over these.

Residents of brick kilns are often migrants who have moved to Tehran from Afghanistan or some provinces of Iran, such as South Khorasan. The residence of many of them in Tehran is seasonal and temporary; meaning they come to Tehran for work in brick kilns during the summers and return to their home provinces in the winters. Most of the children who have come to Tehran from South Khorasan and areas like Taybad and work in brick kilns spend their winters working in their home provinces on cotton and saffron farms. One of the children, who lived with his eleven siblings and parents in a cottage near one of the kilns, working over ten hours a day, narrated:

We came from Taybad. When summer ends, we return to our hometown. Working on the farm is harder. It's tough in the fields, freezing in the cold weather. There, we work in the cotton fields.

The visits of NGOs and benevolent individuals to these kilns for supporting and helping the residents have sometimes contributed to the expansion of migration to Tehran and created opportunities for exploitation by some individuals. These opportunistic individuals, by establishing connections with benefactors under the pretext of being familiar with these kilns, ask the benefactors to accompany them. This companionship often leads them to take a significant portion of the aid for themselves. For example, they might take goods from benefactors or families living inside these kilns, claim them for themselves, and ultimately sell them.



Picture 17 Picture of brick kilns in the Shamsabad area and children working (photo from the study)

Working in Agricultural Farms

Working in this sector is another type of job in which a large number of boys and girls are involved, covering a diverse range of activities such as planting certain crops, harvesting various products, cleaning vegetables and

some fruits, moving heavy loads, washing vegetables, sorting them, working in greenhouses, and more. Agricultural farms are mostly concentrated in the south and west of Tehran (such as Shahriar). Work in this sector is also carried out in the form of family networks or groups of single workers. Most of the workforce in this sector consists of Afghans, groups of Pakistani Baloch people, and, at the lowest rank, Iranians to a lesser extent. Sometimes a family might migrate from a town and settle in one of these farms, living and working there. The living place for the workers in the agricultural sector is mostly makeshift huts or tents set up inside these farms. Sometimes the lack of access to welfare services such as clean drinking water, city gas, and other facilities like proper baths and toilets poses significant challenges to these workers and children who have settled in these places. Two children working in the farms in Shahriar and Transfor Square said the following about their workplace and living conditions:

It's tough because there is no bathroom; we have to go to the city, pay for the bathroom, and then go to the bath. Some kids put water in the sun to heat it; they wash themselves.

Here, I have a room with five other people; we're single. They work in the trash factory. They gather garbage there.

Due to the physical demands of agricultural work, it is highly unfavourable for children. Some of the difficulties in this type of work, according to field findings, include long working hours, physically exhausting tasks, lower back pain, working in dusty and sometimes windy environments, working in moist fields, working under the sun with consequences like sunburn, insect resistance, encounters with some dangerous animals like snakes,

lifting heavy loads, physical pain from excessive work, the use of wastewater for irrigation in some farms, and smelling bad odours when cleaning certain products like walnuts, cutting hands during the collection of some products with knives and sickles, and other similar issues. The narratives of some children working in farms and agricultural fields regarding the difficulties of their work are as follows:

The hardest part is that you have to work in front of the sun all the time. The weather is hot, and mosquitoes bother you.

I come in the morning around seven until seven or eight at night.

When you collect these, your back gets worn out.

I work all of it; I'm at work on Fridays, I don't go anywhere.

It can be said that the childhood of children engaged in this type of work is summarized; meaning they wake up early in the morning and work until sunset. In the evening, tired, they return to their worker's residence or, accompanied by their families, go home, where they struggle to sleep comfortably due to exhaustion. Their lives lack joy and childhood games. Additionally, it should be noted that since agricultural farms are usually located in areas far from the city, this group of children, like those working in brick kilns, is detached from the mainstream of society, education, services of non-governmental organizations, and many welfare and urban facilities.

Sometimes these children clean and package some agricultural products such as peas, beans, and green chickpeas in the field or at home. They or a family member

then take the products to the city and sell them. Cleaning vegetables is the most common task for these children. They, as a family, first soak these vegetables in pools built for this purpose and, after sorting, deliver them. It should be mentioned that part of the children's work is seasonal, and they may migrate to other provinces for work in the agricultural sector, the same sector, during times when agricultural work is less in Tehran. One social worker from a non-governmental organization in the Ne'mat Abad area stated:

See, the news I have from there is that the migrating kids go there, mostly working in agriculture on the ground. For example, a kid goes from here to Qazvin, now, in his words, I don't know, but they say they go. This way, we have exactly seasonal migration; they go there, plant seedlings, and when it's time, they come back.

Or in some cases, when agricultural work is reduced, especially in winter, children may enter other types of work, such as factory work, street vending, or waste collection. The narrative of a child working in a southern Tehran farm confirms this point:

In winter, when agriculture is closed, I go to work in the garbage factory.

Sometimes, labour ministry inspectors visit these farms and give warnings to landowners not to use children for work. However, overall, due to the remote location of these farms from urban areas, their lack of connection to the urban system, and their scattered nature, effective supervision by labour inspectors is challenging. One child working in the Shahriar area commented on work restrictions in agricultural farms:

Here, under fifteen years old, you don't work because they hit you on the head. It's not possible for a young kid to work.

An issue raised regarding child labour in south Tehran is the use of wastewater for irrigation in farms, especially vegetable farms. This water, carrying various microbes, can pose a health risk to the children. Many news agencies and even the Tehran governorate website have reported that a significant portion of the lands in southern Tehran are irrigated with wastewater.¹²⁵ Therefore, it can be imagined that children and even adults working in these farms may face disastrous health risks. Demonstrating these risks requires research conducted by health experts.

¹²⁵Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency, Review on January 24, 2024: <https://irna.ir/xjcpnd>



Picture 18 View of agricultural farms at Transfor Square (photo from the study)

Working at Home

Another form of child labour, especially for girls who constitute a significant portion of this sector, is working at home. This type of work encompasses a wide range of activities, including cleaning vegetables and crops such as peas and beans in spring and summer, sorting some products at home, preparing homemade food, making decorative jewellery, and performing cleaning services for others along with their families. It seems that due to increasing sanctions and economic challenges in the country, more families have turned to cleaning and service jobs, aiming to address some of their economic problems. However, on the other hand, due to the prevalence of COVID-19 (coronavirus), the demand for cleaning jobs has decreased.

While it is true that children should not work, and their employment should be prohibited, child labour, like the structure of gender discrimination in work, also suffers

from this gender-based discrimination structure. Many jobs are not available outside the home for girls, and in some cases, when a child works outside the home, such as street work, they may be forced to abandon outside jobs due to the experience of sexual violence and turn to home-based jobs to reduce exposure to violence and rumours. A child living in Darvazeh Ghar shared the reason for changing his job from street work to working at home:

Well, my family insisted. Every day I went, and there were some issues. Because we were going a bit further, there were these guys on the street, saying things. I was scared, I'd call their names saying someone is following me. Then they'd talk behind me, saying, 'How is this girl, everyone is after her.'

Some home-based jobs also require long hours or inappropriate times. For example, sometimes a load of vegetables may arrive late at night, and children have to clean the vegetables until late at night because the vegetables need to be offered in the market early in the morning. The narrative of a child engaged in cleaning vegetables confirms this point:

For example, sometimes vegetables arrive late; we have to stay up at night, clean them so they don't spoil, and come to sell them early in the morning.

Since these children mostly work with their families, and the head of the family receives money from the employer or other individuals, these children are not paid for their work or may receive minimal wages. Some of these children residing in areas like Khan, Farahzad, Shoush, and Shahriar talked about their income:

My mom handles it. If, for example, I don't have money, we get it monthly. But if not, annually.

We clean vegetables, and then my dad sells them at work. Then he gives us the money, dividing it.

I give my income to my dad.

I have to work; I have to pay our expenses. There's nothing soft at home.

Sometimes in the job of cleaning vegetables, the distribution of work between the family's women and men exists, meaning that buying and selling vegetables are the responsibility of men, while cleaning them at home is the responsibility of women. The narrative of a child selling vegetables in Sadeghiyeh confirms this:

I sell vegetables; there's a grocery. We get them, bring them, clean them, package them, and sell them. My mom and dad clean them, and I set up the booth and sell them.

Children's participation in home cleaning jobs with their parents is also very common. In this type of work, girls usually work with their mothers. Working with cleaning agents and facing the pollution and dirt of homes is another problem of this type of work from the children's perspective. Sometimes, when they go to clean houses, they may compare themselves to other children, and this comparison can cause psychological harm. In home cleaning jobs, the supervisor usually does the heavier tasks, and lighter tasks are assigned to the child. However, even these tasks are challenging for children and create problems. A little girl who went with her mother for home cleaning described her work:

I go cleaning with my mom; my mom cleans the floor, and I wash the dishes.

In some other cases, especially in the city centre where many production workshops exist, one of the locals may take some special tasks from the production workshops as orders and do them at home. These tasks include putting socks inside their designated boxes, packaging some goods, or making jewellery. Performing these tasks is time-consuming, and they cannot handle them alone. Therefore, the person receiving the order seeks help from the neighbourhood children and entrusts them with some of the tasks. A girl who was working at home and interviewed on Taleghani Street talked about her job:

We work for Mrs... We put the socks in the box at home; we bring them, clean them, package them, and sell them. My mom and dad clean them, and I set up the booth and sell them.



Picture 19 A picture of a child along with her mother in the Khan region cleaning vegetables for sale (photo from Hamshahri newspaper)

Work in Grocery Stores

Working in grocery stores is also among the jobs that many boys engage in, particularly those who are either

illegal Afghan immigrants or migrant children from the Ardabil and East Azerbaijan provinces. Working in these stores is very exhausting and demanding for children due to the long working hours. They might work from early morning, such as six or seven, until late at night, for example, around eleven, during all seven days of the week. Two shop apprentices in the Ponak and Beheshti Street areas spoke about their work and its difficulties:

The difficulty is that you have to come early in the morning until ten or eleven at night. Since we're here, we wake up at nine in the morning to work. Until one or one and a half at night.

The accommodation for some of these children is inside the same stores, making them always available to their employers to put them to work. Due to their lack of skills in saying “no” and their unawareness of their rights, these children are forced to accept whatever the employer says. If these children work full-time, they won't have time to go to school or play anymore. In these stores, children are involved in three main tasks: firstly, when the store receives goods or inventory, they move the items into the store or warehouse and fill the shelves with goods throughout the day. Secondly, they work as couriers and deliver customer orders to them. Thirdly, late at night, they engage in warehousing and cleaning the store. Sometimes, they may assign the task of cleaning the inside of the store and its surroundings to the next morning.

Due to changes in modern and consumer lifestyles, especially among the middle and affluent classes in Tehran, households in these classes order most of their goods and daily necessities to be delivered daily or weekly and remotely to their homes. Grocery stores are the hub for these types of orders, leading the owners of these stores to employ more workers, and what better workforce

than the cheap labour of children! Children in these stores spend a significant portion of their time during the day delivering orders to customers' homes. Sometimes, during order taking and delivery, they also purchase the ordered items from other stores and bring them to the customer's place all at once. Alongside other store tasks, such as moving heavy loads, frequent back and forth trips to customers' homes throughout the day, and excessive walking make the work difficult and exhausting for these children:

For example, one's working hours are too long. Then, one is, for instance, also my courier now.

Since many purchases are made through credit cards and card reading devices nowadays, these children rarely receive tips unless they are still buying in cash and want to give them tips. Working inside the grocery store also brings other difficulties for children. The accounts of working children in these stores in the Ponak, Kamraniyeh, Valiasr, Taleghani, and Jomhuri areas are as follows:

It's tough, yeah. A bit difficult when it gets crowded; the customer spills, the Snapp (ride-hailing) spills. We have to prepare quickly; it's tough. I don't go to houses. We prepare, and they take it. It's difficult because if we make a mistake, for example, they want one item, and you put another item, then the courier goes, and it goes into our account. The courier comes back, takes the money from us, and takes it away. It reduces our money.

I move twenty-kilo oils and forty-kilo rice, hundred-kilo sugars.

The difficulty is that there is not enough rest. Secondly, you can't eat lunch and dinner peacefully. For example, when you are having lunch, a customer comes; you have to get up. Now, many times, for example, my cousin or uncle tries to come; now, if the purchase is small. But if one comes and buys a lot, you have to reach him. I mostly deliver to houses. Now that I'm here, I take more to nearby places.

Older people are a bit hard; for example, they are strict or, for example, the cost is high, or, for example, they criticize; they say why these are like this.

As mentioned, the accommodation for some of these children inside the store or a small room above it is not suitable for proper living. During the night's rest, the doors of these stores are closed, and the air inside them is not well-ventilated. The heat and the noise of the refrigerators prevent these individuals from having sufficient rest, and often, the noise of passing cars on the street bothers them. In fact, housing these individuals inside the store is considered an advantage for the employer, as they will serve as guards and take care of the employer's property. Like many other jobs, some of the children listed prohibitions or restrictions as one of the reasons for choosing this job, which the municipality had imposed on them in other jobs. Therefore, it can be concluded that organizing and collecting street children do not prevent them from working, but rather, it introduces them to other jobs that often come with more risks, longer working hours, and lack of freedom and independence. As a shop apprentice in the Ponak area mentioned:

We didn't spread the carpet; it wasn't possible; the municipality wouldn't allow it. I came and became a shop apprentice.



Picture 20 A picture of a working child at a grocery store in Dibaji Street (Photo by the research team).

Working as a Shop Assistant

In Tehran, children are not only employed as shop assistants in grocery stores but also work in a variety of other shops, including auto parts stores in the Grand Bazaar and other parts of the commodity exchange, food stores and restaurants, pet shops, butchers, poultry shops, clothing stores, confectioneries, industrial and traditional cattle farms, and other businesses. The tasks of these children in the auto parts market involve unloading merchandise, categorizing items in the warehouse, or delivering customer orders.

A child who worked as an assistant in a flower shop in a neighbourhood market said about his job:

I move the flower pots, change the soil, and keep an eye on the shop; customers come and go.



Picture 21 A view of apprentice children in the flower market of Mahallati and Imam Reza (Photo by the research team).

Some of these children may have two jobs and engage in other activities later in the afternoon. Working in food stores and restaurants mostly includes waiter duties, unloading cargo, working alongside the chef, cleaning the restaurant, and washing dishes. In large restaurants, an entire large room might be designated as a sleeping area for several workers, or the restaurant owner may provide a small room in a corner for the workers, equipped with three-tiered beds, accommodating around thirty people. Dishwashing in restaurants involves working with dishwashing liquid and water, leading to skin and respiratory issues for the children. The heat generated by cooking stoves and the smoke in these kitchens poses health risks to the children. Many of the children in this sector, particularly immigrant children, work without receiving legal benefits such as insurance, bonuses, and holidays, becoming exploited, and the value they produce

is often misappropriated by the employer due to the lack of effective oversight from institutions. A child shop assistant on Fatemi Street described their living conditions:

Right here, in these bazaar rooms [pointing to the place],
I live with my uncles and brothers.

Working in a Car Wash

Working in a car wash is another example of jobs where Iranian migrant children and foreign children are employed. Car wash systems in Iran are usually either fully mechanized, where the car enters from one point and, after being completely cleaned, is delivered to the customer at the endpoint, minimizing interaction between the child and the customer, or traditional car washes where children clean cars with a high-pressure hose and cleaning agents. Working hours in these places are long, and children work from 7 am until late at night, around 10 pm.

One notable aspect is that during the weekend, which is theoretically supposed to be a day off, the workload for this group peaks, and they are forced to work more. Children in this sector may not receive any wages and are given only a place to sleep, with their income depending on customer tips. Sometimes, tension and verbal disputes arise when they ask customers for tips.

In some instances, they attempt to earn tips by performing extra tasks for the customer, such as cleaning the car more meticulously. Working with a high-pressure water hose and cleaning agents poses risks for the children. In winter and cold seasons, the biting cold affects them as part of their work involves water. Working with cleaning agents causes respiratory problems and skin damage. Two

children working in car washes in the Farahzad area described their difficulties:

One of the challenges is the floor; if the floor is not tiled, it burns the skin.

We polish, we vacuum the cars. Sometimes, if we put more effort into it, the customer gives us more. If the customer doesn't tip, we don't have income. Right now, I don't have any... I'm forced, what can I do?

At times, they try to earn tips by performing extra tasks for the customer, such as cleaning the car more meticulously, which can lead to disputes. Working with high-pressure water hoses and cleaning agents poses risks, and the heat generated by engines and the smoke in car washes affect their health. Children working in these places often share designated rooms inside the car wash for accommodation, along with other adult workers, exposing them to potentially dangerous behaviours or even physical and, in some cases, sexual harassment. A teenager working in a car wash at the intersection of Hafez Street described their living conditions:

Twenty-three people are in one room. Everyone knows each other; my brother is also there. There are three or four of us the same age.



Picture 22 A teenage worker in a car wash (Image from Eqtesad Online)

Work in Carpentry and Woodwork Workshops

This sector encompasses a diverse range of tasks such as furniture making, upholstery, MDF cabinet making, crafting tables and chairs, and other wooden products. Many carpentry workshops are located in industrial zones, away from urban communities. The majority of children working in these workshops are either immigrants or Turkmen children who have entered this work in a chain-like fashion. A significant portion of their living space is within the workshops, and employers may build small rooms for their accommodation within a section of the workshop. The tasks in these workshops mostly include unloading cargo, cutting logs, nailing, gluing, storing goods, and loading items for shipment. Specialized tasks are generally carried out by adults, while more manual tasks, such as moving cargo, are delegated to children. Working in these workshops involves various risks. For example, children might operate woodworking machinery, and since using these machines requires specific skills and precision, children lacking the

necessary skills may injure their hands. However, working with machinery always carries a risk, even with sufficient skills. A child who worked in a carpentry workshop in the industrial town of Morteza Gerd shared the risks of his job:

With the woodworking machine, it sands this too. These things can harm your hands... My brother's hand got hit... He wanted to do things, like arranging the scrap wood; he hit his hand... They don't let me do much; the employer says he'll take my hand.

Another difficulty in this work is the presence of wood chips. The workshop environment is full of these chips, which children breathe in, potentially causing respiratory problems in the long run. Moving heavy loads, such as logs, is beyond the capabilities of children, but sometimes they are forced to do this work. Most of these workshops are located outside the city, in places like industrial centres. Therefore, children working in these workshops have very little connection with the city and urban society, and they are almost deprived of the support of non-governmental organizations. Like many other jobs, usually, the living and working place for these children is the same, and they are always accessible to the employer. Consequently, these children are more obedient and have less freedom of action. They prepare their own meals, which come with minimal variety, resulting in nutritional poverty as one of the challenges for these children.



Picture 23 A teenager working in a wood workshop in the Morteza Gerd district (Image from the research)

Work in Glassblowing Workshops

Another highly hazardous occupation for children is working in glassblowing workshops, posing significant risks to their well-being. The majority of children in this field are immigrant families living together, and it is common for girls to work in this profession as well. Some children, after experiencing the difficulty and dangers of the work or due to unpaid wages, have abandoned glassblowing and switched to other jobs. A child involved in waste collection shared his experience working in glassblowing:

They didn't pay our wages in the factory anymore, so I came to this job. We made glass, and I packaged them.

Children in this occupation have various responsibilities, including moving goods, packaging crystals in different ways, storing goods, blowing into glass, and more. A child

employed in a glassblowing workshop in the Khayrabad area described his work:

It's the material for the rods. I put them in the furnace and bring them out. I'm careful, lift them quickly so my hands don't burn, but it burned once. My hand... it burned like that.

This work also involves various risks, with severe burns being the most significant. Respiratory problems and heat exposure are additional challenges in this line of work. Two children working in a glassblowing workshop located in the Varamin intersection talked about their work environment:

It's hot here; people get cooked from the heat.

Just the heat... the heat is awful... Blowing into the glass also causes respiratory issues. Children at the end of the production chain, lifting crystals and glass off the rails and packaging them, may face the risk of hand burns if they don't use proper safety equipment, like suitable gloves, as the materials are still hot. The risk of burns is high in this job. A child working in a glassblowing facility recalled an incident:

Once, one of the kids burned next to the furnace; his hands and stomach burned.

Employers consider the burning of children and other workers a result of negligence and do not support them. Immigrant children, as they are not insured, are forced to pay a significant amount for medical expenses, and they are not paid for the days they don't go to work. Since a considerable part of the work in these factories and workshops is manual and straightforward, it has attracted

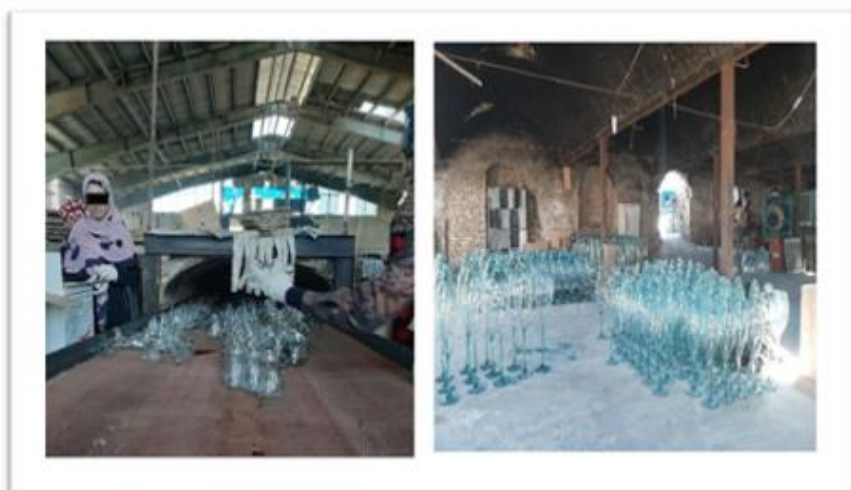
many women and children. There are no days off in this job, and children receive minimal wages on a weekly basis. The income of children working in these workshops in the Khayrabad and Eslamshahr areas was reported as follows:

They pay weekly, 200, 300, 400. Those who are older get more. Those who are new get less, for example, 100, 200 thousand per week.

300, 350 monthly.

They pay weekly. Whenever he gets paid... he gives it to my mother... whatever is there belongs to my mother.

Many of these workshops are monitored through surveillance cameras, and when labour inspectors visit these workshops, the employer's agents remove the children from the back doors. Children and many women working in this sector are not insured, and the employer usually insures only a few individuals who have a close relationship with them.



Picture 24 Images of a glassblowing factory in the south of Tehran and child labour in the Khayrabad area (Photos from the research)

Domestic Work by Children

Domestic work is one of the types of labour that a large number of children are involved in. Before delving into this form of child labour, let's first explore some concepts in this field.

Domestic work refers to household tasks performed in someone else's home. Child domestic labour is work performed by children below the legal minimum age and, in some cases, by children over the legal minimum age but under eighteen years old, under certain conditions such as servitude, hazardous conditions, or exploitation.¹²⁶ According to international treaties, such work is deemed to be eliminated. Child domestic workers are children engaged in household tasks as previously described.

¹²⁶ ILO. (2007). *Child domestic labour information resources*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

In another definition, child domestic workers are those under eighteen working in households other than their own. They undertake daily household chores, take care of other children, attend to the elderly, and perform similar tasks. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No.¹²⁷ 189, domestic work refers to work done for one or more households, and a domestic worker is any person engaged in such work within an employment relationship. Two girls from the Aminabad area shared their experiences:

Because we had a hard time making ends meet, my mom said it's better for us to clean vegetables at home until my dad finds a job. At that time, a bunch was 500 tomans, which was very little. It would be 20, 30 tomans per week. Now, it's been a year, and a bunch has become 600. Someone brings them to us... We clean them and give them to that person.

I give my income to my mom, and it covers household expenses. I have another sister who is twelve years old, and she helps us clean vegetables too. Sometimes, if she feels like it [she laughs]. If not, it's just me and my mom.

The term domestic work encompasses a broad spectrum of tasks and services, varying from country to country and depending on the child's age, gender, ethnic background, migration status, and cultural and economic context. Therefore, the assessment of these types of work depends on the nature, conditions, risks, and other factors related

¹²⁷ UNICEF. (2002). Innocenti Digest: Child Domestic Work.

to the specific job. Child domestic work refers to both legal and illegal work, making it challenging to assess.¹²⁸

Information about these “invisible or unobservable” children is limited. They are considered invisible because they are employed and work separately, often in seclusion or in a private home. Unlike street children or those working in factories and workshops, they do not work in groups, making it difficult to access and determine their numbers. Their work is also unobservable. Domestic jobs belong to the informal labour market, and therefore, they are not recorded and do not appear in official statistics. Additionally, their status may be mixed and overlooked in censuses, or their statistics may not be included.

The International Labour Organization estimates that there are approximately 250 million child labourers in developing countries. The specific proportion for children engaged in child domestic labour is not clear, but it is undoubtedly substantial. According to evidence from the International Labour Organization, girls under sixteen years old are more involved in this sector than any other group. Given the hidden nature of child domestic labour, obtaining reliable statistics on the number of children involved is difficult. Statistics derived from existing research only reveal the tip of the iceberg, reflecting concerns about this phenomenon in many countries worldwide.

Recent findings in Latin America, Asia, and Africa confirm the scope and intensity of child domestic labour.

¹²⁸ International Labour Organization Portal. Accessed on January 24, 2024:

<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/informal-economy/lang-en/index.htm>

<http://www.ilo.ch/global/topics/employment-promotion/informal-economy/lang-en/index.htm>

According to recent reports, only 175 thousand children under eighteen in Central America, more than 688 thousand children in South Africa, and 38 thousand children aged five to seven in Guatemala are engaged in child domestic labour. Approximately 250 thousand children work in this sector in Haiti, with around 20% of them between seven and ten years old. In Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, about 700 thousand children, and in Nepal, around 62 thousand children under fourteen, are working in child domestic labour in urban areas.¹²⁹

The tasks performed by these children include daily household chores, food preparation, cleaning and washing, taking care of the employer's children, accompanying them to school and carrying their bags, caring for the elderly and disabled individuals, gardening, messaging, and assisting employers in managing small businesses. In rural areas, these tasks may also involve taking care of animals, cleaning their living quarters, agricultural work, and some small-scale businesses such as carpet weaving.¹³⁰

Many of these children live either in their employers' homes or separately. Typically, these children do not receive direct payment for the work they do. Some work in exchange for shelter, care, and food, while others work for a wage. Children working in a third-party household may have been sent due to their parents' debts to the employer's home, in which case they do not receive a wage. In some cases, the employer may pay a meager wage to the child's parents or withhold it, citing various reasons, including the child not reaching the legal age.

¹²⁹ UNICEF. (2002). *Innocenti Digest: Child Domestic Work*.

¹³⁰ Blagbrough J. (2008). *They Respect Their Animals More: Voices of Child Domestic Workers*. London: Anti-Slavery International.

These children may work for relatives, family members, or strangers. In domestic work, specific working hours or a defined job description for children are usually not set. They must do whatever the employer asks them at any hour of the day. The twenty-four-hour nature of domestic work for child domestic workers has been well-established in existing studies. In Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines, child domestic workers work an average of fifteen hours every day and generally serve their employers around the clock. They often spend most of their time in the employer's home and are not allowed to go out during certain times of the day when they do not have specific tasks. They are prohibited from having friends because, in the eyes of the employer, the existence of friends may distract the children from their work. Due to the distance between the employer's home and the child's family, visiting the family is not always possible, and they have limited opportunities to return home, mostly during religious holidays.¹³¹

Their eating and sleeping arrangements are often separate from the employer's family, reinforcing the sense of inferiority and discrimination against these children. Due to the absence of family care and support, the majority of their time is spent at the employer's home, and they do not have the freedom to go out during leisure hours.¹³²

Child domestic work is influenced by several factors. Poverty and its feminization, social exclusion, traditions, lack of education, ethnic and gender discrimination, domestic violence, homelessness, migration from rural to urban areas, and parental loss are among the key factors contributing to child domestic labour worldwide.

¹³¹ Unicef. (2002). *innocenti digest: Child domestic work*.

¹³² Black. (2002). *Poverty and Its Consequences on Children's Lives*, Tehran: Andisheh.

Increased economic and social inequalities, debt, and the misconception that domestic work provides an opportunity for children's education are also factors contributing to the prevalence of child domestic labour.¹³³

Children are often drawn to domestic work due to poverty, but for girls, domestic services are considered normal and beneficial, preparing them for future roles such as homemaking. Many believe that domestic work is easier than other types of work and provides a suitable environment for girls and children. Employers do not view their work as exploiting children; instead, they believe they are helping these children and their families. Employers often perceive these children as "family members."¹³⁴

Contrary to common belief, these children are exposed to physical, mental, verbal, and sexual violence. They experience various forms of verbal abuse, including a disdainful tone, insults, threats, indecent language, and shouting. Different types of physical violence against child domestic workers have also been reported, including hitting, beating, whipping, pinching, burning, overloading with work, and keeping them hungry.

Due to the distance from their families, these children are deprived of family care and support, leading to loneliness and isolation. Findings from some studies indicate that the mental health of child domestic workers is more at risk compared to other working children. Anxiety, depression, bedwetting, insomnia, nightmares, constant headaches, withdrawal, submission and retreat, early puberty, depression, and fearful reactions to employers are common among child domestic workers. All these issues

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Bwibo, N. O., & Onyango, P. (1987). *Final report of the Child Labour and Health research*. University of Nairobi: Nairobi.

arise due to the distance from home, lack of social relationships and support, loneliness, and working conditions for these children.

The International Labour Organization has identified several hazards in domestic work that pose a threat to children, making these types of jobs recognized as the “worst forms of child labour.” Some of the most common hazards threatening children in domestic work include:

- 1) Long and exhausting working days;
- 2) Use of toxic chemicals;
- 3) Carrying heavy loads;
- 4) Handling dangerous tools such as knives, hot utensils, hammers, and scissors;
- 5) Inadequate and unhealthy living conditions and insufficient food;
- 6) Exposure to demeaning behaviours, including physical, verbal, mental, and sexual abuse.

These hazards should be critically assessed in relation to the violation of basic rights for children, such as access to education and healthcare, the right to rest, leisure time, play, and regular contact with parents and peers. These factors can have irreparable physical, mental, and ethical effects on the growth, health, and well-being of children.¹³⁵

In rural areas, domestic work poses a barrier to the education of girls, blocking their path to empowerment. In many cases, girls in rural areas only attend school up to a certain educational level, typically primary school, as continuing their education would require them to go to other areas or villages. However, parents refrain from

¹³⁵ ILO. (2007). *Child domestic labour information resources*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

sending their daughters to school due to fears of potential harm, risks, and expenses. Dropping out of school is one of the reasons girls enter domestic work or marriage at an early age. Since domestic work usually does not come with a salary for children, it does not empower them. This study examines some aspects of child domestic labour, such as a group that goes with their parents to other houses to perform tasks like cleaning. In these cases, children contribute to some of the cleaning work in those homes.

Quoting a few children engaged in domestic work in areas like Darkuh, Eslamshahr, and Shoush during interviews:

We go for cleaning with our mother. She cleans the ground, and I wash the dishes.

Because my father doesn't work, we have to work.

We've been here for three or four years. We were in another region before... That region, no, it was a bit lower. Then we went... My mother got acquainted with these aunts. Then she said we want to open an institution so that kids can come and study. Then my mother said okay... I came, registered... We got acquainted through... like these people going around the area looking for kids. Then we got to know each other like that.



Picture 25 Image of children engaged in domestic work (Photo from Hamshahri newspaper)

Housekeeping Girls

Another model of domestic work that is particularly common in developing countries is the engagement of girls in household chores. In this model, girls are obliged to perform all household tasks, ranging from cooking to doing the laundry for other family members.

Currently, millions of girls worldwide find themselves compelled to work in households during their childhood. Not only do they receive no compensation for the services they provide, but they also have fewer rights. Despite having their rights as children taken away from them, they lack support from governments and civil institutions due to the hidden nature of domestic work.

This issue, rooted in tradition and culture, may vary from rural to urban areas and from one household to another. However, under the influence of a patriarchal culture, it is often these girls who are expected to handle household matters without having equal rights to boys. In an urban

area, a fifteen-year-old girl was interviewed, obligated to handle all household tasks, including washing her brothers' clothes. She described her situation as follows:

My family considers me a servant. I have to do all the household chores. In the morning, I have to prepare breakfast for everyone. After that, washing dishes and sweeping the house, and so on.

Household work for girls implies providing constant unpaid services to other family members. This differs significantly from involving children in household chores, which leads to their responsibility and skill development. In the neighbourhood of Pasgah-e Namatabad, a sixteen-year-old girl was interviewed, and her family opposed her education, insisting she handle all household tasks. She shared her experience:

Every time I protest to my family to let me study, they make fun of me. According to them, whether I study or not, in the end, I have to go scrub floors. Do you know how many times I've been beaten just because I didn't wash the dishes sitting down?

Housekeeping girls face punishment if they deviate from their assigned duties. Meanwhile, employers, often their own parents, do not recognize their work as an asset.

Cultural traditions, gender stereotypes, and patriarchal thinking are the primary reasons for the forced housekeeping of girls. The lack of access to them, confined within the walls of their homes on one side, and the normalization of child labour on the other, result in these children not being accounted for, not only in terms of support from civil institutions but also in the count of child labour.

While the level of girls' involvement in household work depends on the cultural and economic status of families, girls forced into housekeeping do not have uniform conditions, yet they all experience gender inequality. For example, girls living in rural areas and suburbs face tougher tasks, more discrimination, and increased violence. A girl from the Ghanianabad neighbourhood shared her experience:

In their view, it's a joke that I sit down to study. My brother works, puts money in his pocket, and comes home. I have to prepare his food, serve it to him. Every time I say anything, they tell me to stand up and prepare his food. My mom says it's your duty; he's your brother.

Household work for girls is directly related to early marriage, and the less a child is involved in domestic work, the greater the risk of early marriage. Families facing cultural poverty or economic problems marry off their daughters, who were engaged in household work during childhood. They justify this decision by claiming that these girls have learned the skills of being a good wife and are ready for married life. On the other side of the coin, these are the housekeeping girls themselves who, in many cases, choose early marriage to escape the difficult situation in their paternal homes. A fourteen-year-old girl from southern Tehran expressed her views:

They tormented me so much in my father's house that I accept anyone who comes to propose. At least there I know I do the work of one person, not the work of ten people.

Deprivation of education, physical injuries from hard labour, illness, depression, nightmares, low self-esteem,

isolation, early maturity, and many other consequences threaten girls forced into housekeeping from childhood.

Causes of Child Labour

Poverty and social inequalities

Perhaps the simplest answer to the question of why child labour exists is poverty, but the more important question is: Why does poverty exist in a society, especially in societies like Iran, which have the potential for production? And through what mechanisms does poverty lead to child labour? In other words, how does poverty force families to send their children into the labour market? The answer to the first question goes back to the political economy of society. In a society where the economy is dependent on oil, unfair distribution and discriminatory distribution of oil rents, and economic opportunities are linked, economic monopolies will inevitably lead to deep and devastating inequalities and poverty. However, the discussion of the factors and mechanisms of poverty and inequality in Iran is very detailed and complex.

In response to the question of how child labour is caused by poverty, we have tried to provide an answer by briefly reviewing the theories of child labour. According to the fundamental theory of “child labour,” if the income of adults or household heads is insufficient to cover the expenses and survival of the household, the family will send their children into the labour market to compensate for these expenses.¹³⁶ According to Emerson and Souza,

¹³⁶ Basso, Keith H., & Wilmsen, Edwin N. (1998). *Sociology of Frontiers*. (Translated by Hasan Aghayi). Tehran: Nab.

child labour results in lower future incomes for these children, and due to lower incomes, their children enter the labour market. These researchers refer to this cycle as the “child labour trap.” According to this trap, adults who worked as child labourers in their childhood, due to lower income in adulthood, are more likely to send their children into the labour market.¹³⁷ Also, because the heads of these children retire early due to various diseases and physical problems, their children enter the cycle of work, and this cycle repeats without breaking.

From the perspective of expectations, parents invest in the education of their children when they expect a return on investment. If for any reason they believe that investing in the education of their children will be futile, they refrain from doing so and send their children into the labour market.¹³⁸ In this regard, a social worker in the field of child labour, active in the Naser Khosrow region, said:

It means that due to the lack of a proper job for the father and mother, seasonal jobs, and in any case, jobs that have neither insurance nor a future for them, they unconsciously have to use child labour.

Emerson and Nabb elaborate elsewhere that unfair distribution of economic opportunities leads to poverty and child labour. For example, since opportunities are unevenly distributed between regions, in places where there is no opportunity for work, such as in villages, even when children study, finding a job that matches their

¹³⁷ Emerson, Patrick M. André Portela Souza. (2003). Is There a Child labour Trap? Inter-Generational Persistence of Child Labour in Brazil. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 51(2), 375-98

¹³⁸ Ibid.

educational qualifications is limited.¹³⁹ As a result, parents decide to send them into the labour market from childhood. A child who worked in the Lalehzar region and had come to Tehran for work from the surrounding villages of Ardabil recounted:

I am now four or five years old. Sometimes I go once every six months, stay for a month, and come back again. The last time I saw my family was almost three months ago. They can't come; if my father doesn't go one day, they kick him out. My mother can't either. My brothers are here, we see each other. One of my brothers takes goods in the county and sells them. Another one works here in a confectionery.

According to the theory of “children working and specializing,” it is not equally likely that all children in a family enter the cycle of work; rather, it is more likely that some children in the family enter the cycle of work, and the family invests in others. According to this theory, it is the older siblings who usually become the forerunners of others and enter the cycle of work. Vameghi and Yazdani also showed in Iran, based on the findings of studies in this field, that most working children live with their families and have “common economic and social characteristics of these households, including: high number of family members, low education of fathers and mothers, unemployment or low-income jobs of fathers, low participation of mothers in income generation, and internal and external migration of the family.”¹⁴⁰ The

¹³⁹ Howieson, Cathy; Jim McKechnie; Sheila Semple. (2006). *The Nature and Implications of the Part-time Employment of Secondary School Pupils*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Social Research.

¹⁴⁰ Vameghi, Maroeh, and Yazdani, Farshid. (2019). Report on the Status of Child Labor in Iran: Social Harms and Inequality (Second

narrative of a child who came from Kurdistan and worked in the Tajrish Grocery Section was as follows:

Except for me, my brothers work, but for themselves.
Because they have a fiancée, they work for themselves.
Since they have a fiancée, they work for themselves. We
are five brothers and two sisters. My younger sisters. I
now make money in two or three places, thank God.

The findings of this research on the causes of child labour align with the literature in this field. According to this, factors such as poverty and low income of the family, working in low-income occupations, illiteracy or lack of education of parents, illness or disability or imprisonment of the father, death of the head of the family, abandonment of the family by the head or father of the family, seasonal nature of the head of the household's job, recent economic pressures due to the intensification of economic sanctions against Iran, the spread of the coronavirus, family indebtedness, escaping from the unhealthy environment of the family, high family population, increasing education costs, culture of some societies, and their beliefs about children are among the main causes of child labour. It should be noted that the poverty of the family should be understood more within broader systems, although sometimes it may also have biological-psychological causes. For example, the onset of illness and the provision of the associated costs can lead to poverty. Sometimes the child himself may, for various reasons, such as migration, identity formation, role models he has drawn for himself, learning skills and progressing in life, buying some personal items such as clothes or a phone, or proving himself in the family and

Social Status Report of Iran 2009-2017). Vol. 2, pp. 95-150.
Tehran: Agah.

expressing power, enter the cycle of work. Ineffective government policies that have imposed more economic pressure on citizens, especially the poor, not supporting poor families by the government, non-enforcement of laws related to child labour, and the lack of supervision over child labour continue to provide the groundwork for the continuation of this phenomenon.

Illiteracy and Low Literacy of Parents

One of the main factors of child labour is the illiteracy or low literacy of parents. For many of these parents, educational opportunities were not available during their childhood, or their parents did not invest in their education. Consequently, due to illiteracy or low literacy, they have entered low-status economic and social occupations and have minimal income. To compensate for some of the family expenses, they refrained from investing in the education of their children and sent their children into the cycle of work. In fact, these families have entered the “child labour trap.” During the field research of this study, when children were asked why they entered the cycle of work, they pointed to providing for their family’s expenses. Or when asked about the education of their parents, their responses indicated that most parents of these children are illiterate or have low literacy. In this regard, here are quotes from several immigrant children who had come to Tehran from northern cities of Iran (residence of migrants), Zanzan, Mazar Sharif in Afghanistan, and Urmia, and were working in the Herandi area:

I live with my father and mother. My dad studied until the third grade, and my mom didn’t study at all... My dad works in a tire shop.

My dad works in production; it's from these productions, sports equipment and stuff... Both my dad and mom are illiterate. My mom doesn't work.

My dad doesn't work. He didn't work before either. Now he's unemployed at home.

No one in our house is literate, only I have a little literacy; no one else. My older brother is also illiterate; he says he doesn't go to school, doesn't like it. My mom only went to the mosque, knows the Quran and such, she is illiterate...

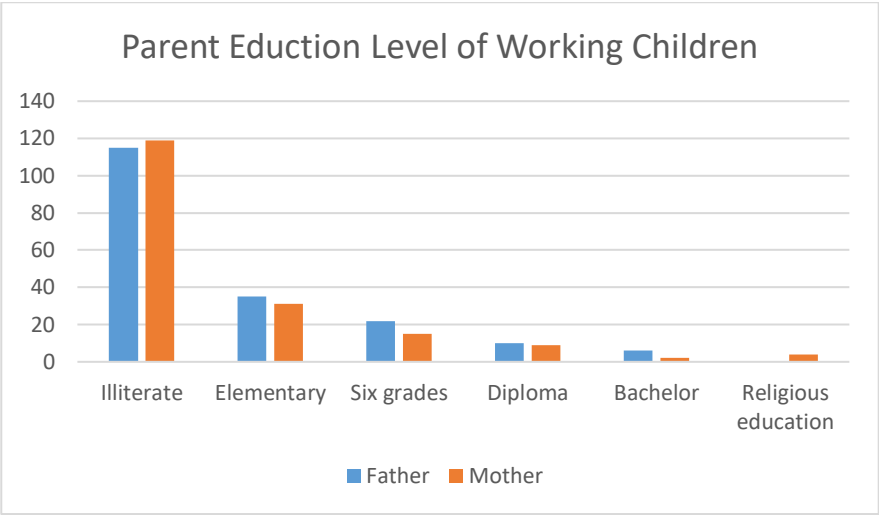
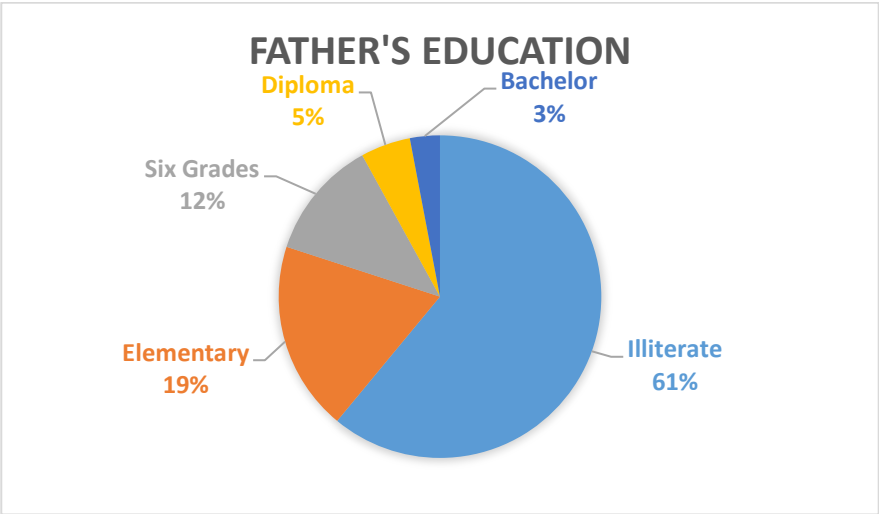
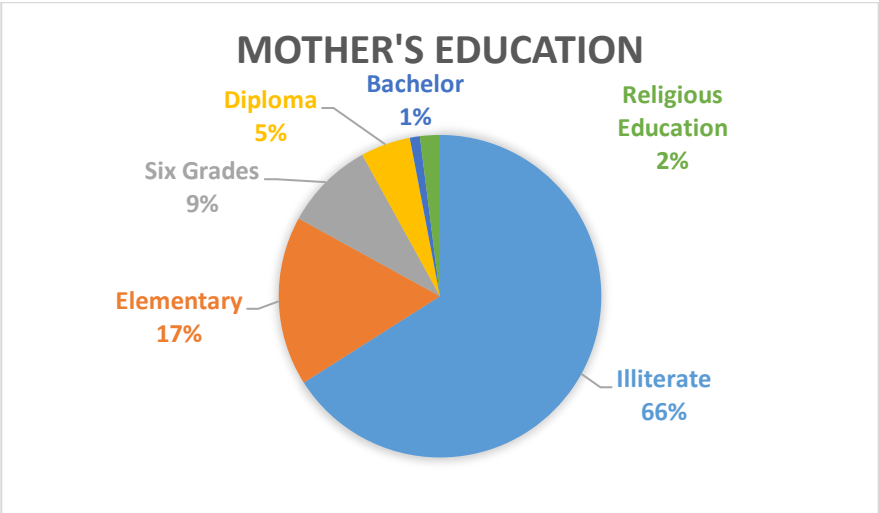


Figure 3 Parents’ Education (Based on the number of individuals).



The educational level of the fathers of the working children (Based on the number of individuals)



The educational level of the mothers of the working children
(Based on the number of individuals)

The combination of low education, engagement in low socio-economic status occupations, and unemployment has led to the widespread poverty of families, particularly in the economic inflation conditions of Iran, resulting in a broad spectrum of society entering the cycle of poverty, which paves the way for child labour. The findings below also indicate that family poverty is due to the type of parents' occupations and subsequent mechanisms, such as family pressure, leading to a child entering the workforce. The narratives of several Afghan children affirm this situation:

My father works in construction. Four of my brothers and two of my sisters.

My father is a janitor in the shopping center. He earns 1 million tomans per month. I also want to go to Afghanistan; we are tired, we work a lot. We came here for employment; we had no other choice.

He goes to work every day. If he's not sick, he goes; otherwise, he stays home. If I don't want to go one day, my mom and dad won't let me; they say, 'Go to work.' I don't say anything anymore.

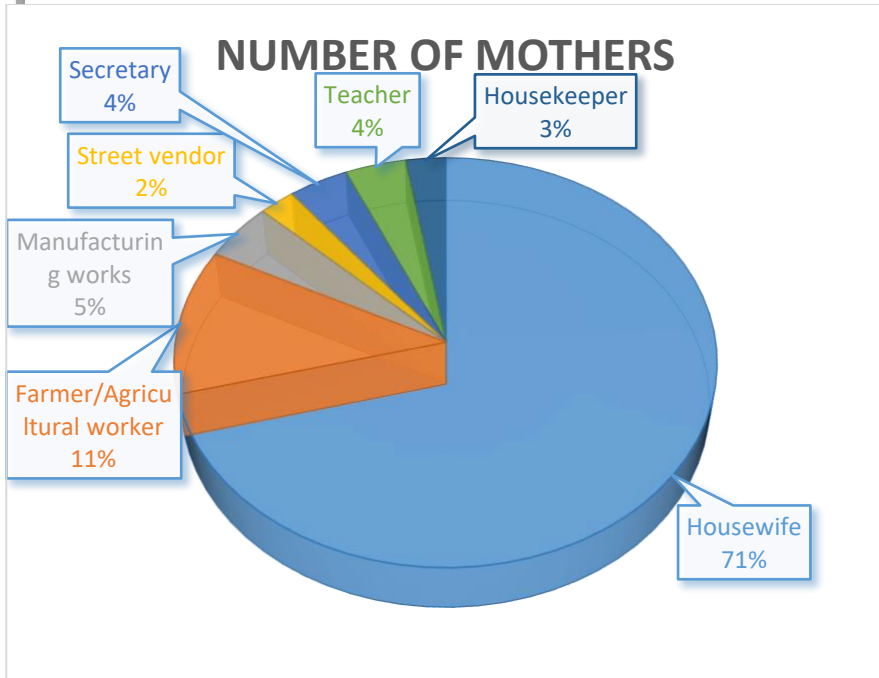


Figure 4 The occupation of the mothers of working children
(Based on the number of individuals, in per cent)

Helping increase family income

Family poverty and the lack of adequate income for parents lead them to engage in work to compensate for their children's living expenses. A significant number of children expressed that they work to help increase the family income, and one of their reasons for working is to contribute to covering the family's expenses. In many cases, they contribute their earnings to their families. Afghan children also send their earnings back to their families in Afghanistan. In cases where children work with

their parents, the parents directly receive their wages from the employer, depriving the child of having an income. The narratives of immigrant children in this regard are as follows:

We spend my money, and we send the rest to Afghanistan. For ourselves, we only buy shoes and clothes sometimes. We give 400 tomans for here.

I send my money to Afghanistan and keep a little for myself. I keep 500 tomans for myself, and I send 1,500. With that 500, I buy dinner for myself. My brother is also here, he is twenty-two years old.

I send all my money to Afghanistan. For my own expenses, I either carry loads here or do extra work. I make two rounds a day, three rounds a day, just this extra work or loading. With the money, we buy shoes, clothes; we bring home expenses here.

We give house rent. We don't spend our money. Whatever we earn, we give it for house rent and other things. Rent is 800, and annually 6 million for house mortgage.

I give my money to my mom and dad. My brother pays the landlord from it. We spend the rest on the house.

I save my money to buy a car for my dad. Sometimes my family needs my income, sometimes they don't. For example, sometimes my dad doesn't work; he takes it from me.

I give all my money to my dad.

In our house, my dad and I work. My dad collects debts, but I spend on household expenses.

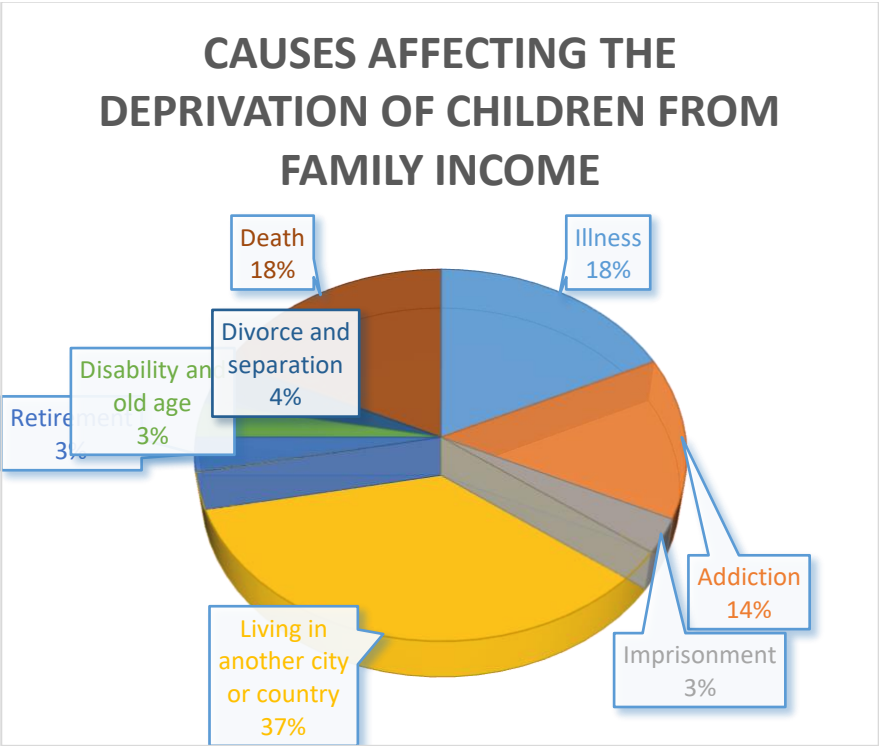


Figure 5 Causes affecting the deprivation of children from family income (N=109)

One of the employers active in the clothing sector identified economic pressure as the most important reason for child labour. Regarding the future careers of children who have learned this profession, he said that some of them continue the same job in adulthood and start their own businesses, while others, who were migrants, have returned to their home country:

Many of them work for themselves. Many Afghans have left Iran. But generally, the workers in these things, in

this environment, are mostly Afghan children, because Iranian families don't send their children to work from dawn to dusk to earn 400 tomans, 300 tomans, 500 tomans, not at all 1 million. But Afghans, no more. For example, you see a husband and wife, all of a sudden, they have five or six children; well, they can't afford the expenses anymore. He says at least I should send them to these sewing workshops to work so that they can cover their own expenses. This is the situation.



Picture 26 Afghan adolescents working in a bag and shoe production workshop in the Nematabad district (photo from the research)

Parents' illness and unemployment

The illness and unemployment of parents are another cause of child labour. Under these conditions, tremendous pressure is put on children to work. In other words, in these circumstances, they are no longer contributors to the family expenses but become the head of the family,

forced to provide for the family expenses alone or with their siblings. As mentioned, parents' illness imposes much greater pressure on children because not only do they have to cover family expenses, but they also have to provide for the medical expenses of their sick parents in the absence of insurance and other effective support. This increased pressure undoubtedly jeopardizes the health and even the safety of the child and makes them pessimistic about the world, contemplating that this world is not a safe place for them and their lives. The following narratives tell the story of the illness of parents and, consequently, the entry of children into the cycle of work:

I work for my brother; he was sick, and my dad was sick, so I work for him. It's so unfortunate! There's no money. I say, God, why did you bring us into this world; this is life! My mom has a kidney problem; she can't work; she goes to the doctor. Yeah, she was sick. The doctor said he would take her kidney. Now she is not feeling well; she still goes to the doctor, in the square of the hospital and clinic.

My dad is unemployed; he was unemployed before. We came from Afghanistan; he doesn't work. It's been two years since we came. He used to work in Afghanistan. Now he has no nerves; he doesn't work; his nerves are damaged.

So that I didn't have anyone; my dad was old, my mom was old. I didn't have anyone from myself; my older brother didn't have. I was forced to come and work.

My dad sometimes goes to work. Now I haven't let him go for a long time because he's sick; he has a disc and stuff; I come myself.

My dad has been high for three months now, his sciatic nerve, can't work.

My dad is old, doesn't work. My dad is blind now, his leg is broken... He went to our relatives' house; he wanted to go to the toilet, he came from the stairs, then fell; his leg broke. It's been a long time, about a year.

My dad doesn't work, he has a problem...; thirteen years ago, he had a stroke.

My dad is nothing, my dad is sick; he's been paralyzed for fifteen years.

My dad has been paralyzed for two years; he used to work in the workshop. He got sick. He doesn't go to work anymore; he has something on his head; I don't know myself.

Addiction of Parents

Another reason for child labour is the addiction of parents. Some parents of working children are addicted to or dependent on drugs. They have turned to addiction for various reasons, including pressures they have experienced in work and life. Addiction is a major factor in their impaired functioning, and in these conditions, they are no longer able to work effectively. Due to their lack of employment, substance use, and the costs of obtaining substances, they involve their children in work and may even exploit them. Addiction and its physical and psychological consequences, along with the inability of the head of the family or the father to provide for the family expenses, create tension and conflict in the family environment. This tension, in turn, sometimes leads the head of the family to abandon the household or put family

members in distress. As a result, other family members, such as children and women, are forced to work. The consequences of the addiction of the head of the household, in addition to its prominent and significant economic dimension, have many psychological effects on family members, especially children. As stated by some children in families struggling with substance abuse in the research, parental addiction is agonizing for them, leading to domestic upheaval and violence. Not only are they compelled to provide for the household expenses and the substance use costs of the head of the family, but they also have to endure the tense family environment. For this reason, many of these children prefer to stay away from home. The narratives of several children about their fathers are as follows:

My father is a janitor, but he doesn't work anymore. Well, he's addicted. Besides, his lungs are infected [he says with reluctance]. My mother and I work at home, clean vegetables, and contribute to household expenses. We earn 40,000 or 50,000 a week. My mother has gone to literacy classes, but my father is illiterate.

My father is addicted. I send money to my family. My father has done something with his money, I provide him his opium. He doesn't go to work at all, just sits at home, and I send money.

My father is addicted; he's gone now [with regret], I don't know where he is. My mother and I work. My mother does embroidery work.

My father is addicted; some nights he doesn't come home. He quit for a year, then started again after a year. We work. He became addicted again, and since then, we work.

Because my father is addicted, he doesn't work anymore. Therefore, we started working.



Picture 27 A teenager working in a bag and shoe workshop in the Nemat Abad area (photo from the research)

Sometimes, children working and their mothers face severe financial crises due to the family head's crisis, making their minimal and insufficient income vital and necessary for the family. In this regard, a social worker from a non-governmental organization in the Farahzad region said:

For example, a boy who works in a grocery store, because his father is addicted and cannot study, works for 100 tomans a week. When we told his mother why you send the child for only 100 tomans a month, let him study, she said, I need it; his father does not work, he is addicted.

The environment of these families is always tense for various reasons, including poverty, pressures resulting from it, addiction, wrong parenting skills, and similar cases. Therefore, children try to stay away from the tense environment, and working becomes one of the options for them in this regard. A social worker from a non-governmental organization in the Farahzad region about the satisfaction of children from work stated:

Well, this satisfaction depends on what goal is defined for the child's work; sometimes the goal is just to get out of the house and their living place. Now, for reasons such as the tension existing at home, age-related conflicts with the father and mother, he just wants to get out of this house. Now, this work, no matter how bad or good it is, is different for him.

Debts and the Death of Parents

Sometimes, the death of parents or family providers leads children to enter the cycle of work. The death of the family provider results in the loss of their income, and in the absence of effective government support or minimal assistance, the family falls into poverty, ultimately pushing children into work. In some cases, both parents may have passed away, or the child may be orphaned. In these situations, children may go to live with relatives and are compelled to work to cover their expenses. The responses of two children from the southern part of the city to the question "Why were you forced to work?" emphasize that they have been forced to work due to the death of the family provider:

My father is no more; he has passed away. I have five brothers, and I also have four cousins.

My father is dead. He was a real man.

However, children are also forced to work due to family debts, as illustrated by the narrative of a child from Mehr:

We owe twenty, thirty million. We have no money to buy a house. My father killed himself to get a house, and now we have nothing. I work to pay for household expenses, buy a bike, clothes for my sister, these are school shoes, and this is where I used to step. Now I don't have shoes to wear.

Parents' Imprisonment

One common factor contributing to an increase in child labour is the imprisonment of one or both parents. In these circumstances, children are forced to leave school to join the workforce to support the cost of living and contribute to the family's financial needs. In this regard, the most important action that needs to take place is the involvement of responsible and supportive organizations, such as the Welfare Organization, in the process of individuals receiving prison sentences. In these conditions, the Welfare Organization must play a supportive role and prevent children from suffering harm and poverty during the imprisonment of their parents. Regarding families in such situations, the judicial system should, alongside punishment and imprisonment, have supportive policies for compensating the damages inflicted on children whose parents are incarcerated and take restorative justice seriously. The narrative of two Iranian children residing in Eslamshahr and the Varamin intersection in this regard was as follows:

My father is in prison because he did something wrong. Since he went to prison, from when I was three, he will be free in another five or six years.

My father had a fight a few days ago; he went to prison. My father was a painter.

Educational Inequality and Cultural Poverty

In recent years, increasing inflation, a reduction in the education budget, and the privatization of education have led to an increase in the cost of education. Many schools charge students fees at the time of registration, and the amount paid is much higher for families who are not citizens. Other educational expenses, such as buying books and stationery, paying for transportation, and nutrition, have also significantly increased. As a result, some children are forced to work to cover their educational expenses. The narrative of two immigrant teenagers from the villages of Khorramabad, who were working in Tehran, emphasized this point:

I will have the university entrance exam next year; I need to attend some classes, buy test books. Now I have to work to cover the costs.

I work to pay for household expenses, school, clothes, and stuff. I buy clothes. I take my money, buy clothes, school, and shoes.



Picture 28 Working teenagers in a curtain production workshop in the curtain market of Koche Madar (photo from the research)

One of the active social workers in the Darvazeh Ghar area stated:

For these reasons, attention must be paid. Since the cost of education has skyrocketed, the child is forced to leave school and, due to family poverty, has no choice but to work. In other words, to fill this gap, at least three times the income of the labourer [father] and the existing expenses, one of the ways to make up for the shortfall is for the child to work. The child works to compensate for the family's expenses or the costs of his education.

Marriage

The percentage of child marriages, especially among the less privileged classes and predominantly Afghan immigrants, is higher. This, in turn, makes child marriage and the financial provision for it another area of child labour. For example, in some Afghan communities, those intending to marry, both individuals under eighteen and those over eighteen, must pay a relatively significant amount of money to the bride's father. Therefore, these

individuals work from childhood and give their earnings to their fathers, who save it for them to use for marriage in the future. The narratives of two Afghan children reflect this situation:

We need to save money to be able to get married.

We give our money to our father to keep it for us.

Cultural Beliefs

In Iran and Afghanistan, the culture of some communities involves involving children in work from an early age. For this group, their child is no longer considered a child from a certain age onwards, and they must work. However, whether culture here is an independent factor or is under the influence of the structure, especially the economic and social structure of these societies, requires more in-depth research. In situations where poverty exists and opportunities are unequally distributed, education may not be pursued, even if parents do not wish their children to work; they are compelled to involve them in the workforce. In these circumstances, culture is no longer an independent factor but is influenced by the social structure. Although some believe that such a cultural aspect plays a determining role in child labour, as mentioned, proving such a theory requires further research in this field. A social worker from a non-governmental organization in the Ghaniabad region had this to say:

Look, in Afghanistan, it seems like, for example, when a child reaches a certain age, he feels guilty if he doesn't go to work because it's in their culture. I have seen cases where a child comes here and says, 'Ma'am, find me a job.' I tell him, 'Well, you still have to study; you

shouldn't go to work.' He says, 'No, ma'am, I have reached this age; I have to work.' It's a bit of that issue, and a bit of the need; the need is greater in Iranian families, but in Afghan families, anyway, it is part of their culture, like Iranian families where, for example, when a son reaches a certain age, he goes to university. Everyone expects him to work; if he doesn't work, well, then it's abnormal. These things, at that young age, like twelve, thirteen years old, if they don't work, it's abnormal. A while ago, one of our working kids was severely punished by his father, and after that, I went to their house and talked to them. When I asked the mother what had actually happened, what caused this incident, she said, 'Yes, for example, he used to go to work in one of those Farahzad shops; this child used to be an apprentice in a shop. Then, for a while now, he hasn't been going. He plays in the alley for himself. Now, how old is the child? He's eleven. He had been severely punished because, now, it's very ugly for a boy at this age to play in the alley instead of working.'

This social worker also commented on the economic status of these children's families, noting that it is challenging to be fully aware of a family's assets, especially for migrant families who hide their financial resources.

We can never say with 100% certainty that we are aware of a particular issue or that the extent of this issue is such. In immigrant families in general, there is always a portion of their assets hidden from everyone, in families that migrate. So, I cannot say 100% that these families have no money; you can never make such a statement. But economically, they are low. This is a reason for child labour. Another reason is their cultural issue; Afghan

groups have this tradition and culture that a father retires at the age of forty and no longer works, but children have to work. It is possible that the family is not very financially troubled, but because it is their cultural issue, their lifestyle, the child goes to work. However, families covered here are undoubtedly economically weak.

Migration

Migration and its associated costs are another reason for child labour. Afghan children, whether alone or with their families, migrating to Iran, either legally or illegally, incur significant expenses. These expenses include the cost of passports and residence for legal migration and the costs of smugglers and trafficking for illegal migration. Sometimes, Iran serves as a middle ground for Afghan families, leading to Europe. They settle in Iran for a while, work to cover the expenses of migrating to Europe. Migration can push them into the trap of poverty, making it inevitable for them to engage in labour. The account of an Afghan child about their life situation illustrates falling into such a trap:

After my dad started working, my mom never worked. We had no worries; we used to go to school. When we came here, our situation completely collapsed, and it got much worse.

An active social worker in the Farahzad region explained the damages and harms caused to children as a result of migration, forcing them into the cycle of labour:

Where we are, most children are migrants. Because they are migrants, certain social damages have occurred there, meaning, due to the lack of a proper job for the

father and mother, seasonal jobs, and jobs that have neither insurance nor a future for them. Unconsciously, they are forced to use child labour. Most send boys to work outside, and girls do household chores like chopping vegetables. Usually, male members of the family are involved in these household chores. For example, the father or another male family member gets fresh vegetables at midnight, brings them home, and these children have to try to clean and categorize these vegetables until ten or eleven in the morning; they work at night. Usually, the whole family works together. Of course, rarely are they the sellers themselves, and usually, the sale of vegetables is done by intermediaries; one person has a van, another has a place for a booth, and the intermediaries usually handle the sale.

In some families, especially migrant families, all members work, and their quality of life is such that they live with minimal expenses, from food to house rent, and the question arises: why, despite the minimum expenses and all family members working, do these children live in poverty and deprivation and even lack the possibility of continuing their education? A social worker, active in the field of child welfare, responded to this question:

See, we deal with immigrant families. There are several situations; that is, we have immigrant families where, when you visit their home, everything is completely zero; that is, the living conditions are completely unhelpful, and you see the children in very bad shape. But you see, this mind says, when a family has five sons, all five of them work for it, for example, 1700 a month. For that family, the situation should not be like this; these Afghan families have extraordinary savings and savings power. For example, suddenly, we find out that

someone has migrated during Eid, gone to Turkey. Well, the cost of smuggling and such things is not insignificant. For example, I have a family that has given only 25 million, 30 million just to come from Afghanistan to Iran in the worst way. Now think about this cost; it is supposed to be for Turkey, now, I don't know more or less about it, but what I mean is that families like this are known to me. I know a family that has five sons, and all five sons work, with these conditions now, what situation is it in, and a family that is trying not to send its child to work as much as possible. Sometimes families may even have land and a house in their city, but when you ask why the child is working, they say because we came from Afghanistan, got passports, ma'am, these passports cost, he has to work and pay for the passports. That is, certain laws imposed due to entering Iran, and those laws are costly, and that cost is the whole family's, and perhaps the role of the son, because it is more prominent, has to pay it.

Children's Inclination Toward Financial Independence

Sometimes, children themselves desire to enter the workforce. However, this inclination is influenced by the social environment in which they live. In some cases, children wish to achieve financial independence. At times, their friends are already working, and this encourages these children to develop an interest in working. In certain situations, children themselves wish to acquire skills to secure a future job for themselves. However, children's inclination toward work is influenced by structural conditions, and one of the mechanisms is social learning. Inequality, poverty, and other structural factors are considered part of the structural conditions for this

pattern. For example, in a poor neighbourhood where some children are engaged in work, this work becomes a model or reference for other children. However, many children have no inclination to work and prefer to play or go to school. An employee at one of the support centres in the Farahzad region said:

But sometimes a child feels the need to provide resources for the household, and usually, those, especially Afghans who enter mechanical and cleaning work, are satisfied with that type of work because they like it. Then, in that culture and in this - how should I say - in this context, mechanical work and cleaning are some of the simplest and most popular jobs. But whether an employer hires them or not, due to low income, I personally haven't had any issues in my referrals. I haven't encountered dissatisfaction.

There are also children who seek to acquire skills in their work to increase their income and secure their future job. One of the working children in the bag and shoe production workshop in the Pasgah Namatabad area said:

Working in the workshop is better than working at the crossroads; it's better in the workshop, initially, the salary is low, but I am learning to do wheelwork so that my salary will increase.

Another child, talking about how he entered the production work, said:

My cousin took me to the workshop with him. We used to work there.

I want to become a wheelworker, earn more money.

The narratives of two other children about why they work were as follows:

In our house, three of my brothers work, my father works, and we, who got bored at home, wanted to have a sewing job, really wanted it.

Hey, it's like, during these three months of summer, we don't want to stay at home, at least some money comes in.

As evidenced by field observations and findings, the number of children who choose to work willingly is much higher compared to children who have entered the labour market by force. However, children coerced into work also pretended in interviews that they had entered the workforce willingly. A social worker active in the Shoush Tehran region, while confirming this point, stated:

Well, I think ninety percent of them do this job out of coercion. I actually talked to one of them a while ago. I asked him, why? Very easily, with a smile, he said, 'Ma'am, we have to work.' You know, his smile was very meaningful to me; they are really forced; otherwise, who would prefer to work instead of playing?



Picture 29 a child apprentice in a curtain-selling shop in the Harandi region (Photo from the research)

Informal Economy

The informal economy is a concept that lacks a comprehensive definition due to the nature of this sector of the economy, namely the informal sector, and the various forms of activities within it. However, there is much debate about this sector itself in the field of economics. Economists have provided several classifications to distinguish economic sectors. In the Marxist system, these sectors are divided into pre-capitalist and capitalist sectors; in the pre-capitalist economy, goods are produced for consumption, while in the capitalist economy, goods are produced for sale. In another classification, the economy is divided into traditional and modern sectors. In a more classic categorization, the economy is divided into three main

sectors: agricultural, industrial, and services, and there are many such classifications in the economy.

The concept of the informal economy and related terms such as unregistered, unreported, hidden, invisible, and dozens of others have recently come to the forefront.

The informal economy includes a wide variety of situations and phenomena. In fact, the informal economy manifests itself in various forms within and between economies. Schneider and Enste have pointed out: “A precise definition of this term, if not impossible, seems very difficult.”¹⁴¹

Work in the informal economy is often associated with small or unregulated workplaces, unsafe working conditions, low skill levels and productivity, low or irregular income, long working hours, and a lack of access to information, markets, financial matters, education, and technology. Workers in the informal economy are not recognized, registered, regulated, or supported under labour laws and social protection. The main reasons for the growth of the informal economy include elements related to economic conditions, legal frameworks, regulatory oversight, and some determinants of granularity such as low education levels, discrimination, poverty, and, as mentioned above, lack of access to economic resources, assets, financial services, and other business fields and markets.¹⁴²

The high prevalence of the informal economy poses a fundamental challenge to workers’ rights and suitable working conditions and has a negative impact on

¹⁴¹ Schneider, F. & D.H. Enste. (2000). Shadow Economies: Size, Causes, and Consequences. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 38 (1), 77-114.

¹⁴² Ibid.

economic enterprises, general income, government performance, institutional health, and fair competition.

More than six out of every ten workers and four out of every five companies in the world are present in the informal sector. Contrary to many assumptions, this sector has not only not decreased but is increasing in many countries. This sector has been identified with the high prevalence of poverty and extreme lack of decent work, and it has been said that without formalizing suitable employment opportunities for everyone and justice in society, it remains a kind of illusion.

Various studies also indicate an increase in the share of this sector in the country's economy. For example, a study has shown that the share of the informal economy in Iran has significantly increased from 13.6 percent in the early years of the studied period in 1991 to 29.8 percent at the end of the study period in 2015.¹⁴³

The informal economy is one of the sectors that has been one of the main attractions for child labour over the past few decades and, due to its nature and conditions, has been one of the main areas of the worst forms of child labour. For example, garbage collection and carrying heavy loads are two examples of work performed in the informal economy in which children are also among the active workforce. In a nutshell, it can be said that poverty and its manifestations, such as deprivation at one level, act as determining factors, and the informal market acts as a facilitator that has provided job opportunities for children. In this research, experts and researchers who held positions and offices in the Ministry of Welfare, the State Welfare Organization, municipalities, government

¹⁴³ Arab-Mazayari Yazdi, Ali. (2019). *Informal Economy and Inequality in Iran in Social Harms and Inequality: Second Social Status Report of Iran 2009-2017*. Vol. 2, pp. 495-516, Tehran: Agah.

research centres, labour organizations, and some non-governmental organizations spoke about the most important characteristics of the informal labour market in Iran and the presence of children in this market in this way:

Firstly, in the economy, there are two sectors: formal and informal, and the informal sector has been defined in various ways. One of the most important criteria for workshops and the informal economy is that employees are not covered by any insurance or social security, and there is no supervision, and they do not adhere to the laws outlined in labour law.

Informal workshops consider their activities, in terms of labour law, such as non-payment of insurance and illegal taxes. The informal workshop can be divided into two categories: criminal and non-criminal. The underground workshop seems to refer to illegal activities or the production of illegal goods and services, such as buying and selling drugs, which falls under criminal workshops. Glassblowing and brickmaking workshops fall under non-criminal workshops.

The informal economy is an inevitable part of any economy and is extensive in Iran. It can be attributed to the deficiencies in regulatory laws, and the transformation of informal work into formal is correct because it increases oversight, makes employers aware of the consequences of formalizing their workshops, and, on the other hand, denies child labour, which is linked to structural problems of poverty and inequality. However, the transformation from informal to formal is essentially impossible because those involved are unwilling to accept formal laws.

By “underground workshops,” we mean workshops that do not adhere to legal working conditions, do not have insurance, do not have contracts, and do not meet the minimum standards set by the Labour Council.

There are two types of workshops in the literature of the Labour Organization, referred to as formal and informal workshops. What we know as underground in Iran is informal work, which is unregistered, does not pay taxes, and may involve the exploitation of children, women, and teenagers, referred to as informal work. Now informal work includes very negative activities, including child labour and other issues related to poverty and social support. Underground workshops have neither tax nor social security records.

Workshops without identity cards and recognition, rejected in both insurance and taxes, are considered underground. The reason for their being underground is various taxes that are levied on them from various sources. Well, this area is our vulnerable area in our employment relations, and workers in this area do not reach their rights. Again, depending on the quality of the workshops, the level of damage incurred varies. The situation of women and men in this area is more acceptable than the situation of children because if they face any problems with the employer, the law supports them, but in the case of child labour, even these minimum legal requirements are not met. Based on the prohibition of child labour, their complaints are not addressed.

A significant portion of child employment in workshops is related to their employment in underground jobs; workshops that, at first glance, seem to be homes, but when you go inside, you see a large number of workers working, and there is also another part that works in formal workshops but is not registered, such as mechanics and welding, cleaning vegetables, handicrafts, and tailoring workshops.



Picture 30 teenagers working in a crystal-making workshop in Kheirabad (photo from the research)

The above description illustrates a glimpse of the informal economy and child labour in this sector. Firstly, it should be noted that the informal economy is a sector that is not accounted for in government laws, and its workshops are not included in official lists. The Ministry of Labour neither maintains a list of their names nor imposes specific supervision on them. In this sector, labour laws such as insurance payments and local taxes are not applicable. Some workshops in this sector operate as residential homes. In other words, employers in this sector establish these workshops in residential homes to evade taxes, avoid inspector supervision, and reduce the significant costs of workshop rent and various bills, a practice quite noticeable in District 12 of Tehran Municipality.

Another characteristic of this sector is the non-utilization or minimal use of modern technologies. A closer look at child labour reflects this issue well. For example, manual handling and transportation of goods, manual waste

sorting and carrying, simple sewing machines for clothing production, and hundreds of similar activities are performed without the use of advanced technology. The absence of modern technologies, a feature of the modern economy, has provided a platform for labour in this economic sector to rely on manual and traditional methods. So, who should perform tasks in this informal economic sector with minimal technology? The answer is unskilled and low-cost labour, and undoubtedly, children and migrant women are the best choices for this work.

One of the notable points in this regard is the deep connection between migration and the informal market. Waves of migration to Tehran, both from Afghanistan and deprived regions of Iran, have shaped child labour in this city and strengthened it. The informal economy also demands cheap labour, and migrants, especially women and children, are the best sources of low-cost labour for this sector. Migrants who lack skills and identity documents are often children and not only serve as low-cost labour but, if their rights are violated, they cannot pursue legal avenues for redress or demand their rights from employers. Generally, individuals working in this sector lack education, skills, and everything that would qualify them for decent jobs.

Since this sector is traditional and many activities are carried out manually and traditionally, it demands cheap labour. Who are the cheap labourers? Naturally, they are migrant citizens, Iranian families migrating from remote areas to Tehran. Most of these street workers and workshop labourers are affiliated with the Baloch ethnicity, either Pakistani or Iranian Baloch. The likelihood that waste pickers are Afghan is higher.

In workshops, nationality is not significant, and most individuals working are those whose families need children to work. However, in carpet-weaving workshops, more locals are employed, and in brick-making

workshops, more internal and external migrants are present. Evidence indicates that ethnicity is not a particular consideration at the national level.

There are many discussions about why the informal economy has expanded in Iran and provided a platform for child labour. At the macro level, economic problems such as dependence on raw materials, monopolies, inefficiency, rent-seeking behaviours in certain economic sectors, low economic growth, government credit restrictions to specific sectors, and the inability to access advanced technologies are determining factors in the growth of this sector. At the micro level, widespread poverty and its manifestations, such as lack of formal education, lack of skills, low literacy rates, and illiteracy, along with extensive illegal migration, contribute to the prevalence of the informal economic sector. On the other hand, many employers in the informal sector resist formalizing because they would have to pay higher wages, provide insurance, and meet other formal work conditions. Additionally, due to tensions with Western countries and extensive sanctions against the Iranian economy, the economy has faced numerous challenges, limiting the government's ability to effectively support formal sectors and creating conditions conducive to the informal job market. As mentioned, the result has been nothing but the expansion of the informal sector in the past decade or two, ultimately leading to the widespread and unregulated employment of child labour.

Now, in this study we conducted, firstly, we made an estimate of the level of child labour. What we estimated is that approximately 36% of children are in this economic sector. However, the information I mentioned is from the year 1392 (2013-2014), I think. Now, I don't remember the exact details, so the changes that have occurred in this past decade, many things have

changed. The difference is that this 36% can almost certainly be said to have changed to 64% because back then the share of the informal economy in the whole country was not very high, and the highest estimate was 22% and so on. This informal economy grows, in fact, it grows in various situations, but the conditions we have in our country's economy make it very susceptible, so to speak, to its expansion with various rationales.

When the government becomes weak, this sector grows, and their supervision decreases. When, for example, the economic situation deteriorates, and the regulations that regulate rights are no longer in effect, it causes a part of the market to tend towards attracting labour; that is, towards a kind of playing that does not adhere to the main principles. For it to compete or ensure its survival, this is the second reason. The third reason is when there is a large gap in the labour reserve, and the work gap has increased so much that demand for work is high that practically individuals can be taken from that gap, people who are willing to enter work in the worst conditions and with the lowest wages because they are very needy and practically have no bargaining power. The fourth reason can be mentioned as a decrease in the right to unionize and the bargaining power of the workforce. You can see the impact of each of these four factors almost.

Now, we have almost all of these four factors; that is, now, due to the economic hardship, the government has almost reduced all its supervisions, even, so to speak, the workshops and businesses that are engaged in work, in order to comply with all those government regulations, are essentially not complying with them,

they have all gone bankrupt by now. Others are close to this situation. The second one is clear, the three phases of work and then I don't know, the discussion that it creates the possibility of survival, the discussion that - those that I mentioned - essentially not recognizing the bargaining power and organization of workers, all of these have been reasons for this sector to grow.

Now, what is the story of this growth? The story is that the children who work here then have the problem that, regardless of whether they legally reach working age, they are under fifteen, which means they should not be working. Even teenagers who, to use Mr. Derakhshi's expression, who is very critical with a legal interpretation, not working and working, but anyway, in his interpretation, go to work, even their problem is the same as I said; at least the minimum wage without any work rules, with long hours, and in fact, with the lowest rights, they work. Naturally, they are not registered; they want to remain hidden and not report. So, our first finding was something like this: that is, it showed that children under eighteen are still working in workshops that are not even recognized as illegal. Let me give you a few examples. For example, in the sector, because there are several sectors, for example, in the clothing and textile production sector, I'll give an example. In the construction sector, I'll give an example. In workshops of metalworking, mechanics, urban services, product sales, motor vehicle repairs, all of these exist. Now, let me give an example; that is, these are not informal, they are not underground. For example, tailoring, municipal work, clothing production, furniture making, welding, flag embroidery, stencil printing, all of these are occupations

in which children are involved; that is, in our study, we had these occupations, and these are under the category of clothing and textile production.

The government's inability to oversee this sector, coupled with its expansion in recent decades, has increasingly led to the exploitation of vulnerable groups such as women, children, and undocumented migrants. Since there are no formal rules for monitoring this sector, individual and arbitrary employer rules have replaced official regulations. Almost all types and forms of child labour, which were examined in this study, exist in this sector: manual material handling, waste collection, work in many production workshops, street work, and work in kiln workshops, and so on. Of course, work in other sectors where children are active, i.e., formal economic sectors such as child labour in fruit and vegetable markets, construction, glassblowing factories, mechanical workshops, etc., is similar to work in the informal sector in terms of working conditions for children. In this sector, employers use various tricks, such as hiding children and taking them out through back doors of the workplace, to keep them hidden from inspectors. It is worth noting that in the waste collection sector, where there is more supervision over the formal sector, less child labour is used, and most child labourers are engaged in the informal waste collection sector, where children collect garbage at night.

Long working hours, work during unconventional hours, the use of primitive and traditional tools or low-tech tools, low wages, non-payment of wages, or raising wages in some cases, working in inappropriate and low-quality conditions, and high vulnerability are among the characteristics of work in the informal sector.

See, in this sector, due to the lack of any supervision, individuals working in this sector are easily exploited. This doesn't only apply to children; it also includes a forty-year-old man who lacks skills and is forced to work in this sector. However, children and women are more vulnerable than others. A child under the age of fifteen working here has no legal protection. Since there is no supervision over this sector, they are easily exploited; they are overworked, denied their rights, and if they suffer any harm, there is no one to be held accountable.

Because child labour is illegal, but employers benefit greatly from it, as they pay lower wages and face no supervision, they don't have the same concerns as adult workers. The way children operate in workshops, especially informal ones, is subject to minimal regulations. They typically work longer hours (around twelve hours), such as in a glassblowing workshop exposed to extreme temperatures. They receive no support in case of any harm, and they have no insurance. In formal workshops, efforts are made to employ children above the age of fifteen, and supervision is established by the city labour office, although it may not be decisive and fruitful. Still, conditions are better, and efforts are made to keep children under fourteen hidden.

Since the cost of education is prohibitive, and children are forced to leave school due to family poverty, they have no choice but to work. In other words, this threefold gap between the worker's income (the father) and existing expenses (if the head of the family works and earns 2700, but the minimum average wage is 6800)

is one of the ways to fill the gap: child labour. Because these children are not registered for insurance, their work is illegal, and they are subject to the minimum wage. Even if something happens, the employer is not obligated to pay compensation, and they are more vulnerable to workplace accidents. Employers are not required to pay compensation. I have seen children whose fingers were cut off in cutting workshops, but the employer did not pay a single rial because the child was not registered in insurance or social affairs; the child's name was not registered anywhere, and they were purely daily-wage workers. Employment relationships have been deregulated, and in these conditions, everything depends on the employer's kindness and mercy. In other words, this relationship is reduced to a master-apprenticeship relationship, and in this relationship, whether I, as a worker, am exploited or not depends on the employer's kindness and... When the relationship is deregulated, it cannot be said with certainty where and to which child more injustice is being done (to a child in an underground workshop or a child in an industrial workshop). Another problem facing children in these workshops is early aging. A child who works in cutting workshops from an early age has a body like that of a seventy-year-old by the time he reaches forty.



Picture 31 child labourers in traditional glassblowing workshops in Rey City (photo from the research)

Migration Issue

One of the most challenging decisions that any individual can make in their lifetime is to migrate from one city to another or from one country to another. It is difficult because a person who has established connections with a particular environment, feels a sense of belonging and attachment to its space and social relationships, has to leave and enter a new space that they are unfamiliar with, and they don't know the rules of daily life there. In fact, experiencing confusion and anxiety is one of the consequences of this decision for those who migrate.

Migration, at different levels, has various positive and negative consequences. Economically, migration can be considered to have positive consequences, while socially it has negative consequences. However, it's not always that straightforward. Economically, especially migration of the impoverished, is an escape from an environment with no economic opportunities, and staying there means nothing but continuing poverty and misery. Migration to a new destination can open doors to new opportunities for the

migrant and provide a workforce for the destination country. Socially, migration is leaving behind social ties and entering a field that a person has no sense of belonging to. In reality, migration is one of the major sources of disorganization in social micro-levels and communities, as it weakens connections and undermines the self-regulation capacity of communities. The impacts of this type of migration are particularly evident among the impoverished and children.

On a formal and national level, one of the explanatory theories of migration is the dependency theory, which explains migration in terms of presenting dependency theories or models. From the perspective of theorists in this approach, migration, especially the migration of villagers to cities, should be analysed within the framework of global capitalist relations and the dependency of underdeveloped countries. This group of theorists believes that the causes of migration cannot be separated from its effects because migration, on the one hand, is a result of the unequal development of capitalist countries and underdeveloped countries, and, on the other hand, it is a factor in the spread and deepening of unequal development. Therefore, in determining the migration process, it is necessary to first focus on the issue of underdevelopment because it is in this context that unequal relations are constructed and established between different parts of society.

One of the ideas presented in this approach is the centre-periphery relations in the development of underdeveloped countries, as suggested by Samira Amin. Capitalist countries have a dominant (centre) and underdeveloped countries have a subordinate (periphery) status. This situation has also affected the internal structure of countries, creating advanced and developed poles of capitalism (usually cities) and underdeveloped areas (usually villages), resulting in a kind of regional

imbalance. This leads to the migration and movement of labour from deprived areas, such as rural areas, to advanced urban areas. Paul Singer, another theorist of this approach, distinguishes two sets of factors related to the origin that cause migration, which are distinct from each other:

1) *Recessionary factors*: These factors occur when the rural population, due to a relative improvement in health conditions and the growth of agricultural production, has excess labour, and as a result, additional labour migrates to cities due to the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas.

2) *Transformative factors*: These factors are effective when modern capitalist production methods penetrate rural areas, leading to changes in production methods and techniques. Here, the goal is to increase labour productivity through capital-intensive industries, thereby reducing the number of workers and causing the migration of surplus labour from rural areas to urban areas.

In dependency theories, in summary, migration is a compulsory matter that arises based on the underdevelopment of one environment (village) compared to another environment (city) and non-capitalist dependence on the capitalist sector. It is entirely an exploitative issue, and its continuation further enhances underdevelopment.¹⁴⁴ A significant portion of children engaged in various activities in Tehran have experienced migration, and for them, migration has been a link in the chain of work.

Internal migration has been one of the significant patterns of child labour since the 1940s, and usually, rural

¹⁴⁴ Lahsaizadeh, Abdolali. (1989). *Theories of Migration*. Shiraz: Navid.

migrants lived more in informal settlements because housing costs were minimal, and they were engaged in traditional jobs such as bricklaying and kiln work. Among them, foreign migrants and refugees also play a significant role, but now rural-to-urban migration has decreased. Given inequality and poverty, even urban residents need child labour, and children are involved in unpaid household work.

Migration takes various forms, and as mentioned, it has different causes and consequences at various levels and domains. One form of migration that child labourers experience is international migration; that is, the migration of Afghan children to Iran, which is one of the most heartbreaking forms of migration globally because it threatens their lives. When asked why they migrated to Iran, the responses of these children are mostly related to the poverty and unemployment of family members, the war-torn environment, and the lack of the possibility of continuing education in Afghanistan. An Afghan child working as a street vendor in Fatemi Square explained the reasons for his migration as follows:

If we didn't have debts, yes. Now, for example, our debts are high. We had two stepbrothers, one of them was from our father, and the other was separate from our mother. We were small, almost five or six years old; we couldn't work yet. Both of them got married, became independent. Then our father had to borrow a bit from them. Our father lost his nerves back then; he didn't settle accounts with them. They came to Iran afterward. Then their debts stayed there, and it fell on our father. Then our father had to deal with them a bit; he couldn't. He suffered losses; he kept borrowing, couldn't repay. Now, in today's currency, we had about 200, 300 million

in debt. At that time, one toman was worth a bit; it was almost 100 million. We took a bit and gave it to them.

‘Why didn’t you work in Afghanistan?’

There’s no work there, it’s all misery.

I did this job in Afghanistan. Selling balloons, there was no money at all. There’s war in Afghanistan; there’s no work anymore.

I saw there’s nothing in the village, so I came here. I saw our patience was running out.

Taliban came, destroyed the school, fighting, it’s no longer safe.

I want to stay here. There’s no work in Afghanistan.

I like working, yes. I work now, there’s no work in Afghanistan. What should I eat? There’s no work there at all.

I had gone, but... what... twice... I had attended two classes, but learned nothing... Because there would be war, and sometimes they would close the school... . We couldn’t go anymore... . Our house’s door was locked; we couldn’t go to school. It was because of the war. Our father also decided, told me to go to Iran... , at least there is a little better there... . It was mostly for our education... . He said that here, you can’t learn to read and write, go to Iran, at least learn a bit. There, I wouldn’t work at all; I would just study and go to the mosque to learn the Quran and such. I didn’t learn anything, but my brother finished the first part of the Quran, but I couldn’t finish. But I was better in school... .

I didn't tell you something at first; sorry for lying to you. A few years ago, like five or six years ago, a few of my older brothers came here. They were living here. Later, my brother and I came to Iran. I was living in my aunt's house. After a while, my brother was living in my older sister's house. Then, when my brother had an accident with his friends and passed away, my father was here at that time. They randomly called my mother, said he's in a bad condition for no reason, come to Iran. He wants to close the Afghanistan-Iran borders at six in the morning; you can't do anything. They were also desperate; they quickly packed, gathered their stuff, and came here. Now we had more means, gave some to the neighbours... , our aunt and them took our hands, we gave them their money again.

Another reason for the migration of Afghans to Iran is their common language with Iranians, as the common language facilitates social communication with the host community. Social workers in the Herat and Shush regions also recounted the reasons for the migration of child labourers as follows:

One hundred percent needed to send their child. Even though the children were there when we called them, they needed to send their children, otherwise who is willing to have money, have a situation, leave their child in a foreign land. Because they did not have a proper job for the parents, seasonal jobs, and anyway, jobs that have no insurance, no future for them. Unconsciously, sometimes they are forced to use child labour.

The way Afghan migration occurs is also worth pondering. They sometimes migrate with their families, sometimes

with friends and relatives, and sometimes individually. Chain migration is the predominant form of migration among Afghans. For example, initially, a few members of the family migrate. Then other family members or relatives migrate because the individuals who initially migrated provide them with relative information and facilities for their work and accommodation. Since these migrations take place in a network or chain, as a result, some forms of work are related to specific groups, cities, or ethnicities. For example, child garbage collectors are mostly from Herat province, while those working at intersections are more related to Kabul. A child labourer in Tehran's grand bazaar said about the way he migrated to Iran:

Only I came from my family, with my relatives. This is my cousin. My uncle is also here; he lives with us, inside the same house. My uncle's work is the same cycle. We are all in a cycle.

Another child labourer in the Shahrak Gharb area said in the same vein:

I came to Iran with two, three, four of my cousins. Three brothers, one sister; two brothers are in Iran, one in Turkey, and one is in Afghanistan. One brother works in a bakery, one works in construction, and one is an Osta (military term) in Afghanistan. My brother goes to work for himself. I came with my uncle.

Other narratives about migration are as follows:

I came to Iran four years ago with my friend secretly. I work here; there's no work anymore. I knew someone, my friends brought me to work.

I've been here for four years, but my father and brother were here before. After a while, they came to Afghanistan; that is, they worked here. After four years, we all came to Iran.

We've been here for a long time; we've been here for a long time. We have no documents.

I came to Iran alone a year ago; my parents are in Afghanistan.

We've been coming and going a lot. We've been here for a year, two years, three years, one year, then we go again.

I came six months ago. I came alone; my family is in Afghanistan.

I came to Iran because there was no work. I've been here for five years with my uncle. My uncle's name is... . My mother and father are in Afghanistan. They didn't come... , they won't come anymore. You know, I had to save money.

Afghan children mostly migrate to Iran illegally because legal entry faces many issues and challenges. One of the reasons for illegal migration is the significant restrictions on visa issuance for migrants, and in some cases, the associated costs are so high that the child and their family have to work for months to afford it. Therefore, illegal migration becomes an alternative for them. The illegal migration of Afghans and their children to Iran is one of the strong migration trends. At the macro level and in the country's management, there seems to be a deliberate intention for the entry of these migrants, as there is no effective control at the borders. The flow of illegal

migration has provided very cheap labour for various economic sectors, including the informal sector. Many service agencies and contractors in Tehran's municipal areas either misuse this cheap labour or exploit these migrants. Moreover, this flow has led to the involvement of migrants and child trafficking networks. The economy in this area is very powerful, generating substantial profits for traffickers or "smugglers." Two child labourers in the Khulazir region shared their experiences in this regard:

The whole route is unfortunate; we have to be on the road for a week. It's easier where it requires more money. The first one from Pakistan is difficult; it requires less money. The places where I come on foot through the mountains. There's no bread, no food; it's all hunger. They put fifteen people in a car. Three in a box. By the time you get here, you're ruined.

I want to go back to Afghanistan.... It's good if mom and dad are here. If you don't see for two years, you'll miss it.... Going through smuggling from there to here is tough. Mom and dad can't come; they're spending money. I had just come; I went to Turkey, then from Turkey.

In some cases, Iran serves as an intermediary for Afghan families between Afghanistan and Europe, especially Germany. Some of them may work individually or as a family for a while to cover the travel costs to Europe. Here, too, migration takes place illegally, relying on smugglers. From mass media and social networks, we also see and hear about the extensive dangers threatening this category of migrants. The narratives of some children in this field were as follows:

I want to go from Iran to Germany, Turkey. There was one here working with us, went there. Now he receives 30 million tomans, a technical job. His parents are in Germany; he went there himself.

I came to learn welding, then go there and do welding. Let's go to Turkey again. I've been here for a year; then let's go. It's much better there... , the pay here is low.

Germany is good too because my uncle is there now. I can study. I can become something; but countries like Iran and Afghanistan, you just have to do labour. Labour is not bad, for example, you don't get anywhere. If you get somewhere. Now that I'm working hard. My family can help a bit. When you know you can't help, you get very frustrated.

We went to Turkey, then came back. We went to Turkey; they fooled my father, said come to Turkey, we have acquaintances, we'll take you to Germany. Our life will be good in Germany. Then we went there, the guy cheated us, took all the money, ran away. Went to Germany, we stayed there. I told my grandmother to send money there. We came here illegally. After that, my uncle said, let's go to work, work together. I said okay, uncle, let's go. I told my mom too. My mom agreed, said if you go, it's good, both your father and you work.

Once we tried to go to Germany; they caught us at the border and sent us back to Afghanistan.

I really... really want to go back to Afghanistan. My heart wants to go to Herat.

Another type of child migration is internal migration. This type of migration doesn't only involve Afghan children but also includes Iranian children. Migration from underdeveloped provinces with fewer job opportunities to Tehran has always been a prevalent trend in various forms of migration. Migration to Tehran occurs from almost all provinces, but it is more common from provinces such as Ardabil, Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and Lorestan. This section of migration has also led to certain types of work being associated with specific ethnic groups. For example, Kurdish children are more likely to work in the fruit and vegetable markets, while Lur children are more engaged in the bazaar and street vending, and Turkish children are more involved in some production workshops, such as bag and shoe production. Two children, one Kurdish and one Farsi-speaking, shared their experiences in this regard:

We are from Qorveh, Kurdistan. Not all of the hand labour belongs to Kurds. There are other places too, Turks are there, Sabzevaris are there, but it's mostly Kurds, 70 percent of it is Kurds.

My older brother came first. His friend had brought him. Then I called my brother, and he found a job for me, so I came too.

We are from Sabzevar. We migrated nine years ago because there was no money anymore. They introduced us to come here, said it's good here. At that time, we were two. Then gradually, we became four. It's terrible; I mean, it was very good there, our manners, our personality. Then my father's work, my mother didn't work at all. We didn't have any worries; we went to school. We came here, and our situation completely deteriorated; it got much worse. It got so much worse

that we all regret it now. Now, we don't even think about going back to our hometown.

A Turk child working in a grocery store in the Vanak area shared his migration experience:

"Originally, I'm from Ardabil. I've been in Tehran for a long time. My parents came a long time ago."

The migration of "Ghorbati" or "Kooli" individuals from the northern provinces of the country to Tehran is another form of internal migration. They have been migrating to Tehran since the past and continue to do so. They work in Tehran for several months of the year and then return to their place of residence for a while before migrating back to Tehran. The lifestyle and work of these migrants in Tehran have formed a distinct subculture. They live in specific neighbourhoods, such as Darvazeh Ghar and Atabak. They may have multiple wives, and the number of children among them is significant. Often, these women and children work and contribute to the family's expenses. Their work is mostly in the crossroads or terminals; they sell goods or clean car windows or engage in street peddling. In an interview with one of the "Ghorbati" children, a street vendor in Atabak Street described his migration and work experience:

"I clean car windows. It's not much; it's been about a year since I came to Tehran. I don't go to school. There's no money in going to school; my dad says it's better for you to work from now."

Afghan children may also migrate to different cities within Iran to find work or seek better opportunities. One Afghan child working in a flower shop was asked, "Where did you work before?" and he replied:

At first, we went to Mashhad. We were there for a couple of days. Then there was a problem there... there was no document... they wanted to send us back at the border. Then we came to Isfahan. There was no work there either. We came back to Tehran again. We started working here. Afterward, we stayed....

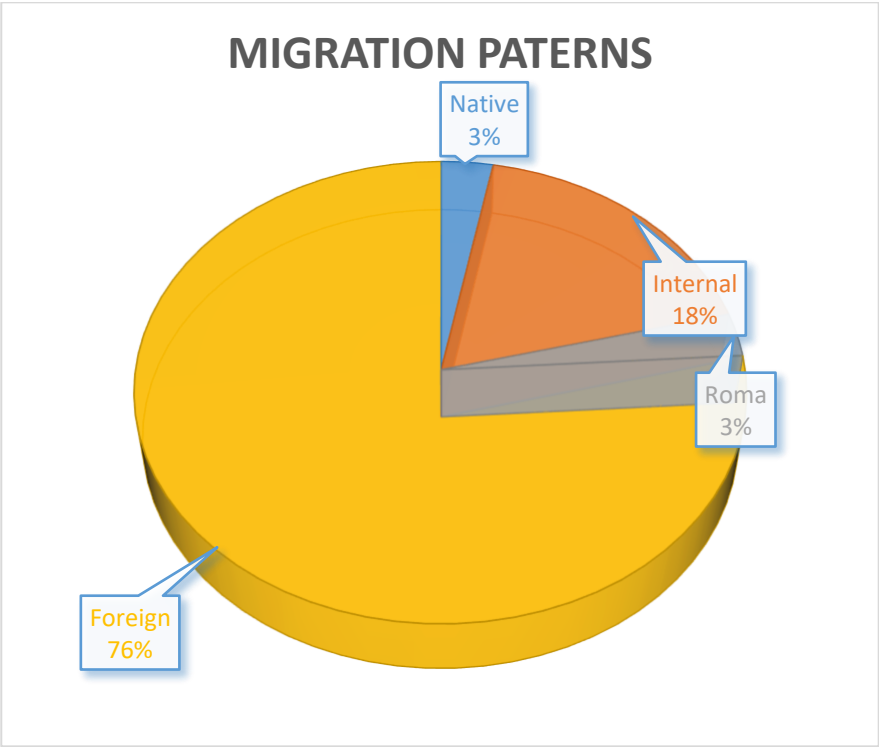


Figure 6 Migration patterns

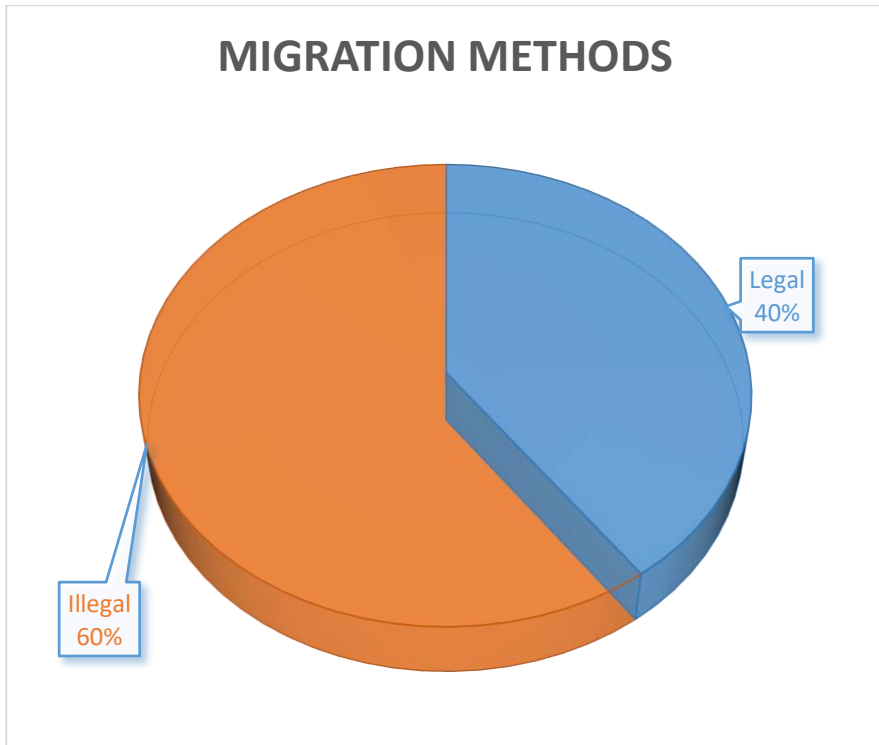


Figure 7 Migration methods of children from Afghanistan to Iran

Another important aspect of the migration discussion is the absorption of migrants and how they are received in the host or destination society. For many migrant-receiving countries, it is crucial to integrate migrants in a way that aligns with their culture. Labour, migration, and education laws play a significant role in the absorption of migrants. In Iran, there are still major issues with these laws that hinder effective migrant absorption. For instance, the regulations in the Foreign Nationals' Employment Fourfold List only consider a limited number of difficult and challenging occupations for migrants. Migration laws impose restrictions and difficulties, leading to instances where migrants are detained and repatriated to their home countries.

Although educational directives have been issued for Afghan migrants, they still face numerous challenges in

this regard. Some evidence indicates that Afghan migrants, especially the second generation, have made some progress in Iranian society and have managed to integrate to some extent. For example, there is a noticeable educational gap between the first and second generations of migrants. In 1390, 62% of foreign migrants in Iran were literate, compared to 44% for the first generation and 74%¹⁴⁵ for the second generation. However, it is unclear whether these findings apply to all migrants, especially undocumented ones.

Many migrants working in various occupations such as waste collection, bakeries, or on the streets have minimal interaction with citizens and social institutions, both in terms of work and life. On the other hand, oppressive labour laws, lack of social support, and migration contribute to further exclusion, preventing them from having housing, opening bank accounts, utilizing insurance services, and more. Consequently, they lack the minimum rights of citizenship and are considered a marginalized group. In terms of healthcare access, a young Afghan waste collector shared the following:

My brother has dialysis; he's thirteen years old. We don't have a residency card; we have a passport. We went to the Special Diseases Foundation, but they didn't do anything. Every time he goes, they take 140 thousand tomans for dialysis. Then we have to pay for car rent and other expenses. We went to social welfare, which

¹⁴⁵ Sadeqi, Rasoul; Abbasi Shavazi, Mohammad Jalal; Salavati, Bahram. (1397/2018). *Iran in the Context of International Migrations* pp. 118-142; in Abbasi Shavazi, Mohammad Jalal. *Changes and Status of Population in the Islamic Republic of Iran*. Tehran: Institute for Research and Specialized Management of the Country's Population.

charges 140, otherwise it was 270. We go to Shariati Children's Hospital. Now we go three days a week.

Another Afghan child working in similar conditions shared:

My father is sick, has had blood cancer for three years. The cost of his medicine is around 6 to 7 million. My mom and uncle used to send money before, but my dad didn't work.

Afghan migrants face not only significant limitations in terms of citizenship rights but also cultural biases and painful judgments from Iranian citizens. In everyday interactions, many Iranians ostracize and may subject them to violence, both directly and indirectly. Some individuals use the term "Afghani" to denigrate and expel these people. The life experience of an Afghan girl working on the streets was as follows:

They call us Afghani. We have no power, no documents, we're uneducated, and we can't say anything to them.

Other Afghan girls shared similar experiences:

They [officials] tell us if we're bothered here in the park, it's better to go to our own country. I say our own country is not safe. If it were safe, I would go there, not stay here.

We don't tell anyone to go because it's not our country.

I have no documents, so they won't let me go to school. I studied up to second grade in Afghanistan.

Iranian society is not only limited in its view of Afghan migrants; another group includes Pakistani migrants

working in farms in the south of Tehran and its surrounding areas. These migrants, who mainly migrated to Iran as families, have not integrated into Iranian society at all. They are deprived of all citizenship rights and are completely isolated due to language and cultural differences. Working as families in agricultural farms, when the agricultural season ends, their children engage in waste collection and other similar activities.

Afghan children serve as a major source of income for their families, both in Iran and Afghanistan. When they work and earn money, a significant portion of their income goes to their families to help with daily expenses. Parents also use this money for daily living expenses or invest in improving their homes or saving for their children's future. In recent years, due to extensive inflation and the devaluation of the rial, the Iranian currency no longer has much value against foreign currencies. As a result, the money sent by migrants to their home countries is no longer a substantial amount, leading to the return of many migrants to their home countries or their migration to other countries.

My mom returns to Afghanistan for Nowruz. There's nothing here; the money has no value; money here has no value in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's money has value.

For example, if I work 100, I take 80 home. I keep 20 for myself. If I work 50, I keep 10 or 15 for myself; the rest I give to my mom. I spend my money; I go to the club and play. My dad saves my money for the house.



Picture 32 a teenager working in a bag and shoe production workshop in the Nematabad district (Photo from the study)

Age

Age, ethnicity, gender, race, and similar factors often determine our life path, opportunities, and life chances, as they can form the basis for the distribution of social resources and, consequently, either enhance access to social resources or lead to deprivation and, as a result, social exclusion.¹⁴⁶ A more crucial discussion involves the relationship between age and work, and fundamental questions such as “At what age should a person start working and earning income?” and “Can work disrupt the child’s personality development or contribute to the direction of personal growth?” Many studies and literature in the field of childhood indicate that engaging

¹⁴⁶Giddens, Anthony. (2017). *Sociology* (Translated by Hasan Chavoshian). Tehran: Ney.

in work considered as child labour can disrupt the child's personality development, accompanied by various risks. As mentioned, child labour is "often defined as activities that deprive children of their childhood, potential, and dignity, and are harmful to their physical and mental growth"¹⁴⁷. These types of work hinder children from attending school and deprive them of other aspects of childhood, such as play and joy, as well as safety.¹⁴⁸

Many past studies show that children typically start working at a young age. For example, Hosseini, by examining the situation of child labour and street children in Iran in the provincial centres of Tehran, Mashhad, Shiraz, Ahvaz, and Rasht, has shown that the average age of child labourers is 13.5 years.¹⁴⁹ Vameghi and others, in a study on street children in Tehran, showed that 5.8% of these children were under ten years old, 45.3% were between ten and fifteen years old, and 48.9% were between fifteen and eighteen years old.¹⁵⁰ Another study showed that 25% of child labourers in Kerman were under thirteen years old, and 75% of them were between thirteen and eighteen years old.¹⁵¹ Children are engaged in work at

¹⁴⁷ International Labour Organization Portal, International Confederation of Trade Unions, 2008.

¹⁴⁸ Diallo, Yacouba; Etienne, Alex; Mehra, Farhad. (2013). Global child labour trends 2008 to 2012. *International Labour Organization*.

¹⁴⁹ Hosseini, Seyyed Hassan. (2004). "The Situation of Working and Street Children in Iran". *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 5(19), 155-173.

¹⁵⁰ Vameghi, Maroeh; Dezhman, Masoumeh; Rafii, Hassan; Roshanfeker, Payam. (2015). "Rapid Assessment of the Situation of Street Children in Tehran (Causes and Hazards of Child Labour on the Streets)." *Social Studies and Research in Iran*, 4(1), 33-57.

¹⁵¹ Zand Razavi, Siamak; Rahimpour Anaraki, Nahid. (2011). A Comparison of the Situation of Iranian and Afghan Working Children in Kerman Province Based on the Four Principles of the Convention on the

an age when, according to many international conventions, working is prohibited. Not only do they work, but they start working at very young ages. Such children are more exposed to danger because they do not have a precise understanding of the risks of work, and they cannot defend themselves well against work hazards. Some narratives of working children about the age they started working illustrate this point:

I started when I was seven or eight years old.

I started working when I was eight or nine years old.

I've been working here since I was a little kid. Everyone knows me, shopkeepers, police, everyone knows me.

I started working at the age of eight. I sold fortunes, dishcloths... I also cleaned windows.

I started working at the age of six. I went to school, came home from school, then went to work. I sold fortunes, dishcloths... I even cleaned windows.

I started around thirteen or fourteen years old.

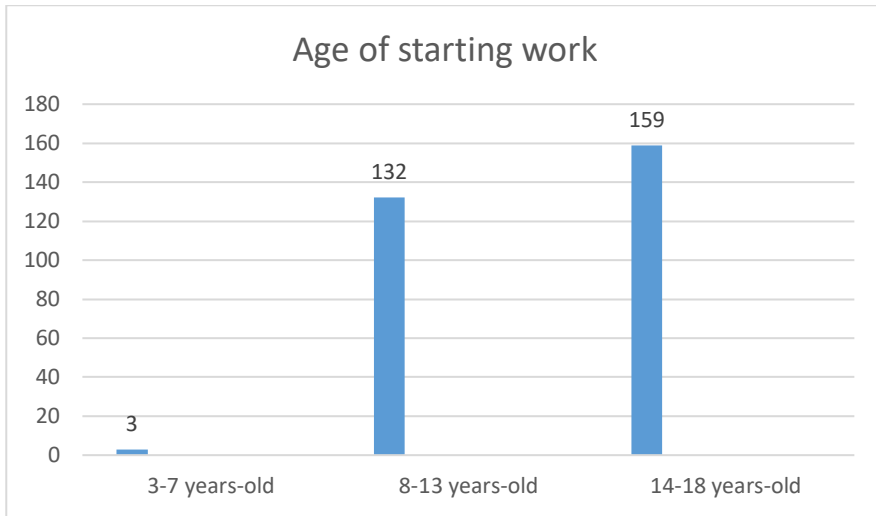


Figure 8 Age of starting work among children (N=294)

The various narratives above show that children start working at very young ages, and in some cases, working has irreversible effects on these children. For example, when a child was asked about the age he started working, he had no accurate perception of his age, indicating that, cognitively, the child has not reached sufficient maturity for growth. The narration of a child working in the Tehran metro reinforces this point:

- How old was you when you came here for work?
- Twenty days.
- You was only twenty days old when you you've been working here?!
- Yes.

The above narrative shows that working has become an obstacle to cognitive growth, as the child does not have an accurate perception of age. It should be noted that not all children necessarily start working at very young ages, and some of these children begin work at older ages. The narratives of two Afghan migrant children about the age they started working were as follows:

"I didn't work before. When I came to Iran, I started working; it was last year when I was fifteen."

"I've been working since I came from Afghanistan. It's been a year, I was fifteen back then."

The above narratives show that migration has led the child to enter the cycle of work, and the younger the child, the less understanding they have of the risks of work, exposing them to greater danger and harm. A social worker from a non-governmental organization in the Sohravardi area stated in this regard:

"But age is very important in this context. You see, children whose age is lower may not know the type of relationships, may not know self-care, may be forced by their parents, but an adolescent goes this way, comes in front of parents and says no, I want to take my money myself. Somewhere, he stands in front of the employer and says yes, I want to take my money myself."

One of the tailor employers in the large market of Tehran explained about the risks of child labour at a young age:

For example, imagine that, for instance, with such behaviour, they are forced to interact and socialize with people older than themselves, witnessing things they shouldn't see anymore, those kids. For instance, if I drink alcohol, my drinking party starts here, and after working hours, that poor apprentice is standing there seeing things they shouldn't. Or, for example, if I lift my girlfriend, hypothetically, I bring her into the tailoring shop, my apprentice has to go there and watch. Now, what things they might see in the midst of that, only

God knows. A child who starts working, by God, you can't say anything anymore.

In many cases, the age of the child determines the type of work they engage in. Some jobs require a level of skills and physical abilities that many of these children lack, such as working in construction or on farms. In certain jobs, like those performed by street children, the absence of an employer allows children of any age to enter such work. In certain tasks, such as working in glass and crystal workshops, more reliance on the child's skills is needed, as their fine motor skills can excel in these tasks. Therefore, the age of the worker, along with the skills and abilities required for certain jobs, plays a crucial role in shaping their work. Since children lack these qualities, employers may not hire them, or the child and their family may conclude that the child lacks the capability for such work, and the employer will not assign tasks to them upon inquiry. As a result, this factor leads children to enter other types of work that may not require specific skills, but may expose them to greater risks in some cases.

A child working in waste collection on Herat Street explained the choice of his profession:

"I started working in waste collection because there was no other job for me. I was small, and no one would hire me."

A child street vendor working on Enqelab Street described the reason for working on the street:

"I initially went to work as a mechanic, but they said I was too young; come back when you're a bit older."

Two child street vendors working in the Zafaraniyeh area also explained:

“My older brother goes to work in construction, but he told me I couldn’t join because the work is tough.”

“Because I wanted to go into tailoring, but my aunt and others went there, ate their food, and didn’t pay her. Well, they said, ‘until you grow up a bit more,’ they said, ‘your age is under sixteen, seventeen; you can’t work. Because of that, I sell scarves. But well, working is not a fault.”

A child working on agricultural fields in Shahriar talked about this:

“Here, those under fifteen don’t work because they check IDs, and kids under the age can’t work. Young kids work in the waste sorting facility.”

The culture and perceptions that families and even employers have about children also play a significant role in determining the age at which children start working. Regardless of a family’s financial needs, the income of the family will also be a determining factor. Many parents believe that children either need to acquire skills from a young age to secure a better job in the future or need to have income and savings to establish an independent life in the near future. Parents of these children themselves often worked from a young age, covering their families’ expenses. Many of them experienced various job-related hazards and, when reaching middle age, retired from work because, in some cases, they were no longer physically capable of working. An immigrant child explained the reason for his work:

“My father is sick; he can’t work. He has a disc problem and hasn’t been working for several years, so we have to provide for the household expenses.”

A child who works in a mechanics shop in Yusufabad narrated:

“My father said school is not useful for you, and you can’t find a job with it. Come and learn something. So I came here.”

Even in some cases where families do not specifically need the income from children, the culture and beliefs of the family dictate that children should work from a young age and acquire skills. One social worker in the Solqan region stated:

“Even if the family is not financially struggling, because it’s their culture, their lifestyle, the child goes to work.”

A child working in a car repair shop in Khan explained the reason for his work:

“Because I saw others doing it, did you go to work? Everyone went, so I said, since everyone is going, let me see what it’s like. The boss told me to come work with him. Then, a while later, another one came. So now, there are two of us.”

In some cases, age is considered an advantage for child labour, while in others, it becomes a basis for discrimination against them. In jobs where there is no employer, such as street work, the income for children is higher. Even in these situations, families encourage children to undertake such work, instructing them to perform these tasks. A fortune-teller child working in the metro at Fatemi Station explained:

At first, I used to come to work with my mom. I earned more than her, so I stayed in this job.

A child working on Fatemi Street also talked about his income:

Well, I earn more than them because they are older, and they don't get much money. I am younger, so they give me more money.

This is clearly observable among some migrant families who use their children for work on the streets, as they know that by evoking people's compassion, they can have more income. Even in some workshops, the young age of children is considered an advantage, leading some employers to pay more attention to them. In this regard, an employer stated:

If I use them, it's because I want to give them a good feeling and such. I definitely won't give them heavy work. Like here... it's more about making them feel good by shaking their hands, otherwise there's no need for it. Usually, I personally try to create a better atmosphere for the little kids, and it's the same elsewhere, to have a better environment for them.

However, the opposite view exists as well. Another employer expressed:

It doesn't matter to the employer if, for example, this child needs rest, needs to play, needs... Of course, when mom and dad don't care, well, the employer also says, if the parents think this way, well, I'm the same way.

In general, age is a fundamental factor in discriminating against children. For example, in many jobs, especially those done for employers such as work in production workshops, farm work, greenhouse work, and similar activities, the wages or salaries of children are much lower

than those of adults, even when the child works as much as an adult. Some children in this context stated:

The adults' wages are much higher than ours.

Our wages are significantly different from theirs; they receive at least 3 toman per month, while we get much less, like 700 to 1 toman, for example.

I get 800, 850. There are one or two older ones, they get 1, 1.2 toman.

In this regard, an employer in the tailoring sector mentioned:

When a child enters this job, they receive 200 to 250 toman. Adults receive up to 500 toman in a week.

Additionally, since children often work for their families and are compelled by their families, the family keeps the child's income for itself and does not give the child the right to manage or spend it. In many cases, children send their income to their families through exchanges if they live in Afghanistan, or when they return to their country, they give all the saved income to their families. An employer active in the field of bag sewing explained the payment of child wages:

They take it themselves, and their fathers take it too. Fathers sometimes take more. In general, we give their wages to their fathers because they themselves say it this way.

Some working children also talked about their income:

I do bank transactions, I send it to them, to Afghanistan.

I keep whatever I want for myself; if not, I send it to Afghanistan. I don't need money here. I'm working, and whatever I earn, I send it to them.

I give it to my mom. I don't keep anything for myself. What should I keep here? I'm working; what am I going to get?

In conclusion, child labour is a significant factor in disrupting their growth in various dimensions, including physical, emotional, cognitive, social, etc. Working deprives children of many of their rights, such as the right to education, play and joy, security and peace. Children do not like to work, but poverty and misconceptions about children force them to work. They often complain about the hardships, difficulties, and risks of work, knowing well that, like many other children, they have the right to study and play, but they must cover these fundamental rights and work.



Picture 33 a young child selling flowers along the path to Behesht-e Zahra (Photo by the research team)

Ethnicity is another social determinant. However, ethnicity is not independent of other social determinants, such as age and gender. For example, some ethnic groups may send their daughters to work more than others; for instance, Western families may send their daughters to work more than Afghans. Therefore, social determinants are interconnected and can reinforce each other in perpetuating discrimination. In Iran, inequalities are intertwined with certain ethnic and religious groups, but ethnicity alone does not explain inequalities; rather, a

significant portion of these inequalities is based on a central-peripheral pattern.¹⁵²

Today, class, gender, ethnicity, race, and their common intersections have become the most important factors shaping discrimination. In Tehran, children from various ethnic groups are engaged in work, and some forms of work are associated with specific ethnicities, highlighting the significance of social determinants in shaping our social world. In Iran, major ethnic groups involved in various occupations include Westerners, Kurds, Lurs, Turks, Baluchis, and, of course, some migrant groups like Afghans and Pakistanis. Afghans themselves are divided into several different ethnicities.

Iranian ethnicities like Turks, Kurds, Baluchis, and Lurs are relatively well-known in Iranian society, but the Westerners, mentioned less frequently as an ethnic group, are less recognized. Child labour is prevalent among this group, and they mostly reside in neighbourhoods like Darvazeh Ghar, Shush, Khak-e Sefid, and Atabak in Tehran. Although Westerners are not a homogenous group and come from several cities and tribes, most of them are from Babol city. Identity documents like birth certificates and ID cards hold little meaning for many of them. Intra-group relations among them are strong, and they usually spend some time working and living in Tehran before returning to Babol for certain ceremonies.

Major ethnic groups in Afghanistan include Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks, but these are not the only ethnic groups in the country. These ethnic groups also differ in terms of religion. Pashtuns, constituting about 40% of Afghanistan's population, are the dominant ethnic

¹⁵² Omidi, Reza. (2019). "Examining the Effects of Social Factors on Inequality in Iran in Social Harms and Inequality" in *Second Social Status Report of Iran 2009-2017*. Vol. 2, pp. 436-464. Tehran: Agah.

group in the country, and most political posts in Afghanistan are held by Pashtuns.¹⁵³ Similar to Iran, Afghanistan also faces significant inequalities among ethnic groups, and one of the marginalized ethnic groups is the Hazaras.¹⁵⁴

Pakistanis, mostly Baluchis, constitute another part of the child labour force in Tehran.

An important aspect of the discussion on ethnicity and child labour is the link between certain jobs and specific ethnic groups. For instance, many Afghan waste collectors in Tehran come from Herat city and its suburbs. Kurds from Kurdistan province or the city of Qorveh are more involved in bricklaying. Turks are engaged in manufacturing and grocery stores. Lurs, a subset of Kurds, and some Afghans work as street vendors, while Westerners and some Afghans are involved in mechanic jobs. Pakistanis mostly work in farms, and some are engaged in street work.

When asked about the ethnicities more involved in waste collection in Ekbatan region, a waste collector mentioned:

We are mostly from Herat, but those behind the trucks are from Kabul.

A Roma Kowli explained the type of work they do:

We mostly work around crossroads and terminals, selling fortunes, gum, and offering readings.

¹⁵³ Riyahi, Mohammad Ismail. (2002). Jogis of Mazandaran. *National Studies*, 3(12), 1-21.

¹⁵⁴ Islamic Republic of Iran News Agency, Accessed on January 24, 2024. <https://irna.ir/xjcpnd>

Regarding child labour in sewing workshops, one employer said:

Many Afghans have left for Iran. But generally, in workshops that are informal, where the work environment is not good, there are more Afghan children. In such workshops, children work from scratch, learn the work from zero to one hundred. Most of them are now my apprentices; their brothers are in Germany.

The above narratives clearly illustrate the inequalities existing among ethnic groups in labour. Afghans, as a migrant group, face more oppression and are often involved in challenging and laborious jobs, such as waste collection. In the informal sector, where rights and benefits are minimal, job security is low, insurance is absent, and risks are high, marginalized groups like Afghans are more active. Waste collection is one such informal job, and in this sector, Afghan groups, especially those who have been displaced, are engaged.

The narratives also highlight the differences in working conditions for Iranian and Afghan children. Iranians, in general, are less likely to engage in difficult, labour-intensive work. Most Iranian children are involved in jobs that offer better conditions, such as motorbike deliveries or work involving machinery. They may aspire to work for a year to save money and achieve a specific goal, reflecting differences in economic situations and aspirations. Afghan children, on the other hand, often find themselves working in difficult conditions due to economic challenges and a lack of alternatives. The narratives also underscore the role of ethnicity in shaping employment patterns, with different ethnic groups being associated with specific types of work.

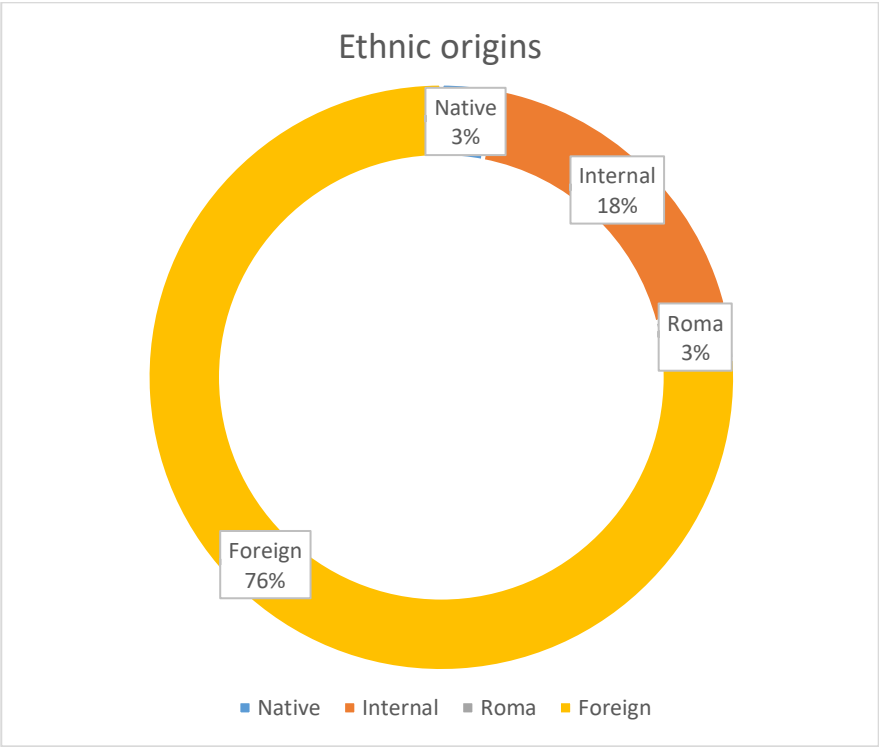


Figure 9 ethnic origins of working children (N=303)

One of the social workers from an institution located in the Farahzad area, providing support to working children in that area, mentioned:

“Most of the kids here are Afghan. Currently, among our working children, we only have three cases of Iranian kids, out of sixty-one.

A Ministry of Labour employee also commented on the ethnicity of Baluchi children involved in labour:

The Baluchi children, sometimes referred to as Pakistani, are mostly without Iranian identity cards. The majority of these street workers and workshop labourers belong to the Baluchi ethnicity, whether they are from Pakistan or our own Baluchistan.

Two notable points regarding ethnicity and the nature of work are worth considering. These points address the question of why certain ethnic groups are more active in specific types of work. The answer to this question ultimately relates to the social networks involved in certain jobs. Initially, individuals from a specific ethnic group may engage in a particular job in Tehran. They then expand their involvement and, in turn, invite more relatives and fellow ethnic group members to join the workforce. This creates a self-reinforcing chain in that particular line of work. Another aspect is the residential location of ethnic groups. For instance, if a particular ethnic group settles in the Farahzad or Kan neighbourhoods in Tehran, children from that ethnic group are more likely to be engaged in mechanical work and automobile repair. Since part of the Afghan population resides in these areas, their children are consequently more involved in such activities. The central city, especially the 12th district municipality, is more dedicated to market activities and related support functions, such as production workshops and warehouses. South Tehran, on the other hand, is associated with brick kilns, agricultural work, and similar activities. In other words, the patterns of land use in different parts of the city play a crucial role in attracting population groups and shaping the nature of work. This discussion is further explored in the context of the forms of labour.

A social worker from a non-governmental organization focused on children in the Farahzad area shared:

Most children working in workshops are Afghan. Most Afghan children enter jobs like street sweeping, mechanics, and, as a third priority, hairdressing, for a few reasons: Firstly, these jobs are easier to learn, offer higher income, and apprenticeships in these professions are attained much faster than other skilled trades. In

general, these centres find it easier to accept Afghan labour.

Another significant aspect of the discussion on ethnicity and labour is the ethnic contradictions that manifest through child labour. These contradictions are not limited to work but also extend to schools, neighbourhood relationships, children's games, and other interactions. Here, the focus is mainly on ethnic contradictions observed through labour. As mentioned earlier, in societies like Iran and Afghanistan, ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping our social world. For instance, groups or individuals categorize themselves with a particular ethnic group and classify others into another ethnic group. Their behaviour can be influenced by judgments, preconceptions, or biases towards that ethnic group, leading to interactions based on either fairness or prejudice with that ethnic group or individual. Since many children are engaged in ethnic groups' activities, intra-ethnic relationships exist among them, forming the basis for social contradictions. Certain geographical areas may be reserved for specific ethnic groups, and resistance may arise if another group enters that area with its work. For example, Pakistani Baluchi children work at Saadat Abad intersection, and if another group goes there to work, there may be opposition to their work. In many cases, specific individuals control certain intersections, renting them out to children or a particular group and may rent them to another ethnic group at a higher price. For example, Afghan children do not work on Saturdays, dedicating that day to personal and household matters. Consequently, the owner of a specific intersection may rent it to another ethnic group, such as Afghans, at a higher price on Saturdays. As mentioned, working in ethnic groups has led to the emergence of contradictions in the workplace. A statement from an Afghan child

working with a handcart vendor in the labour market illustrates this:

They are okay, they don't do anything. But these Kurds and Lors [Lurs] harass us. They say Afghans are rubbish! Why did you come here? Go back to your province. I tell them I haven't eaten your daily bread, God provides for everyone's daily bread. They hit my cart, and I hit back.

Another Afghan Tajik child, when asked about his relationship with Iranians, stated:

I argue a lot with Iranians. They insult me. We fight with them.

Another Afghan child, when describing his relationship with other citizens and ethnicities, said:

They are bad people. Iranians themselves are good, but these Lors and Kurds are bad people.

The reason for such perceptions among Afghan children regarding Lurs and Kurds is the conflicting interests in their work. Many Iranians believe that the presence of Afghan workers in various jobs has resulted in fewer job opportunities for Iranians, and if there are jobs, the wages paid to them are lower because Afghan labour, working for lower wages, is more prevalent. Consequently, Iranian workers consider foreigners as one of the factors contributing to the scarcity and lower pay of jobs. A Lur child in this context mentioned:

"These Afghans have ruined our work; they work for free. They don't get paid much anymore. They give more work to them."

The following account, narrated by an Afghan child, reflects another form of ethnic discrimination against Afghan children:

“Nothing, what can they do to them? After a month, they give them residence cards. No one can touch them anymore. In Turkey, it’s because... if you get a residence card here, they won’t mess with us. They catch us everywhere now, the police and all, saying you’re Afghan, you have to leave.”

With a tone that suggests this is a common occurrence, “they catch us everywhere now; the police and all,” indicates that the police and authorities are increasingly targeting Afghan children. The child further explains that once they obtain a residence card, they become untouchable and that this card has provided them with a form of protection against harassment and deportation. The child also emphasizes the discriminatory treatment faced by Afghans, stating, “saying you’re Afghan, you have to leave.”

This comprehensive overview sheds light on the complex interplay of ethnicity, child labour, and the social dynamics surrounding these issues. It reveals the multifaceted challenges faced by Afghan children in Tehran, encompassing not only the nature of their work but also the intricate social, economic, and cultural factors influencing their experiences and perceptions.

Gender

Gender, like age and even more deterministically, is considered one of the primary social determinants and the basis for discrimination and inequality. Social researchers, including feminists, distinguish between “sex” and “gender” to show how gender differences in

physiological aspects have become the basis for discrimination against women.¹⁵⁵ A clear example in this regard is child marriage or early marriage, which, by necessity, has a significant impact on work, labour, and other life opportunities. Traditions, beliefs, and poverty in families lead to early marriage of children, depriving them of education and opportunities available in childhood and in the future that they could undertake. Under the influence of traditions, beliefs, and poverty, children marry earlier and are deprived of education and future job opportunities.¹⁵⁶ In all child labour activities, gender plays a determining role in the child's presence in the work environment, the nature of work, workplace hazards, and harassment, the number of years a child can work, and the child's income.

Field findings and observations indicate that child labour, especially in forms such as waste collection, mechanics, welding, blacksmithing, and similar occupations, predominantly encompasses jobs considered entirely masculine.

In other words, these are predominantly boys working outside the home. However, girls are also engaged in various household chores or tasks related to the home. This is mostly a result of cultural beliefs about men and women, as traditional cultural beliefs in many societies have dictated that the responsibility of men is to engage in work outside the home and provide sustenance, while women's duty is to engage in household work or participate in activities that do not necessitate their presence outside the home. This has led to less attention

¹⁵⁵Ritzer, George. (2016). *Contemporary Sociology* (Translated by Mohsen Salasi). Tehran: Chavoushgaran.

¹⁵⁶ Ahmady, Kameel. (2017). *The Echo of Silence: A Comprehensive Study on Early Marriage of Children in Iran*. Tehran: Shirazeh.

to the work of girls due to its hidden nature, and their situation and statistics remain largely overlooked by researchers. Often, research findings on child labour indicate that boys are more engaged in work than girls. For example, research by Vameghi and colleagues on street children's situation shows that only one-fourth of these children were girls, and the rest were boys.¹⁵⁷ Hussein's research findings also show that only 5% of girl children were engaged in work.¹⁵⁸ This is while, if the number of girls doing household chores is taken into account, the overall balance will undoubtedly shift towards a higher number of working girls. This is because common traditions, prevailing beliefs, and cultural issues have led many families to consider their daughters as servant-like figures for other family members, and all work, even washing their brothers' clothes, falls under their responsibility. Housemaid girls are those who, due to the dominant male-centric view in the family, do not have the opportunity to be present outside the home and do not receive any remuneration for the work they do in the home.

Of course, it should be noted that girls may be engaged in tasks such as working at home and working in some production workshops that are less visible to society, and therefore less attention has been paid to studying them and their work arrangements. However, overall evidence suggests that it is mostly boys who are more engaged in tasks outside the home than girls. A child specialist in this regard stated:

¹⁵⁷ Vameghi, Maroeh; Dezhman, Masoumeh; Rafii, Hassan; Roshanfekr, Payam. (2015). "Rapid Assessment of the Situation of Street Children in Tehran (Causes and Hazards of Child Labour on the Streets)." *Social Studies and Research in Iran*, 4(1), 33-57.

¹⁵⁸ Hosseini, Seyyed Hassan. (2004). "The Situation of Working and Street Children in Iran". *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 5(19), 155-173.

In Afghan society, they usually don't send girls out to work as much; it's mostly the boys who are sent for external jobs. But, you know, girls are also involved in household chores like cleaning vegetables and stuff. When it comes to vegetable cleaning, around midnight, the father or someone in the family goes to get fresh vegetables, brings them home, and they have to work hard to clean and categorize them until around ten or eleven in the morning. Then, they deliver the sorted vegetables. It's a night shift, and usually, the whole family works together.

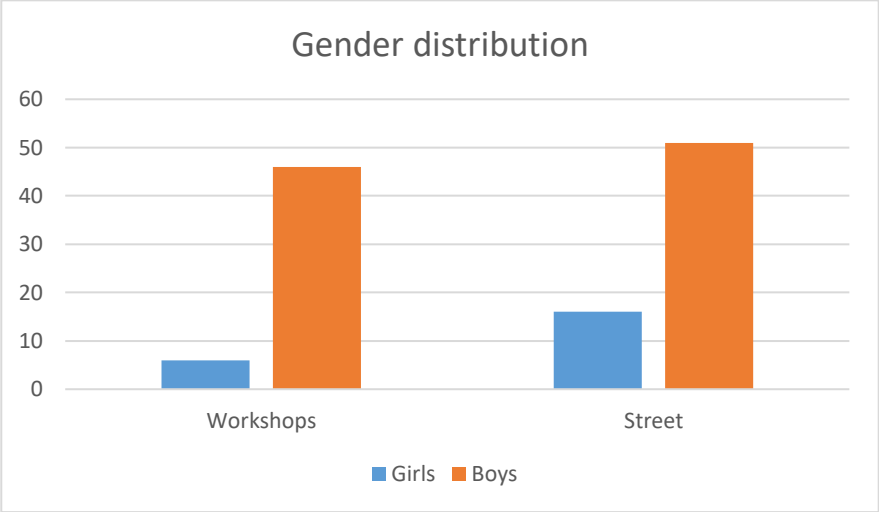


Figure 10 Gender distribution of children based on two forms of work (number of individuals)

Another social worker from one of the child rights organizations also commented on this:

Our admissions currently consist mainly of males. Out of the 132 individuals we have admitted, approximately twenty-five or twenty-six are girls, and the rest are boys. Girls are less inclined to be admitted for education, and their involvement in work outside the home is also

limited. This tendency is primarily shaped by the cultural norms of Afghan and even Iranian families, where they tend to send more boys to society. Typically, individuals either self-identify, find us on their own, or are referred by someone else.

Gender plays a significant role in the type of work children engage in. In general, boys are more involved in external activities such as waste collection, mechanics, manual labour, and work in some production workshops like bag and shoe manufacturing, grocery stores, brick kilns, fruit and vegetable markets, and the like. This is because the nature of these activities is predominantly masculine, and some working children even sleep at their workplaces during the night shifts. On the other hand, girls are more active in tasks like sewing, household work such as vegetable cleaning, and crafting jewelry and related activities. In family-based work, such as farming, both girls and boys may be present. In some jobs like street vending, both girls and boys are also present. A social worker from a non-governmental organization shared the following narrative about gender and child labour:

Our kids, seven of them are girls, the rest are boys. Now, one of our girls, who is also quite young, eight years old, sells items on the street. Another case is a street vendor who goes to sell with her father. The others do household chores, like taking orders, doing embroidery, making decorative items and jewelry, or some sewing tasks. In most tailoring workshops, there are more boys, but we did have girls in some of the sewing workshops.

One of the girls living in the E'dam Square, engaged in domestic work, expressed her perspective:

I want to work outside myself, but my father doesn't allow me and my mother to go outside. He says he doesn't want us to work outside.

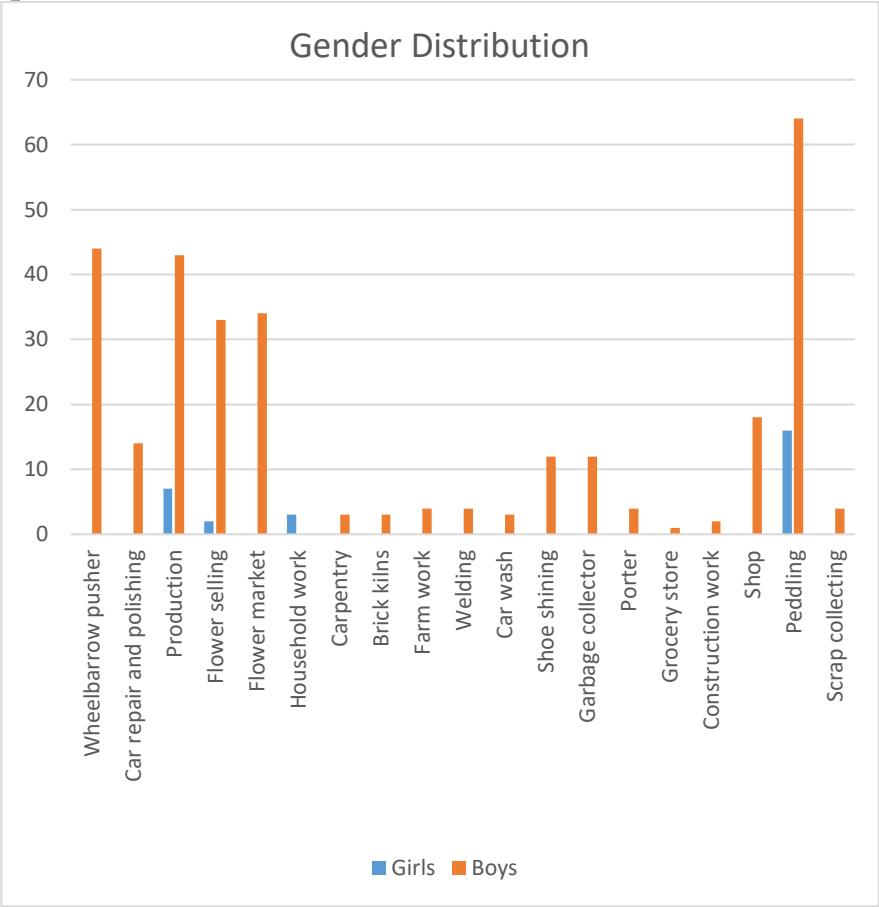


Figure 11 Gender distribution by type of work

Several other social workers in the field also shared their accounts:

Almost half and half, as most younger children work in tailoring workshops, in the middle of the job.

Nine of them are girls, and thirteen are boys, with their age group ranging from ten to sixteen or seventeen.

It depends; for instance, many of our girls do household work. For example, I wanted to count here, but well, household work includes sewing bowties, doing embroidery on clothes, bringing scarves home for packaging, ironing, bringing socks, and they do it in a cardboard packaging. For instance, they package socks, make papions.

One of the challenges that children, especially girls, face is the issue of leaving work as they grow older. Families, just as they introduce their children to the work sphere, can also remove them from work. Families, from a certain age, especially from the age of puberty, when there are visible signs of changes in girls, are less likely to allow their daughters to be involved in some forms of work, especially those that society considers more masculine. The reasons for this can vary. One of these reasons is a sense of danger that families feel; they are concerned that their daughters may be exposed to harassment and sexual assault. However, the most significant reason for these families is that children, after reaching the stage of physical maturity, gradually need to be prepared for marriage. The work of girls outside the home, conflicting with the values and beliefs of their families and communities, that a girl should be a homemaker, is in contrast. Therefore, this can be one of the reasons for the withdrawal of girls from the cycle of work outside the home. A social worker from an active institution in the field of children said about the number of girls and boys and their ratio:

If we want to say, compared to before, the number of girls has decreased a lot because most of our working children are Afghan, and as their age increases, families become biased and don't allow it. Now, boys have become more common.

Even in some cases, children hide their work from those around them so that they do not realize that they are working. Naturally, the culture of the family and communities in which the child works plays an important role in this, because - as mentioned - girls' work, especially outside the home or on the street, is not desirable for such families. One of the working girls who worked at Valiasr intersection told about her activity:

Yes, I'm friends with them here. I just told him that I'm going to work; [he] knew.

When girls enter street work, their field of action becomes much wider and naturally their mental structure and habits may also change. On the one hand, they are faced with the limited space of family and community, and on the other hand, with the space of the street and work, which are not necessarily aligned. For cultural and traditional reasons, families warn girls to avoid contact with men, but working on the street and rubbing shoulders with different people contradicts families' advice in this regard. This can cause serious conflicts in children that can lead to role conflict and some mental health issues. It should also be said that the likelihood of violence, especially sexual violence, occurring at work for girls is greater, and they and their families always fear that they might get hurt. Therefore, the fear of getting hurt is another factor in girls ending street-level and out-of-home work. Of course these violence are serious and girls have experienced it in various ways in many cases. The narrative of some working girls interviewed on the streets of Tehran was as follows:

Yes auntie, today a man did this, he said come with me... He wants to go buy me clothes. I said go away! I won't come. The dead man said come kidnap you; we had gone to the park.

Many offer proposals like let's go there, I'll give you this much money, but so far we haven't been fooled.

For example, some are in the car taking off their pants and saying come look at this.

It bothers you in that boys come and harass you... I don't know, they take your money, keep stalking you and harass you like that.

Some boys stand in front of you, all our problems are boys who harass.

In many cases, when a girl is subjected to violence, they may not report the violence that occurred to support networks such as their families due to fear, because in these cases the child is considered guilty, as they have been told repeatedly that "as long as a person doesn't stir up trouble themselves, no one will bother them," and this belief is also ingrained in the children themselves. One of the working girls who worked in Yousefabad area told about this belief:

I'm coming to work, no one has said anything to me. Because, excuse me, I'm sorry, when a person doesn't make trouble themselves, no one bothers them, as long as they don't cause problems for anyone.



Picture 34 Flower-selling girls on the street (Photo courtesy of IRNA news agency)

Children's Attitudes

Attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours towards a person, a subject, an event, or an object. Attitudes are usually shaped as a result of experience or upbringing and can have a significant impact on behaviour. While attitudes are stable, they can also change. Psychologists define attitudes as learned tendencies to evaluate things in a specific way. These evaluations can be positive or negative, but in some cases, they may be accompanied by uncertainty. Research has shown that attitude consists of three components or elements:

- 1) *Cognitive component*: Refers to thoughts and beliefs about a subject, including a set of information, ideas, facts, and knowledge about things.
- 2) *Emotional component*: Relates to emotions and beliefs about things, which can be positive or negative, in favour or against, and supportive or opposing.
- 3) *Behavioural component*: Indicates the behavioural tendency towards things, meaning how we think about

things and refers to our cognition and feelings about them.¹⁵⁹

As mentioned, attitudes towards a person, subject, event, or object become contextualized. Similarly, children have a series of attitudes in various aspects such as work, education, different countries, citizens, family, leisure time, and other things and events, which involve a set of positive or negative evaluations or desirable and undesirable judgments about them. In fact, their attitudes have a cognitive, cognitive, and emotional belief structure. Although children's attitudes cannot be entirely divorced from the social positions they inhabit, these positions play a significant role in shaping their attitudes. In other words, their life and work experiences shape their attitudes. Part of children's attitudes towards work or the tasks they have done is based on family experiences, friends, work conditions, job shape, and the employer's and others' interactions with them. The following quotes all reflect children's attitudes towards work:

I went there to work for myself, earn money, and spend it on myself. For example, I didn't want to go home and ask my mom for money. First, I sold films, then Ponak Midoon, we sold socks. At that time, the story didn't go well. Our municipality fined us, and then welfare once scolded us [smiles]. Then we saw it's not possible, we can't get involved with them, argue and debate with them. Then we saw it's not possible, we went to the building. We went to the building and saw our brother fell, he had a problem, so I didn't go anymore. Plastering, he fell from a height and had back surgery. Then I didn't go anymore. Then I went into

¹⁵⁹ Perlovsky, L. (2013). A challenge to human evolution-cognitive dissonance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4, Article 179.

straightening work. I came here because I liked the job. I worked on the building for about four or five months near Chahar Panch. But our brother has been plastering for a long time, about ten years, he didn't come out anymore.

My coming to auto body shop has a long story; at that time I was young, we were in Afghanistan. I told my dad, dad I love that star on the car, it was a Mercedes Benz logo. After that my dad went and found one and brought it for me. Because of this issue I became more interested in cars. This is how we learned about motors, we learned about cars. Then I said let me go into auto repair work, I'm very interested in it.

I want to make my dad rich, I'm interested, why? Because all of our family has two or three shops from this job. Because my uncles have gone to Germany, they have a tire shop, I like the smell of tires.

Some children who worked in workshops and repair shops provided responses about the reasons for choosing this type of work, indicating their inclination to learn skills, earn more income, and escape the challenges of street work:

I liked sewing; I wanted to learn so I could work.

I work here to learn a skill.

To earn money.

I want to learn a job, grow up. I can't be on the street forever.

I want to learn a job so I can work and grow up for myself.

Workshop work is better than street work; it's better here, although the initial salary is low. But I'm learning welding to increase my income.

Contribute to the family expenses.

We were in this area, and there were many tailors here, so we started working in this field.

I want to sit behind the sewing machine and work. I have to work now to support my family financially.

We should start learning a job from now. When we grow up, we shouldn't go and work as labourers for low wages.

This is another job. We had no job. When you don't know a trade, it's very difficult. Now, everyone's life has become a torment. There is no labour, no job. If the job was good, would we be doing hard labour?

I don't like my job. I want to leave this street and go to the other side, go to the municipality. I don't know, I want to play with my friends, study.



Picture 35 A teenage labourer in an industrial crystal workshop in the Kheirabad region (Photo from the research)

The above narratives all show a set of children's attitudes towards the work they do. Children talked about three main reasons for starting work and the motives behind it, which reflect their overall attitudes in this regard: having financial independence in order not to ask for money from the family, helping the family with expenses, and learning skills and making progress in that job to achieve job security in the future. The children's attitude towards work was also a set of both positive and negative attitudes, which depended on the nature or type of their work and work experiences. In jobs where they have freedom of action and enjoy it and in jobs where they learn skills, the children's attitude is more positive. For example, their attitude towards street work is positive in the sense that they have freedom of action in it and can enjoy it. But some children have a negative attitude towards it because street work does not provide a future for them. So children can have a positive attitude towards some aspects of work and a negative attitude towards others. Their attitude towards workshop work is the same; that is, they have a positive attitude towards being able to learn a skill in this type of work and build their future with it, but some of

them who find this type of work either too difficult or associated with pollution and hazards have a negative attitude towards it.

Children's attitudes towards those who are related to their work in some way also develops a set of positive or negative attitudes. The municipality and welfare organization are among the groups associated with working children, and children's experiences with these two institutions and their agents have usually been violent. Therefore, their attitude towards them is negative and they do not trust these people.

The attitude of migrant children towards their destination country - for many Afghan, Iranian and sometimes other children such as Germany - includes their beliefs and perceptions about that country. These attitudes are influenced by life in the country of origin and destination, work in both countries, and the social networks of these children in European countries. For these children, countries like Iran and Afghanistan trample their dreams and goals - as a set of values - and European countries like Germany are places where they can progress and self-direct. An Afghan child said the following in this regard:

Germany is also good because my uncle and them are there now; I can study, I can become somebody. But countries like Iran and Afghanistan, you just have to be a worker. Being a worker isn't bad either, for example you won't get anywhere, if you get somewhere then that's it. Now that I'm working hard, my family can get a little help. When you know you can't help, it really bothers you.

A child who worked in one of the shoe workshops expressed his attitude about European and Iranian countries as follows:

If I go to Germany, I'll continue in the same profession, get somewhere, because when you get involved in these jobs in foreign countries, you have extremely high income. We have a friend; then his cousin is twenty years old in Germany. Then there, here he was working in a sandwich shop, he went there and did the same job. Then he opened a pizza place. The best thing is that in foreign countries, as long as you don't waste your money gambling here and there. Here money shakes once and that's the end of you, you've crashed. It's true, a person goes and buys fabric with money now, a month later the money comes back up again. Well of course the person loses money.

An Afghan child who came from Herat city also talked about his attitude towards other countries:

Good places are only for Americans.... Afghanistan too, rich Afghanistan.... But there, for example, very..., for example, very few people have money, but a lot of them have a house. They must have a house.

An Afghan rag-picking child also said about his country and Iran:

I want to go to Afghanistan, but for example I want to go to see my relatives and all, but it's useless to stay there. I have to go to another country other than Iran and Afghanistan.

It seems that children are also well aware of the destructive mechanism of inflationary life and know how it affects businesses, and they have realized that working in Iran, where work has lost its value, has no future for them. Therefore, like many other groups, they prefer to leave Iran despite all the risks.

For Afghan children, Iranian citizens are another communication group towards whom working children have formed varying attitudes, which are the result of interactions in the workplace, residence, play areas with other children and sports clubs, and school. Part of these attitudes are based on existing realities and some are also based on a set of distorted preconceptions. The attitudes of Iranian and Afghan children, despite the commonalities, also differ from each other. For example, the exclusion of Afghan children in everyday interactions is greater than that of Iranian children, and they are more exposed to violence. The following narratives indicate the attitude of some Afghan children towards Iranian citizens and some law enforcement representatives, such as the police and municipality and welfare agents, in dealing with these children:

Some are good, some are bad. For example, you go with a trolley to collect garbage, he swears at you, he says Afghan! Don't throw garbage on the ground. I say I do not spill it. I say to myself why these people do not have a good tongue, they can say the same thing in a different way.

Iranians call us Afghans! Why did you come here, go back to your own country. They think we ruined their job. But they don't know it's God's will every day.

Yesterday they beat me; a guy hit me here [points behind him]. If I tell the police, they will say yes, Afghan, go away.

You burn in the sun from morning till night. You die of cold in winter, of heat in summer. Now all of that aside, at least give something to make people happy. One goes home and says at least we did something for the family.

Sometimes now I think with myself, God, for what reason were we humans born; we do bad things to each other, we don't open our eyes a little. If we do bad things, we should think a little about ourselves.

An Iranian migrant child who worked at the Mir Damad grocery market depicted his attitude about Tehran citizens as follows:

They have very high expectations, they think everything should be at their disposal. For example, when it gets crowded here, we don't have time to unload the pallets, then everyone says... , fruit, potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, why don't you bring them. Or they squeeze the fruits, damage them, then they don't take them anymore. Everything gets ruined. We tell them, they answer rudely. At first I thought these Tehranians were very cultured, but that's not the case at all.

A child who worked as a courier in a grocery store in Ghods area narrated:

For example, sometimes you carry goods for them, you go this long way, climb the stairs, then they don't give a tip; if you say to them, they say don't you get paid by your boss. That's right, they may have a lot of money, but they are very stingy.

Working children's attitude towards leisure time is also different. Therefore, their definitions of leisure time also differ from each other. Some consider the existence of leisure time necessary and some consider it unnecessary. Some define it as having fun and playing and some define it as resting, sleeping and doing personal things like cleaning and being with the family.

On holidays we sleep, shower. We clean the house. If there is time we go into the city and hang out.

A child who worked in one of the mechanics in Farahzad area narrated about his days off as follows:

On holidays I play football, go to the club with my friends.

Attitude towards society is another form of children's attitudes, and working children usually compare their living and working conditions with others. When they know there are shortcomings in their lives compared to others, feelings and perceptions are formed in them towards society which, combined with each other, shape their attitude towards society. This attitude is that there are great inequalities in society and their lives have many shortcomings compared to others, which they have to compensate for by working. An Afghan child working in a welding shop in Khalazir area expressed his sense of these deficiencies in the following sentences:

My family does not need my money. I use my income to buy household items. They say don't buy, but I like to [says with pleasure]. Because I'm suffering, this house doesn't have this, I'm suffering. It bothers me when I say our relatives have it, we don't, we have to get it. Our relatives came to Iran twenty years ago.

Overlooking and normalization

Child labour in various forms is very common in Tehran, and the question that comes to mind is: Why, despite the laws, regulations and organizations present in this area that have human and material resources, are we still witnessing child labour? Part of the reasons for this social

phenomenon goes back to the migration of foreign national children and the widespread poverty in Iranian society, but another part of it is due to the inefficiency of agencies related to this field, agencies such as the Ministry of Labour, Cooperatives and Social Welfare at the top of society and Welfare Organization as one of the subsidiary organizations of this ministry. In fact, this ministry should have strict supervision over various jobs so that children are not exploited in difficult jobs, and the Welfare Organization and other organizations should be responsible for social support and empowerment and identify these children and prevent them from working by supporting them and providing alternative incentives. Of course, immigration and, consequently, nationality is an important issue and legally these organizations do not have a duty to protect non-Iranian children, but this does not contradict humanitarian duties and observing children's rights, especially since Iran as one of the signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is obliged to make every effort to protect migrant and refugee children residing in the country and combat anything that violates their rights. Employing children in various forms, especially difficult and harmful jobs, is a clear violation of children's rights, and according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child - of which Iran is also a member - existing agencies should prevent child labour. Article 2 of the Covenant states:¹⁶⁰

States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political

¹⁶⁰ UNICEF. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child.

or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

But it must be said that in Iran the existing agencies overlook and ignore working children. One of the children's rights activists in this regard quoted:

In general, the Ministry of Labour and other agencies that are in charge of this have no effective supervision over child labour, they have no supervision over workshops, they have let go. For example, don't they know themselves that children work in workshops, they are on the street, or children collect garbage around the city. In fact, they themselves have some research in this field and at least have a relative understanding of this issue; they know, [but] they don't do it, they don't even enforce their own laws. Of course, in terms of regulations we don't have weaknesses, but we have problems in terms of implementation.

Or a car wash employer in this regard stated:

There is no supervision from the Ministry of Labour, who comes on TV? We only hear.

As mentioned, there are many laws and regulations regarding child labour and its prohibition, but it seems that some of them have been passed not to be implemented. Simply passing laws is not enough to eliminate child labour, but appropriate mechanisms must also be provided to enforce the laws. Also, prohibiting or making child labour illegal alone is not enough to eliminate child labour, even if appropriate mechanisms are devised to enforce laws, because a family that is poor sends their children to work to compensate for part of their expenses. It should even be said that when

educational opportunities are not available, economic opportunities are not equitably distributed among classes, ethnicities, religions, genders and living spaces, child labour will be one of the options to compensate for these discriminations and deprivations. Also, identifying some workshops, such as home workshops and productions set up in residential spaces, is difficult for the government due to their nature of activity, and if identified, there is no possibility of easily supervising them. An expert in the field said:

In underground ones the threat to children is greater, because the possibility of supervision and identification is less, both the supervision of public organizations and public supervision, working hours and the type of work and observing standards that ensure the mental, spiritual and physical health of the child. In this definition some of the children are of working age between fifteen and eighteen years old, but since they do not have clear identity documents, naturally they do not benefit from legal protections like others, and these people who do not have identity documents are both Iranian and non-Iranian, and it cannot be said that all of them are not Iranians.

Even in some cases where laws are enforced, children's work and lives become more difficult. As explained in previous sections, in many cases, monitoring some jobs, especially jobs where children are more visible to the public, such as street children, and arresting them in failed regularization schemes, has not only prevented child labour, but has also led them to other types of work that are more difficult in nature and working conditions and the child has less freedom of action in those jobs. Likewise, in cases such as raiding the place of residence of junk collectors and demolishing their place of residence

and work, such actions have not only failed to prevent child labour, but have also threatened their lives in various ways. Schemes to arrest illegal foreign national children and deport them across the border are the same. Therefore, it should be said that so-called child regulation or child labour prevention schemes alone are not enough to eliminate child labour, but comprehensive support for them and their families is needed alongside. In some cases, our laws are flawed in a way that provides the context for employers to exploit and perhaps abuse child labour. One of the experts and activists in the field of child labour stated in this regard:

Look, the workshops are away from government supervision, this is a fact, and workshops with less than ten people are not covered by labour law; this is very bad. Now we have a paradoxical policy; that is, the child works. Maybe he works better than an adult, because I saw kids in these mechanics, inside the car chassis, he goes in and changes the oil, does the car work.... So far he is considered a worker. When it comes to wages, he is a child; there is a dual state and the government has no supervision at all, because it considers workshops with less than ten people to be family workshops. While these are not family workshops at all. No Afghan can come to Iran and have a shop, for example, a mechanics shop, or have a fruit shop. These are not father-apprentice shops. At one point they said that workshops with less than ten people would be included in the labour law. Then when they removed those workshops, many of those workshops were no longer subject to labour laws.

Of course, it should be said that it is not only the government that overlooks the elimination of child labour

in a way, but also many other public organizations such as municipalities, NGOs, employers, and children's families overlook or normalize child labour in a way and even justify it in some cases. Tehran Municipality is one of these organizations. For example, according to many guidelines of different sections, such as the bylaw on collecting dry waste, child labour or employing children for that job is prohibited, but since the municipality outsources such works to the private sector and has weak supervision over contractors, especially in terms of employing children, it has overlooked child labour and contractors have legitimized their work. This can be clearly seen in jobs such as junk picking, working in produce markets, and handcarts in the market. An expert in the field of childhood studies stated in this regard:

This outsourcing and privatization of work has well provided the context for child labour. If the municipality itself wanted to do this job, since it could be criticized as an official institution, it might have used children less, but by outsourcing these jobs, it has absolved itself of responsibility; overall it has no supervision over contractors.

Employers also employ children in various jobs based on different justifications and portray their work as normal. Here, normalization refers to their beliefs about children and their work. One of their justifications for employing children and portraying their work as normal is that they themselves started working as children and working as a child not only does not harm him, but is also effective in social growth and learning life skills and it is natural that this false belief leaves much room for contemplation and criticism. Of course, they are not well able to distinguish between the forms of child labour and jobs that are not considered child labour, as well as the consequences of

child labour. One employer said the same thing in this regard:

I myself have been in this business (car repair job) since I was a kid. Like these kids, we would come in the morning and leave at night. One learns a lot in work and can later become something for himself.

While we should not forget that this form of skills training is more applicable to traditional economies and household and small workshop production jobs, in modern society where work units are organized and established based on knowledge and industry, such processes of learning skills do not have much applicability. Of course, part of our economy has still remained traditional and more importantly the informal sector has expanded in the absence of an efficient economy and there are still many job opportunities for simple routine work and utilizing unskilled labour. Another justification that this group provides for employing children is that the child must enter work from a young age and gain skills so that they can ensure their future career in that field. The owner of one of the shoe workshops in this regard narrated:

This work has to be started from childhood, because when you first come to work, you don't know how to work, your salary is very low and the work is hard. You have to come at a young age so that you get used to work and also so that by the age you reach and grow older, you have at least a minimum income.

Some other employers argue the assistance to the child. They believe and think that by giving work to the child, they have helped the child's family and the child to some extent. Perhaps these employers inside the workshops also have more affection for the child, do not assign heavy

works to him, and take care of the child during work. Perhaps if this group of employers was aware of the consequences of child labour, they would no longer employ children. One of these employers engaged in the flower market stated:

Frankly I deeply respect the laws of child labour and such. And if I use them, just like that, because I want to somehow help them; I certainly will not give them very heavy work. Like this... he is here. He is here more because I want to hold his hand, and there is absolutely no need for it. This little person is here so that he changes a flowerpot, earns a few coins, sweeps, like that.

One of the garment industry employers who had experience of working with children several times expressed his view about employing children with these statements:

I say as far as I can do it myself, I try not to hire children. I say their fathers are more irresponsible; such people take advantage more... they bring children. But if I advertise, they contact me, I don't hire them. Usually I don't use them, unless they are referred. For example, if they don't have another reliable place, they say Uncle, let him stay here for two months, three months. But in general it's really hard. Really dealing with children is very difficult. Either you have to set aside your age and become like them, a little experience to work with them, or if you want to give orders, you see that if we want to tell them something, they get upset. Or if they ruin a job, if you tell them a little loudly that you ruined the work, you see that they are hurt, their heart is broken and

such. Well, I gained this experience. I try to jokingly and with laughter tell them Uncle, you did the work wrong.

Sometimes employers normalize the work of children based on gender or type of work, because they believe that when light works within the child's capacity are assigned to him, children can be used for work. In response to this group, it must be said that such types of works may either not be suitable for the child in terms of work environment conditions, not the nature of work, or because they take a lot of time from the child and disrupt his school attendance. One of the employers who had a production and supported employing children by doing light works expressed his view with these statements:

Again I say it depends on the circumstances; there are places where when you are kind to a child, he understands your kindness better and it depends... I say. If the work is very heavy, we will not use children. If the work is light, in principle it can somehow be done.

The work does not have any particular skill to gain. It is that their mental ability becomes stronger in work. How should I say, they do the work in the best way possible, since the work does not have any particular skill, it is just mediation work and light work.

The owner of a grocery store was also of the view that the type of work can be determined for employing children and in this regard said:

Look, considering children's conditions, we can accept up to a certain extent, for example something that exists is from 14-15 years, on the condition that their family itself knows. Our system is this; the person comes with his mother. We talk to his mother. For example, we say

Uncle, the conditions are from 9 am to 9 pm. We abide by our limits and boundaries. This is our system here.

We say we abide by our own boundaries and limits.

Another group of employers believe that employing children keeps children busy and prevents them from other risky behaviours such as vagrancy and delinquency. In the view of this group, since the child gets busy at work and the employer oversees his behaviour in the workplace, this prevents children from delinquent behaviours and abuse against them. The owner of a tailoring shop in this regard said:

If you don't take his hand, don't help him, he will get up and go or he can become a child labourer on the street corner or become an addict or get abused in all ways, the types of abuses you know better.

Another group believes that using child labour is beneficial for both employers and children; because the child is cheap labour for them and the employer has given him work along with learning a skill, and may pay him a monthly amount. A store owner about the advantage of using child labour said:

Somehow in the works we do it benefits both sides; after all, there are places where he opens my store for me, I can do four other tasks, you know what I mean.

Another group justifies employing children based on the argument that if children themselves insist on working, they will hire them. Of course, some children may seek work and ask the employer for a job due to their family's poverty or insistence of their family. Since the support networks of these children are weaker, they may try hard to find work and ultimately enter risky jobs. Therefore, they are more vulnerable and exposed to dangers and

abuse. The owner of an auto repair shop recounted the children's insistence on getting a job:

If they beg and insist, we will hire them. I told you, I mostly work with adults; people who are skilled, people who call themselves, 'Engineer, do you have work? Don't you have work?' I don't actively look for them myself because I have my own workforce. Both older and skilled people. Because children, especially inexperienced ones, are more bothersome.

Another group of employers, knowing that children are more obedient and will do whatever they are told, protest less in work and are less persistent about their rights compared to adults, use child labour. Usually, based on field evidence, this group of employers mistreat children in the workplace. For example, they may hit their heads, order them around, and if children do not want to work for them, they may not even pay their wages. Another reason employers use child labour is that in jobs with long or irregular working hours that must be done at night, these children can best handle these jobs, as adults or married people are not willing to do such work. For example, in jobs where housing and work are in the same place or nearby, and children employed in this area have migrated from villages, these children can better do this work in all respects for the benefit of the employer. One of the owners of a carwash shop in this regard said:

Sometimes these kids are better than a hundred adults, because they are more honest and listen more, and are more afraid than 20-year-old or 19-year-old young people whose heads are blown up. For example, a 20-year-old or 19-year-old, if you tell them above their eyebrow, they want to sulk or hit you with a blow.

Another employer who had a car parts shop stated the advantages of using child labour:

It's a good feeling, they are intelligent children; they carry out work better than older ones. We were also able to trust them and hand over the work to them.

Similarly, some others only pay attention to their own benefits in work and it does not matter to them who does the work, the important thing is that the work gets done. In this regard, the owner of a grocery store said:

Whoever needs work here has a place to give them work. Now their size and age don't matter to us. Basically, the work they do for us is important.

Sometimes employers are aware in some workshops that using child labour is illegal, but still use them due to their cheap labour and obedient nature of children, and when inspectors visit these workshops, they hide children from inspectors' views. For example, they may transfer them to warehouses or places outside the inspectors' line of sight or take them out through back doors of the workshop. A manufacturer of bags and shoes talked about the tactics of using children in official workshops:

Official workshops also use child labour but with caution. If the labour inspector also arrives, they claim it is the son of one of the workers or hide him so the inspector does not notice.

Some employers somewhat understand children's conditions and criticize family indifference towards children and employers' abuse of this situation, believing children have rights that should be respected. One of them who worked in the embroidery industry said in this regard:

Some employers do not care, for example, that this child needs rest, needs to play, needs... . Anyway, if it's not important for the father and mother, well, the employer says that since their parents think this way too, I think the same way too.

An employer who had a shop in Tehran market also talked about criticizing child work:

The market environment is not a good environment; it's dirty, a very bad environment. Here one has to learn lying and tricks.

NGOs also sometimes provide the grounds for child labour. For example, they may find work for children due to witnessing family poverty and the child and family requesting them to find work for them. It should be said that although NGOs believe child work is wrong, they sometimes provide grounds for child labour using some justifications and shortcuts. Some of their justifications are that work in production workshops where the child learns a skill is better than work on the street, or they believe working less harms these children and even closes the door on many deviations. These organizations may adopt different strategies depending on where they are located or the place they are based. For example, in the Fardis area, they may find work for children in some workshops in the area or in District 2 of the municipality, of courses that they believe are suitable for the child's future and pose less risk of harming the child's health. One activist from NGOs believed in this regard:

In one stage we can reduce harm; that is, at least control the place where the working child works or if we know the child can have a better job based on their abilities, bring them to the workshop from the crossroads; this is

the first step alongside which improving family conditions and empowering other family members and ultimately removing work from the child, especially children under 15, this is the overall process. Now what we do is communicate with employers; that is, wherever the child works, which may be a place we ourselves have introduced the child to, gone to various centres such as hairdressing salons, communicated with employers, introduced the child there or the child may have found a job themselves, we get information about the job, visit in person and communicate with the employer and introduce ourselves and have direct communication with the employer. We examine the child's working conditions, working hours, wages, employer behaviour, mental health of the employer. This ongoing communication, every so often talking to the employer, if there is any note about the child, the employer tells us and if we are going to hold a workshop, a course, the child comes to receive training, with the communication we have with the employer, we can get permission for the child not to go to work at that time. This relationship is maintained as long as the child changes their job for any reason and now communicates with another employer. This ensures we do a minimum harm reduction in the first stage and now the long-term goal is to remove work from the child, especially children under 15, we are moving more towards vocational training for those over 15, but for a child under 8-7 years old, we try to remove work from the child.

Ultimately, it is these children's families or their parents who normalize the practice of child labour. Many of them, due to their poverty and urgency to provide income,

consider child labour normal for themselves and their children based on their beliefs about childhood and child work, and by using strategies to reduce risks. Of course, these beliefs are formed within a social, cultural and economic context and structure. For example, some believe that working enables children to learn skills and develop personality traits that will benefit them in the future. Or in a social context where new economic opportunities do not exist, for example in underdeveloped areas, parents know that even if their children study, go to university, and acquire skills, there will be no jobs available based on those skills in the future, so they must do traditional jobs that are accessible. Therefore, they start their children working from a young age. Sometimes they justify employing their children by citing the supervision and support they provide for them, arguing they have reduced risks for the child. For example, they may accompany children to the street and watch over them from a distance to ensure nothing happens to their child. Or in some workshops where the parents themselves work, after some time they ask the employer to give their child a job too, believing the child will face no problems because the parents are present at the work site. A notable case is child labour among large segments of immigrant communities who belong to a particular culture, and they migrate to Iran specifically to work. One child rights activist said in this regard:

Look, for some it's like, let's say in Afghanistan, when a child reaches a certain age, they feel guilty if they don't go to work, because it's part of their culture. I've seen many cases myself where they come here and say 'Miss, please find work for me.' I say 'Okay, but you still need to study, you shouldn't be coming to work.' They say 'No, miss, I've reached this age, now I have to work.' It's partly that, and partly their need, which within Iranian

families is more about need, but within Afghan families, anyway, it's part of their culture - like for an Iranian family, let's say if a son reaches a certain age he goes to university. Everyone expects him to work; if he doesn't work, then that's abnormal. For them at the age of childhood, let's say twelve, thirteen years old, if they don't work that's abnormal.

A few points should be noted. Ultimately, it is these children's families or parents who normalize child labour. Many of them, due to their poverty and urgency to provide income, consider child labour normal based on their beliefs about childhood, child work, and using strategies to reduce risks - though these beliefs are formed within a social, cultural and economic context. For example, some believe working enables skill development and benefits children later. Where new opportunities don't exist, parents know work is what will be accessible. Therefore, they start children working young.

Sometimes parents justify employing children by citing supervision they provide, arguing it reduces risks. NGOs also sometimes enable child labour grounds by finding work for children and families requesting it, using justifications like work is better than streets and limits deviations. However, child work should still be considered wrong. While supervision aims to protect working children, the overall goal should be to remove child work, especially for those under 15 years old.



Picture 36 Child labourers working in a traditional crystal-making factory in the Eslamshahr region (photo from research)

Surveillance and Protection

The concept of surveillance in the social sciences refers to actions aimed at regulating behaviour. In other words, the goal of surveillance is to prevent behaviours that violate social norms and values, and as a result, its goal is to regulate behaviour based on social norms and values. However, in the social sciences, this concept refers more to deviant behaviours and is not used in the field of child labour. In this regard, Cohen said: “Surveillance or social control refers to the organized responses to crime, delinquency, and persistent deviant or problematic social behaviour that are actually perceived as such, whether reactively (after the presumed act has occurred and the actor has been identified) or proactively (to prevent the act).¹⁶¹ ”Therefore, surveillance is not used here in this sense. However, it should be noted that when employers supervise children in various jobs, they are trying to

¹⁶¹ Cohen, S. (1985). *Visions of social control: Crime, punishment and classification* (pp. 127-143). Cambridge: Polity Press.

regulate children's behaviour based on rules they themselves have established. In these rules, values and general norms are no longer applicable; rather, they are the employer's rules that are often oppressive. For this reason, employers and their staff supervise children in various ways to prevent violation of established rules.

On the other hand, social protection refers to any act aimed at nurturing children and preventing harm or damage to them, as parents protect their children so they are not harmed and grow well.

Children undergo supervision or protection for various reasons by different organizations or individuals in their work. In this regard, organizations and individuals such as the Ministry of Labour, Welfare, Municipality, Police, employers, seminars, parents and other family members can be mentioned. As stated, the goal of supervision and protection differs for each individual and organization. One of the supervisory bodies for children and child labour are the Ministry of Labour's inspectors; they must supervise the work environment for various reasons such as work quality of life and non-use of children. Supervision is sometimes used to prevent the illegal employment of foreign nationals. This type of supervision is not based on monitoring the non-use of child labour, but rather discrimination and oppression against Afghans. One battery manufacturer described such supervision reports:

I had heard a few of my friends were detained for bringing Afghan workers; they were mechanics. One friend told me about it. He was also a battery manufacturer.

Various reports from several employers regarding inspectors' supervision are as follows:

The inspectors will object if they see children under 18... That's why now, though they used to work with wheels before, they no longer have permission to work due to their young age. We have to hire them here (in the workshop).

Having them as apprentices in the workshop is no problem; for example, if an inspector comes, you can say they are my relatives sitting here with me... because they don't have permission to work.

Here the inspector only comes to check hygiene and insurance. And when they come, the children run away from the workshops.

The municipality only comes to seal (shut down). They have nothing to do with anyone. At one point they said workshops with under 10 people would fall under labour law, but after those workshops were removed, many such workshops no longer fell under labour rules.

One child who was apprenticing in a tailoring workshop about supervision at work said:

The inspectors would come and object. The employer would do something, send us out. Then one time one came after me, asked how long I've been working here, I said six years.

Supervision also differs depending on the type of child labour; the possibility of oversight is much less for some jobs, including those done in informal and underground workshops. Workshops operating in residential units or

not legally registered whose address is not accessible are among those without official or legal institutional oversight. However, in some cases as well, many children lack legal protection under Iran's labour laws due to lack of identity documents. One child rights activist said about supervising workshops and child labourers:

Oversight possibilities are less for underground workshops, increasing risks to children, because both public organizational oversight and public oversight are harder. This also applies to observance of standards protecting children's mental, spiritual and physical health and safety, such as working hours and job types. Some working children are 15 to 18 years old but lack clear identity documents, so naturally they too do not benefit from legal protections like others. And these people without identity documents include both Iranians and non-Iranians, so it cannot be said they are all non-Iranian.

The main problem is that in many cases, for various reasons, many workshops and jobs are not supervised in terms of non-use of child labour. Major reasons for this include lack of manpower at the Ministry of Labour and expansion of the informal labour market. One labour ministry expert stated in this regard:

We don't have a problem in terms of regulations, but we have problems in implementation. When families are more involved in economic issues, like now during the corona situation, children are more vulnerable.

Workshops that do not have a license and supervision are underground workshops. Usually the ones that are seen have a license. Anything unauthorized is not necessarily a workshop, it could be in the form of a room. Some may not

even be a room and could be unauthorized. Supervision is possible in licensed centres, because the law allows it, although there is weakness in supervision in the inspection sector.

The problem of lack of supervision over unlicensed and unauthorized workshops imposes conditions on children that threaten their physical and mental health safety through increased risks. The statement of one expert in this field also confirms this point:

The working conditions of a child in workshops are much worse than street conditions, because it is outside of public view and the possibility of injury exists, and the employer has no accountability in this regard. Working in a workshop has more harms; the child has no job security and is subject to injury and amputation.

Some employers who receive some projects from government and public organizations supervise children in various ways. Their goal of supervision is for children and other employees not to violate work rules so they can profit more financially. For example, in garbage collection, urban contractors rent areas from the Tehran Municipality and through their own inspectors, supervise the area under their control to ensure work is based on their own rules and regulations. These contractors also rent neighbourhoods to garbage collectors in their own way, many of whom are children, and if anyone violates these rules, they identify and punish them in various ways. Or in the Flowers Market and the Grand Bazaar of Tehran, there are councils that supervise child cart pushers in various ways to work based on their rules. Regarding contractor supervision, quotes were as follows:

Some cart pushers used to have plates before. Now they don't give plates anymore. The municipality used to

give them, now even the municipality is gone. It's been about a year. They used to charge 30,000 tomans per journey.

About a few years ago, a company came and organized these people based on documents they provided to the company, guarantee status, some merchants, shopkeepers, neighbourhood people, city council and others would vouch for them and the company would accept that guarantee. Fingerprints were taken and files were prepared. Ultimately the plate would be in that person's name and it was clear who their guarantor was, and based on that plate their information would be retrieved, they were also given a uniform. For example, if they had taken someone's cargo, they could be identified from the plate. Although part of it is in our hands, part of it is also related to the police. If they had taken someone's cargo, we would send it to the police; they would say the plate number and then we would send the information to the police for follow up.

If this plan is implemented, they will collect without plates. Because these people are clever; they learned the cleverness and expertise of the market in the bazaar chaos, suddenly moving from one place to another so the cargo owner gets lost and doesn't see them. Then they can't find them.

One employer talked about supervising flower stalls:

Me and my brother work together; we've been here since morning and keep an eye on all the stalls. We've been here since we were children, we don't pay anyone money to work here.

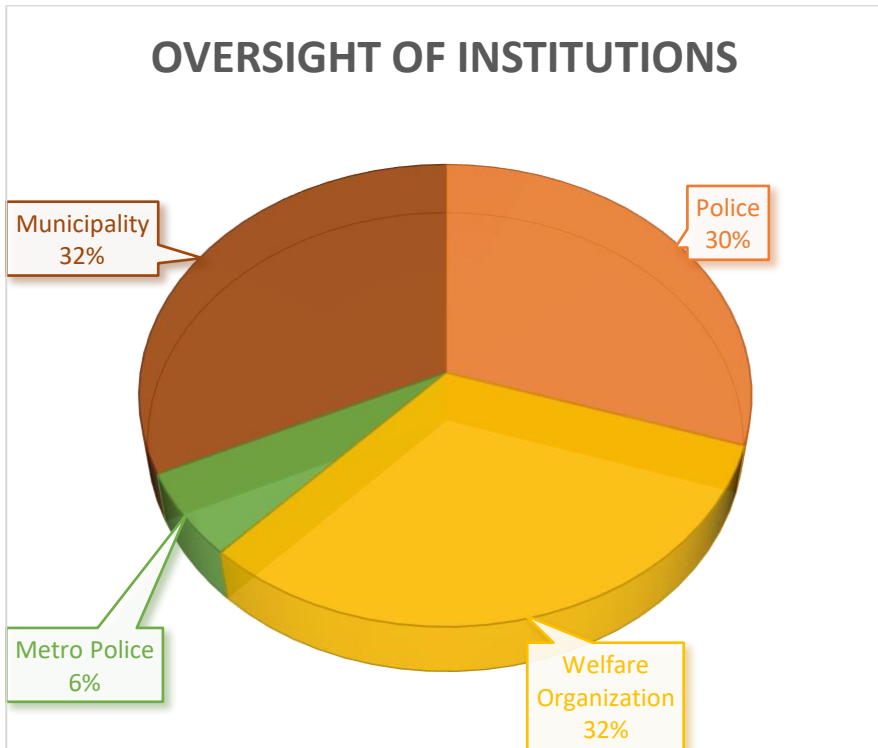


Figure 12 Oversight and Care of Institutions for Child labour

Non-governmental organizations are also another factor monitoring children's situations, which has been well covered in the NGOs category. These organizations pursue various objectives through monitoring, the most important of which are: identifying children for recruitment and support, monitoring work and employers to combat child exploitation and reduce work hazards and risks, removing children from more difficult jobs with fewer benefits, and in some cases, moving children into less difficult jobs with greater skills training and learning opportunities. Alongside NGOs, parents or a family member also monitor and supervise their children's work in different ways for various reasons. The main goal of this group is to reduce work risks and prevent experiences of

violence and abuse. The following accounts clearly demonstrate how and why children's parents or a family member monitor and supervise them across different types of work:

I went to work, there were two ladies there who got married and left. We two were left alone. Now we don't go to work anymore. Today we're going to settle up, because this is not an appropriate place for women. My parents don't let us go to work. There are two men there. At first there were eight of us; everyone left, just two of us remained with two men, so they don't let us go anymore either.

When we were at Shahr-dari intersection, we'd make 15 tomans a night, the boys didn't beat us. Here we make 20 tomans a night and they beat us. My dad says work here, it's closer to home.

Those Afghans come with their moms, their moms work less, she mostly stands there watching over them to make sure no one steals their money, no fights happen.

With the coronavirus outbreak, monitoring has increased in some jobs to prevent child labour. At the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, and due to fear of its widespread transmission, many governmental organizations in their professional domain prevented child labour. One organization that prevented child labour in waste picking was Tehran Municipality, which announced that through extensive monitoring, citywide advertising, and requesting citizens to report observations of child waste pickers, it would prevent child waste picking. However, after a short while this plan was abandoned and children returned to waste picking. Monitoring and prevention of child labour during the

coronavirus outbreak was not limited to waste picker children, but also occurred similarly in other jobs, including in the flower market, as field observations attested; as one employer in the market recounted:

After these coronavirus conditions emerged, in the new year, it was ordered by the government that no one is allowed to use children for work, or they'll be fined. So the market council decided to not give carts to kids under 18.



Picture 37 A photo of Tehran Municipality's urban advertising in Laleh Park regarding combating child waste picking (research photo)

NGOs also monitor children in various ways to support them and reduce work hazards. In this regard, one activist in the field stated:

We make that connection with their employer, with them, now I come to some agreement that they free up some time so the child can, for example, get education or counseling, if they need something, so they can actually do it. I forgot to mention another case of our kids who now works in goldsmithing and actually spends a lot of time working, from around 8 to 5 or 6. Now based on what he himself says he makes around 1/300, 1/400 million, and they're our kids. For example we have a kid who's an apprentice in a shop and makes 1 million tomans a month.

A social worker at one of the NGOs also recounted:

Visiting our workshop, yes, we do that periodically. At first when we started, we did it. Then we follow up with the families, because families trust us. They themselves go to the child's workplace or bring the child themselves. For example for a child who worked as a mechanic, we convinced his mother to send the child. The child was also attending high school.

Labour Relations

Children's work has several distinct characteristics. Labour relations and labour rights are among the most important of these features. Labour relations refer to the child's relationships with those around them at the workplace. Many individuals are present at workplaces playing various roles, with whom the child has relationships. In jobs where an employer is present, it is the employer who has the most significant relationship with the child in the form of employer-employee relationships. In other words, not in terms of the amount or quantity, but because it plays a decisive role in the

child's work. The child's relationships at the workplace are not limited to the employer, and depending on the type and location of work, also encompass relationships with various other individuals both at the workplace and residence, such as co-workers, both child and adult, the child's family, local business owners, customers, same-age playmates, and other citizens.

How a child enters into work is initially heavily influenced by the child's family's socioeconomic characteristics, place of residence, and relationship networks. Overall, children's entry into work takes shape based on their social networks. Although in some cases children may start a particular job by chance, such cases are rare. Since their relationships are intra-group and usually dependent on familial, friendly, kinship, and neighbourhood networks, these children have limited options for work and enter so-called "child labour" jobs. Sometimes children also find work through non-governmental organizations. The following accounts all demonstrate in some way that children have entered the workforce through these networks:

I came to work at a sewing shop; it's a good place, I came with my mom. I wanted to make money.

My classmates were working here, they introduced me and I came.

For two years we didn't go to work. Then we went peddling. Then we came into curtain selling. Then I went to sewing somewhere else. After there I went to another curtain shop. From there I came here. I go with my cousin, wherever he goes, he takes me.

One day I was walking by, someone called me over saying come work here from now on. It's good work. I

went and said let me go in the morning to see what happens, whether it's good or not. From that day I started going to work.

One day I came, my first day, I made 24 tomans. The next day I made 30 tomans. Then I thought maybe it's good. Then for a few days I went until I saw it was good.

I came myself.

They said come here, so I came. My dad, said so.

I didn't learn this here, my grandma taught me. Then at first when I came here it was with fighting, but I made my place eventually. My grandma and I fought with the northerners, the westerners, they wouldn't let us work; they said this is our workplace, that kind of talk... So my grandma was looking for a good place to work, she found this place. The next day she brought me and my sister too.

Social workers at NGOs also contribute their perspectives on how children enter into work:

It seems that due to families' financial and cultural issues, children migrate with their acquaintances to find work and get involved in something chosen by others. It occupies a lot of their time and is difficult work. If they want to change their job, their friends and acquaintances find other work for them. They send most of their income to their families.

And other social workers stated similarly:

Their parents take them to work, especially if they are teenagers or children or younger, they are matched to work by their parents or the social worker finds work for them. If not matched, they are guided like go here, go there, like go get work and do it.

The child doesn't choose the work, the family forces them. The family, so to speak, or the child themselves sees that there are economic problems and sees their relatives have done this work, so they also look for some money; they aren't looking to choose a good job that is promising for the future. Let me give an example. When I or a family that has a child, so that the child isn't idle in the summer, doesn't wander the streets, tries to put this child somewhere, they choose, they don't say go become a peddler. They don't say go do this work in such workshop, take the money and bring it. They want for example for this child to gain a skill. They look at what the child likes, the family looks at what they are interested in or the family itself looks at what they are interested in, and directs them in that.

One market employer recounted:

Right now I needed someone, because my work is easy, but since they were acquainted, their fathers were here, they sent two; overall I hire one during summers who is a school kid.

In many cases the child's gender impacts how they enter into work. Although we see in the streets and metro stations that some girls and boys work alone with no one watching them, for some families it is important that their children's workplace be safe. Concern about sexual harassment in many cases causes families of this group of

children to find a safe job or location for them. For example, they sometimes assess the workshop's safety and if assured it is safe, allow the child to work there, or in many cases take the children along with themselves. One child recounted about this:

My mom asked a lady, they said this place with this gentleman is good. My mom brought me here to work.

And another girl told about how she started working:

Like our boss had seen my mom in the park that I can sew and stuff. My mom had said if you need someone, I have my daughter; she wants to learn sewing.

One employer at a production workshop stated about children commuting to work:

The mother goes, for example the daughter comes. She has a daughter, two sisters and another brother too. They rarely go alone. At younger ages, they rarely go alone; like maybe when they're 15 or 16 they might work alone, but for the ages I'm talking about, 12, 13, 10, they go with someone.

Some children prefer working in workshops and others prefer street work. The social and family backgrounds in which children are raised and the area and place they live greatly impact which type of work they choose. One child peddler shared his opinion about street work:

I actually don't like this work, it has no future, no future. It also has problems that when we clean some [car windows], they say this work isn't good, it's begging.

A social worker at an NGO stated about this:

Kids like work where they have more freedom, the child doesn't have good judgement, even if 15 or 16 years old, to see their own future. It's our job as social workers and families to guide them and make them realize you have to learn a skill.

Or one social worker explained why children prefer street work over workshop work:

Those who go into car repair work, workshop work and such, they aren't satisfied, they aren't satisfied in that way. It's very rare to see a child in this group who is satisfied, because an issue they have is coming and going on time is problematic for them. We have a child who complains every time that they don't like their boss; he always tells me I have to be here at 8:30, well I want to sleep until 10, then get up; meaning they can't get into the rhythm of work, they prefer to go peddle, they have their fun, make mischief, and make better money than going to the workshop.

Or one children's rights activist stated about this:

A main point that I think, you know for many families and children who work, I think it is that working in any kind of workshop compared to street work is at least socially more respectable; meaning that street work carries more stigma than a child who works in a shop or workshop. For many families it's difficult to accept the stigma of their child working in the street. One thing about street work is it has an age limit, children can peddle and attract people's attention for, so to speak, income and selling to people, up to an age, even for girls this age is lower, especially for Afghan girls; as soon as they reach puberty, they take them off the street due to

the street's dangers. So up to a point they can work in the street. After a certain age the family decides or the boy himself decides to go learn a skill. Or street work has a limit, peddling, after a point they should learn a skill and think about a job for the future. For this reason we also see this timeframe even for children working in the street, boys peddle up to a certain age, as soon as they get a little older you basically see smaller children peddling in the street.

Another social worker discussed the risks of workshop work versus street work:

They should do workshop work, why? Because the workshop is more defined; meaning if something happens there, you can for example go after the employer, talk to them, discuss; I don't know, ask for the reason, but if something happens to a child at an intersection, now a car hits them, they flee and leave, or God forbid they are assaulted, in the different areas they were, you can't follow up; who do you want to catch, where, who do you want to talk to? Special incidents that happen to them, maybe like 1 or 5 to 10 percent you can have special follow up, but not with workshop work. We're not saying incidents don't happen, we're not saying problems don't arise, of course they have their own particular problems, even for adults.

Regarding income level and skill learning based on type of work, one activist stated:

You know, in workshops the wages are much less than what comes from outside. A child who works in a workshop, the employer claims that you're also learning something here, you don't know it. The wages there are

very low, maybe 60 tomans a week. I don't know if it's increased or decreased after coronavirus. But children who go to intersections with people's charity, well they make more money, they might make 50 tomans a day.

Some working children have two jobs and some have only one. Some children may work two shifts and others one shift. One NGO activist stated about children's work shifts:

They usually have one job, because their jobs have long hours. For example someone doing fruit peddling has to come in the morning and set up their fruit stand and collect the fruits at night to store them and leave.

One child also recounted about his second job:

At night I go to my dad, help him out. I don't take money from my dad; whatever he makes he brings home. There I tidy up the clothes.

After children enter into work, meaning the work they do for an employer, the employer plays a decisive role in their work. The employer determines the child's wages, hours and days of work, form of work or how to do the work, advancement at work, and many other aspects. Some children who work in the streets also have employers, while others are self-employed. For example, children who sell flowers in the streets mostly have employers, while peddlers and cart workers are self-employed. Of course, children with employers may become self-employed after learning skills and techniques. This is especially more common among children seeking to gain skills. In this regard, one employer in Farahzad neighbourhood recounted:

Many kids have worked for us, then later set up shop for themselves, opened auto repair shops. Now in this same Farahzad we have many who now have garages and work, they were kids themselves and were apprentices for a time.

In many cases, employers in various fields, for different reasons, for example if during work they damage work tools, break a part, or their tools and work items are confiscated by municipal agents, reprimand and fine the children, and in most cases hold the children responsible. Reprimanding them is a constant practice at work, because the employer thinks the child will learn proper work mechanisms better this way and perform the work more competently. The following accounts clearly demonstrate how employers reprimand and fine children for their mistakes or incidents during work:

It was last week, they took our buckets too, took them all. Our boss yelled at us, said why didn't you run away; we had a lot of flowers, we said we can't run away.

If you mess up the size of a window, for example take a fabric you don't know what it is and randomly cut it with scissors. Then that's it, the shop owner charges it to your account.

If I take leave, he deducts from my pay.

If I do a task wrong, he fines me.

Some employers, in addition to reprimanding and fining, verbally or even physically abuse children. An Afghan child recounted his lived experience of verbal abuse from his employer:

He swore there; he swore at my dad, called him an animal. So I left there.

When a child works wholeheartedly and wants to learn all the skills to become self-employed in the future, they may face two threats from the employer: the possibility of being fired for any reason at the employer's discretion, and not being taught all the ins and outs of the work because some employers want the child apprentices to remain dependent on them at work and not become self-employed and thus their competitors. In jobs like peddling there is also the possibility of conflict with local shopkeepers, which itself poses a threat to working children, because many shopkeepers believe that peddlers have made their business stagnant or their presence around the shop causes crowding and thus fewer customers visit their shops. For this reason, these shopkeepers ask the child peddlers to pay an amount for setting up in front of their shops. In some cases where children refrain from paying this amount, tension and conflict arises between them which has consequences for the children. A peddler child who worked in Afsarieh area recounted about these kinds of conflicts:

I come here and say the sidewalk doesn't belong to you. These shopkeepers bother us; they say either pay money or leave here, they even beat us up, take our stuff.

In workshops too, if a child spoils part of the work, the employer may, due to this mistake and incurred loss, deduct part of their wages. A child who worked at a sewing shop talked about their experience of such common punishments:

For example once she told me to attach this waistband, my boss wasn't there, that 18 year old girl. I told her I can do it. She said go ahead if you can. Then, for

example, I took the waistband. Then I had to wrap it around the pants, tidy it up; then I went and attached the waistband straight; it got cut in one place. She looked at it. I thought I did it right, but there was less waistband. I said come look here. She looked and said you got lucky you didn't ruin the whole pants. This much of the pants was torn [she showed an amount with her hand]. The serger has a blade on one side, and sews with the other side; I had torn it with that blade. Then I told my boss deduct from my pay, she said no, I'll fix it myself. Since there was little, it got fixed. If there was more, she would have deducted from my pay.

In many jobs where having safety equipment is required, employers, for various reasons including reducing labour costs, do not provide this equipment for children and so children work in these sectors without safety gear, jobs like waste picking, mechanics, scrap shops, welding, brick kilns, glasswork, construction, and similar. Lack of safety equipment or working with unsafe tools endangers children's health and can sometimes lead to disability or even death. A child waste picker said about this:

We don't have work clothes, we come with these, we buy gloves ourselves, they don't buy anything for us.

In other cases, especially in formal sectors like fruit and vegetable markets, flower markets, and auto mechanic shops, based on organizational regulations or labour laws, employers provide uniforms for children and force them to use them. But since these clothes are not originally tailored for children, they are usually loose and clumsy on them and bother the children. Therefore, they are not inclined to use these clothes and do not show any desire for them. What is noteworthy and should be mentioned

here is that the existence of this kind of clothing in effect normalizes child labour.

Wages are another aspect of children's work that is violated in many cases. Working children usually come from deprived, poor families who are not supported by the family and have to work. Therefore, they have no bargaining power and at the same time are unaware of their rights. This has led some employers to violate their rights. For example, employers usually do not insure children and in many cases only insure some of their relatives so that they can present those individuals to Labour Ministry supervisors when needed, and deprive other children of this legal right. Here, children refers to 15 to 18 year olds who can be insured based on Iran's labour laws. Also, working children's income is very low and in some cases employers refrain from even paying this meager income. These children's work hours are very long and they receive no overtime pay. It can be said that in return for the only thing they have to sell, that is their labour, they receive almost no wages. One NGO social worker stated about these children's work hours:

Children's work hours in workshops depend on the agreement with the employer, depend on the free time children have. Most of our kids, at least spend two and a half to three hours a day in class, that's the only two, three hours. The distance from coming here and the distance to go back home, at least three quarters, an hour on the way. Some of them are half an hour on the way here, half an hour on the way back. These times, so to speak, take away from their working time. Kids who work in workshops generally have less work time than kids who work at intersections and are busy working; I think those in workshops about six, five, five to six hours. Their wages are less relative to the work they do.

Compared to adults?

Much less than adults.

However, in many jobs, especially skill-based ones, as the child's skills increase and they take on more specialized tasks, their income also increases accordingly. A child working in a sewing workshop on Berlin Alley talked about their work hierarchy:

The work hierarchy here, first you're an errand boy. Then you become a straight stitcher; meaning you sew simple things. After simple stitching you become an applique stitcher. After applique stitching then you become a pattern stitcher. Then the wages go up accordingly.

Another child tailor who worked at one of the producers on Mother's Alley within the bounds of Tehran's Grand Bazaar, and called himself a born tailor, recounted about his promotions:

When I first started, I was just an pager body. I used to earn 400 for the first time. Then, after learning a bit, I went to someone else, and it became 600. After mastering a particular skill, I went to another person, and it became 1,000. Then, I went to someone else, and I earned 1,350. Now, I work for myself; my partner and I work together. But, you know, I wasn't born a pager; I come from a family of tailors [we laugh].

Because children are unfamiliar with their rights and have no ability to negotiate, they lack even the minimum guarantees, and the few existing guarantees are also verbal agreements made with the employer, and there is

usually no written contract. A child who was an apprentice at a shoe store said about their work contract:

We have no contract at all. We discuss everything verbally with the shopkeeper, no contract. There's nothing called a contract; the foundation of this work wasn't like that, everything's the same as the beginning. I wish them well, the shopkeepers here, 99 percent of them their word means nothing at all.

Because employing children is against the law, they do not benefit from advantages like insurance, although many employers, due to tax evasion, do not insure their adult workers either. In this context, one employer in the curtain making sector of Tehran's Grand Bazaar said:

We don't insure our workers. Our building isn't commercial, we can't file an insurance list. And if we want to get a commercial property, the rent goes way up, it's not cost effective for me.

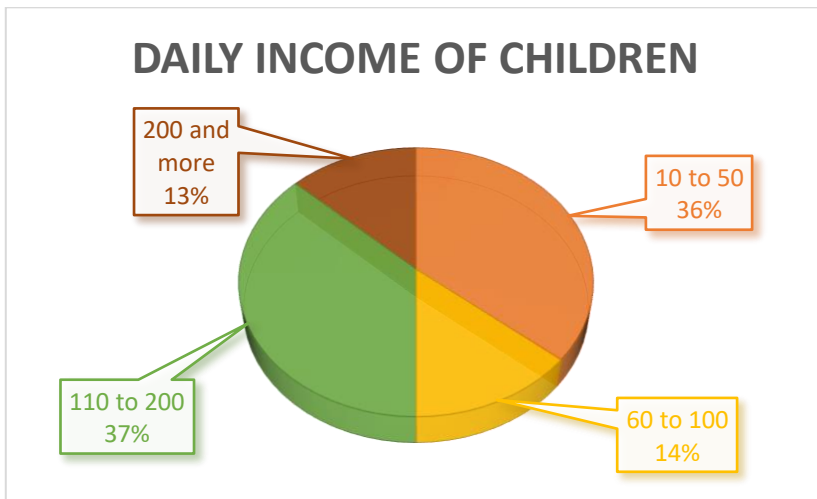


Figure 13 Daily income of working children (in thousand Tomans)

It can be said that except for a very small number of children, the rest have no work contract or have short-term contracts. Employers refrain from contracting this group to avoid legal responsibilities. This causes children to lack job security. They may experience various types of jobs over the years which prevents them from acquiring many skills, moving up the occupational hierarchy, and increasing their wages. Why they switch between different jobs has many reasons. One activist in the child domain stated about this:

See their wages depend. For example, I didn't have a case where I could say they had very high wages, like 500, 600. Because children, given their limited awareness, migration issues, economic and family conditions, and lack of stability, they've never been able to stay in one place continuously and learn that profession. They may learn something one summer, but the next summer they change their profession. So, their skill doesn't fully develop, their employment is messed up. But it's been 500 tomans or 50 tomans a week, 80

tomans a week, for 8 to 12 hours. But initially training, skill, continuous follow up, what they go through, maybe a child goes one week and doesn't go back after.

An Afghan child who worked as a windshield washer in Tehranpars also recounted his work experience:

In Afghanistan I farmed for a year. I did welding; I mean I've been working for five years, five six years; I mean since age eight I worked. First I farmed, then did welding. Now that I came here I wash windshields. I also sold fruit like my dad for a year.

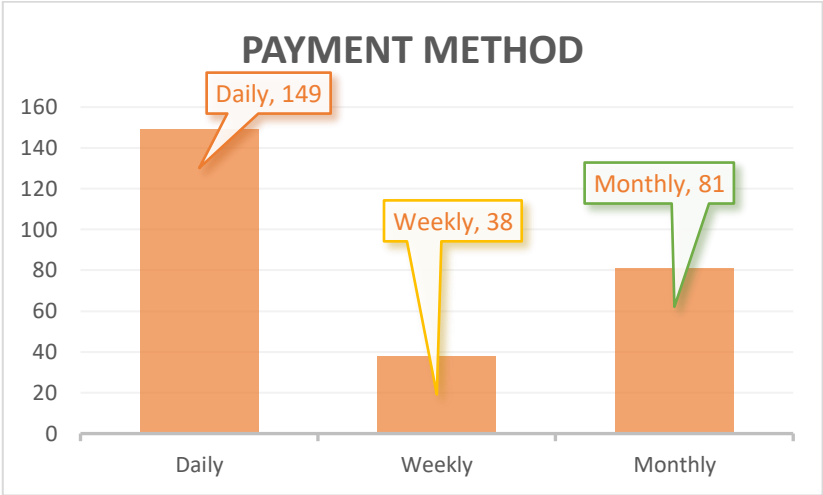


Figure 14 Distribution of children based on time of receiving income

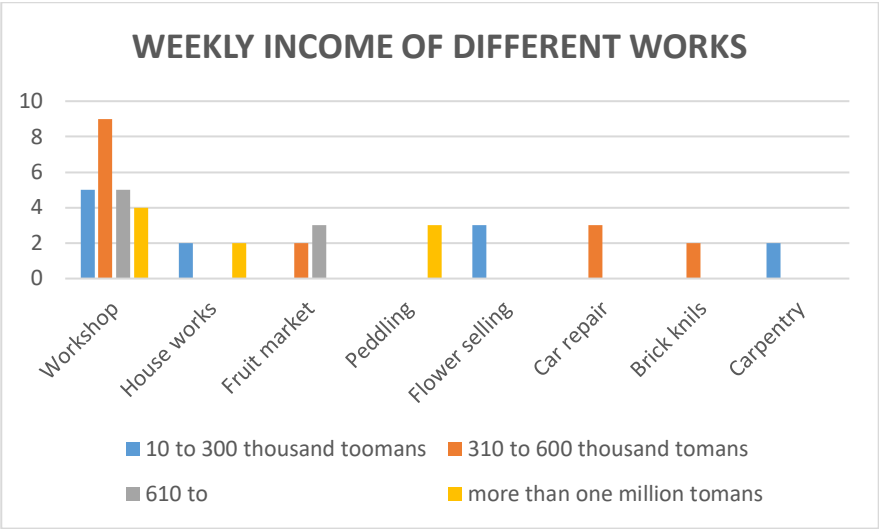


Figure 15 Amount of weekly income and form of work

Displacements resulting from migration or relocation due to being a tenant and job changes have devastating effects on children, preventing them from developing a sense of belonging to a place and in terms of work causes them to be unable to remain in one job to learn its skills and progress. As a result, they switch between different jobs over the course of their lives. In many jobs, the work environment does not have proper quality for children. For example, most welding and scrap workshops, mechanic and manufacturing workshops lack many proper work conditions like sufficient light, air ventilation, welfare facilities, adequate space, hygiene, and such.

Another problem for working children is lack of days off or holidays in some jobs; in jobs like mechanics, car wash, food shops, produce, flower market, and the like, children work even on Fridays, whether full-time or part-time. In other jobs that take one day off, their day off also usually does not coincide with the official holiday, Friday. For example, their day off may be Saturdays to do chores like personal hygiene, house cleaning, and such. In this regard, Afghans can be mentioned whose day off is

Saturdays. This group rents out their work location or hangout to other groups on their days off.

In some occupations there is the possibility for children to take leave, but in most cases they will have no wages on leave days, and in fact their wages will be based on their work days. Two children who were shop assistants at a car parts store said about taking leave:

He gives leave, but for example hassles us. Like he says you have to stand in at night instead. He says if you don't want to work, go out, just like that... It's like this everywhere.

It's possible to take leave. They're good people. No, right now I took leave, but he deducts from my pay.

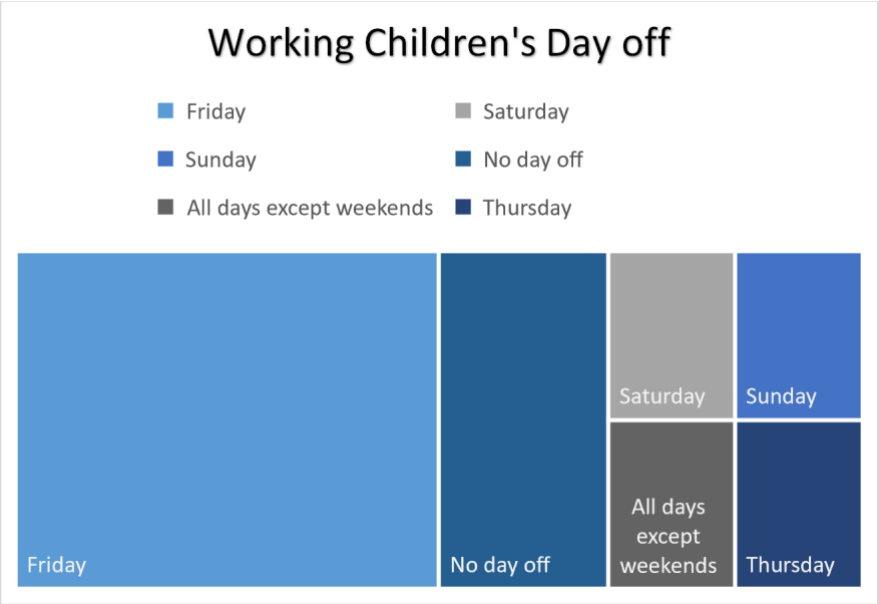


Figure 16 Distribution of woking children’s day off

For various reasons, children may quit or abandon their jobs. It was explained earlier how residential instability and migration causes them to leave or change jobs. Other

cases that lead to children quitting or switching jobs include: low wages, some jobs being seasonal, weather conditions, workshops closing, experiencing serious violence and harm, work being difficult and fatigue from the work environment, exploitation, and interference by official institutions. Lack of skills and doing exhausting physical labour are also reasons children dislike work. A child who worked with a cart in the market told about the difficulty of his work:

[This too] is work. We didn't have any job. There was no job. When you don't know a skill, it's very difficult. I'm bothered by this cart, cart pulling is very difficult. It's not working, it's not a job; you're forced, it's wretchedness. If we had this work, would we be pulling carts? This work bothers me, but someone who is illiterate can't do work. [This too] is work. It's not a job, what work can I do? I don't know any skills, just this cart pulling.

Another child also talked about changing their job due to lack of days off:

The previous job wasn't useful. It didn't have many days off, like it didn't have many holidays. We worked on Fridays and such. There too we'd go in the afternoons from 1 to 8:30 and such, but the work wasn't very useful. It's mostly because of the holidays.

In Iranian society, since social order has largely slipped out of the hands of its managers and social disorders have led to unjust rules not prevailing in society, legitimate mobility mechanisms like education and work have lost value, and activities like brokerage have enabled mobility. In such conditions, children know well that working has become worthless, and hours of work and increasing them

does not lead to capital reproduction for them. An Afghan child's narrative about the value of work in Iran reflects such an understanding:

I don't want to stay in Iran: first, its money has no value anymore, no matter how much you work, the three of us work, we really make little. Every other country values refugee, this country doesn't value them, the country and government, I have nothing against its people. My brother... has been working for three years. If he keeps doing the same work he's doing for three more years, will he get anywhere here? You yourself, if you work somewhere for 20 years, you won't get anywhere. Yes, for example, I studied so much, didn't get anywhere. Iran altogether doesn't get you anywhere, doesn't get you anywhere. I don't know why it's like this. If you don't work for a week now, the next week you'll have nothing to eat. Yes, we Muslims until the next holiday, etcetera, etcetera [referring to occasions that lead to work stoppage].

Working has various adverse consequences for these children, some of which were covered in previous categories. Precocious adulthood is another such consequence, as one NGO activist stated about this:

Then children who go to work suddenly grow up. This is really bad too, it's as if they're leaving childhood behind all at once, you clearly see a child who yesterday came to the centre and climbed the right wall of the centre, now standing behind the shop counter all composed; it's sadly unsettling, not fully grown up, pretends to be grown up. Because when they go to work and bring home money too, they're also respected at home. After all, money brings power with itself. It gives the children a kind of power in

such families. For example they can tell their sister, even their mother, bring me food, heat up my food.

Power Relations

Power exists in all social relationships, and depending on the rules of those relationships and how multiple resources are distributed – wealth, hierarchy, knowledge and information, personality – which exist among social groups and actors, it is distributed. Depending on who wields power, it can be productive or restrictive. For example, when the power holder legitimately uses power and employs it for public good, power takes on a productive nature, while if power holders use it to benefit one group, like employers, and harm another group, like workers, then for workers, especially working children, this power will be restrictive in nature, and even not wielding it can also be restrictive for some, especially children. For instance, when the municipality and its subsidiary organizations like the Waste Organization do not implement existing laws and regulations, they undoubtedly act in favour of contractors and employers and likely benefit from not implementing them.

In various jobs, depending on the type of work, children enter power relationships with themselves, the employer, citizens, their families, and various apparatuses like the municipality, welfare organization, and police force. Also, in all forms of work children are engaged in, there is one or more types of power relationships, some specific to certain jobs. The employer can abuse their power and act against the child's interests or support the child in some way at the workplace. Power can be wielded very overtly, like the blatant violence children experience at work, or covertly, like oppressive, exploitative relationships. Power can also have a structural dimension. For instance, where legal structures recognize child labour and do not prohibit

it, or based on existing regulations assign some of the worst jobs to certain groups of children, like foreign nationals, power has taken on a structural form.

A notable duality of power relations can be seen in children working in workshops versus those active in street jobs. Since many street jobs lack organizational work rules, the child works self-employed with no employer or boss, their field or realm of action is broader, they experience greater work variety, and have more freedom and power at work. In contrast, in workshop jobs, like production or jobs under organizational rules, like waste picking or working at produce markets, children have minimal power. So here rather than a duality of street work versus workshop work, we can speak of a triad of street jobs, workshop jobs, and jobs done under administrative or organizational rules. However, specialists and social workers in this domain mostly refer to the first duality; in their view, street children have much more power than children working in workshops. One expert's opinion was:

In the street, people who chase you may beat you, may come beat you up, vagrants, addicts, sick people, etcetera who want to... they're in the street too, in workshops too; meaning even a job inherently seemingly harmless like sewing doesn't seem so much that the nature of the work is dangerous. It's not necessarily so, people who work there will definitely not harm the child. These things aren't predictable and what we've found is that power and power hierarchy and power relations and domination and control in a closed environment is more limited for the child compared to an open environment; this is a qualitative finding. We know it needs more research.

One activist on the rights of children working at an NGO on the outskirts of Tehran's Grand Bazaar also stated about this:

Personally, I prefer a child works at an intersection than works in a workshop. See, the employer, the child has no self-confidence against the employer, and he (employer) knows that even this child's family, let's say, I'm saying if the child gets into trouble, he feels now he'll go tell his mother or father to go after the guy or not. This child doesn't have that feeling, because he knows well that this guy's father is also this gentleman's worker and has no right to say anything. This is why even if physical violation happens to a child in these workshops, whether sexual violation, usually no sound comes out. Apart from these, just that they don't respect him, because they know, the employer himself knows well and the children know well, children are smart. It's as if this gentleman has absolute power over that family, and usually it's that we've heard from the mother that yes, this poor soul brought my child to work for him, they're very happy he's provided work. But it doesn't have good consequences behind it, especially in workshops I'd go to in Tehran's bazaar. I thought these kinds of children went back home at night, but in Tehran's bazaar they slept right there. I'm certain nothing good happens there, young and old, all of them, no women were there.

As is clear from the two above statements, child rights advocates' and social workers' views on the risks of street child labour versus closed environments like workshops differ. Some believe children are more defenceless in workshop environments and the power relations are very different, and a child working on the street, although

facing many risks, does not become captive to any power relationship like the worker-employer relationship, and while there is greater variety to earn money on the street, even in a small sewing workshop there is a hierarchy and head worker and it takes a long time for the child to reach higher levels and advance. In this closed environment the possibility of the child becoming a victim of violence and harassment is greater. But on the street and at intersections even if someone wants to cause disruption, the child can change their workplace location. On the other hand, in public space the possibility of them wanting to assault the child is less. Another point is a child's ability to fit into a framework of order and commuting based on work rules. Children with little physical capacity, and given that premature work tires their frail bodies, need more rest. While workshop work rules do not give them this permission. One NGO activist who had experience working in several organizations stated about this:

To be honest, based on discussions, in any case, I was in other groups too, with other kids, those who peddle are very satisfied, those who go to intersections, although we see they suffer harm too. But those who go into mechanic work, workshop work and such, aren't satisfied, not satisfied in that way. It's very rare we see a child in this group who is satisfied, because an issue they have is coming and going on time is problematic for them, an issue. We have a child who complains every time that they don't like their boss; he always tells me I have to be here at 8:30, well I want to sleep until 10, then get up; meaning they can't get into the rhythm of work, they prefer to go peddle, they have their fun, make mischief, and make better money than going to the workshop.

Another children's domain activist talked about the difference between street-working versus workshop-working children:

Our connection with these children is mostly that, as I'm saying, their traits differ; workshop children are usually very obedient, calm children. We mostly try to activate them a bit, unlike street children. Street children are very active, agentic, noisy, energetic children. Because workshop children are very calm children, we usually try to draw them into conversation. Because they have very condensed work hours and someone is constantly over them teaching them everything; meaning they're completely dominated. In workshops many children are dominated.

Accounts and opinions of activists in this domain are not unanimous regarding differences between children's street versus workshop work, as another activist recounted:

They should do workshop work, why? Because the workshop is more defined; meaning if something happens there, you can for example go after the employer, talk to them, discuss; I don't know, ask for the reason, but if something happens to a child at an intersection, now a car hits them, they flee and leave, or I don't know, God forbid they are assaulted, in the different areas they were, you can't follow up; who do you want to catch, where, who do you want to talk to? Special incidents that happen to them, maybe like 1 or 5 to 10 percent you can have special follow up, but not with workshop work. We're not saying incidents don't happen, we're not saying problems don't arise, of

course they have their own particular problems, even for adults.

The children's own accounts in this matter were also as such:

Yes, I said this work isn't like in a production workshop. In a production you go work somewhere as an apprentice, suddenly five machinists also tell you what to do. It's useless.

Here one is free, come to work at nine o'clock, come at ten o'clock, you don't get swore at by the boss anymore.

I used to work before, sold clothes in a clothing store. I'd go from ten to nine at night. They paid me 20 tomans [per day], it was hard. Then I went somewhere else, sold dishes and stuff. They paid 150 a week, that was hard work too, I couldn't do it anymore; I'd go from ten to ten, it was very difficult. They yelled at me, ordered me go bring this, bring that. They swore at me too.

At work, for example, it would make me upset, wouldn't let me sit for a minute. Kept saying do this task, do that task. Everyone called my name [meaning they constantly called my name]. For example this one would say, for example a dad would tell his son, son go bring something. They would tell me..., go bring it. You have to go. Then they would order the other welder go clean it up, he would say you go.

Even these children's parents are obedient before the employer. For example, if the child's rights are violated at the workshop or their mental or physical health is endangered for any reason or they are harassed, their parents may stay silent and not object to the employer,

because in some cases the parents themselves also work for the same employer and know that part of their livelihood depends on them. The account of one activist in this domain about this was:

You can't intervene, why? Because the family needs that money, and then pretends other trivial reasons to take the child out of school for example. Like they don't want, for example someone in the alley bothers them, for example their dad doesn't let them. You know what I mean? They start making excuses, while the sole issue is the family needs the money coming from there and counts on it.

In workshops, children even sometimes become a tool and leverage for the employer to indirectly get their message across to other workers. The experience of a working girl at a sock knitting production workshop represents this very point:

They always talk at me in the workshop. You know? They say tell it to the door so the wall hears it, yes. I'm always the scapegoat, if they want to talk to the other women, they yell at me. I know they don't mean me, I don't say anything.

In jobs where the child's and employer's place of residence is the same at night, like in neighbourhood flower markets, these power relations and inequalities reach their peak, because the employer's presence is constant for the child. Accounts of children's domain activists also confirm this point.

One possibility that exists is that because these children are sometimes roommates with their employer, these

power relations continue with the same intensity in their place of living too.

They have very condensed work hours and someone is constantly over them teaching them everything; meaning they're completely dominated. In workshops many children are dominated.

Does this make them become very calm children?

Exactly, very much so.

One cloth seller employer recounted about power relations from their own childhood work experience:

We were just standing. I swear we aren't like that, we haven't laid a hand on them. When we were younger, suddenly, let's say it's called half a meter, they would make a racket, throw the half meter tape at us; they had power over us. Not now, we have power over them.

Ultimately, it must be said power relations in workshops become individual relations, because no specific rules exist to regulate relations between child and employer, and the only legal or organizational rule that should exist is the child labour prohibition law which is not implemented. In these conditions, power relations can become dependent on the employer's personal and moral traits; meaning they can determine work hours, type of work, wage amount, and anything they want. The child's only choice is to stay at the job or quit it, and they have no bargaining tools. Although as mentioned, these relations have become personal in nature and differ from one employer to another.

In some production workshops, the employer may use their own family members for work and even bring their

own children to the workplace. Usually such employers give their children relatively easier tasks or jobs that lead to their children gaining or advancing skills. Based on field evidence, these children are also considered tools to wield power against other children; as one child working at a carpentry workshop recounted:

Whenever the boss isn't there, his kid is there; he supervises. He doesn't work himself anymore, just orders us around.

In cart hauling work too, some individuals may hire several children to work for them or haul loads. This group of employers may favour one group of children and discriminate against another group, oppressing them, for example give more loads to Iranian children than foreign national children. An Afghan child who hauled loads with a handcart recounted about this kind of discrimination and power relations:

They're the bosses; when they get a load, they give it all to their relatives for example. Here there are two or three relatives, they don't give us any. Or they give more to Iranians, don't give us any.

Undocumented migrant children, due to lack of identification and in some jobs being migrant, are the weakest and most powerless. In some jobs where these migrant children's workplace may be the same as Iranian children's, like cart hauling and peddling and working at intersections, the Iranian children "bully" them, and sometimes don't let them work, because they think their presence in Iran has caused the amount of work and wages to decrease for Iranians. Therefore, they commit physical and verbal violence against them, and may sometimes forcibly take their work tools or money. An

Afghan child who worked at Tajrish square recounted his lived experience:

For example, these westerners exist. We go there, they don't let us either. We've also staked out this spot; we let them, we don't care, if someone comes, we can't say the intersection is ours. No, we aren't like this, we work. If someone comes, themselves one day they'll go, see there's more of us here, they'll find another place. We don't tell anyone to leave at all, because this isn't our country, ma'am. That's how it is.

Even the police's treatment of Iranian versus Afghan children is different, and when Afghan children ask them for help, they do not respond to their request, because they think they are not responsible for their security or they think the presence of Afghan children at work has caused tension and fights, and as a result see them as the culprits. An Afghan child who worked in Shahrak-e Gharb recounted about this:

When they bother us, we go to the police; they say it's your own fault, it's none of our business.

Power relations are not limited to workshop jobs and exist in all other forms of work too. For example, in working at produce markets, the child's power relations become multifaceted; one side is the organizational rules set for these markets, another side is the market organization's supervisors, another side is the child's employer, another side is their coworkers at the workplace, and ultimately another side is the citizens. The child has less power than the others in this dynamic. The following account narrated by a child working in the produce section of Efsarieh area confirms this point:

These engineers don't care at all how much money our boss gives us, whether he takes our money or not. They just come and supervise that we give customers good load, no fights happen with customers, this place stays clean.

These power relations also exist in street work, and a very prominent form of power relations is seen among the children themselves; those who are older or have more seniority at a street or intersection and consider it their territory bully new and younger children who have recently started working, flaunting and exerting their power more. A child who worked on Englab Street talked about other children exercising power:

... comes with his mom, comes with his brothers. There's about six of them with his own mom. They work right here, wash windshields. His mom sits there, watches the kids. They bother here; meaning they forcibly take money and stuff. They say we've worked here for ten years, this intersection became ours. I say where's the deed then.

Or a child who washed car windshields in Saadat Abad area recounted:

Just like that randomly we're walking, the bigger ones hit the back of our necks with a punch or they take our money.



Picture 38 Two windshield washing children in Sohrevardi area
(research photo)

The municipality, welfare organization, and police force are also among those who wield power at intersections. The municipality is concerned about street and intersection order, the welfare organization arrests children under the guise of organizing plans, and the police force may confront the children depending on the case. Children have experienced their presence repeatedly. Therefore, because they recognize them and their vehicles, they try not to get caught by them and flee or resist arrest when seeing them. Although sometimes they may not succeed. For example, the tools or goods they sell may prevent them from escaping, since they don't want to lose their merchandise, but not fleeing also cannot prevent them from losing their goods, because they cannot resist the officials' verbal and sometimes physical violence, and of course they may secretly retaliate against

their violence. A child who worked at an intersection in Shush area recounted his experience with such encounters:

They can't; I realize, I escape. They came here wanting to catch me, I went and hid here a little, went under this tree, the tree. We worked, the last time we punctured the thing [referring to patrol car], went away, stabbed its tire with a knife, punctured it.

A child flower seller also recalled the presence of officers in Punak district:

That week they took our buckets too, took them all. Our boss yelled at us, said why didn't you run away; we had a lot of flowers. We said we can't escape.

A child working and having income disrupts power relations in the family; meaning having income causes children to be less dependent on their parents and have power and independence in the family space. In these conditions, they will no longer remain under their parents' control and may even give orders in the family environment. This may be more applicable to children working in the streets, first because they have more income, and second because since they are not limited by workshop environment restrictions at work, they gain a more independent personality. One NGO activist working in Tehransar area had this opinion about it:

Then children who go to work suddenly grow up. This is really bad too, it's as if they're leaving childhood behind all at once, you clearly see a child who yesterday came to the center and climbed the right wall of the center, now standing behind the shop counter all composed; it's sadly unsettling, not fully grown up,

pretends to be grown up. Because when they go to work and bring home money too, they're also respected at home, afterward. After all, money brings power with itself. In such families, it gives the children a kind of power. For example they can tell their sister, even their mother, bring me food, heat up my food.

In flower markets where there is a work council or market monitoring, these councils themselves are one means of exerting power. When they provide a uniform for the working child or give them a special card to work, they in effect legitimize child labour. They also oversee market relations by monitoring the market, and sometimes this monitoring functions as a rule in the market between workers and employers, resolving their disputes. A child who worked at a neighbourhood flower market recounted the monitoring by these councils:

The council gave us these clothes. Their office is there. They supervise here. They give us clothes and these [labels put on clothes], don't let fights happen.

School Dropout

In the modern era, and as some sociologists say, in late modernity, where information and knowledge have become one of the most important forms of capital, education and learning play an important role in acquiring skills for individual and social life and gaining access to new forms of capital. Essentially, in the modern age, at the micro level, humans become empowered through mechanisms such as education, healthcare, and proper nutrition, although gaining access to these is the

product of effective social policies at the macro level.¹⁶² But apparently child labourers are deprived of all this, because work prevents their education in various ways and endangers their physical and mental health.

If people are deprived of these mechanisms, their poverty is not just financial but also a poverty of capability. Any time they cannot work for any reason, they become very vulnerable, just as child labourers have repeatedly recounted in field observations that their fathers in middle age could no longer work because they were injured and had to retire early. The accounts of two children were as follows:

My dad is sick and can't work, he has a slipped disc, his bones have broken several times, he has platinum in it. Now my other brother and I have to provide for the household expenses.

My dad hasn't been able to work for three or four months now, his back nerve and sciatica have flared up. Now we had no choice but to start working.

Due to lack of education and vulnerabilities caused by work, child labourers enter the same cycle their fathers went through. Of course this cycle is the product of discriminatory and exclusionary structures like inequality, poverty, immigration laws, education laws and its commodification, and the like. Based on fieldwork findings, there are three important issues regarding child labour and school dropout that have been examined: forms of education, conditions of education, and factors and reasons for dropping out of school.

¹⁶² Sen, Amartya. (2018). *Development as Freedom* (Translated by Mohammad Saeed Noori Nayini). Tehran: Ney.

A significant portion of child labourers in Iran are Afghans whose educational conditions are very different from many Iranian children. Some of them immigrated illegally and due to lack of identification documents cannot continue their education. Although the Supreme Leader of Iran ordered that “No Afghan child, even those who have immigrated illegally and without permits to Iran, should be deprived of education and all of them must be enrolled in Iranian schools,” contrary to this order, the necessary mechanisms for the attendance of Afghan children in schools have not been well established, both due to structural and organizational issues as well as problems of some children and their families. For example, the education of these individuals requires infrastructure in schools, provision of financial resources, and the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and schools with these children and their families. Due to lack of these factors, many Afghan child labourers have remained out of school or are being educated in NGO schools, and despite the considerable efforts and achievements of these NGOs, these children still suffer from some limitations, such as lack of standardized curriculum and accredited certifications.

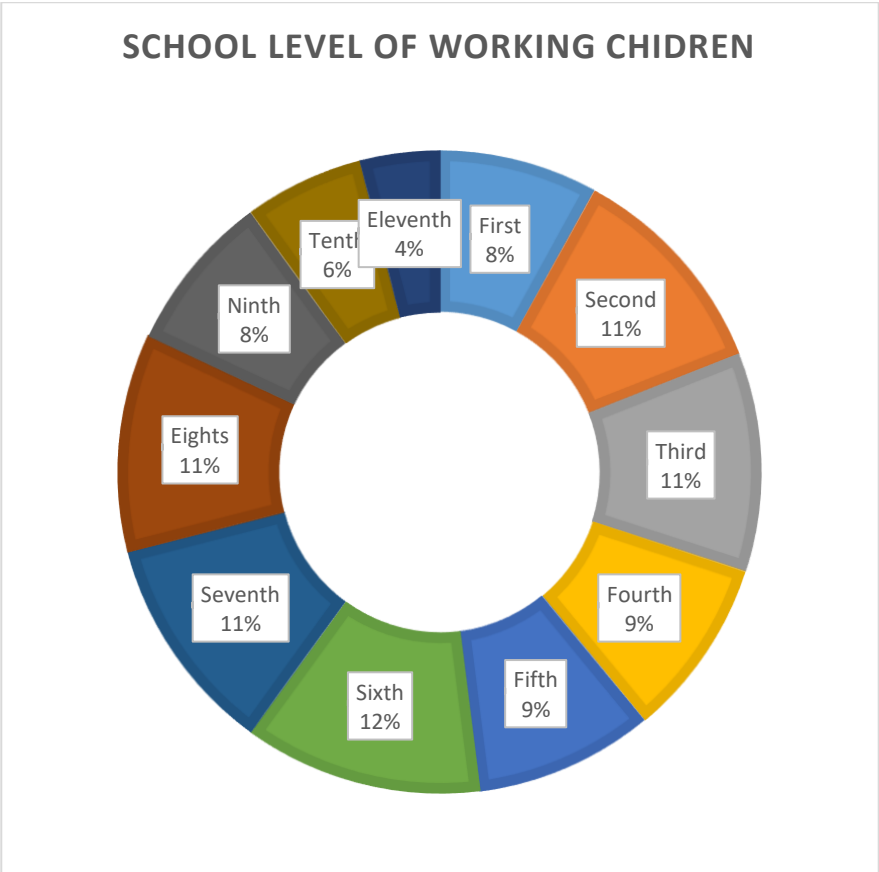


Figure 17 Distribution of Children Based on School Level (N=233)

One of the social workers of an NGO in Kan district stated:

Look, they have entered a country that is not a good host to them in general. Now they can enrol in schools, just enrolling in schools itself is a project; every year they have to go to the Bureau of Aliens Affairs, get a letter from there. Some days the bureau issues the letter, some days they don't. It's a whole project for a child to enter school, and the schools look at them with a demeaning perspective. For example, I remember there was a janitor at their school - they separate Iranian and foreign national schools, morning shift for Iranians and

afternoon shift for foreigners - who was a teacher for the afternoon shift. Maybe that janitor was an educated person, but this difference in roles hurts the kids. The kids really notice the difference in morning and afternoon quality, even though neither has good quality, but the afternoon is even worse than the morning quality.

One of the child labourers in Eslamshahr also said about attending school:

In Afghanistan I went to public school. Here we didn't have the paperwork. We went three or four times; they didn't give the paperwork. Now I'm in Grade 2 of [NGO name].

A significant number of foreign national children study at NGO schools. The number of these types of schools in Tehran is considerable, and they provide for a huge portion of the educational and other needs of these children. Perhaps if these institutions did not exist, the educational needs of many of these children would go unmet and they would miss out on any education at all. One of the mechanisms of these institutions is the use of mediation techniques to gain the consent of the child, their family, and the employer for the child's education. One of the social workers of an NGO described:

Look, from the day we started this work, we made a pact with ourselves to never make our work charitable, and to not create any illusions for them that would distance them from their real lives just to make ourselves feel better that we gave money and so on. Our relationship is that we speak with the child's employer or family, arrange for the child to come play at the community center for a few hours, because we see play

as the first right of the child, and then after that is their education. We've also had children who came to study as well. For some families we've given an ultimatum that the government will take your child if they don't go to school and you're responsible. We've said by any means necessary, depending on the family themselves, that the child has to go to school. Then, since they couldn't go to regular schools and had dropped out, we provided the means for education right there. Our goal is for the child to learn, and if possible, to send them to public school; not because public school is good - no, not for that reason - but so that the child doesn't feel a sense of injustice. You see, they see that all their peers are going to school every day wearing uniforms, and they can't. This is more hurtful than the illiteracy. This is why we try to send the children to public school.

None of the public schools have a mechanism to mediate between the working child, their family, and employer to enable the child to continue their education. Iran's school system does not have social work services. The presence of these social workers firstly allows for identification of foreign national and working children within neighbourhoods and various jobs, and secondly, identification and follow-up of the various issues working children face in school, providing them with necessary support. One of the experts in the field of working children stated:

You see, our schools lack effective mechanisms to attract or support working children or even dropouts. Fortunately, some NGOs in the child welfare field have covered this very well. In addition to educational needs of children, they provide a wider array of services to children which many schools lack.

As mentioned, many undocumented Afghan children who immigrate to Iran illegally are deprived of education due to lack of documents. The statements of experts and activists in the field of working children and foreign nationals confirm the same:

Due to reasons like lack of residence permit or education card, or being overage, we bring the child to our centre where they stay for a period until they can get an education support card. When they get the education support card, the Education Department of the Association follows up; we get an allocation from the Ministry of Education for our children. Since there are so many of them in these areas, it is very difficult in our public schools, they give us an allocation and we enrol the children, and overall, the fact that children go to public school does not mean we withdraw our support from them. I can say approximately in this centre alone we have about 200 public school children under coverage who receive psychological, social work, medical services from us, and even their education costs, as much as the Association is capable of paying. But in general, educationally, don't think that by keeping the children with us and having them study we can build their future, it's not like that. I'm not saying our curriculum has problems, on the contrary I can confidently say the Association's curriculum is specialized for this target group. We have children who due to damaging living conditions did not develop adequately; for example, we have a 9-year-old who is just now ready to start Grade 1, and the children have significant learning disability issues for which we have a learning disability coach. All these issues are addressed, whereas in the area schools, from what I've observed in

visits, from people's experiences, we see classes of 30-32 students formed for them, and the teacher expects a child with any issue to just normally study with regular teaching and progress.

Employers and work also obstruct children's education and disrupt it in various ways. Before mentioning anything about employers, it should be said that they encompass two major groups: some of them are not only not opposed to children's education, but also try to enable these children to continue their education and not be deprived of their rights. Another group may not oppose the child's education, but believe that these children must either work or study, because firstly, the child working benefits them. Secondly, a working child must dedicate their full time to work. One of the social workers of an NGO was asked: Is it possible for children to be absent from work, and if they are absent, what consequences will that have for them? They responded:

See, they work full time. Of course, school hours, since they're part time, absence doesn't matter at all to the employer, because the children go part time. But outside of school hours or holidays when they work full time, their absence requires a mutual relationship that we build with the employer. If the relationship we build with the employer is good, we [can] get permission from the employer for the children to be absent for classes held here, but more than a few sessions of absence, no, the employer will definitely oppose and not allow more than a few sessions of absence.

Two other social workers' responses to the above question were:

Employers are generally of two types: some don't have a problem with the child's education, they even welcome it when we go see them, they even encourage the child to come. But another group opposes, their work is a lot, children do part of their work, they think that since they give the child this little bit of money, they should work full time there.

Permission for school is not given to the children, in many cases, well here the social work unit steps in and contacts the employer and convinces the employer to allow the child to, in a sense, leave for an hour or two, whatever it takes, half an hour minimum, for the child to be present in class. But regarding how they respond to their absence, well, it happens. For example, we would take the kids on field trips, kids had gym class, kids played football, the kids were constantly stressed that ma'am call, ma'am what will happen. All these connections are made, we speak [to the employer] that, for example, allow them today to come on the field trip. Allow them to stay for gym class today.

The opinion of two employers on this matter was as follows:

The kids usually don't miss work, they're afraid; their fear is not so much losing the job, it's losing that day's wages.

Our kids study. But look, it depends on the person themselves, their studying doesn't relate to us. Their studying is their own responsibility. But in our work system we accept part-time kids so they can also focus on their studies. 100%.

Therefore, NGOs try to establish connections with employers and mediate between the child and employer

to get children into the education cycle, but these efforts are not always successful.

Another effort of NGOs is to get working children into the formal education system as much as possible so that children can benefit from this educational system and receive valid educational certificates. Therefore, another action of NGOs is mediating and negotiating with schools to accept students for education. One activist in this area stated regarding these efforts:

Most of our clients are undocumented Afghan immigrants. The reason is precisely the lack of identification documents to register in public schools. As you've observed during this period close to school opening we have a lot of registrants, now according to the guidelines about which children are the target group and should be covered, we carry out student registration, but overall the Association's goal and perspective is that no child who is eligible should miss out on public school education, and our effort is so that for obtaining the education support card, whatever guidance and follow-up is required, they colloquially call it the blue sheet, children can receive it and register in public school. A child who is not overage or a dropout, if they don't have these conditions, from right now that they come to us, we provide financial support, for example we want no child to not go to public school for lack of money, whether they are overage or their card is not ready, for this reason the child comes to us and we constantly have this issue with our clients that they think we don't want to register the children. But the crux of the matter is that we want the child to enter the formal education system, because the report cards we give children are not valid according to the Ministry

of Education. If a 5-year-old child studies with us and wants to transfer to public school, they definitely have to take a placement test in order to enter. But if children enter the public system from elementary itself, it will mean every year their status is automatically renewed for them to complete their grades.

There is a mutual relationship between children's migration and education. Due to conditions in Afghanistan, namely war and insecurity and attacks on schools by some extremist Islamic groups, it is not possible for them to continue education in their country. Therefore, some of them migrate to Iran to continue their education and may also work alongside studying. As a result, continuation of education is sometimes one of the factors for children's migration. The opposite is also true; meaning the child used to study in their country of origin, but for any reason, it was no longer possible to continue education there and they migrated to Iran, but afterwards, migration and work prevented their education. The second scenario is more common among children that will be discussed in the next section. One of the foreign national children recounted their reason for migration as follows:

In Afghanistan I used to go to school, but I had done two, two grades, but didn't learn anything. Because there was war there, sometimes they would come and close down the school, we couldn't go; the house door was locked, we couldn't go to school. Because of the war, my dad said come to Iran; at least it's a little better there. He came more for our education. He said there's no way to learn literacy here, let's go to Iran and at least learn a little literacy.

In some cases, after children migrate to Iran, it is no longer possible for them to continue education. Several Afghan children recounted:

In Afghanistan I went to public school. Here we didn't have the paperwork. We went three or four times; they didn't give the paperwork. Now I'm in Grade 2 [NGO name].

I studied till 6th grade in Afghanistan, then we came to Iran. There up until 3rd grade and so on. However, much you didn't study there you would pass. After 3rd grade, went to 4th grade, the lessons got a little harder. I don't know what they call excellent, outstanding they call it. I think..., very good.

Very good or what do they call it, there they say first grade; I got first grade. I was there in 5th grade, I was first. Went to 6th grade, I came second. As you go forward the lessons get a little harder.

Another form of education for working children is studying at religious centres and learning religious texts. Through religious education these children may also learn reading and writing. So far there has not been a comprehensive educational system in Afghanistan and formal education still does not exist in some parts of that country. In Iran as well it is possible that Afghans have their own religious centres in some neighbourhoods and this type of education is common among them. In this regard we can point to the Afghan mosque in Farahzad neighbourhood where they have religious teachings, and as in the past it is accompanied by violent behaviours like flogging. One of the social workers active in Farahzad neighbourhood referred to this and stated:

We had set up workshops for Afghan children and in these same workshops one of them recounted that he receives religious education at their mosque and for various reasons they may also commit violence against them, this same child said he was flogged.

Or one of the Afghan children recounted about their religious education:

In Afghanistan I was in 4th grade. Morning I would go to the mosque, at 8 I would go to school until 12. At 12 I would come and go back to the mosque; there I would read Quran until 12 at night. I wouldn't be home at all, would drink tea and go. I wouldn't be home at all. On Fridays which is off, on Fridays read Friday prayer and would come home to rest. I knew very well in Afghanistan, now I've forgotten everything. I read God's Quran whenever I'm home, every day.

It is true that the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran has issued an order for the education of Afghan children, but their education is still not possible in many public schools for various reasons or is associated with many restrictions, causing children to lose interest in continuing their education after entering these schools. For example, some schools require considerable sums from the families of these children to continue their education, and since many of these households are poor and cannot provide this amount, it is not possible for their children to continue their education. The officials of some of these schools also make various excuses for not accepting foreign national children, such as the school's capacity being full, not having a certain field of study, etc. When these children are finally accepted in public schools, it often happens that they are excluded from school in various ways. For example, a 10-year-old Afghan child

may enter fourth grade, but since they have not properly learned the lessons in previous grades and previous schools, they cannot properly keep up with the class and lessons and do not understand them. In this case, teachers, for whatever reason, do not spend enough time with these children and in some cases even commit violence against them, causing them to drop out of school. The following accounts clearly demonstrate these issues. Note the quote from one of the experts in the field of children's affairs on this matter:

Look, one of the problems our schools have is that they don't understand the circumstances of working children. An immigrant working child's abilities are not the same as an Iranian child who doesn't work and goes to school. They also have their family's support. They send that immigrant working child to school, the teacher and school don't understand their circumstances, they don't know the child's situation is not like others, they work, they previously didn't have good schools, they've come from their own country, their family is illiterate, they can't help them with school work. So the child cannot properly learn the school curriculum, gets frustrated, and may drop out.

One of the children also recounted about dropping out of school:

I went to school; studied there for three years. Came back out again. The teacher was a bit ill-tempered and I failed. Didn't go back again. I didn't understand her lessons; she would get upset, argue.

In summary, it can be said that the education of working children, especially immigrant working children, is in three forms:

A) Some who were born in Iran and have identity and residence documents can use the formal education system, although this group has many problems in schools due to work and some other limitations.

B) Another section, which constitutes a considerable portion of children, for reasons such as illegal immigration and lack of identity documents, being a school dropout and overage, high costs of public schools for them, working, etc., do not have the possibility of education. As a result, most study at NGO schools. It is true that the curriculum at these schools is not standardized and may vary from one institution to another, or they may work with working children part-time, but overall they cover a considerable portion of the educational needs of these children and also attend to their other needs, and they also have quality extracurricular classes.

C) Some other children also study at maktab-khanehs [traditional schools] and religious centres and receive traditional education.

Another important discussion regarding lack of education and dropout of working children is family circumstances, work, and migration. As mentioned in the definition of child labour, children's work is dangerous physically, mentally, socially, and morally for children and is harmful to them, and in cases such as depriving them of school, dropping out, and attending school while combining hard and long work, it prevents children's education or in various ways disrupts their education. In fact, children remain out of school or are forced to drop out for various reasons due to different forms of work.

As discussed in previous sections, another reason for forcing children to work and lack of education is families' financial problems and poverty. In this regard, one of the experts in the field of children stated:

You see, one of the important issues that prevents children's education or causes them to leave school and class is families' poverty. In conditions of poverty, households see children as labour. Therefore, they force children to work. Poor families cannot invest in their children's education, they want to send them to school but they can't. Basically, it should be said that as long as there is poverty, the issue of child labour, lack of education, and dropping out will also exist.

Children have also recounted over and over that due to family poverty, being forced to help cover all or part of family expenses, contrary to their inner desire they had to leave education and start working. The following accounts all clearly demonstrate this matter:

At first, I went to school, then after my dad got sick, I didn't go anymore, I went up to fourth grade in school, if I go to school, I won't come here to work. Yes, when summer ends, I won't come.

At first, we went to school. My dad got sick; I didn't go anymore. This year I'll go to school. My dad said go to school, I'll work.

From a young age I went to school. When I came back from school, I would do odd jobs for my brother who had a workshop in the market, then I left my studies and went with my brother, did odd jobs and learned the lathe. I wanted to study but it didn't happen due to the economic situation.

I didn't go to school because of the money, because I had to get clothes, pens and pencils.

I myself studied until eighth grade. Here I studied up to fourth grade, four grades in Afghanistan I studied up to eighth grade in Afghanistan. Here I went to Azadegan 2. Then I quit.

I went to school but quit because of bad financial circumstances; I studied until tenth grade. Then our situation got difficult and I had to...it didn't happen, expenses went up. I had family, my dad's work, I was forced to quit.

Poverty prevents children's education in various ways. Sometimes poverty leads to migration and then work and subsequently dropping out. Due to poverty, some children in certain parts of Afghanistan are forced along with their families or alone to migrate to Iran for work. Usually, these children were studying in their own country but due to migration and entering a new setting, the possibility to continue education did not exist for them. When children were asked "Did you go to school?", their response was:

No, I studied a little up to fourth grade. Didn't study anymore, came to Iran. Can't do it anymore, have to work.

School no, when I was in Afghanistan I went. Here no, here it's all work.

At that time when I was in Afghanistan I went. Came here, they want paperwork. We don't have any.

Migration has not only impacted Afghan children, but has also affected Iranian children and caused disruption in their education. For example, nomads mostly do not go to school due to lack of identification documents and in some cases temporarily attend NGO schools. But in many

cases, due to returning to their place of residence in the north of the country, attending these schools is no longer possible for them either. A social worker from an NGO in Aminabad area recounted:

For example, our center's nomad children, since before Nowruz when they migrated north, still haven't returned for us to have them in classes.

Usually when the father or head of household is addicted, their addiction leads to the family's poor economic situation, and in this case, children are forced to work to provide for the family's livelihood and as a result remain out of education. A child stated the reason for not attending school as:

No, couldn't go to school anymore. My dad was an addict there.

Sometimes the reason for children not attending school is the head of household not allowing it, preventing the child from going to school; as an immigrant child recounted:

Don't go to school, dad didn't let me.

Working, in any form, disrupts children's education; even if the child goes to school while working, the combination of hard labour and education alone imposes double pressure on them which in the long run causes alienation from education. For example, sometimes it is seen that these children work a few hours in the early morning, then go to school and after a few hours return to work again. In fact, this kind of simultaneous work and study causes children to experience heightened pressure which leads to physical and psychological fatigue and may have detrimental effects on their mental health. One of the

social workers described the coincidence of work and education and its problems with these sentences:

What I saw very often is their long work hours. For example imagine I'm a 12 or 13 year old girl who has to go there every day from 8 am, sometimes I feel we also expect too much from the kids. For example if we tell them look if you want to study, it's like this and like that, come for your lunch break. For example imagine the child runs there from 8 am, comes here for lunch. It's natural that it frustrates them, makes them feel double pressure.

Or two of the children stated in this regard:

I came to work, to work. In Afghanistan I went to school, but when I came to Iran, I quit.

I went until 9th grade but halfway quit and came to work.

What the social worker recounted is something children experience in NGOs, where managers and executives try to adapt classes to children's work so the child feels less pressure, while the education system of public schools is not like this and children have to be present in formal, inflexible frameworks in schools. The combination of work and education ultimately causes children to choose between the two, and due to poverty, it is work that is chosen. Overall, there are very few cases where children have successfully completed their education, and mostly they have either remained out of education or dropped out. When children were asked "what would you like to do in the future?", they mostly pointed to middle class professions. Many of these children, especially immigrant children without identification documents, know that

education is only possible for them until a certain age, and their childhood and future will be violated due to discriminatory laws, nationality, gender, class, and lack of effective social support, and gradually achieving their dreams becomes impossible for them. One of the activists in the field of children's affairs stated in this regard:

Puberty is a very sensitive age for kids; when they enter puberty, new windows of life open for them and they look and can no longer be convinced that without ID and education you can't even enter university. They think this before puberty, for example if you ask, they say they want to become a doctor, they say they want to become a teacher, pilot. But when they precisely enter puberty, all their beliefs collapse, they ask why, ma'am they don't let us in university, they don't let us in fashion design, sewing, technical-vocational. Ma'am, they don't let us become firefighters. This happens so much that the kids withdraw, their dreams are violated.

In summary, it should be said poverty in all its forms and mechanisms, migration, work and its resultant pressures, discriminatory laws against children, and inappropriate procedures of the education system have caused a large spectrum of working children to either remain out of education or drop out; even if they continue education, the pressures resulting from simultaneous work and education cause them to not properly keep up in classes and lessons and have educational decline. In the interviews, when children were asked "what would you like to do in the future?", they pointed to what are called "middle class values", and these answers indicate that these children want to study and enter university, but structures and laws full of discrimination, oppression and tyranny prevent them from continuing education. The result of such a structure is nothing but a cycle of

reproducing poverty, because these children have been forced to abandon education and turn to working due to poverty in their families and communities. Abandoning education and other requisites that should exist for children in childhood (such as play and joy, security and feeling it) leads to nothing but poverty of capability, a poverty that if takes shape - and it has taken shape - there is virtually no solution to escape it.



Picture 39 A working child (Courtesy of Young Journalists Club)

Child Marriage

Early marriage is another major obstacle to education, especially girls' education, one of the factors of which is poverty. In poor families, especially among poor Afghan families, children are usually seen as an expense, and a daughter's marriage reduces family costs. In many cases, families even receive an amount from the groom or his family in exchange for their daughter's marriage. In Afghan culture and traditions, after a certain age, girls are no longer allowed to work outside the home, because working outside the home may prevent their marriage, and with child marriage, continuing education is no longer possible for them, because roles like housekeeping, childbearing, and being a spouse are incompatible with

education at a young age. In many cases, it is the family's desire that leads to early marriage of children, especially girls. Working children's accounts in this regard were as follows:

Mr. ...'s school, their girls get married; my sister doesn't want to either, my dad doesn't want to either. If it's possible for Mr.... they have another school too, its name is Sobh, there, if my mom went there a lot. My dad says a girl should get married, studying isn't very good anymore.

Because of money problems and a suitor came for me, it was mostly about not having money.

I studied until eighth grade. I was thirteen when I got engaged, didn't study anymore. My studies weren't bad.

Peer Influence and Ineffectiveness of Education System

Another reason for children dropping out and prematurely joining the workforce is peer influence. This issue is very prevalent especially among middle class youth whose parents also do not have higher education. Adolescents in middle school, due to puberty and influence of friends, develop tendencies toward certain behaviours which if not managed by family and school, lead to academic decline and even dropping out. The families of these children, who may have made efforts for their children to continue education, after the child drops out, in order to protect them from high-risk behaviours and friends, try to find work for their child so they learn a skill, even if they do not get paid for the work they do. A

50 year-old father who had put his 16 year-old son, after dropping out, to work in a car repair shop in Vanak said:

Up until eighth and ninth grade he was good, excellent GPA; all the teachers were satisfied with him. He fell in with a few bad friends, didn't study anymore, didn't listen anymore. Two or three times I found cigarettes in his pocket. Every day the school wanted me, they complained. I told them I'm not there, at school, you have to watch out. He didn't study anymore, however much we tried he didn't study. He quit studying... I thought I'd leave him to his own devices, he'll wander the streets..., become an addict... I put him with this friend of mine, learn a skill... I don't pay him, get work out of him, but I'm satisfied, it's better than wandering around.

The education system in Iran has many weaknesses and one of the most important is mismanagement of schools, especially in middle school, when due to going through puberty adolescents undergo changes and need more care, but most school administrators and counselors have not received sufficient training to deal with adolescents and their tendencies and issues, but rather create an atmosphere in schools with authoritarian behaviours and treatment that make adolescents more prone to high-risk behaviours and dropping out. This is while in cases where administrators and counselors have had better interactions with adolescents, they have successfully passed through the sensitive period of adolescence and puberty, and climbed the ladder of success. A 16 year-old adolescent who worked as a motorbike courier at a restaurant, while regretting not studying, said:

When we were kids, we didn't care; we wanted to mess around, tease the teachers, but we weren't killers. They

mistreated us, once the school principal hit me in the ear in front of everyone in the yard, called my dad to come. He spoke so badly of me in front of my dad, my dad got upset too, he slapped me in the office in front of everyone. Right then I walked out of school. I said I'm never coming back. I got upset and went to my aunt's house. She bought me a motorbike, I came and started working as a courier. Now you freeze in the cold, for 1 million a month you have to ride this motorbike... A month ago I got into an accident, an SUV hit me, my leg got messed up, but since I didn't have a license out of fear I didn't stop at all... They didn't let us study, so we make something of ourselves.

In some cases, children's work happens for reasons like having financial independence, especially among adolescents who have expectations beyond their parents' means. In such conditions, adolescents decide to quit studying and enter the job market to provide for their needs. This group also often gravitate in this direction under peer influence. The remarks of a 15 year-old adolescent who started working after dropping out reflect this issue:

Every time I told my dad to give me money, he said he didn't have any. We always felt deprived of everything! I got really fed up; I said I'll come work, buy whatever I want for myself... If I have a kid, I'll do anything they want for them.



Picture 40 An adolescent working in a car repair shop (courtesy of Nasim News Agency)

Intervention and Support, Reducing or Increasing Harm

As explained in the section on work relationships, working children's relationships are usually limited to three main groups: relationship with family, relationship with employer, and relationship with NGOs. The form and nature of these relationships, which may be interventionist or supportive, impacts the child's wellbeing and can lead to reducing or increasing potential harms. Here, it is discussed what effects interventionist or supportive relationships of these groups can have.

Family: Due to immaturity, dependence, or lack of independence, children working and the risks associated with working require comprehensive support for developing their capabilities and reducing their vulnerabilities. They have multiple support networks, the

most important of which are: family, NGOs, government and government organizations, and in some cases employers and coworkers or friends at work. Children's support networks are not limited to these, but these several provide various supports for children. For example, although their families involve them in work due to poverty, at the same time they support them in various ways. According to some families, involving children in work is a kind of support, because it enables the child to learn a skill in order to provide for their life in the future. A social worker at one of the NGOs stated in this regard:

Many families send children to workshops so that the child learns something, as opposed to working on the street, children who learn trades in these same workshops, like sewing and mechanics. Of course many children don't learn anything either, because they may work for a few months and leave. The parents' perspective here is not income, it is learning a trade.

In many cases, parents take their children along with them and involve them in work. This has been observed in both street work and workshop work. For example, many nomad families bring their children into their haunts to beg. Such families watch over their children during work so that others do not bother them, steal their money, and social workers from welfare organization or municipality agents and other agencies do not arrest them. In many cases parents keep watch over their children from a corner of the street or intersection so that nothing happens to them, and if something does happen, they can intervene in a timely manner. One of the Iranian working children stated in this regard:

These Afghans, their moms come too. She goes there and keeps watch so no one bothers her kid.

If the child's father or mother or even older sisters and brothers are working in a workshop, after a while they may provide the grounds for their children or sisters and brothers to work there too. This has been frequently observed in sewing workshops, manufacturing, and crystal workshops. In other types of work like scavenging, parents bring their children along right from the start. In other cases as well, parents involve their children in work along with relatives or friends. In these conditions they are assured that at least their child will be harassed and abused less. In some cases families contact the employer so no issues arise for their child at work, or they may even get help from NGOs. In some cases, children also inform their parents or a family member they trust about their problems. The following accounts demonstrate support from children's family networks in some way:

Just yesterday I didn't come to work, stayed home. My mom told him that don't go today, because it's hot, you've gotten dark. Then she told me to stay and rest today. I forcibly told my mom let me go. Then my mom said don't go. I listened to her and didn't go.

If a problem comes up for me, I can't tell my mom, because she doesn't believe me at all, I only tell my sister; she's at home. She also used to work, came begging for two years, didn't come anymore.

It is true that parents send their children to work, but at the same time, they are concerned about their education and upbringing, and they try to provide opportunities for their education. In cases where a child works away from the family, such as when their family is in Afghanistan or Iranian children whose families are in rural areas, children receive support from them through phone contacts. These supports are mostly in the form of

emotional and informational support. New communication technologies have provided these children with the opportunity to better connect with their families. An Afghan child working in garbage collection described the way he communicates with his family:

For example, I recharge 20 tomans, make a call, talk visually with the family. For example, with IMO or WhatsApp, now I can see them [with a laugh].

NGOs: One of the very important sources of support for children and even their families are NGOs. Due to the nature of childhood, many of these organizations have invested in the child welfare field. For example, in Farahzad neighbourhood, an area with a share of working children, several NGOs like Mehr o Mah Institution, Royesh Nahal, Khaneh Elm (Imam Ali Society), and Gol Narge Charity are active and support these children. In central areas like Shush, Darvazeh Ghar, and Oudlajan, such organizations are numerous. NGO supports include educational, social work, psychological, medical, skills training and apprenticeship, employment for children and their families, legal, research, advocacy, and even welfare support. These organizations also provide the grounds for children's play and joy in some cases. Their support is not always complete and flawless, but in many cases it paves the way and their supportive methods and procedures are not the same and differ from each other. For example, in some cases they provide the grounds for children's work, as one of the officials of an NGO in Darvazeh Ghar neighbourhood stated regarding the nature of their support for working children:

In addition to the educational classes that we have that I mentioned, apart from academic classes, we have other classes; we have discussion classes, theater classes. Usually we don't have other services for the child

themselves. For example we have a social work unit; we try to provide social work services for the children, social work care starts from issues that come up in class to when we find out about a specific issue in a child's life, for example if we want to attend to it. For instance we visit homes, we try to be closely familiar with the child's living conditions. For example now with Coronavirus we're usually informed on the phone. We have a healthcare unit, children can usually tell us about their health issues, we find a doctor for them, send them there. In some places it may be completely free, in some places cheaper only. Then daily nutrition.

We're completely opposed to child labour and meanwhile all our efforts are so that if we can't stop and eliminate child labour, to reduce their work. For example if they go to work for three, four hours or six, seven hours, we cut it in half. Taking into account our discussions with the child or taking them from work, bringing them here, for example, they study here. Just them coming here and staying reduces child labour relatively; in addition to these matters, well sometimes we also feel danger in society, within the families themselves we feel danger, we find a supporter. The child in terms of existence and form and shape and age is such that the likelihood of them being harmed is high. A child, a girl, goes to the intersection, we take, so to speak, a monthly pension for them from the charity and our own Association and pay this family so that this child does not go to work. We also get a specific commitment from them that they must certainly do this.

Establishing communication with the employer is another support strategy of associations for working children.

When they support the child in this way, they can both become more familiar with the child's issues and problems and the employer feels that working children have supporters and they share the children's issues with them, and they may even harm and endanger the children less. The remarks of one activist at a migrant school confirm this point:

I think just that we're following up, once a week or every other week, firstly they realize someone is behind this child, so they can't take advantage of this child. Second, very often employers come to us for help. For example let's say, ma'am, this child's behaviour is like this; can you, let's say, if I tell them it's bad they may take offense, you're closer to them, let's say make them understand in some way that this behaviour of theirs is not right. For example they have this kind of cooperation, very rarely here, let's say an employer, let's say I'm saying one or two cases we've had who treat very badly, but mostly they cooperate and also when they realize then they know that in fact someone is behind the child and I think it brings the level of harm down a lot, for this reason I always tell social workers that even if they can't visit in person every two weeks, to definitely contact on the phone asking what is the child doing now, what is their situation.

Most of them get paid on time; 90% of them get paid, some don't, they get in debt, it's kept for next month, whether that next month or not, they come and take an advance, something in the middle of the month, but mostly they get their wages. There are some employers who no, for example play tricks; in addition to being less, they don't pay them, saying for example we didn't have sales or no, where we gave the work the money

hasn't been given to us yet, let it be until next pay period we'll give the money, these kinds of talks happen. At such times we definitely intervene and try to get the child's rights and wages from the employer.

Not all children's conditions are the same. Some are from very poor families and some may not have extreme poverty in their family. Given these circumstances, the strategies of NGOs and social workers for support and reducing work-related harms vary for children. In other words, their support strategies differ depending on each child, case, and their family circumstances. In these cases, especially regarding children from very poor families, the issue is no longer about rights, but social workers take more pragmatic approaches so that the child is less harmed by work. For example, they are no longer opposed to the child working, but try to move children from high-risk to lower-risk jobs or by suggesting some jobs, prevent their entry into high-risk jobs. One of the child welfare activists in Ganjabad area stated in this regard:

One issue is whether that work is necessary for the child at all. Sometimes we encounter children whose learning ability, family conditions, and our society's laws give this child the opportunity and conditions to study, progress, and leave work. Well, we encourage this child for this to happen, sometimes we encounter children who no, they have lower learning ability or lower economic conditions, given that they have no documents or identity and our society and laws do not accept them studying – this thing I'm saying is my personal opinion and may be different or can be different – I personally believe for this child instead of putting all this energy, time, cost, wanting to spend on their education which is useless. Ultimately, I will direct

this child from labour to learning a trade, being able to do skilled work. This is one issue. Overall, we can take work away from a child that is harmed by work when the reason that caused them to go to work is resolved. The issue of family empowerment and the child leaving harmful work should happen simultaneously. I can't remove the child from work until the other family members who can work or the family's economic situation improves, because it's useless for me to want to remove the child from work, because the child will return again to that home whose economic conditions are very weak and the only result will be the child distances themselves from me. So first these two must be done together, empowerment and the child leaving harmful work. Well now empowerment may take time, especially in Afghan families it takes a long time. The only thing I as a social worker can do is harm reduction. For example in addiction, DIC centres, I come in the first step, keep the child's work under control. If the child is working at intersections, I try to bring the child from intersections to workshops. If not possible, I try to control that intersection, shorten their commutes, shorten their work hours. If they work in a workshop, contact their employer. If their employer is not good, transfer them. If they are good, be in touch with the employer, keep their work under control until we start family empowerment. Now it's moved forward a bit, now I can say the child should leave work.

You see, we mostly based on law for example from eighteen and up, but this child who came illegally and has no identity documents said they're sixteen, it's likely they look eighteen and we understood this based on their body physique, their relationship with family,

and we made a suggestion for them. They may have gone there and issues like insurance and other things may have happened. This child couldn't go there, but we created the background for them to think about it and know what changes they can make in their life, but they didn't accept it. They went with their brother to labour in the mines, 5 million a month and who knows what may happen to them.

In other cases, it's not always possible for NGOs to work comprehensively and in-depth on children's issues. Therefore, sometimes in order to reduce harms to the child they counsel them and make them aware of work issues and dangers. In this regard, one of the activists of an NGO in Harandi area stated:

Mostly children have economic problems that make a child a working child. When a child becomes a working child, they also have economic issues that mostly need to be resolved. But if the counterpart and working child have a cultural problem, that is much harder, much harder. For example they have to come work on them, be trained, workshops set up, for us to be able to bring them up from that low cultural level they're at. Because that cultural elevation itself leads to their economic growth, in their family, and the child understands what they should do, how to behave, even at intersections, even in their work environment. What for? So they can earn more income. A nudge is given in these areas to the family and child by the social worker. Our strategy to reduce harm is, so to speak, the child must be made aware, there should be more contact of social worker and family with child's employer and awareness given. Awareness given regarding issues, so to speak, physical and spiritual and regarding harassment and improper

treatment by employer. The employer is not in love with their eyes and eyebrows. I also can't find a solution for them, except tell the child, for example sir, don't go to work, empower them or for example find someone to help the family economically. They mostly don't have more than these two ways, but for you to economically empower all children yourself, it's not in our professional mission. Well you just become their guide, we're not even their guardian, we're their social workers, social work in social, cultural, and economic areas. To the extent we can we help the family. Why? Because overall the child is not in our custody, not like welfare where the child is here day and night, you can implement any program you want for them. The child is with you two hours, three hours, then goes into society. Then goes into the family. You may have conveyed and discussed many things with them, done cultural building, but again if they're in that atmosphere, maybe over time they'll also forget what you did and said. Not that it had no effect, no, but because we're separate, the effects, effectiveness, impacts are much less on the family.

Charity or welfare supports are usually another type of NGO support provided to working children. The remarks of one social worker of these organizations who was active in Kan area confirms this:

Here in addition to programs and classes, they receive financial support, for example a few times, rice, lentils, household items, and so on...

The accounts of several children from Farahzad, Kan, Shush, and Darvazeh Ghar areas about NGO support for them are as follows:

...I was young; then I saw Ms... talking with the kids. I went and asked here if I can come study, I didn't know much Farsi... We were also there, but... is very different. I'm not saying... also didn't help, when we were there, we were studying these lessons. We really wanted to, but we didn't have time. At that time we went from 8 to 11 at night we worked. At that time we were selling movies. At that time they arrested us so much.

Yes... I went for classes, not for aid and stuff.

They had come here, then said we have a school here, whoever studies should come. Then we went. Then we brought all the kids.

They came here found me helped me.

Some NGOs criticize and oppose charity actions, here we quote two opposing opinions:

Look, from the day we started this work we made a pact with ourselves to never make our work charitable, and not try, for example, with aid make first an illusion for them and distance them from their real life and empty our own feeling that we came gave money and so on...

First, we're not a charity, the strategies we use, first we encourage the kids to come study here, we force their mothers, beyond encouragement, we force them to come to life skills classes. For cleaning here, this lady has a list, we inform the mothers, purely so that we say, look, we don't give or take money here, everything must be participatory, the family must cooperate with us. That's why we have this kind of, the mother, father, if you don't cooperate here, this door will close, we have

this kind of situation. Or for example we send their children to school, the mothers must take turns going with the children. We tried, we try not to be a charity, because we don't accept charity work at all. Participation, encouraging the father and mother for the child to not work and come study, get training, the consequences and results of children's work, especially those who work on the street, we talked a lot with them about this. I remember we spoke with a mother; I spoke with her myself; I told her on the street your child goes and this and that happens, this and that happens.

Some other NGOs have also provided health and medical services for these children. Regarding provision of such services, one activist stated:

We provide healthcare and treatment to the extent we really see the child is in danger. To be honest we didn't consider this our duty, but for example there's a case where we see the child is becoming impaired, for example we have a child whose bones and skeleton has a particular problem, we started treatment for this child, because the family at all couldn't do this. Or for example one or two cases of children who need psychological treatment, their problem is acute, we followed up for their treatment, but we want the family to primarily take this child.

Employer: In previous sections, the image portrayed of employers was that some violate children's rights, commit violence against them, and exploit them, but they have another side too, that is some employers have become part of children's support network. Overall, some employers may appear in the first image's role and some in the second's, which depends on various factors including their

personality traits. The second group of employers are concerned about children's health and future in various ways and support children to reduce work hazards and resultant harms. For example, they don't oppose children's school attendance during work and even encourage them to go to school and study. In some cases they may take these children to and from school themselves, establish connections with the child's family and NGOs, and relay the child's issues and problems at work to them. They may pay children more for the work they do and try to assign tasks to the child that they can handle and don't damage their health. In some cases they provide food for them or some household goods for the child's family. But some employers have a kind of charitable perspective toward the child; that is they think just by giving the child a work opportunity and, so to speak, "taking their hand" and paying them a monthly amount they've done a great deed for the child and their family, so they won't take another step for them. An employer in Gisha area who had two children working in his grocery store stated:

I don't need these two kids' work, I said come so I can take their hand; don't wander the alleys, whatever they work is for themselves and their family. Goods come in, they move them around, stand at the shop's door.

Of course it should be said that when various agencies and institutions don't have programs for children and their families also can't effectively fill their children's free time and children, especially during school's long vacations, spend their time in alleys and streets, the employer may also in a way feel entitled to have such a perspective. The following accounts also demonstrate other forms of support employers of various jobs like car wash, scavenging, and battery manufacturing provide for children:

I personally both support them and back them up. If a problem comes up for them, to the extent I can I do something for them.

Leave, as much as they have work to do. I definitely have to know what work they have. Usually for little kids personally, well other places are like this too, I try to care for them more, [make sure] they don't associate with neighbours, bad people, and so on. Well at work we try to make sure our talk, music we play, well anything under 18 shouldn't bother them. Other places are usually like this too. He has leave now, says he wants to go and so on. Usually he goes with his dad, doesn't go alone.

I'm talking about myself; I have nothing to do with other places. Other places pay kids much lower wages. I try to get close to adult wages, because I know it's because of [their] economic circumstances. I do what I can now. And for you, about other things, I do what I can. I myself try for it to happen, if I can do it. If I can't, then I can't. For example one of them, it was two or three years ago, he was a student, he came to work for the summer, then went back; he said I don't want to study anymore. Believe me, I spoke with him maybe two or three times, even after school opened, I talked with him, spoke extensively with him. Because my deaf worker now has a BA. I have an associate's degree myself. Then he said seeing you, what do I want education for. I really talked a lot with him but he didn't agree. He's working now, I say things like this happen, well we usually do something, talk.



Picture 41 An NGO school in south Tehran (Research photo)

Government Institutions: Although many of the actions taken by the government and public institutions regarding child labour have been criticized, they do, in some cases, contribute to support networks for children. For example, despite some shortcomings in the education of children, especially Afghan migrant children, in recent years, the government has supported non-governmental organizations to better assist and provide services to these children. Programs such as the organization of child labour aim to support and protect children, but they may face challenges in terms of goals and implementation. Sometimes, neglecting the work of children is considered a form of support for the child because, from the child's perspective, they can work without obstacles. In some cases, government organizations or public institutions establish centres to provide services to working children, such as social service centres established by the municipality in more vulnerable areas of Tehran. The target groups of these centres are diverse, and one of them is working children. The Welfare Organization has

directly implemented plans to organize and support working children, but according to child rights activists, this plan, which has been implemented more than thirty times, has failed and not only does it not support and address the situation of children, but it also harms them. This plan is usually implemented in collaboration with the municipality and the governor's office, and the children interviewed in this study complained about being detained by municipal and welfare forces and the violence imposed on them.

What is certain is that working children need support networks, and these supports can be provided in various ways, such as emotional and social supports. Support networks, especially informal supports in the form of emotional and professional support, strengthen attachment and promote the learning of life skills in children. Attachment is one of the factors that strengthen self-control as a capacity. These networks make children less vulnerable in work and life. For example, when some employers are aware that children have support, they are less likely to harm them or endanger their health because they know the child is protected, and it may cause trouble for the employer. However, when for any reason these support networks are weak, it creates a ground for the exploitation of children in various forms. It should be noted that this issue may vary from one employer to another, and as mentioned, some employers not only do not exploit children but also become part of their support network. In general, social support is one of the most important mechanisms that prevent harm to children and their exploitation. However, when these supports are weak or inaccessible, children become more vulnerable in the work environment. One of the activists working in the field of child labour in the Chahar Danghah area expressed the following opinion regarding this matter:

Those who have guardianship and naturally have more supervision are more likely to protect children compared to those who do not have guardianship or effective guardianship. Because they lack support from others, they are more susceptible to exploitation and economic and sexual exploitation.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

In previous sections, some services of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the field of child labour were mentioned. Due to the important role that these organizations play in supporting child labourers, they will be examined in more detail here. There is virtually no comprehensive and widely accepted definition of NGOs in the literature of this field. Their diversity, diverse goals and structures, and the highly diverse driving forces behind them have made consensus on such a definition difficult. One definition states: NGOs are groups formed by members of society as individuals and without any government title or professional position to achieve social, civic, moral, environmental and other social goals. These organizations are non-profit; That is, they do not operate to make a profit or do business.¹⁶³ NGOs are divided into four types based on their orientation:

- Charitable: This type of NGO carries out paternalistic top-down activities with minimum participation of beneficiaries. Activities such as meeting the needs of the poor, distributing food and clothing or medicine, housing, transportation, schooling and the like are carried out in these organizations.

¹⁶³ sciencedirect.com (2013) Accessed September 2020.

- Service-oriented: These non-governmental organizations provide services such as health, family planning, educational services and program design, and expect people to participate in implementation and receipt of services.
- Participatory: These NGOs generally implement self-help projects in the form of cooperatives, in which local people get involved by providing cash assistance, tools, land, human resources and the like.
- Empowerment-oriented: This orientation emerged when access to development was based on helping people and a clear understanding of social, political and economic factors that affect their lives. These NGOs try to enhance people's awareness of their potential power to control their own lives. In the activities of these organizations, people have maximum involvement and participation and act more as facilitators.¹⁶⁴

NGOs play an important bridging role between citizens and between the nation and the government in all fields. These organizations are among the most important elements of social capital and strengthen it, as they strengthen social relationships and the outcomes arising from them, i.e. social support. In other words, these organizations provide the best mechanism for helping people by strengthening social relationships, which unfortunately in Iran this capacity has not been utilized well.

Supporting child labourers has been on the agenda of some of these organizations, and NGOs active in the field of child labour in Tehran include charitable, service-oriented, empowerment and child rights organizations.

¹⁶⁴ <http://ngosiran.ir> (2017) Accessed September 2020.

Some of these organizations include: Society for Supporting Child labourers, Society for Supporting Children's Rights, Mehr and Mah Institute, Imam Ali Society, Royesh Nahal, Defense Society, Mehr Afari Institute, Yari Network (some of which are members). Small Tree Children in the Kyan region, Defense Society for Child labourers and Street Children, Assistance Society for Children. The target groups of these societies are vulnerable and at-risk children and women. Of course, in addition to these organizations, many other societies and charities are also active in Tehran that by reviewing their portals, charters and activities, one can observe their main services in the field of child labour, which include: educational, social work, psychological, legal, Welfare, research, medical, supportive, advocacy, defending children's rights, and so on. Most child labourers (in various occupations) have experienced receiving various support services from these organizations, although some of them have become obsolete or are considered paper organizations.

It should also be added that children are attracted to these organizations in two ways: sometimes NGOs enter workplaces to attract children, and sometimes children and their families, based on the information they have received from their networks about these NGOs, go to them in order to accept and receive services. Some activists in this field quote:

We went there with the intention of attracting any child working in this workshop to come study and not work, and the employer in some way encouraged us in this relationship. Look, we have psychological counseling, if you want, you can study here and it worked very well. We talked to many employers that this [not working] would benefit you too, in a way that the employer

would come and discuss his own and his family's problems with our counselor.

The main issue is identifying these children, and drawing attention to the fact that some severe forms of work are much more important, and in these workshops, where sufficient supervision does not exist, we must draw attention to this form of child labour. And ultimately, the aim is for children to get out of the illegal situation and have some form of residence permit so that they can receive services.

The process for child labourers is that the children come here, after completing the case file process, the ultimate goal of the institution is that alongside improving the conditions of the family, empowering the family, work is taken from the child. Work is only taken from the child when those initial steps for improvement and empowerment of the family have been taken, as long as that work has not been done, taking work from the child is not beneficial.

Two children spoke about how they got to know the NGO that supports them:

Our dad found this place, one of his acquaintances gave him the address. I come here to study.

We registered here ourselves to study. Our aunt introduced us, we came here to study. Four years later we went to regular school.

Some NGOs noted that a considerable number of their beneficiaries are referrals from other institutions, and one of the problems facing children and their families is lack of awareness of available resources - in this important

matter NGOs help each other and provide referral services; as one activist of these civil society organizations stated:

Now, regardless of the type, whether that child lacked access to resources, did not recognize the resources, or the institution itself was unable to, in some areas, observe that child to enter and provide services - we follow up on referrals from other centres, from neighbours, other child labourers.

The main target group of NGOs are Afghan children, and Iranian children less often turn to them for support. One reason for this may be that Iranian children can go to public schools and are not faced with the same legal restrictions as Afghan children. Or migrant children, due to their family culture emphasizing the unimportance of education, less often refer to NGOs. After attracting these children, NGOs provide various services to children based on their goals and capabilities. One of their most important services in the field of educating or schooling children, which was discussed in the “drop out of education” section. The following quotes also indicate NGOs’ educational services:

Most of our clients are undocumented Afghan migrants. The reason is the lack of identity documents to register in public schools, as you yourself observed in this time period when schools are open, we have many referrals for registration. Now based on the guidelines we have, [ie] which children are part of the target group that must be covered, we register the children. But the overall goal and approach of the association is for a child who does not have the opportunity to enroll in public schools due to conditions, and our efforts are guiding and following up so that children can receive

educational support cards, blue cards as they are called, and register in public schools.

A child who is not overage, not a school dropout, if they do not have these conditions, our efforts are for the child to be supported financially from now on when they refer to us, for example we want no child to lack money to go to public school. Now if they are overage, or their card is not ready, for these reasons the child comes to us, we constantly have this discussion with our referrals that they think we do not want to register children. But essentially the issue is that we want the child to be placed in the formal education system, because the records we give to children are not considered valid by the education system. Even if a five-year-old studies here and wants to transfer to public school, they must definitely take a placement test to be able to enroll. But of course if children enroll in primary school from the beginning, this ensures their grades are automatically renewed every year and they can complete their education levels.

Currently among our own child labourers we only have three Iranian cases out of sixty-one. The truth is where we are located, most children are migrants, unconsciously some social harms have occurred there, that is, due to lack of proper and permanent jobs for fathers and mothers, seasonal jobs that have no insurance or future - unconsciously sometimes they are forced to use child labour. In Afghan societies, girls are less often sent outside for work, mostly boys are sent for outside work. But of course there is also housework done by girls, like vegetable sorting and such, we have family workshops.

All our children are currently in the Afghan school. But we have no problem, everyone can register. But for now they are all Afghan.

The support we provide is at the level of educational support; That is, on the condition that the child who goes to work also goes to school and we pay their school costs. You know schools are not free at all and they charge migrants even more, so someone has to mediate.

We gave some families an ultimatum that see, your child will be taken by the government, if your child does not study, you are responsible; depending on the family itself we said the child must study their lessons. Then since they could not go to a normal school, being out of school, we provided it in that association. Our goal is for the child to learn education and send them to public school as much as possible; not because public school is good, no, not for that reason, but because the sense of justice in the child, you know that inequality hurts the child. They will see all their peers of the same age go to school every day dressed, and they cannot, this is more agonizing than illiteracy itself.

NGOs provide services in various ways, even to children who are accepted in the formal or public education system, as these children need support due to issues and problems they have faced. One activist of NGOs stated in this regard:

For example, imagine a child who immigrated to Iran six months ago; for reasons such as not having a residence permit or educational support card, being overage, we bring the child, they stay with us for a period to obtain an educational support card. Once they

get the card, the association's educational deputy follows up the case. We receive a quota from the education system for our children, as their volume is very high in these areas, it is very difficult in our public schools, they allocate us a quota and we register children. But of course with children entering primary school from the beginning, this automatically renews their grades every year and they can complete their levels.

Playing is undoubtedly one of the inseparable experiences of childhood and all children need spaces to play, unfortunately many of them are deprived of this right. However, sometimes NGOs provide play areas for them or may organize camps for those under their coverage, which only includes covered children. About providing such facilities, one activist in this field stated:

Our communication is such that we talk to the employer or the child's family, for the child to come to the association for a few hours to play, because we consider the first right of the child to be play and then education, and we had children who also studied their lessons here.

We took children on trips, children had sports hours, children were constantly stressed asking 'ma'am, what happened, ma'am call this number.' All communication is established, we talk depending on the family itself to give permission for the child to come on trips, to stay for their sports hours.

One of the child labourers in Farahzad said about going to these centres to play:

...there then we go play football.

Communicating with employers to protect children's rights is another service of NGOs. The social workers of these NGOs contact employers to attract children, convince employers and raise awareness about child labour and its consequences and dangers, identify children's problems through employers, and support children against employer abuses regarding child labour wages by communicating with employers and where children work. Part of what NGOs said about how they communicate with employers is:

Then wages, which are supposedly 500, 600, 400 for some, some who work more, for example at a higher age, 800 tomans. And they give it to the child themselves or their parents. Yes, if the child earns it, they directly return it to their families. Most of them receive their wages on time.

Actually, we have arranged our files in such a way that each social worker is responsible for a number of files. Then these basically see the child once a week and the events, communication with employers is in the vocational training section. For example, we have children who go to crossroads and may be exposed to harm. Now in the vocational training section, we provide some assistance. For example, that which work they are engaged in, at least be a skill, an art, learn something.

We take that communication with their employer, somehow we get along with them so they give the child some free time to for example reach training, counselling, something, can actually implement it. I forgot to mention one of our children who now works in goldsmithing, he works from eight to five or six. Based

on what he himself says, he earns 1,300, 1,400 tomans and they are our children. For example, we have a child who is an apprentice in a shop and earns 1,000 tomans a month.

One of the employers used to see us on the street and constantly ask questions, 'ma'am, what happened, don't you have classes for us, ma'am, why don't you want to do anything for us?' On the way we were going to the association there. You see, the reality is that employer himself was also a child labourer, after all he is also a person. You see, that employer view with prestige did not exist for those poor things.

Some children reported going to these centres for playing:

...there then we go play football.

NGOs provide various services even to children enrolled in the formal education system, as they need support due to issues and problems they have faced. Communicating with employers to introduce children, convince employers and raise awareness about child labour and its consequences and dangers, identifying children's problems through employers, and supporting children against employer abuses regarding child wages by communicating with employers and where children work is another service of NGOs.

Medical and insurance coverage is another form of support provided by NGOs. Since child labourers and their families face many deprivations, they are therefore faced with various health or medical issues, and they may also be injured at work and need medical services in various ways. On the other hand, Afghan children and even many Iranian child labourers, given that they are not covered by any medical insurance and health costs are

unbearable for them, need this support more than anyone else. One social worker from a civil society organization spoke about the medical support they provide:

In each of our centres, we have social work, psychology and medical services for children; thank God, if we have a child who needs high cost treatment medically, the association will not let this issue remain for children by finding supporters and organizing campaigns. I think this is one of the issues that, given that they are citizens and health costs are very high for them, thank God the association has been able to have good activities in this field. There was a child with ear infection who underwent surgery, there was a problem with the pelvis bone. Now issues that are high cost - thank God - the association can provide services to children in these cases. Of course now it is the time of corona, no, but besides this, you may have seen our health room in this center, before this disease came, we had a pediatrician; we had an obstetrician who came and visited weekly. Now the issue of free visits is irrelevant. Some of those beneficiaries whom we ourselves knew the conditions, the issue of their tests, the issue of providing their medications were either free or at minimum cost. We have a dental office in Molawi center. This is considered the headquarters. In the dental office for example, we had a volunteer dentist once a week who came for treating children. In summary, in the field of treatment my colleague... are busy, they can guide you better. But psychology is there, now whichever child finds entry into the system, the social work file attached has a home visit from each house for children. Social work file formation is simultaneous with forming the child's psychology file and educational file. Where in the

psychology part each child receives counseling and is seen. Now whichever has an issue or issues similar to learning disabilities, we have much more to do with these children; that is, it is not like a child has an issue and is abandoned. We cooperate with Doctors Without Borders, which is at the end of Rahdo Abdullahi Street - that with them unfortunately and thankfully this cooperation exists that children can benefit from psychiatric visits and psychiatric medications that children may need. And the social work team, as it were, any financial or legal issue that may arise is discussed with the association's legal advisor. Most issues are related to obtaining educational support cards for children and issues related to child abuse if any. Issues related to our child labourers getting involved with welfare and now any issue that we have very direct communication with the children's families, it has become inseparable. The social work section has very close ties with the family. Why? Because overall most behavioural, moral, economic and cultural issues of the child are handled through the social work unit, and in some cases psychology. So that these children who have effectively or by compulsion of the family been put to work in society can have more comfort and see less harm at least compared to a calm life in terms of mental health and not, for example, in terms of economic welfare. Because we are completely opposed to child labour and on the other hand all our efforts are that if we cannot stop and eliminate child labour, reduce it. For example if it goes three hours, four hours on the job or seven hours, six hours on the job, halve it. Considering the talks we have with the child or pull them to school, bring them here, for example, they study. Just coming

and going and staying here itself causes child labour to relatively decrease compared to these issues. In addition to these issues, now sometimes when we feel danger in society, when we feel danger in the families themselves, we find a supporter. A child in terms of existence and appearance in terms of age is such that the risk of harm is high. A girl child goes to the crossroads, on a monthly basis, we take a stipend from our own charity and association for this family not to go to work. We also take a specific commitment from them that they must definitely do this job.

Medical workers work with families and child labourers from various aspects, I am presenting the social workers of the center, but teachers or trainers only work with them in relation to literacy, that is, they do not have any other special job, it is not within their scope of work. But social workers are in terms of vocational training, child rearing training, education and upbringing training and financial assistance both in terms of collecting financial assistance for families, such as introducing them to clinics, their health and treatment work is the responsibility of the social worker. Then I can again serve you by home visits to the child himself and the families. Visiting their work environments is. In essence, there is a very close relationship between social worker and children and there must be. Why? Because overall most behavioural, moral, economic and cultural issues of the child are handled through the social work unit, and in some cases psychology that they can help this child who has effectively or by compulsion of the family been put to work in society have more comfort and see less harm at least compared to a calm life in terms of mental health and wellbeing. Because we are completely opposed to child labour and on the other hand all our efforts are to reduce it if we cannot stop and eliminate it. For example if the

child works three hours, four hours or seven hours, six hours on the job; reduce it by half. Considering the conversations we have with the child or pull them to school, bring them here for example to study. Just coming and going and staying here itself causes child labour to relatively decrease compared to these issues. In addition to these issues, now sometimes when we feel danger in society, when we feel danger in the families themselves, we find a supporter. A child in terms of existence and appearance in terms of age is such that the risk of harm is high. For a girl child who goes to crossroads, we take a monthly stipend from our charity for this family not to send her to work on terms that they must definitely do this work.

The social workers work with families and children from different aspects, I am presenting the social workers of the center, but the teachers or trainers only work with them regarding literacy, that is, they do not have any other special job, it is not within their scope of work. But the social workers work in terms of vocational training, child rearing training, education and upbringing training and financial assistance, both in terms of collecting financial assistance for families, such as introducing them to clinics, and their health and treatment work is again the responsibility of the social worker. Then I can again serve you with home visits to the child himself and the families. Visiting their work environments is. In essence, there is a very tight relationship between the social worker and the children and there must be. Why? Because overall most behavioural, moral, economic and cultural issues of the child are handled through the social work unit, and in some cases psychology. So that these children who have effectively or by compulsion of the family been put to work in society can have more comfort and see less harm at least compared to a calm life in terms of mental health and not, for example, in terms of economic welfare. Because

we are completely opposed to child labour and on the other hand all our efforts are to reduce it if we cannot stop and eliminate it.

Finding or providing employment for children and more precisely taking children out of higher risk and futile work and putting them into work with lower risks and more security where they can learn a skill is another area of support by NGOs. However, this is not easily possible for NGOs and comes with its own specific difficulties and challenges, which they described in this way:

You see, I have always believed based on my experiences, maybe it's not right but I think taking a child from street corner, especially at older ages, sitting behind a wheel, working and learning a skill is much better and I try in this field; getting a fifteen year old child who had been cleaning windows since fourteen years old facing various insults and harassments to encourage them to go to a shop to wait or work in a workshop to learn a skill, and I think managing this at lower ages is acceptable. But for example a child who was at the street corner from eight to fifteen years old, it is very difficult to take them and keep them busy at a shop, because these children have a lot of freedom at street corners. There are some places we really can enter. I had a case of a fourteen year old girl we wanted to separate from work but this could not happen, why? Because any amount I proposed, that child was earning more at the street corner. They do not have this cooperation, habituation, cannot stay in one place. They are used to earning money, for example buying something for themselves. They are not used to someone ordering them to do this at this time and that at this time. Completely in such an environment, I think

my success rate is very limited unfortunately when children have worked so many years on the streets.

But for those older, we try to find work so they can also learn a skill. You see, most according to law, for example from eighteen and up, but this child who has come to the country illegally and has no identity documents says they are sixteen, perhaps they are eighteen and we understand this based on their physical condition, the type of relationship with their family, we understood this and proposed one option for them.

Family poverty is one of the main causes of child labour. If interventions are not made at the family level for these children, the interventions made at the child level may not achieve the intended goals of the NGOs. For this reason, some NGOs extend the scope of their activities to the family level as well, to enable empowerment of families and elimination of child labour. Some NGOs focus on empowering women and mothers of children in the empowerment sector, as they believe the mother plays a key role in the family and upbringing of the child. One activist of civil society organizations spoke about this type of empowerment:

Here, women's and child labourers' empowerment now, the institution's approach and perspective is that empowerment should start from women because the mother plays a key role. Certainly when the mother reaches psychological empowerment, she can get involved in various aspects of life, she can have emotional support, she can influence educational areas of children, the interpersonal relationship is between the child and mother. After this, we go for their vocational training and job creation. When vocational training and

job creation are achieved, the burden and stress caused by children's work is reduced, their working hours are reduced and one of the institution's prerequisites is that if we are to provide services, participation in counseling sessions and social work follow-ups is mandatory. Regarding children who work, the child must definitely be educated, which is one of the things that causes progress. Reduction of working hours; that is, participation in the institution's cultural and artistic classes. One very important thing is communication with the employer, both we and the family must be aware of where the child works and what time it is. You see our children last week at Ettehad Square, there were all sorts of mechanical, polishing, engine making and polishing. There are other places too. For example, one case we had was installation and this [child] goes with his father.

Subsistence assistance is another form of supportive services provided by NGOs, which one of the officials of these organizations expressed as follows:

Philanthropic individuals come and help. For example, this Mr. ... during the quarantine vacations, was giving rice, oil and food items to families.

A number of other NGO activists described the range of their supports as follows:

At one stage we can reduce damage; that is, at least control the place where the child works or if we know the child can have a better job based on their capabilities, they can learn, take them from street corners to workshops. This is the first step that along with improving family conditions and empowering

other family members and ultimately taking work from the child, this is the overall program plan. Now what we do is communicate with employers; that is, wherever the child works, which may be a place we have introduced to the child ourselves, going to various centres, like beauty salons, communicating with employers, introducing the child to there or maybe the child themselves have found a place. We collect work information, go in person and communicate with employers and introduce ourselves and have direct communication with employers, examine child's work conditions, working hours, wages, employer's behaviour, employer's mental health. This ongoing communication, every now and then talking to employers that if there is any note about the child, the employer tells us and if we are going to hold a workshop, the child comes for a period for training, with the communication we have with employers we can get permission for the child not to go on the job at that time. This communication is maintained until the child changes work for any reason and now communicates with another employer. This helps us do at least minimal harm reduction in the first stage and now the long-term goal is to eliminate work from the child, especially children under seven to eight years old, those over fifteen years we are moving more towards vocational training but for children under age, we try to eliminate work from children.

Social workers work with families and children from different aspects, I am presenting the social workers of the center, but teachers or trainers only work with them regarding literacy, that is, they do not have any other special job, it is not within their scope of work. But

social workers work in terms of vocational training, child rearing training, education and upbringing training and financial assistance both in terms of collecting financial assistance for families, such as introducing them to clinics, and their health and treatment work is again the responsibility of the social worker. Then I can again serve you with home visits to the child himself and the families. Visiting their work environments is. In essence, there is a very tight relationship between the social worker and the children and there must be. Why? Because overall most behavioural, moral, economic and cultural issues of the child are handled through the social work unit, and in some cases psychology. So that these children who have effectively or by compulsion of the family been put to work in society can have more comfort and see less harm at least compared to a calm life in terms of mental health and not, for example, in terms of economic welfare. Because we are completely opposed to child labour and on the other hand all our efforts are to reduce it if we cannot stop and eliminate it.

Based on field evidence, children have experienced receiving support from various NGOs. In the view of some of these children, in some cases the NGOs have provided a good environment for them. In some other cases, children did not have a pleasant experience visiting them to receive services, and expressed their different experiences as follows:

I've known Organization... for a long time, I used to come to classes here 7 years ago; what classes! Math, language, science. We used to come for theater, ping pong. There is another organization too that we go through football, its name is...

I am supported by the Special Complex for Migrant Children.

The organization I go to has never helped me at all. It's been a month that I've been writing there. Some days it says come, it takes my exams from me, any work.

NGOs provide services to children within their means and abilities, try to defend their rights, empower them and their families, but there are many child labourers who have not benefited from the services of any of these NGOs. The reasons for this deprivation can be the large number of child labourers, the establishment of NGOs in some neighbourhoods and deprivation of other neighbourhoods from their services, the limited capacities of NGOs, and the obstacles and problems that governments place in their way. For example, many waste picker children and children working in agricultural fields, fruit and vegetable markets, food stores, and brick kilns may not receive any services or sustained services from these organizations due to their place of residence and nature of work. One active journalist in the field of children said in this regard:

NGO coverage is very limited and most children, just as they are not supported by the government, despite the large number of civil society organizations, in practice they do not know these organizations and the connection between the body and children is very weak and intermediate circles are also very inappropriate and the connection of civil institutions with the public is not a good and appropriate connection.

He considers advocacy alongside providing services to children through NGOs as defending children's rights, and says:

In general, in my opinion, our work should be advocacy, not charity, in a way that the government thinks some associations and NGOs are doing the government's duties and the government feels at ease. Advocacy against the government why it does not implement the conventions it has joined since 1994. One of these conventions is the Convention on the Prohibition of Child labour or structural changes must be based on provisions of the Constitution to have decent work and housing. Oversight by responsible agencies, especially labour inspectors, must increase significantly and inspect wherever even one worker exists. Employment relations must become formalized and employment relations must come out of informalism and ultimately the long-term solution is to eradicate poverty and ensure family subsistence.

Regarding advocacy against the government, one child specialist said:

I strongly believe that the work of NGOs has now become the arm of the government, which is wrong. In my opinion, these centres should have cultural and educational services. Advocacy culture should be promoted more, changing laws. I say it should be advocacy, they themselves must request and even start from scratch. You see we have a child whose father forces them to work, even one of them has leg problems; then we insisted come study, the child was really talented. They used to come to container boxes, containers was a bridge for us. The children who came to container boxes, we would invite them at the street corners and they would tell each other. The child who had come there, we were basically guiding them to

come here to study and work. But consider the father did not allow, he was one of the terrible ones; he had three wives and the child had to provide diapers for the babies. This boy fought with me for a while, he used to say everywhere that Aunt... is part of the municipality. Such a situation, because a contradiction had arisen between him and his father, and gradually he came to the conclusion that he had to wait for his father, study. Now he goes to school, I say advocacy must start from here.

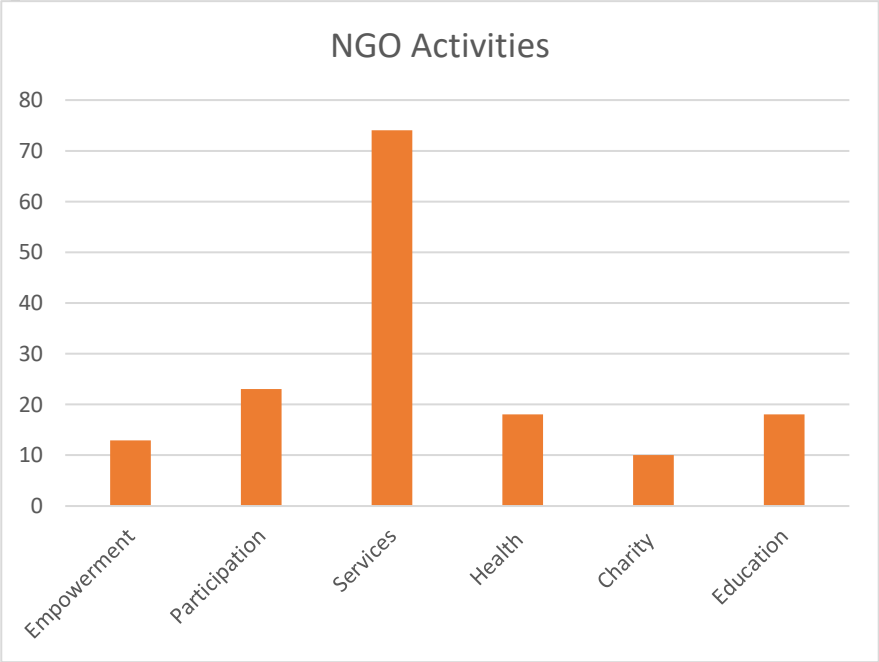


Figure 18 NGO activities for working children (N = 229)

Studying the type of activities and actions of NGOs shows that some of them are active in a more specialized manner, some do charitable work, some others provide services, some are active in the field of reducing child labour harm, some are active in empowering children and their families, and some others defend children’s rights. But some or most of their services are multifaceted. In the

southern districts of Tehran, and Firouzkouh and Kish regions, there are many such organizations and civil society institutions active in these areas whose activities depending on the type of their goals are charity, mediation and providing livelihood and survival services, or empowerment. Some NGOs also exist whose one of the services is providing alternative jobs for children, and their services are of substitute nature. For example, they may take street working children into workshop jobs of learning skills. In fact, these NGOs trample the rights of children based on defending their rights and banning or eliminating child labour. The solutions of NGOs whose services are charity-based are short-term and like a shelter, and never lead to empowerment of child labourers and their families. It can be said that child labourers and their families always remain dependent on these institutions for receiving a few living commodities, a job that many governmental institutions have done for decades. The approach of some other NGOs is systematic, they seek to reduce pressure on the child through reducing working hours and other supports. The main goal of NGOs providing health and medical services is not providing medical services, rather their health and medical services are the basis for empowering children and their families. Of course, there are some NGOs whose main and major services are medical services of health and treatment type, like Doctors Without Borders. Another group of NGOs, like Mehr va Meh Institute, have provided a diverse range of educational, social work, psychological, medical, skills training, entrepreneurship, harm reduction, etc. services for children and their families to empower them. The feedback of children, their families, employers and other organizations in contact with these NGOs (NGOs doing empowerment work) has been more satisfying. The goal of this type of NGO is real empowerment in the true meaning of the word. As Amartya Sen said in *Development as Freedom*, food should not be distributed

through distribution institutions, rather, humans, especially vulnerable groups, should be empowered to find food themselves. Food here has both a real and metaphorical meaning, meaning that human abilities and capacities should blossom so that they can choose.

The activities of NGOs in the field of children are not devoid of forms and criticism. They are criticisable in terms of internal structure, procedures, human resources, political attitudes, and such matters, although they face many limitations. Of course, some of these organizations are dependent on governmental and ruling bodies and gain credibility from them and are a means for promoting founders. Some other NGOs do profitable works in the guise of being civil society organizations. For example, they may benefit from tax exemptions in other fields by providing a service or gain access to some permits for economic activities. A number of charitable organizations are active in this sector.¹⁶⁵

This is a bitter truth that the pressure of security agencies, especially in recent years, has limited the activities of some organizations and civil society institutions. However, one of the fundamental criticisms against them is that in many cases they get entangled in fake competitions with each other and refrain from cooperating and complementing each other due to these competitions, which causes harm reduction to have a slower and less successful process. On the other hand, most NGOs are not committed to a codified memorandum of association or a more general memorandum, such as the memorandum of supporting children's rights. Of course, it is natural for the charters and goals of NGOs to differ, but there must be commonalities between them

¹⁶⁵ Sen, Amartya. (2018). *Development as Freedom* (Translated by Mohammad Saeed Noori Nayini). Tehran: Ney.

regarding some broader principles such as child rights and the like.

The importance of this issue lies in standardizing child support procedures. For example, there must be a standard in the field of educational resources among them, or cooperate to implement some plans together for more synergy and efficiency, and agree with each other in defending children's rights. It is also necessary to consider defending child rights as an indisputable principle among all of them, which they adhere to in practice. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the best conventions that can be the basis for the charter and performance of NGOs.

Prohibition of child labour and ineffective plans

“Organizing street and working children” was the title of a bylaw approved by the government in 2005. The main goal of the plan was stated to be empowering “working children” and supporting them, and it was supposed to get children out of the cycle of labour hardship, but over fifteen years it turned into a punitive crackdown on street working children.

According to the bylaw of organizing street and working children approved in 2005, any person under 18 who spends unlimited time on the street is identified as a “street child” and institutions, organizations and executive bodies are obligated to practically identify, attract and accept these children and support them until the child reaches a reliable outcome.

This bylaw emphasizes that identifying working and street children must be done by social workers and their attraction method is also through effective communication of the social worker and gaining children's trust. In the next step, children are also placed

in the empowerment stage, a process that will lead the children away from the cycle of work.

This plan considers the Welfare Organization as the main custodian of supporting working children, but has determined duties for eleven governmental bodies. For example, the police must be responsible for establishing security in all implementation stages. Issuing necessary licenses and judicial orders is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. Providing suitable physical space for implementing organizing stages is the duty of municipalities, and providing job-oriented financial facilities to job-seeking families is the duty of organizations like the Social Security Organization based on this bylaw.

What was happening on the streets was not identifying and attracting street children by social workers through trust-building, but arresting children. After arrest, children facing encounters mixed with violence and creating fear and panic were sent to welfare residences and had a chance of release after about twenty days away from family on condition of not appearing on the streets again, without any support or empowerment.

Many children were harmed in this process, some of whom had no choice but work and were responsible for their family expenses, went to underground workshops facing much greater risks, and some learned how to escape the clutches of officers and chase operations on the streets.

The plan to organize working and street children, after fifteen years of failed implementation and continuous failure, not only did not reduce the number of working children, but proved its inefficiency by failing to socially support working children. But in 2020, after fifteen years of repeating the failed plan of “organizing working and street children”, welfare officials have spoken of replacing

the “social support of working children” plan and claim that in the new plan called “social support of working children” they will act “family-cantered” and the process of identifying, attracting and supporting working children will be done through “case management”, but the existing ambiguities in this plan have also added to the concerns of working children and their families.

Children’s narratives of plans like organizing working and street children prove that under the pretext of social support and attraction, these children have been victims of various forms of violence. Sometimes other institutions such as police, municipalities and metro agents also prohibit the work of these children in their supervised areas and in many cases impose various forms of physical, material and psychological violence against them. Many child activists have also acknowledged the ineffectiveness of these plans. It must be said that as long as comprehensive programs do not exist at school and neighbourhood levels to support these children and their families, resources will simply be spent collecting them from streets and will hardly have a fruitful outcome and will only waste resources. Children have repeatedly narrated that they were arrested once to several (six) times by one of the institutions such as the municipality and transferred to one of the welfare centres. The narrative of one of these children was:

Welfare [Organization] wants to take us to the beggar house (poor house), it keeps us there until your mom comes, takes you home. It says don’t work here, that’s it. The municipality chases us, welfare chases us.

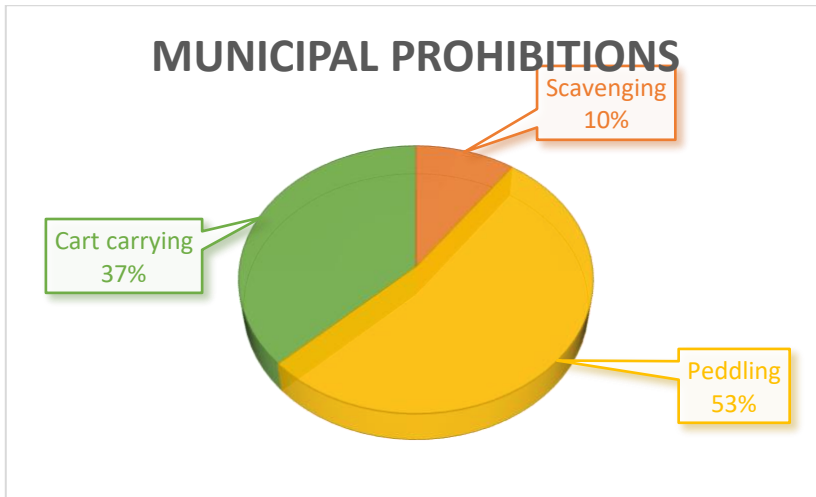


Figure 19 Municipality prohibition and limitation (N = 19)

Children's experience of plans that welfare has termed organizing and social support is a bitter event that from children's perspective has the ruling of prison and arrest, such that their description was:

The municipality comes every day and says don't work. Welfare doesn't have anything to do for now because of corona. Welfare has arrested me six times. The municipality one time too. My mom and dad came, they let us go.

I was here in the bazaar working; suddenly a car came, grabbed my hand, threw me in the car, took me with itself to prison. We were too many in prison, around three hundred people, all were my age. I was there for two months with my cousin until my brother came and gave 3 million tomans, they let us go. I was collecting carton boxes when they caught me.

Welfare arrested me, I said something to him. I said Mr. ... knows me, he's the head of this welfare. He said ah! He called Mr. ... and said I arrested a girl named ... ,

she's ten years old. He said let her go, she's my acquaintance... Mr. ... had caught me in something but he let me go again. I said something to Mr. ...; I said do you like if someone takes your daughter, goes? Like your daughter is working, catches her, takes her somewhere, do you like? Think I'm your daughter. He said go.

In the city welfare has arrested me twice. Here too once they arrested me. There they take us for three days. Then someone comes for us, let us go.

Once I was sitting working, someone said come let's go. I thought he wants to give me food, something. When I saw it was the welfare car, I escaped. But ultimately, he caught me, took me in the car. I was there for a few days. Then my mom came for me.

The municipality comes, hits us, takes our money. A month ago they arrested me, wanted to throw me out of the country. I was in Golshahr.

Do you know what happened? Once welfare came, took me from my bag, I left my bag and ran to my friends. I said now what should I do, my bag was left in Mr.'s hands. He found me again, wanted to arrest me. I went up. He caught my wrist and pulled; I screamed help me people. People gathered around me, all were saying leave her. There was an old man, he came took my hand and said leave her. But they had held my wrist so tightly two people, forcibly took me in the car. My hands had gotten a line, it hurt so much. Then they took me there. I stayed a week. My mom came, they let me go. Always they said we'll do this and that for you, they didn't do anything actually. It was just annoying problem.

Once the municipality arrested me, they threw me in the car, and threw my things in the car too. I told my employer, they arrested me, what should we do. He said pay attention to the goods so that no one steals them until I come myself. Until he arrived, about 600,000 tomans worth of our goods were stolen

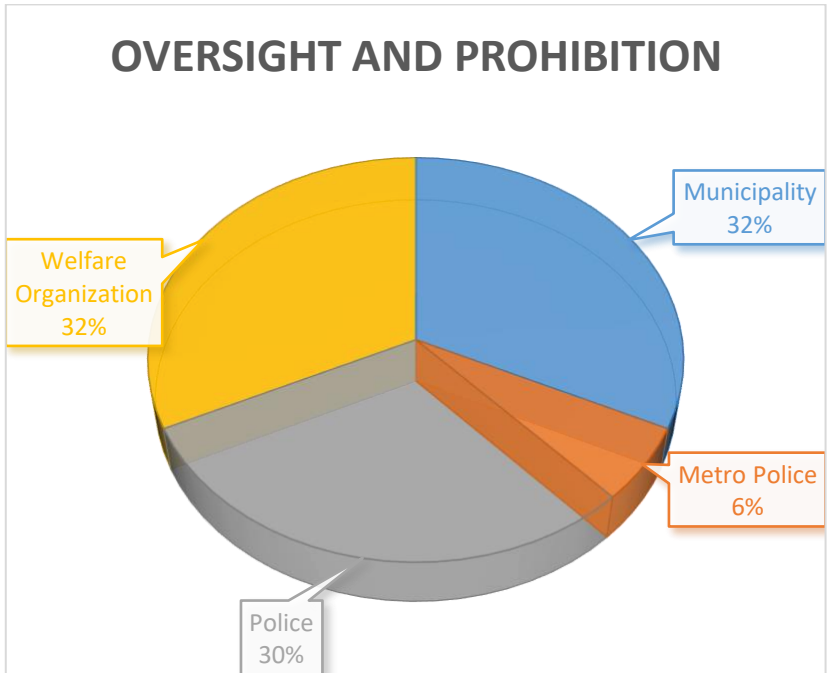


Figure 20 Extent of oversight and supervision of child labour by institutions (N = 66)

In many cases, children are afraid of these types of roundups because these roundups are sometimes accompanied by violence, and when they transfer them to care centres, it is something like a “poor house”, prison, etc. for the child. The below narrative well shows how much this incident had frightened the child:

Welfare arrest, taking to welfare. Then I cried too. Suddenly I was asleep, woke up, realized I was wet,

went. I closed the door like this, a woman was saying you can't escape. I went, she said come sleep here. Then I went, took a pillow, blanket, slept here. Then morning came here. My mom came for me, then they let me go.

Over the past fifteen years, welfare has nearly implemented the organizing plan twice a year. The start of the plan was also usually in the Khordad month (May-June), when more children joined the cycle of work coinciding with school breaks. Under this plan, after arrest children were transferred to centres such as Besat and Yaser. Besat and Yaser are welfare's temporary childcare centres with a capacity of less than 50 children each to hold children simultaneously, but under the accelerated plan without executive backup, children were collected from streets in blows and transferred to these centres. This issue was severely criticized by children's rights activists in particular in 2019 when it was reported that more than 190 children were held in worrisome conditions in Yaser Centre - which holds less than 40 children.¹⁶⁶ Welfare managers responded to these criticisms saying that children are screened in these centres; that is, Afghan children without guardians will be deported and commitment is taken from other children's families not to appear on the streets again. Usually, the period of keeping children also varied depending on whether it was their first, second or third arrest. A child working in Vali Asr Square narrated their experience of these arrests as follows:

Welfare has arrested me five times, takes me to Yaser. The first time arrests you, keeps you two three days, lets you go mom and dad come. But, for example, if it

¹⁶⁶ Islamic Republic News Agency (ISNA), July 7, 2019
<https://www.isna.ir/photo/98041708716>

arrests you two three times, keeps you for one month, two months. It kept me a lot, three months was there. It doesn't arrest when schools aren't closed, when schools close in summer, then it arrests.

Usually older and more agile children do not easily allow officers to arrest them and send them to care centres, especially since through several arrests they well know welfare personnel and vehicles. Thus, they know how to escape their clutches to at least not be transferred to centres for a while. A group of street vendor children also narrated their experience of this plan as follows:

Catching three weeks ago, then we escaped. My employer said see, escape.

For street vending welfare arrested me. I was in the car; after three hours I saw they all got down, the driver called too. Driver got down too. Door was open, I with four five kids said time to escape. We opened the door, went behind the car, escaped from behind the car. He arrested me one more time too, this same man had arrested me before I had escaped from behind him.

That moment my brother fought; they arrested me. My brother ran away, they arrested me, called home.

One day welfare came to collect us, wanted to gather us, we ran up until there. We ran in alleys, lost ourselves. Didn't come again one day comes collects us.

Police arrested me; arrested took me, asked all sorts. Wanted to bring my dad, I said don't talk to my dad! Recited a supplication once, he said go.

Children's fear and anxiety about plans dubbed organizing, in addition to severely damaging their mental health, shows that collecting children from streets in this way is done without their consent contrary to what welfare managers have stated, to the extent that the terror and stress resulting from this event makes them flee. In many cases, arresting children on the streets also turns into chase operations due to their escape, where the only thing missing in this incident is anything called "social support" or "organizing".

As the narratives show, in the children's organizing plan, encounter with children is done without clear professional standards and in some cases arbitrarily depends on the individual encountering the child. Welfare is not the only institution collecting children from street levels, municipalities and police are also involved in this. Apparently these second institutions impose more violence against children during encounter and collection, as unlike welfare centres' collections with less assistance from child field experts like social workers or psychologists. Municipal "discipline groups" or "demolition squads" also use a significant level of violence in dealing with other groups such as peddlers, and consequently against children. Sometimes they may take goods the child sells or their work tools, or force them to perform alternative activities, all of which are forms of violence. The narrative of two waste picker children about the violence imposed was as follows:

The municipality has arrested me twice. For example, the municipality would take you, take all your money, say clean here for a few hours, then say go.

Yes, arrested. The municipality sometimes catches, takes the load. Not today, took it a few days ago.

This form of violence against street children is much more prevalent. It should be noted that the Tehran Municipality outsources the collection of dry waste to contractors. Each contractor is responsible for a specific area of the city. They employ personnel to oversee the area, ensuring that no one outside the contract enters the area and collects waste. If a child outside the contract enters the area or collects waste at a time other than the specified time, they are identified by the contractor's supervisors, and severe violence is inflicted upon them.¹⁶⁷ Street children often experience this form of violence from recycling centre supervisors or contractors as a method to prevent and discourage their activities in the area. In this context, a street child recounted:

If anyone is caught engaging in smuggling here, they'll apprehend them, give them a beating, toss them into recycling, pour water on their heads, and put them in jail. I went through it too. Yeah, once... got caught, and he said, 'Alright, I'll let you off this time. Just remember that if I see you here the next time, I will cut your nose.'

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, many restrictions were imposed on child labour in waste collection. With actions taken by the municipality, children were temporarily prohibited from waste collection. However, like many other initiatives, this program did not reach a clear conclusion, and children returned to the streets for waste collection.

In the market, children working with carts may encounter authorities, especially municipal officers, and face restrictions and violence. Contractors obtain plates for

¹⁶⁷ Children's Rights Support Association. (2010). *Childhood Yawn: A study on the recognition, prevention, and control of the phenomenon of child scavenging in Tehran*.

carts used for transporting goods, limiting market activity to those with plates. As some children lack identification documents, they are unable to obtain plates and are forced to use carts without plates. This leads to opposition from contractors against the activities of plateless carts. A child working in the large market expressed:

Once they wanted to take my cart. Recycling said it doesn't have a plate. It happened yesterday, the day before, I don't remember. They took my load; I had no one to help me, just myself.

In the metro, security personnel often prevent children from working, assuming that a large number of working children will be troublesome. Various measures are implemented in the metro to prevent the activities of street vendors and children, with significant restrictions and violence against them. As mentioned, violence is inflicted upon children or their goods are forcibly taken from them. A migrant child in this context mentioned:

At the beginning when COVID came, they didn't let us work. The metro officer came, forcibly took me out of the train; he took my gums and said, 'Come here again, I'll shave your hair.'

Police officers, under certain laws such as the collection and repatriation of illegal immigrants, also find children in some neighbourhoods and districts, returning them to their own country. Some foreign children shared their experiences in this regard:

The police detained us and send us back to Afghanistan. I've come three times; they caught me twice, took me and sent me to Afghanistan.

Yeah, one time they caught me, but I managed to escape. They take me across the border. Once they crossed the border, I came back again.

Not me, but my older brother, yeah; he's two or three years older than me. They caught him, crossed the border, and once they crossed, he returned.

As for me, they caught me once. I took a photocopy of my documents and kept it in my pocket. They won't catch me anymore; they don't have anything on us because now we are in the computer with our names and family information.

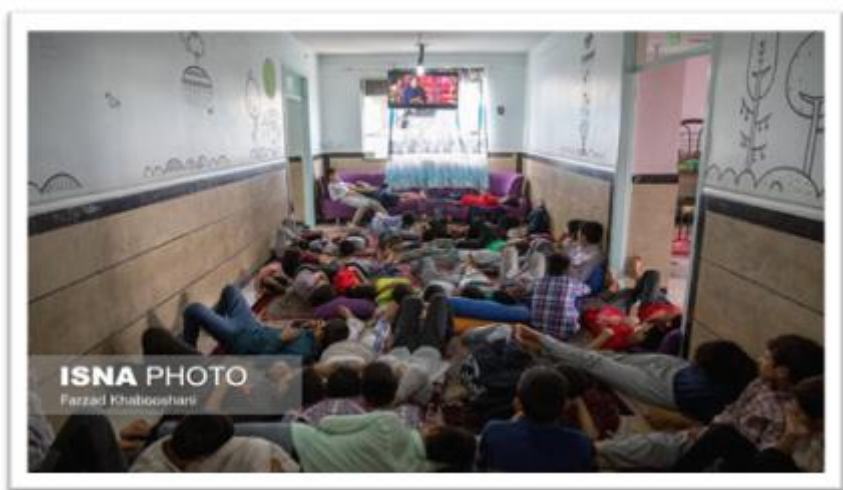
Restrictions, violence, and obstacles imposed on children in certain tasks can drive them towards more hazardous activities. Such measures do not lead to the conclusion of child labour issues because they focus on the children themselves rather than addressing the root causes, such as poverty, unequal distribution of opportunities, and comprehensive support for children. The same factors that lead to child labour may push children from one job to another, which could be significantly more perilous than the previous one.

For example, street children, due to the visibility of their work, are more exposed to schemes of collection and work prohibition. Since they have been apprehended multiple times, they might change their work and engage in riskier activities. A street child, describing the experience of switching jobs due to arrests, mentioned:

First, I sold DVDs. After that, we sold socks in Ponak Square. At that time, nothing happened. The municipality used to hit us. Welfare hit us once [with a smile]. Then we realized it's not possible to argue or discuss with them; we went to a construction site. At the

construction site, we saw our brother fell; he had a problem, he was a plasterer. I didn't go back after that.

Children experience various forms or aspects of these restrictions and prohibitions in different types of work. The prohibition of child labour, while undoubtedly a beneficial measure, requires thoughtful mechanisms. Such mechanisms should be incorporated into collection or organization programs, similar to current initiatives. In these programs, children might be detained for a short or extended period in welfare centres, and ultimately, a commitment is obtained from their families not to involve the child in labour, leading to their release. These actions are constructive and do not necessarily eradicate the root of child labour. As demonstrated, the outcome of such measures includes the experience of violence by children, their temporary stay in welfare centres, and ultimately their return to the cycle of labour.



Picture 42 Image of Yasir Center in the organization program for working and street children in 2019 (Photo from ISNA News Agency)

Consequences and Risks

Risks of Child labour in Various Forms

According to Article 3 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, hazardous child labour is defined as: “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.¹⁶⁸” Specifically, risks of child labour arise from hazardous or unhealthy working conditions that may lead to fatalities, injuries, illnesses, and, consequently, the compromise of safety standards, health provisions, and work arrangements. These risks may result in permanent physical impairments for the child, affecting both their

¹⁶⁸ ILO. (1999). *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention*, 1999. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva (No. 182).

physical and mental well-being.¹⁶⁹ Evidence indicates that the majority of risks and issues stemming from child labour may not manifest until after the child reaches adulthood. As repeatedly highlighted by children and social workers in non-governmental organizations, the parents of these children, especially their fathers, often retire post-midlife, with such retirement or forced retirement resulting from strenuous and difficult work and their consequences experienced during childhood.

It is estimated that 73 million children aged five to seventeen work in various sectors such as agriculture, mining, construction, production workshops, as well as other areas like waste collection, markets, restaurants, and streets. The International Labour Organization has estimated that approximately 22,000 children lose their lives annually in various occupations, and the number of injuries or illnesses is not precisely determined. This figure is higher in Africa and Asia compared to other continents.¹⁷⁰ In our country as well, many children die or suffer disabilities due to work, yet similar to many other societies where child labour is prevalent, there is no accurate statistics on child labour-related mortality and disability. The findings of this research also indicate that in various forms of work, children face multiple risks jeopardizing their health in various dimensions. Sometimes the nature of the work endangers the health of the child, such as limb amputation due to the use of certain devices. At other times, working conditions or the

¹⁶⁹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) portal,
<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/informal-economy/lang-en/index.htm>
<http://www.ilo.ch/global/topics/employment-promotion/informal-economy/lang-en/index.htm>

¹⁷⁰ ILO. (2017). *Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

living environment of children, such as exposure to extreme heat or cold or toxic substances in certain jobs, pose a threat to their health. Some jobs are ethically dangerous for the child and harm their mental health. Other jobs are associated with significant risks and are considered among the worst forms of child labour, while some involve fewer risks. The following sections delve into each form of child labour examined in this research and their associated risks.

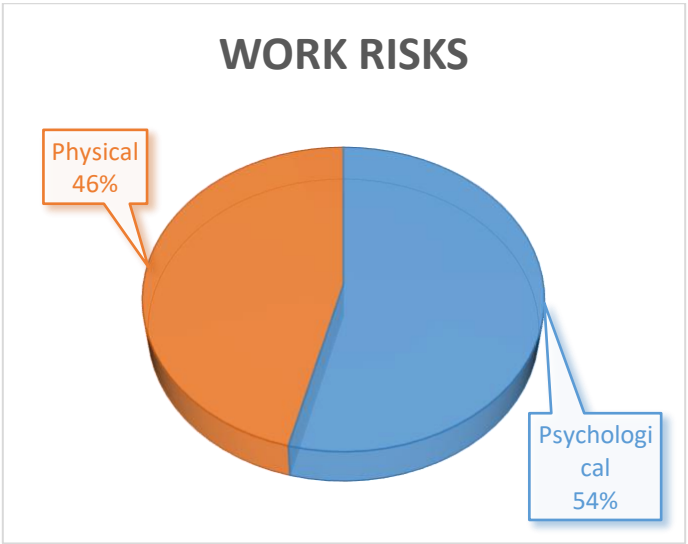


Figure 21 Distribution of children based on the type of work risks (N=211)

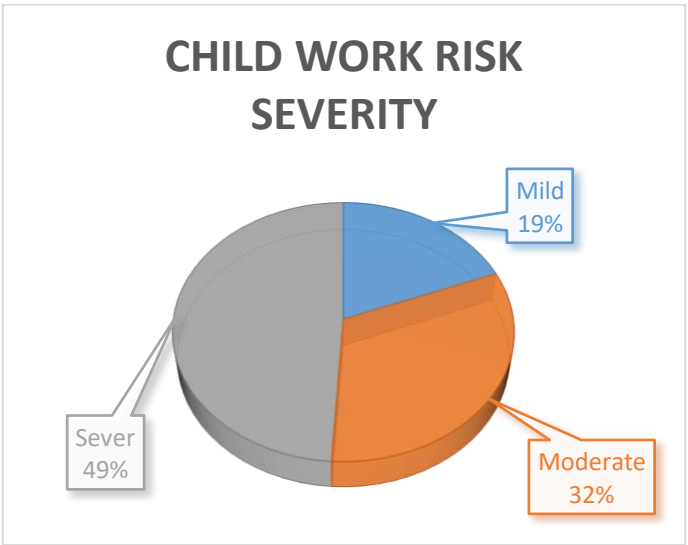


Figure 22 Distribution of Risks Based on Their Severity (N=211)

Work in Grocery Stores or Shops: One of the significant risks that threaten children in this type of work includes long working hours leading to excessive fatigue, heavy and frequent lifting of loads, and, in some cases, working away from home and sleeping inside the shop.

Children's working hours can sometimes extend from 7 a.m. to midnight, although they may take breaks between those hours. Regarding the risks of working in a grocery store, a child working in the Saadat Abad area was asked, and his response was as follows:

The difficulty here is that you have to work from early morning until late at night. It's really tiring on the feet. Everyone is like a prisoner here, and you have to keep moving the goods, rice bags, drinks; it's tough.

In some other jobs, such as butchery or poultry sales, the risk of children injuring themselves is very high as they work with knives. A child who had the experience of working in a butcher shop in the Yafteh Abad area shared the following:

I was just a kid, playing in the butcher shop, and I was swinging the knife like this. I lost focus, and I hit my hand here. Look. Then, I went to the doctor.

Working in Fruit and Vegetable Markets: Children in this type of work experience various physical, hygiene, psychological, and ethical risks. Some of the significant risks in this field include separation from the family, long and irregular working hours, heavy lifting and carrying of loads, night shifts, prolonged standing leading to foot pain, relatively unsuitable living conditions, extreme fatigue and weakness due to long working hours and working overnight, learning risky behaviours such as substance abuse and excessive alcohol consumption, or engaging in risky relationships within the work environment. The narratives below illustrate some of the risks and hardships associated with this type of work:

We don't have fixed working hours; the fruit and vegetable market doesn't have fixed working hours. For

example, the load comes around 11:30 or midnight, and we wake up to unload it. Then, it comes again around 1:30 or 2. Another time around three or four. Then, around five and six, it comes again. On Fridays, when it gets busier, we unload the goods all night.

Moving such heavy loads is difficult. Fifty-kilogram crates of potatoes and peas need to be moved. Cabbage is heavy, and its boxes have nails; it can hurt you anywhere.

Our difficulty is that we walk a lot. Now, today, I finished a minute ago, came here... Our work's difficulty is unloading empty crates at night.

Street Hawking or Selling in Public Transportation like Metro: Children who engage in various activities such as street hawking, window cleaning, selling palm fronds, begging, singing, and playing instruments in different spaces like the metro, parks, and streets may not face severe risks such as limb disabilities due to machinery but still encounter several significant risks. One of these risks includes long walks during the day while selling in the metro or constant standing. In these jobs, children sometimes argue with each other and may harm one another. Narratives from some child street vendors in the metro about the risks and hardships of their work include:

My foot hurts; I'm done now. My foot hurts a lot. It's hard; you have to walk all the time.

Our problem is that if we don't work, we have to walk a long way from here to our house, which is two hours away. We have to linger for an hour, and around eleven, we get there. For example, my mom scolds me, asking

why I came late, come earlier. Then, if we come earlier and don't work, she scolds us again, saying why did you come early.

This guy says go outside, go outside.

Here, you have to keep walking, keep walking.

What should we do? We have to come for two hours and say, 'Ma'am, buy tissues, buy tissues.' Until she buys, we're dying of thirst.

Here, everyone walks in the heat; it's hard. Some passing cars honk at us and say bad things.

Children working on the streets also face these issues. In addition to walking long distances or standing for work during the day, they also face other problems such as cold and heat, inhaling smoke and other chemical substances resulting from the wear of brake pads and tires. One of the street vendors, working on Motahari Street, narrated:

We have to navigate between these cars, inhaling smoke. We burn under the sun from morning till night; the sun bothers us a lot. Winter freezes us, summer burns us. Now, putting all that aside, at least something should make a person happy. One goes home and says, 'We did something for our home.' Sometimes, I think to myself, 'Oh God, why did we come into this world? We're doing harm to each other; we don't even open our eyes a little bit. If we do harm, let's think about ourselves.'

These children also experience physical dangers such as the possibility of accidents, falling, and getting injured on

the street due to playfulness and similar factors. One of these children described their experience as follows:

I was here once, a car insulted us. It went back and forth, and then it gave me a fifty and said sorry. We came here, I fell; my foot got stuck, I fell, and I bled. I bled here.

Two of the street children also mentioned their experiences in the following way:

This man who works at the restaurant bothers us, doesn't let us work; he says this is his area. The difficulty is also that they don't buy from us anymore. Walking and heat bother you a lot. It's hot, and there's no market. What else can I say?

Among the other risks these children face are psychological and moral hazards. For example, when a child insists on selling their goods to a customer, or experiences verbal abuse in their work, or most importantly, receives offers of sexual relationships from some drivers or other people, which exposes them to challenges and negative emotions. Physical violence and theft from each other also prevent the proper development of these children's personalities and may even lead to the reproduction of these violent behaviours and the formation of unethical tendencies in their characters. Some of these children shared their experiences of violence as follows:

The problem is too much. For example, there is a lot of sexual harassment in the park, especially when we are street vendors. And then we have hard work, we struggle, we want to go home at night, and they take our money. It's very difficult for me to walk under the

sun all day long, and someone wants to pick my pocket. Of course, this happened to me too; many people picked my pocket, and I retaliated; I also picked their pockets. I knew who they were; my fake friends had done it all. I'm not the kind of person who lets someone harm me without knowing who they are; even if they open their mouth wide and jump underground, I won't let them go.

That's how work is; it's heavy. Now, if you work, it's good; you say, 'I worked, I earned money.' Sometimes people swear at us, say something, and leave, but we don't take it to heart.

I have had fights several times, with those passing cars. For example, today a SUV passed by, I cleaned its windows. Then he rolled down the window and insulted me. I gave him a response. I'm not the kind of person who, for example, if someone says something, I don't respond. Whatever he says, I respond.

Once, a man lowered his car window. Then I got angry and smashed his window. He had taken off his pants. He left out of fear. Once, in Naziabad, a man tried to force me into the trunk of his car, but I escaped.

Manual goods transportation with a handcart:

One of the many difficult tasks that children perform is manual goods transportation with a handcart. Alongside issues such as navigating through congested streets, engaging in arguments with pedestrians, and the tensions and conflicts that arise among the children themselves while working, one of the main hazards of this work is the extensive walking throughout the day accompanied by heavy load transportation. For a child whose limbs have

not fully developed and are still growing, carrying heavy loads can hinder their physical growth and cause damage to their spinal column and other bones. These children usually work in busy and crowded streets in the city centre, so they may encounter tension and conflicts with other drivers, similar to street vendors and street children. Additionally, they are exposed to various forms of pollution throughout the day and inhale significant amounts of smoke. Some of these children described the hazards of their work as follows:

When you load the goods on the cart in this heat, you start sweating and pulling. It's bothersome.



Picture 43 a child with a handcart in Tehran's Grand Bazaar
(Photo from the research)

Lors [referring to people from the southern region of Iran] and Kurds bother us. If it's about the load, they won't let us. They say they are Iranians and claim that this country is their own. They use force and say that the country belongs to them.

We are upset; this cycling, this cycling, handcarting is very difficult.

I often argue with Iranians. They insult people themselves. For example, when you pass by, they give you a shove or hit your cart; they have a load and hit your cart, throwing it away.

It's bothersome; the load is heavy. People get very bothered; the load is heavy. You become exhausted when you reach home. You have to wake up at 9 a.m. and come here.

I transport 20-kilogram bottles of oil, 40-kilogram bags of rice, and 50-kilogram bags of sugar. They are all heavy, and it breaks you down.



Picture 44 a child with a handcart in the Imam Reza Market
(Photo from the research)

Working in a car wash: Most of the hazards that children face in a car wash include long working hours and lack of sleep, standing work, inhaling the smell of cleaning chemicals and working with them, and in some cases, physical disabilities due to the inability to use work tools. The accounts of children working in this profession regarding the hazards of their work were as follows:

Someone had just come, he turned on the hose, sprayed it, and blinded his eyes; he is still in the hospital.

It's tough; we work from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m., and we're on our feet the whole time. It's all water, the smell of the floor ruins your mood.

We clean cars, we sweep the floor. Sometimes people say things that upset you. The boss sometimes behaves poorly.

Garbage collection: Garbage collection is one of the worst forms of child labour. Children in this line of work experience numerous hazards. The most significant ones include: cutting their hands and fingers due to sharp objects such as needles, glass, etc., found inside the garbage, touching contaminated and dirty garbage, inhaling the very bad smell of trash cans, especially in summer, long walks while carrying loads of garbage on their shoulders, experiencing various forms of violence and becoming victims of crimes, living in dangerous places, working in both hot and cold weather, long working hours and excessive fatigue, entering garbage cans or bending them, and most importantly, the psychological distress they endure as a result of this work. The accounts of some children working in garbage collection regarding the hazards and hardships of their work were as follows:

The hardship also causes lack of sleep; one has to walk a lot; picking up this garbage, always walking.

Now the lack of sleep makes people angry.

The smell of the trash cans suffocates you.

The hardship is that we work from morning, 6 a.m., until night, 9 p.m. Then in the morning, at 6 a.m., we start working until 10 a.m. We can't get a SIM card, can't call our homes. For example, you open a bag, put your hand in it, and it's full of dirty things, and it stinks.

Our hands get injured; these sharp things hurt our hands. When my hand gets injured, I find a piece of cloth from the garbage and wrap it around.

Now that we go to the garbage cans, there are a lot of masks. We don't have gloves, so our hands get in contact with them.

One of the experts also spoke about the hazards of this work, saying:

The environment is not suitable because of the long working hours. They are forced to be exposed to drugs to extend their working hours. The hygiene conditions in the waste sector are deplorable, and there is minimal public supervision over children on the streets. Children who were talking to me in the garages said that the conditions in the workshops were worse. Worse in the sense that many employers mistreated them, but the pits are better in this regard.



Picture 45 Image of urban garbage collected by children in the Jannatabad area (Photo from the research)

Workshops for woodworking and carpentry: The significant hazards that threaten children in this profession include handling heavy loads, excessive noise in the work environment, and the risk of cuts and limb injuries due to working with machinery that children lack the skills to operate. The accounts of some children working in cabinet making and furniture making are as follows:

If my finger gets caught under it, it will get severed; it can easily get severed because it's unsteady. It's very difficult in that regard.

Once it causes an injury, my foot is gone.

We lift these heavy things and place them here; it's tough.

Since working with some of the machinery is very difficult and can cause injuries, some employers are aware of this and do not allow children to operate these machines. The account of one child working in carpentry confirms this point:

With the carpentry machine, it spins, and it also has a belt. We have to work with all of these. Once my brother put his hand on it; he wanted to do things, arrange the scraps like this, and his hand got caught... They don't let me go too much; the boss says he'll take my hand.



Picture 46 a working teenager in a woodworking workshop in the Ismailabad area (Photo from the research)

Flower Selling: Another one of the activities associated with at-risk children is working in flower markets or flower shops on the streets. Generally, this type of work carries fewer risks compared to other occupations, and

since most children are drawn to this work through familial networks, they always receive a certain level of social support. In this job, sometimes dealing with flowers is pleasant for children, and they take joy in it. However, selling flowers on the streets, like other forms of street work, comes with its own set of risks. Children's narratives about the risks and unpleasant experiences of this work are as follows:

Selling flowers is tough, especially under the sun.

Here, you have to move these carts around; it's tough now.

I work with flowers, well, it's tough.

We have to get up at four in the morning to work; the difficulty lies in that.

It's good; when you change the soil or the pot, it gives you a different feeling. For example, when you tell the customer to take this pot home, you think about how long it will live with it in their house.



Picture 47 a child flower seller operating a handcart in a local flower market (photo from the research)

Work in Scrap Yards: Working in scrap yards also poses many risks for at-risk children, and some of the main hazards include: handling heavy metal parts, excessive noise from operating air cutting machines, the possibility of injury and burns while working with air cutting machines, or injuries and wounds due to handling iron parts. The narratives of some children working in this profession about the risks and difficulties of their work are as follows:

These things are heavy; it's tough at first, lifting them. Cutting is good, but it's tough at first.

This job is very dangerous. My friends got injured, and we got hurt too; you lift the iron, it catches your foot, you fall on the ground. That's how they get hurt; they wound us.

I cut these scraps. I grind them, sometimes my hands get injured, they burn. It's part of the job.

The machine is dangerous. For example, you throw something, you see your hand falls in it. You have to be very careful.

Welding: Among the significant hazards of this job, there is a risk of burns due to working with air cutting machines and welding, excessive noise, eye injuries due to welding machine work and welding rays, respiratory problems and lung issues due to toxic gases in arcs/electric welds, and orthopedic problems in the spinal column area due to poor posture. The narratives of children working in this section about the hazards of their work are as follows:

The difficulty is that these air cutting machines, when you cut iron, if you're not careful, you get burned.

Once, one of my friends had a spark fall into his eye; he couldn't see well anymore. Those who grow up, many of them have weak eyesight; they wear glasses.

It's tough; bend this, make the mortar... Welding bothers me.



Picture 48 A picture of a teenager working in a welding workshop in the Khalazir district (photo from the research).

Work in Agricultural Farms: Working in agricultural farms also involves various risks, such as working under the sun, which can lead to skin cancer, operating agricultural machinery or using sharp and cutting tools during harvesting and sorting vegetables and agricultural products, the possibility of falling from trees when picking certain orchard products, back pain during harvesting, lack of connection with the outside world, etc. Some working children in this sector narrated the risks and difficulties of their work as follows:

The difficulty is that in summer, you have to work in front of this sun; you get sweaty, your back gets sore.

I work all the time; on Fridays, I'm at work, I don't go anywhere. You don't see much of the city; it's really bad.

Once, my friend's hand got stuck in that machine; his finger got damaged.



Picture 49 working teenagers in agricultural fields at the Transfor intersection (photo from the research)

Work in Glassblowing Factories: Working in this profession also poses many risks for children. Among the significant ones are the high heat in the work environment, exposure to chemicals and melting furnaces, entry of chemicals into the body due to inhaling in glass blowing, respiratory and breathing problems, lack of proper ventilation in the workshop, burns to body parts such as hands, feet, and stomach, drying of the skin, and even chest due to the heat in the work environment, high pressure on the body due to heavy lifting, prolonged standing during work in mold glass factories, and the unsafe nature of the workshop environment. Usually, children in this job and many other jobs lack safety equipment such as shoes, clothing, and hats. Safety

clothing is generally not tailored for children and is not readily available. The narrative of a street child who had the experience of working in a glassblowing workshop describes the risks of this work as follows:

I used to work in the glass factory. I put the glass on the iron, carried it to the machine, put it in. Women gathered, put it in the cart. A machine came, picked it up, took it. There it was 200, then 300, 400, 500, 700. Then I came out. Then I came here [referring to working on the street and washing car windows]. My hands burned there [lifting his sleeves and pointing to burns on his hands]. Then I came out of there. Then my brother worked there; his hands burned, he came out. I worked more than him. I worked, then came out. I went at four in the morning; I came home around five.

Another child working in this profession spoke about the risks of his work:

My job is with these rods. Several times my hand burned near the furnace. It was in the early days; I came, for example, to do something, it hit my hand, and it burned.



Picture 50 working children in a traditional glassblowing factory in the Kheirabad district (photo from the research)

Work in Production Workshops: Most children work in production workshops that produce bags, shoes, clothing, and similar occupations such as tailoring. Some of the significant risks in these types of jobs for children include getting fingers caught under the sewing machine needle, cutting hands and fingers while using scissors, the high speed of some machines and the pressure to cope with their speed, working with chemicals and flammable substances, fire incidents in the workplace due to the use of flammable materials like chemical adhesives, becoming addicted due to inhaling chemicals and adhesives, or developing a habit of sniffing them, cutting and amputating limbs, performing monotonous tasks and damaging the brain, heavy lifting, facing ethical issues and their consequences on the child's personality and behaviour, and observing some risky behaviours such as drug and alcohol consumption. Some working children in this sector narrated the risks and difficulties of their work as follows:

In the previous workshop, there were two apprentices, four spinning wheels. Then this apprentice would

sometimes go to the Saba club. I was doing the work; all the speeds were up. Then Ossa [possibly a supervisor] said... you're falling behind [excitedly describes]. I said, I can't give back his apprentice who hasn't come. He said, I don't know, you're working here; you have to be fast. I said I won't work anymore... If you're working, you're not the winner who can endure a lot of pressure.

We were two; both spinning wheels need an apprentice. This is the usual situation. For example, on the night of Eid, your work gets heavy, but in normal months, one padu [a piece of work] can handle two spinning wheels. Definitely, one person cannot handle four spinning wheels. I was in the middle of work, and there were four spinning wheels. Then in the morning, until twelve or twelve and a half, the workload was high. His voice had come down to say, 'Sir! Why aren't you catching up?' I said I can't give back his apprentice who hasn't come. He said if you can't, don't work. I said I won't work right now. I got up and left.

Sometimes, yeah, he says lift the heavy load. For example, I can't lift the heavy load, like, eighty kilos and stuff... I say I can't, he complains.

I came out of the previous job... I didn't change one part of it; I wanted to cut the fabric, cut my hand with scissors. There he said, go, you can't.

I worked for two weeks making clothes, the Armenian market. Then I came to this tailoring workshop. It's tough now, either all standing or all sitting, you can't survive. There, in the production, I was in the middle of work, we were sitting. I don't know, wear the back of

the clothes, thread the needle, it's not work, it's not worth it.

It's essential to recognize and address the challenges and risks that working children face, advocating for their rights, safety, and well-being.

In this section, experts in the field of child labour, labour representatives, some of the caregivers associated with non-governmental organizations working with working children in this sector, and the field observations of researchers are discussed.

Most children face mental and physical challenges.

Fatigue resulting from work affects them; for example, some of them become tired in a way that they cannot perform well in their studies and homework.

Afterward, there is a possibility that they may be subjected to assault, either by the employer or anyone else present there. They might be subjected to physical punishment because of disobedience or not performing their work well. These issues are prevalent. Yes, for example, they might be physically punished, slapped, questioning why they are not working, accusing them of being late or causing damage. These things also happen.

Many things, however, were ones we had to guess; we had to follow up, we had to gather evidence. For example, when I see a group of children in a workshop eating and sleeping there, culturally and intellectually, they are a different model. Above them, the homeowner was involved in smuggling materials; he, his husband, and their daughter were all addicts. For example, his daughter, in addition to addiction, was involved in sex work. Consider that anything can happen here.

Personally, I prefer a child working on the street corner rather than in a workshop. You see, the employer knows that a child without self-confidence has no recourse against the employer, especially when the child's family, for instance, if a problem arises for the child, does not have the confidence to go to the child's mother or father to complain. The child does not have this confidence because they know that the employer himself is the authority, and the children are aware. It seems that this person has absolute power over that family, and usually, we have heard from the mother that yes, this servant of God came, and my child is happy that he gave him work. But there are no good consequences behind it, especially in the workshops I visited in the Tehran market. I thought these kids would go back home at night, but they slept right there in the Tehran market. I'm sure nothing good happens there anymore; young and non-young, everyone, not just men.

Many times, children are abused in workshops; work exploitation occurs. This means that they hire the child for work, and either they do not pay them their income or give them a much lower income. Sometimes, there are confrontations, meaning behavioural violence, verbal violence where they shout, insult, and disrespect, but sexual abuse or child sexual abuse is low in this age group. I'm not saying it's not there, but in the age group that goes to work, because the children are older and have reached a level of self-care, sexual abuse and child sexual abuse are less.

They pick up the thread of clothing. For example, the clothing that is sewn comes down, they pick up the

thread, pull it, and remove it from the ground, and these kinds of activities. Then, well, these lead to occupational fatigue; you have to sit on your knees a lot. Many cases have come forward complaining that the lady's working hours are long. I am forced to stand most of the time. Now, in terms of physical harm, for example, their hands may go under the sewing machine needle. There have been cases where these issues exist.

The working conditions of children in workshops are much worse than street conditions because it is out of public view, and there is a possibility of member deficiency, and the employer has no accountability in this regard. Working in workshops has more harms; the child has no job security and is at risk of injury and amputation of limbs. Child workshop work is the worst form of work, and that is why it is said not to confront or collect them, and this child is afraid and goes to work in the workshop. A child who cannot sell gum on the street goes to work in a workshop, and there is a high probability of limb deficiency there as well.

I should also mention the growth and such; on the other hand, some of the jobs not only do not have growth in them, but it can also affect the child's mindset. Meaning a child who enters such jobs at a very young age, for example, a model of these categorized jobs or pants or such things; it may even damage his brain. Anyway, in terms of diversity and growth, while a child who comes to the street can learn various navigation skills and many other things because the brain is exposed to different things, sitting still against a wall in a small environment for three or six months, doing a linear job, gradually harms the brain.

The violence inflicted on a child in the workplace, meaning it may be that an adult next to you who insults you dozens or hundreds of times during the eight or nine hours he works, even physically hitting you; meaning to have fear of him. For example, every moment you work, he finds fault with your work, always looking for an excuse to vent his anger at you from somewhere else. This may be permanent during eight hours of work and all working days, while the same person does not pose such a threat to the child in the workshop. Of course, we know that its harms and pressures are not to the same extent. The type of this problem is part of the health field, such as discussions related to a child's nutrition, for example, related to, for example, skeletal health and muscles. All the accidents that may happen to a child in workshops, from burns and poisoning, to injuries and amputations, all of these are present; meaning a set of problems related to the physical health of the child. The discussion is extensive, and it can be opened up, a form related to the health of child labour, they are mostly exposed to some form of violence, some form of threat, some form of anxiety, and stress, endangering their mental health.

Observation of two interviewers from the workshops of shoemaking and tailoring in the southern part of the city and the Grand Bazaar of Tehran is described as follows:

The employer had a very crowded and dirty workshop; his workshop was a shoemaking workshop. It was difficult to climb the stairs to reach the workshop. Inside the workshop was extremely hot, and everyone was sweating. Another feature of the workshops on Shapur Street is that they are all in residential buildings,

dilapidated houses with closed doors, which practically makes supervision over this part of production difficult and perhaps impossible.

I entered the courtyard of an old building; on the left side of the courtyard, at the end of the left wall where a lot of clothes were hanging, there was a small door that I entered through. There was a large work table; on it, a bunch of children's clothes were sorted. Under the table, a young man of about twenty was lying down. The employer and a worker were busy folding the sewn clothes. At the end of this room, there was a hatch that opened into a small, unlit space, and there were three wheels there.

One of the social workers actively engaged in the Harandi area also spoke about the risks of workshop work as follows:

I had a child working in a shoemaking workshop, and his conditions were not good. Fortunately, I don't have him anymore, thanks to God, but it happened. Well, part of our experience is to identify the problems, such as the smell of glue, when we first accept the children. We try to find solutions through interventions, either through families or by finding supporters, even to remove the children from such work. However, no matter how hard we try to change their occupation, we don't have many street vendors in our center. The street vendor children in [the city] are mostly from a specific ethnicity and are more prevalent in the central market. Surely Mr. [name] can explain. Our street vendors are numerous. The children working in the flower market are numerous, and I think there is a combination of all

these children in the East Center, but due to being in the market area, many of our children are in workshops.

Some of the issues that children observe in these environments are ethical and social problems, such as addiction and risky behaviours. When children face these issues, they feel very bad, and due to the traditional and cultural background of their families and the lack of education in sexual and self-care skills, they feel ashamed. Sometimes, the observation of these issues may lead them to change their jobs. Also, witnessing these behaviours in the long term makes them normal for children, and they may learn these behaviours over time. The accounts of employers, social workers, and some of the children in this regard were as follows:

I worked in a tailor shop; he used to bring his two daughters; I didn't like it, they did bad things, so I left.

So far, I haven't seen any sexual harassment in the tailor shop, but they become addicted very quickly. You see, a child comes into a group, for example, a child comes into a group and sits, hears things he shouldn't hear, they do things in front of that child that they shouldn't. For the child, it becomes normal; that is, some events become normal and natural for him. For example, forgive me, I can say it easily, for example, the employer brings his girlfriend into the tailor shop after working hours, brings the child, well, the child sees it this way, it becomes normal for the child, a little more bone-breaking, so to speak, or it becomes a practical thing.

The older boys may experience sexual harm, and the garden owners in the gardens drink alcohol, and children are in the same environment. In fact, children in these closed environments are more exposed to harm.

On the street, the child is freer for money and transportation. The child in the workshop is very oppressed and helpless, with low self-esteem, but on the street, they have more self-confidence and interact with people. However, the workshop has nothing to say.

One of the children working in a clothing production workshop mentioned learning risky behaviours in such environments:

You see, we ourselves don't use opium and glass, but some of the older ones do, for example, they use opium, they use glass. I just smoked a hookah, nothing else.



Picture 51 a bag and shoe production workshop on the outskirts of Tehran's bazaar and a working child there (photo from the research)

Working in Car Repair Workshops: Working in mechanical workshops involves a wide range of tasks, including oil changing, polishing, machining, wiring,

electrical work, and other aspects of automobile and motorcycle maintenance. The risks that threaten children in these types of occupations include: getting clothes and hands dirty, working in a dirty environment, the coldness of the workplace in winter and its heat in summer, exposure to chemicals and machine oil, breathing various chemicals such as those used in polishing, loud noise especially in polishing and machining, precise handling during the installation or removal of certain parts, the child's lack of skill to perform these tasks, moving heavy vehicle parts, the possibility of injury and limb impairment, staying under the car due to the jack slipping, burns caused by welding sparks, weakening of eyesight, the risk of electric shock when connecting wires in wiring work, and other related hazards. Children's accounts of the hazards of working in this field are as follows:

The danger is that, for example, my hand might touch the exhaust, burn, or I might break my hand. You have to be careful.

Exhausts give off hot gas. Once my foot hit it badly and got burned. Some customers don't understand; you tell them it's not a problem, they say you don't understand, they won't pay you. For example, when we want to lower the engine, we suffer. It has its own difficulty; you don't understand until you're in the job.

I can't do some jobs; I get angry, I suffer. For example, if he tells me to open the wheel rotation, I get very nervous. He just hits me on the head to break it. Yesterday, it happened the same way with that Persian who doesn't come down here. My hand got injured in the fight; we were in Karaj, our family had a fight with three people. Then he told me, because I do boxing, he

said you can hit them. I punched him, the guy passed out, my fist hit the wall, it broke.

One day the employer said I'll go have lunch and come back. I also left the shop and never came back. The work was hard, everything was heavy, and he himself was bad.

Sometimes there were, for example, a job would come, and then somehow it was breaking, it was nerve-racking, we wouldn't do the job. Some jobs are hard, we can't do them; they tell us to do it.

I had to break them to get them out; it was hard work, it wouldn't come off, it was nerve-wracking [referring to a part of the car].

Polishing makes a lot of noise, nerves are shattered, and it's no longer possible; I came out. I went to motorcycle repair, it was dirty, not worth working.

Here in winter, you die from the cold, in summer, from the heat.

The car wheels are heavy; it's very hard for me, you have to bring them in, move them around.

An employer's account from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare about the risks of working in this field was as follows:

I saw children whose fingers were cut off in machining workshops, but the employer did not pay a single rial because this child's name was not in insurance or social affairs. The child's name is not registered anywhere, and he was completely working on a daily wage basis.

Another problem for children in these workshops is early aging; a child who works in machining at a young age has a body like a seventy-year-old when he is forty.

Working in Construction: In this sector, children face risks such as death due to falls, lack of proper safety clothing and footwear, absence of accident insurance due to illegal migration and lack of identification documents, moving heavy loads, getting dirty and contaminated with materials like plaster and cement, burning hands, injuries, working in cold and hot weather, inhaling dust, excessive fatigue, falling construction materials and tools on various parts of the body, hands and fingers getting stuck under the crane cable, and more. The narratives of children employed in construction work about the risks they face are as follows:

These rebars get really hot in the summer; if you don't handle them well, they burn your hands.

Construction work is all hard; you have to move heavy things all the time, whether it's in water or cement that ruins people's hands.

On the construction site, we witnessed our brother's fall, and he encountered serious issues.

Once they hadn't installed the crane properly; we were giving materials to a friend, and it fell on him; he was all messed up, bleeding everywhere, we took him to the hospital.

See, for example, my employer says go grind tiles with this machine, the grinder stone. You have to be very careful not to hit your foot, so the tiles don't get in your eyes. There's definitely dust; it suffocates people.

The crane cable is very dangerous; if your hand goes under it, you will definitely get hurt. There has been a lot of cases where their hands got messed up in the job.

When you have to carry cement to the fourth and fifth floors, or carry sand and such, it's heavy work. Also, when you have to bring down materials, lift them up, like tiles, ceramics. Moving heavy loads is difficult, stones, stone facades.

Working in Brick Kilns: Working in this sector is also accompanied by various risks, including working under the sun in summer, moving heavy materials, severe burns, bricks falling on feet, inhaling dust and respiratory problems, being in proximity to kiln heat, suffocation in the kiln's furnace, falling into the feeding hopper of brick-making machines, falling under the conveyor belt (brick elevator) on a child, falling into excavated pits in the workshop area, entanglement of children with machine components, falling bricks and raw clay on the child. The narratives of two children employed in this sector about the risks and difficulties of their work were as follows:

Sometimes, for example, the bricks break badly, and our nerves get shattered. It's a real struggle. The bricks break badly. When we want to stack them, they fall on our feet, causing wounds. What else can we do? Then the bricks have cracks; we say it's not a problem, we cut it off, suddenly it breaks, falls on our feet.

We wake up at four or five in the morning, go make bricks until noon when we come home, eat a piece of bread. Again, we have to go work until evening. The heat bothers us. All our hands and feet are injured, our backs hurt at night, we can't sleep. My dad says you have to work; I don't have extra bread to give you.

In summary, children experience various hazards in their work, leading to their death, limb impairment, cuts to body parts, especially hands, muscle and spine disorders, various diseases, loss of vision or weakening of eyesight, addiction, and other risky behaviours, burns at different degrees, stunted brain and mental growth, and ethical issues. Many of the consequences of labour, such as dropping out, manifest in their near future and must be dealt with throughout their lives. Many child labourers, especially those without identification and documentation, lack work contracts and insurance. If they seek medical care, they have to personally bear significant treatment costs. An expert in the field of child labour categorizes the risks children face in this way:

These consequences depend on various factors: firstly, work, to some extent, develops skills for children, but as the conditions of work become harder for children and approach what children understand as work, meaning physical harm, psychological impact, ethical influence, or if it interferes with their study by making them work hard, well, all these can put various physical, mental, and ethical pressures on the child. It depends on the type of work; you have problems that, in all the areas I mentioned, can cause the most damage. It's a global classification. It specifies the works that are related to issues like child pornography or using children as soldiers in very harsh environments like mines and so on, and that's up to the point that works that have no conflict with these issues. The child works for a limited time during the day or week that, for example, is not considered, and no harm is done, and studying does not conflict with it. In the middle, there are works that can affect a child's health depending on their type. In my opinion, the family can play an important role in how,

figuratively speaking, much support they provide. Families that are fragmented, have conditions other than their economic needs, have unstable conditions, have addiction problems, moral problems, involve in prostitution, lack sufficient control and support for children, it is possible for the child to get involved in very damaging occupations, and since they lack support, they are more exposed to harm in the work environment. We see this often in street work and comparing Iranian and Afghan families. Specialists who worked in intergovernmental organizations had heard that Afghan families, at least until a few years ago, because they were exposed to fewer social damages, less addiction, less moral issues, less selling out, less control and support for children, could be more stable overall.



Picture 52 brick kilns in Shamsabad (Photo from the research)

Security

One of the most essential needs for every human is having a sense of security. Security refers to its actual source in the real world, and the perception or awareness of security. Although these two are related, they may be

distinct from each other. For instance, an environment may be relatively safe, but individuals entering it may feel insecure due to unfamiliarity or simply choose not to enter due to fear. The topic of security holds significance in the study of child labour, and as such, this section delves into some examples.

Security encompasses various dimensions, including personal safety, mental well-being, collective security, and financial security. Another aspect of security is “existential security,” according to Giddens, which pertains to the assurance individuals have regarding the continuity of their identity and interaction within their social and material surroundings.¹⁷¹

The work and lives of children, especially Afghan children, involved in labour are fraught with insecurity and danger. The security of these children, particularly during migration, is highly jeopardized, and they may even risk losing their lives. The account of an Iranian child who migrated from a rural area to Tehran for work vividly portrays the fear and lack of security experienced during migration:

My brother was in Tehran, he said, ‘Come, I’ve found a job for you.’ I said okay and went. My mother said, ‘Don’t go.’ I boarded the bus at night, and during the bus ride, I was so scared, I started crying. When I arrived in Tehran, I was even more frightened. I was afraid of getting lost. I regretted coming here. I always pray that no child goes through this. I was thirteen.

For Afghan children who migrate illegally, the experience is even more challenging. Typically, they start by traveling

¹⁷¹ Giddens, Anthony. (2017). *Sociology* (Translated by Hasan Chavoshian). Tehran: Ney.

by car to the Iranian border, then entrust themselves to smugglers to cross the border. They may walk for several days between the mountains of Iran and Afghanistan with minimal food and water, or sometimes none at all. After reaching the Iranian borders, they hand themselves over to Iranian smugglers who transport them to locations close to buses heading to larger Iranian cities. If they use private vehicles, around ten to fifteen people may squeeze into a car, with some sitting in the trunk. If the vehicle is a van, they may accommodate around thirty people. The child smugglers drive at very high speeds to evade authorities, leading to accidents and the deaths of numerous migrants. In Iran, several road accidents involving these migrants occur regularly, with a simple internet search revealing dozens of such incidents. Sometimes, authorities shoot at these illegal migrants during their journey, causing harm or even death. An Afghan child describes his migration experience as follows:

The path is unfortunate. It's like squeezing a bag of flour; we fit thirty-five people in this [pointing to a Nissan]. I walk to the railway station, to Bam, to Kerman, to Naein. If the route is less crowded, we enter Iran from Pakistan to get to this point; it doesn't take more than four days if it's less crowded. There are dangers; there's the danger of hunger, the danger of thieves, the danger of the government, the danger of cars. If you look at them from inside [the car], there's nothing else but the Afghan body; I mean, facing the bed, we call it 'bed,' I don't know what you call it.

Twelve times, I've been to Iran and back. I hope no child goes through this. I was thirteen years old.¹⁷²

In these conditions, a child's perception of the world is one of insecurity, where at any moment, their life may be at risk. In other words, they will not experience existential security.

The security of these children, whether at work or in residence, is jeopardized in various ways, from personal safety to mental well-being and the assaults they may experience at work. The experience of security and its perception differ based on gender, as girls are more likely to experience sexual violence. This, in turn, intensifies their sense of insecurity, whether real or perceived. Often, the feeling of insecurity leads them to change or abandon their work. Two girls working in the Velenjak area described their experience:

I went to work; there were two girls who got married and left. We were left alone. Now, we won't go anymore. Today, we're going to settle our accounts because there's no place for women here. My parents won't let us go to work. There are two men. Initially, there were eight of us; everyone left, and only two of us and two men remained, and they won't let us go anymore.

They curse, very impolite. A girl, well, she goes to a man, lowers her pants. Then, when she lowers them, they go to his mother and say. His mother doesn't care,

¹⁷² Children's Rights Support Association. (2010). *Childhood Yawn: A study on the recognition, prevention, and control of the phenomenon of child scavenging in Tehran*.

says it's understood. Many of these incidents have happened, but not to me.

In the workplace, depending on the nature of the tasks, children's security is compromised in various ways, ranging from personal safety to mental security and the threats they may encounter. Nevertheless, the experience and perception of security differ based on gender, as girls are more susceptible to sexual violence. In many cases, this feeling of insecurity prompts them to change or abandon their work. Two girls working in the Velenjak area shared their experiences:

I went to work; two girls who got married left. We were left alone. Now, we won't go anymore. Today, we're going to settle our accounts because there's no place for women here. My parents won't let us go to work. There are two men. Initially, there were eight of us; everyone left, and only two of us and two men remained, and they won't let us go anymore.

They curse, very impolite. A girl, well, she goes to a man, lowers her pants. Then, when she lowers them, they go to his mother and say. His mother doesn't care, says it's understood. Many of these incidents have happened, but not to me.

In conclusion, the issue of security is pervasive in the lives of these working children, influencing their experiences and perceptions in various dimensions. Whether it is the perilous journey of migration, the dangers faced on the job, or the threats to their well-being in various environments, these children grapple with a pervasive sense of insecurity that permeates their daily lives.

Girls may sometimes face sexual harassment and violence from fellow citizens at work, especially in street jobs.

Some who worked in the central streets of the city shared their experiences in this regard:

For example, the sexual harassment is very high in the park, especially for us, who sell flowers. The girl I told you about earlier, the one who escaped, had experienced this sexual harassment. Later, she couldn't tell her mother because if she did, her mother wouldn't believe her. Her mother would say, You must have done something to attract him. I can't tell my mother now either; she won't believe it happened to me. But if a stranger, someone she has never seen before, comes and says, Yes, your daughter did such and such, she will believe it. Then she was forced not to tell her mother. She couldn't bear the guilt, so she left home. It happens in this park too. My cousin and I walk in the park, and many people suggest, saying, Come with us to a certain place, I'll pay you this much money. But we have never fallen for it.

Some boys block your way. All our problems are caused by boys who bother us. The experience of violence may lead them to either quit their jobs or change their jobs. For instance, they may switch from street jobs to working at home. In general, the experience of insecurity plays a significant role in changing the type or location of children's work. One child shared his experience of changing jobs:

I used to have conflicts with the boss. He used to insult me for no reason, say bad things. I didn't like it. I never liked bad things since childhood. I retaliated, and I left.

Bad things like what?

For example, they would curse at random things. Their ethics were not good. Sometimes they made bad jokes with me; for example, they insulted my brother, things like that. I got angry and kicked him out.

Parents may be willing to protect their children in the workplace due to the fear of their safety. This is more common in street jobs. For example, a family might bring their children to a busy intersection, and the father or mother stays a bit further away to watch over them. As one child described it:

We were at that intersection, an Afghan family, all working together. His mother was sitting somewhere, keeping an eye on them, afraid that no one would hit them, no fights.

Another strategy for children to maintain their safety is seeking refuge in family networks while working. This is prevalent in many jobs. Since individuals in some jobs connect with their social and family networks, these networks provide security and a sense of safety. A researcher's observation is as follows:

An employer, along with a woman and two children who were siblings, worked in a production workshop. The mother worked in the sewing workshop on the second floor. During the interview, the mother came downstairs, put her other child, a newborn, to sleep there, and left. The children had found this job through their mother. From these cases, it can be concluded that the work environment and employer have been approved by the mother, and there is trust and security for the children.

As mentioned, a sense of security plays a crucial role in whether or not children work and the agreement and consent of their families, especially for immigrant families. To create a sense of security, familiarity with the work environment is essential. Since many immigrant families have recently settled in Iran, and their origin was small communities in Afghanistan, they are afraid when migrating to Tehran and may not go to any place for work, staying mostly around their homes. A social worker from a non-governmental organization commented:

I found a great job for a family from Kotobi Square, where the father was addicted, and the mother was severely depressed. The mother opposed, saying, How can he come back? We had such cases. You know why? Because they have just come from Afghanistan, and their safe environment is here. They are afraid to go out and stay more around here. For example, regarding this woodworking workshop, we told them to join society, get acquainted with people, gain experience, and maybe it will help them progress and migrate to other countries, but...

Another aspect of children's safety is job security. Although it is reiterated that children should not work, in the jobs that are considered children's work, their job security is threatened in various ways. As explained in the risks of work, children may lose limbs or even lose their lives. After they get hurt, they may be expelled from work or laid off. In the workplace, the employer usually sets various unwritten rules and exploits them. This feeling of job insecurity manifests in different ways. For example, garbage children who pay their "customs" at the beginning of the month are worried whether they can earn enough income for the next month. However, children with more experience in work or with a certain level of

skills are more obedient and feel less insecure because they are considered suitable labour for the employer.

Another form of insecurity is financial or economic security, which children in various jobs do not achieve, as explained in the above example. In many workshop and apprenticeship jobs, employers may refrain from paying children wages for baseless reasons, such as not working well, being late, leaving early, or learning the job. Or sometimes, they may pay them half of their wages or not pay them at all, claiming that they don't have it now, and they will pay later. The wages of these children are often wasted. For example, a child working in a mechanic shop said about his working hours:

I told him to settle my accounts; he said you didn't work well at all. I said, 'How! I came here every day from nine to eight at night.'

They didn't give the salary; they gave 50 tomans and I left.

Hey, he says, 'I'll pay the salary this week,' either doesn't pay it all or, for example, pays 200 tomans, doesn't pay the rest.

The narrative of a social worker from a non-governmental organization about the lack of security for working children in various dimensions was as follows:

Minimum wage, non-compliance with safety and health standards, job insecurity, lack of the right to protest, lack of social support, exposure to various threats, beatings, and harassment are among the problems that children face. The first significant issue is safety at work, and it is the most essential part. In the second stage, they lack any form of education and social support. Low

wages, one-fourth and one-fifth of the legal wage according to labour laws that equalize working with other workers. Their rights are greatly wasted. For example, they do not pay their wages.

Another type of lack of security experienced by children at work is interpersonal security. Relationships are the most crucial element of social capital. Of course, any relationship can be of good or bad quality. Relationships based on, so to speak, master-servant or asymmetric relationships accompanied by fear and anxiety are examples of poor relationships. Children experience such relationships at work. The issue of power relationships has been well addressed in how asymmetric power relationships are detrimental to children, and these children experience a lack of security in their work. Employer relationships with them are arbitrary, and sometimes they are dealt with harshly. They do not sign contracts with children or sign short-term contracts and extend their working hours significantly. A child working in a car repair shop said about his working hours:

I told him that I can't stay here after five. He said you have to be here in this mechanic shop until nine. I found it tough, so I didn't go.

A disruption in mental security is ultimately another aspect that children experience. It should be noted that when people do not feel secure, the natural consequence is feelings of fear, anxiety, and other mental health problems. One of the mechanisms that children use in such conditions is resorting to fatalism. When their security is threatened in any area, they try to create a sense of security for themselves by using mental structures they create. However, this security is false because it deprives children of their rights and provides a further opportunity for their exploitation.

Mostly, they were satisfied with my work, but when it came to paying, they were not satisfied; they would say, 'Dad, you don't know how to work at all. You never come on time.' I would say, 'Dad, we came from nine in the morning until twelve at night, standing.' [With a smile] They would just mock me. If you want, I'll take you to them. I'm a person, and I told them that this world is not worth much, do you want to eat my money? He left, I don't go there anymore. Sometimes I greet them. I'm not a person to take it to heart; I say maybe it was meant to be like this, maybe God wanted it.

It should also be mentioned that besides institutions such as Welfare Organization and the Municipality that threaten the security of children during regularization projects, the police also threaten the security of children. Their threat is more significant for Afghan children who have immigrated to Iran illegally. These children are always afraid of being identified, arrested, and ultimately deported by the police. For example, it was observed in garbage collection sites how some of the garbage collectors had arranged their sleeping place above the roofs of their cabins. When asked about the reason for doing so, they said that they sleep on top of their cabins to see if someone attacks them; they can see the police before the officers enter the site and escape from them.

That's it... It's the municipal police. It was just a little; they could take me, throw me in jail. Because of a street vending, they labeled me as a troublemaker. Because when he sees that we are not afraid of him, he says such things with his filthy language.

Experience of Violence and Harassment

Children in the work environment experience various forms of harassment or violence. Harassment mostly occurs on an interpersonal level, but violence, in addition to interpersonal aspects, also has a structural dimension. For example, when an employer or a citizen commits violence against a child, this dimension is more than the interpersonal types of violence, whereas when societal structures, such as unequal distribution of resources or laws, facilitate child labour, not only do they not prohibit child labour, but they also, in a way, legalize it, and such an act is considered a form of structural violence against children. In this section, we will delve more into interpersonal violence based on the life experiences of children in various types of work. Children experience various forms of physical, psychological, sexual violence, and neglect from various individuals such as employers, citizens, merchants, family members, colleagues, or peers in the workplace, agents of official institutions like municipal officers, law enforcement personnel, and welfare inspectors.

Different definitions of violence have been presented. One definition states that violence is: “Any physical, bodily, or mental and psychological action, harm and distress, neglect, and behaviour resulting from negligence, misconduct, or abuse, including sexual abuse.”¹⁷³ In the same context, child abuse is defined as: “Any physical or mental harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, and neglect of the basic needs of individuals under eighteen years of age

¹⁷³ Nouri, Seyed Masoud. (2008). “Domestic Violence against Children: What, Why, and Treatment Solutions in the Light of Legal Efforts”. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 2(3), 35-54.

by other individuals that is non-accidental.”¹⁷⁴ In another definition, violence against children includes all forms of violence committed against individuals under the age of eighteen, these violence acts can occur by parents, other caregivers, peers, employers, romantic partners, and strangers.¹⁷⁵

One form of violence that children experience in work is physical or bodily violence that may result in injury or impairment of body parts. This form of violence in the workplace is very common, and many children experience it. Most children working in repair workshops, such as mechanic workshops or production workshops, to a significant extent, have experienced physical violence. However, this form of violence is always accompanied by verbal or psychological violence. Reasons for the deliberate experience of violence in workshops can include sabotage at work, inappropriate selling of goods to customers, conflicts with customers over the interests of the employer, the employer's expectation for selling goods to customers under any circumstances and in any way, not delivering goods or work to the customer on time, damaging work tools, losing work tools, damaging customer property, not being present at the workplace on time, damaging goods, misbehaving during work, etc. A child, who used to work in a mechanic workshop, described his experience of this type of violence as follows:

We had an employer who would hit us with a wrench.
He would say, 'You don't work well, you ruin the job,

¹⁷⁴ Ludwig and Kornberg (1982); cited in Madani Ghahfarokhi, Saeed, & Bayat, Mojtaba. (1389/2010). Poverty and Child Abuse in Iran. *Social Welfare Quarterly*, 9(35), 271-300.

¹⁷⁵ World Health Organization. (2018). *A Review of Public Health Literature*.

you don't listen to me.' But we can't argue with them much; we say it's okay, it's life, it will pass.

Or a child who worked in one of the car repair workshops in the Farahzad area recounted his experience of violence due to being late:

Fight, yes, it can happen; he also hits. That day I was late to work, he scolded me, said if you come late again, I won't let you come. Or once he threw a wrench at me.

Two children who were working in a clothing production workshop and had experienced this type of violence due to damaging the work also reported the following:

Our employer, I once made a mistake in the work, and he went berserk. Later, he told me not to be upset; I went berserk to make you more attentive.

He came and shouted at me a lot, asking why I ruined the dress and such.

It is natural for a child who has just started working not to perform the job well, but in some cases, the employer does not think this way. If a child does not perform the job well, the employer, in a way, resorts to violence against them. Additionally, losing tools and work equipment at the workplace, either temporarily or permanently, is a common occurrence in work environments. However, sometimes the loss of work tools is used by the employer as a pretext to demonstrate violence against children. During interviews and field research, children often mentioned that they had experienced violence because of the loss of work tools by the employer.

Hit, hit, hit! They hit each other with sticks, arguing about a lost wrench, then it turned into a fight. Most of

the time, the masters argue with the apprentices, saying, 'Where is the wrench? Where is the screwdriver? Why did you lose them?'

In many cases, continuous violence at work has led children to abandon that work and turn to other occupations. In fact, the violence that results in quitting a job plays a significant role in further exploitation and poverty of children, as well as their entry into other occupations. A thirteen-year-old child who worked in a workshop in the Qaleh Morghi area recounted:

I was working in a sewing place; I cut the curtain. I fought with the boss, but he didn't give me my money. He said, 'You just came, and you already ruined the job.' I didn't care anymore; I didn't come here.

In a similar vein, a child working in a mechanic workshop shared his experience:

There's a wire rod, they heat it up, and this is done. He told me to do this job; I didn't do it, but he did it himself [laughs while explaining]. Another time, it was my first time; I went, and he asked me to bring a tool. I couldn't bring it. He hit me on the head with that wrench. Anyway, I left.

Children spend some time learning a job to acquire the necessary skills, but due to the experience of violence, they are forced to abandon what they have learned. In these situations, with a change in occupation, the acquired skills of the child in that field are lost, as often they enter a different type of work, and their skills and experiences no longer apply. Also, in many cases, when a child enters the workforce, the employer may not pay them for the first few months because they believe the child is not skilled

and is in the process of learning. In this regard, a twelve-year-old child working in a passage in the city center stated:

Here, they bother us a lot; maybe I should leave. When he bothers me, he doesn't pay my wages; I have to leave at the end of the month. For example, if he delays my salary, if he bothers me, fights with me, I have to change my job. I left my previous job because the boss bothered me; I came here. I learned a lot, but now it's useless. He was very unfair.

Sometimes, dealing with customers in some jobs becomes a regular occurrence for children. An employer in the Sadeghieh area shared his experience of customers getting involved with child workers:

Here, there's a lot of trouble; they fight. For example, a guy comes, he wants to unload the load, he throws the load or breaks it; for example, he says, 'Why did you do this work?' He says, 'I wasn't here.' These things upset them, and a fight starts.

A fifteen-year-old child working in the Sadeghieh area in the transport sector also reported:

See, it's chaotic here on Fridays. We can't handle it; the customer says bring the load and unload it. I told him, 'Can't you see until I lift it, they're taking everything off.' It turns into a fight just like that.

It is common for street-working children to experience various forms of violence, especially physical violence. One fourteen-year-old street vendor described the violence over territory as follows:

... They say we've been working here for ten years; this intersection is ours. I say, where is the document for that? Then, because of this, a fight broke out one day. We didn't work near this intersection before; we used to go to the municipal intersection. Once... he went towards the car, he wanted to clean it... he was on a motorcycle. Suddenly, he kicked this boy. When it became like this, because of that, we came to this intersection. It's not from the municipality, it's from another group... for the kids who are there... Afghan kids.

Another street vendor, working in the Tehran metro, stated in this regard:

I get into arguments with them because I won't let anyone work here. I won't let anyone come here to work because there are really a lot of street vendors. Some of them haven't come yet, I mean if we want to count, there are around fifty street vendors working here. Then, I won't let them come. Because honestly, street vendors are too many. Now some of them haven't come, I mean, if we want to count, all the street vendors working here are around fifty. Then, I won't let them come. Yesterday or the day before yesterday, I had a fight with a girl. Her name is... and she had run away from home, she's from Mashhad, Sabzevar, she had run away from home. She had come here to sell scarves; no one bought from us. I had to pull down her headscarf. I don't take money from them because taking money from them is a sin. Then my mother says, 'Don't bring money from the forbidden into this house.' I hate it myself.

The reason for the war over territory is that individuals who have been active in an area for a long time consider that territory as their own. Therefore, they view anyone who attacks their territory in any way as an invader and may engage in various forms of violence against newcomers. One child shared their experience in this regard:

These guys sometimes hit us, saying this car is mine, whatever happens, cut it in half. Every night, he forcefully takes 20 tomans from us. These guys, the older ones, extort 20 tomans from us every day, saying it's for Charrah. They don't come here. Their nephew comes here around four in the afternoon. He says they take 20 tomans every night, it's for this place. Their house is in Farahzad, he works here until eleven or twelve at night. Then he tells us to come, give 20 tomans for the night. If we don't give it, he hits us. My brother and I give him 40 tomans, with his 20, it's 60 tomans. We only give him 60 tomans a day, three of us. Others don't give money; they're his family. Some days he comes and says, my dad is missing, give me 5 tomans, and so on.

Other children described their experience of the war over territory as follows:

On the first day we came here, there was a tall guy who came and said, 'Don't stay here.' I asked why we couldn't wander around. He said, 'On our first day, we claimed this place as ours.' He went up for two or three days, and I thought tajrish (begging) brings good money; I said it for no reason. Then he went up and saw that tajrish brings good money, so he stayed up there.

At Charrah, there have been so many fights; a man from the other side was taking 30 tomans from each person. Those from Herat, the women, had taken Charrah. They didn't let us work. We called that guy, and he came. One person got a check; they also took their motorcycles. He said, 'Now go.' They were from our family; his brother had been stabbed and was cut up from here... It belonged to Afghanistan.

The vegetable seller used to come and say, 'Go from here,' and he said, 'Here is Vayinsa.' I don't know whose place it is. I asked why. Then, I don't know, I told that man, he solved it (meaning he has a friendly relationship with a shopkeeper who brings vegetables from the market).

In the streets or at intersections, older children sometimes beat younger ones or may forcefully take their money. The rules at intersections about who enters first and sells goods or offers services to customers are another reason for violence among children. A child who was a street vendor in the border area talked about it:

There are a lot of fights; yesterday a newlywed bride came. Then a boy said, 'I should go first because I am the first.' Another boy said, 'I'll go second.' The second one didn't go; he had cleaned his windows and gave him ten tomans. Then, the boy who said, 'I was second,' didn't give money. I said, 'Give me something too.' He said, 'I won't give.' This led to a war. Suddenly, he hit him somehow; he hit the door, and it softened against the tree. His father came and asked why you hit my son; a war broke out. ... His father told me and... and... to go home, let's see what happens. We also went home. I don't know what to do today. Every day they hit us,

forcibly take money from us. Then when we, for example, come with a rural customer, he says I am the first; it means you have to give me the money you got; you go clean his windows, and he gives you some money. Then he says, 'I am first, give me the money.' They all harass us; it's not like one or two, everyone harasses us like this.

Another child working on Shariati Street shared their experience in this regard:

The older ones hit us sometimes; my brother hits me, and this one hits me too. Some days, this one hits me, saying this car is mine. He says it's mine; anyone who comes cleans it. We, too, get beaten by this street boy. This boy came, hit my leg, and broke it at Charrah, the same intersection as the municipality; this boy came and broke my leg.

Sometimes, the way citizens help these children can lead to violence among them, as one of these children explained:

No, for example, someone gives me 50 tomans, for example, and says swear. All my friends come and say, let's swear. Then someone forcibly takes it from me, saying that lady said swear. Then after swearing, I give ten tomans to them.

Or it is possible that other citizens act violently against these children, as narrated by the children themselves:

Why do adults fight with us? We don't take jobs with them.

Some say beggars and stuff; I don't like it, it makes me angry.... Whatever, we respond to them as well.

Violence from other citizens against children presents another form of violence in intersections and streets. The reasons for such violence can vary based on the type of work. In intersections or streets, the majority of violence against children by citizens is related to blocking the path of vehicles, not moving from the middle of the street when the traffic light turns green, cleaning car windows against the will of drivers, hitting and breaking car windows by children, insisting on buying a product or seeking help, and similar situations. In garbage collection or carrying loads manually in the grand bazaar of Tehran or flower markets, traffic generated by hand-pulled carts can inconvenience citizens and potentially lead to violence against these children. Putting garbage in a corner of the street or alley during garbage collection can lead to objections from neighbours or shopkeepers. In this line of work, some citizens may engage in conflicts with the children and steal the collected garbage. The life experiences of children regarding this form of violence are as follows:

They swear at us; we go to clean their car windows, and they say, go, let me see. They swear, we go, pour water and clean. Some of them don't pay.

They told us to go to a roundabout; we went, the window cleaner took my hat, and then I grabbed my brother, worked fast, made a hundred tomans, and then went home.

For example, we clean, and they hit. We say don't hit; okay. We listen to what he says, and we say okay, don't

hit. He also gets found, and we also have a fight, and then it goes like this.

Once the light turned on, the cars moved, and I was in the middle of the street. Someone said to me, are you a cow? Don't you understand to go over there? I said, it's your dad. He wanted to follow me, but I got away from his hands.

For example, you're passing, and he gives you a slap or hits your wheel. He has cargo, hits your wheel, throws it over there.

We bring garbage and put it here; they say don't put it here. The car comes, swears at us.

In district 2, he bothered us a lot, hit our carts, took them away. These Turks with vans bothered us a lot. He hit us. Once, he stabbed my friend with a knife, broke his leg. He hit my ear; I ran away from him.¹⁷⁶

Unfortunately, not only ordinary citizens and drivers but also some shopkeepers around the working places of children demonstrate violence against them. These acts of violence are often physical and can have significant psychological consequences. Some shopkeepers believe that the presence of working children on the streets and sidewalks next to the street causes discomfort to customers and negatively affects the image of their businesses. Children, in this regard, shared their experiences with the following statements:

¹⁷⁶ Children's Rights Support Association. (2010). *Childhood Yawn: A study on the recognition, prevention, and control of the phenomenon of child scavenging in Tehran*.

This shop, the restaurant, the owner hits me so much, says don't work here. The two men in this restaurant, they're both bad, partners with each other. The others are okay.

The man working in the restaurant bothers us, doesn't let us work, says go from here.

Shopkeepers stop us, tell us to go away. I say, is this your father's property?

No one bothers me, only sometimes shopkeepers might bother us; they say why are you standing in front of the shop and making noise.

Based on field evidence, sometimes local businesses support these children. For example, they might provide them with food or intervene to separate them during disputes. Here are the children's statements:

Most of them give us food, they don't insult us. We go to the shops, smoke, and they still don't insult us. In Esfand, we smoke.

No, the shopkeepers don't bother us; they are good. Sometimes they even separate us when we fight. If a fight breaks out, they separate us.

Sometimes violence is exerted by officials of government organizations or governmental entities against these children. For instance, in projects aimed at organizing or collecting children from the streets, there is evidence of violence against these children. In many cases, law enforcement officers in charge of the metro or municipal parks use violent methods to prevent these children from working in their designated areas. As the following

narratives show, these children have experienced violence from these organizations or their agents:

There was this incident where one of the officers, his name is..., pulled my hair and forced me into the train. This happened during the time when the coronavirus was just spreading in Iran. They had implemented a plan for Imam Khomeini's month, and they had placed officers everywhere. I couldn't stay in the train with all those items. I got off the train. He grabbed me and forced me back into the train.

When the police catch us, we either leave or they beat us and then we leave. But the municipality caught us once, and they beat us so much.

The Welfare Organization came and took us, took the kids. I didn't get on the vehicle; they pulled me, put me on it. I resisted, and they hit me so much.

If there's a confrontation, nothing works; when we go to the police, they say you're a foreigner; it's your fault.

Children also experience various forms of violence, including psychological and physical abuse, as well as neglect from their own families. Some families may display violence towards their children due to factors such as unemployment, returning late from work, coming home early, insufficient income, or providing inadequate financial support. This type of violence is more prevalent among families facing economic hardships. Additionally, families where children are engaged in work or have been forced to work may also exhibit this type of violence. The experiences of children in this regard are described as follows:

My dad hits a lot, even my little brother. He hits me too. He's waving his hand. My dad says, 'Go and work.'

My dad says today you have to work this much, for example, 50,000 tomans. If you don't work, don't come back home.

One day, I didn't feel well, I had caught a cold, and I came back home. They scolded me, asking why I came back early.

On days when we don't work, we have to stay until late because our house is far away. When we arrive around 11 pm, my mom scolds us, saying why we came late, come earlier. Then, if we come earlier but haven't worked, she scolds us again, asking why we didn't work. If I ever have a problem at work, I tell that cafe owner, and he helps me.

It seems that children working for gangs or gangs employing them experience more violence compared to other children. Two children who had encounters with children working for a gang shared their experiences of working for these gangs and the violence they experienced among them:

Some parents can't take care of their kids; they sell their children. Once they sell them, the guy who bought the child keeps them, telling them they have to work a certain amount every day. If they don't work enough, they either won't get food or won't have a place to sleep. Thankfully, my cousin and I are not part of that group. But if I were in that group, rest assured, I would escape from there. Those groups are tough; if you don't

work, they won't give you food, or they might beat you to the point of death or won't provide a place to sleep.

There's a van full of kids; they drop them off at Tajrish. Until they work, they won't let them go. Tajrish Park has a store; we don't know whose kids they are. If we knew, we would save them. Sometimes those who work, those who live in tents, they are the leaders. If anyone says their house is a tent, it means they are the leaders. Those whose houses are in the lower part of the city, the farmers, no, you can imagine.

In some cases, these children may also be exploited by some gangs, as the authorities of these gangs are well aware that children cannot defend themselves. Therefore, they take advantage of them within the framework or cover of institutions. One child who had experienced encounters with these gangs mentioned:

An institution came last year and took us to Chitgar. We reached Chitgar, and they said, 'Give 2 million and 800 thousand, and I'll introduce you. Bring each person, and I'll give you 400 thousand.' We said, 'How can we bring a person?' He said, 'Give 2 million and 800 thousand to the government. For every person you bring, I'll give you 400 thousand. The one who gave 2800, they give me 400.' That's how it worked.

Sexual violence is another form of violence that children experience in the workplace. This type of violence is the most severe form that any child can experience, resulting in the most unpleasant feelings and leaving lasting memories for years to come. The experience of this type of violence is a real crisis for children, jeopardizing their physical and mental well-being. In many cases, children, especially girls, do not report these acts of violence out of

fear of being blamed by support networks or the fear of damaging their reputation. In other cases, parents may force their daughters into early marriages due to the fear of sexual abuse. Although it appears from the findings of this research that this type of violence and abuse is not widely experienced among children, it should be noted that many children who become victims of violence and sexual abuse refrain from disclosing their experiences due to various reasons, including fear and self-blame. This is one of the hidden damages of child labour, which has irreversible consequences. However, gaining access to children's experiences of this type of violence requires gaining their trust, which was not possible in the short opportunities for interviews with children during the fieldwork of this research. On the other hand, when many children were asked about their experiences of sexual abuse in any way, they did not share their own experiences in this regard but instead talked about the experiences of other children. The experience of these narratives demonstrates, firstly, that these children are aware of what sexual abuse is, and secondly, that this form of violence or child abuse exists to some extent among them. One of the interviewees recounted the story of a child working in the Jeī district as follows:

The boy asked me to stop the interview. He explained that he no longer wanted to rely on his parents for money because he felt indebted to them. He started working at a car repair shop, and while he was there, it began to rain. Following the advice of the shop owner, he took off his clothes to let them dry, and the shop owner touched him. Afterward, he escaped from the shop and left his clothes there. When he arrived home, his uncles severely beat him with a wire, questioning why he had gone to work at a different place. He described all of this information in a fragmented and

anxious manner, accompanied by slight trembling in his hands and restless feet. He was constantly worried about his voice being recorded. He didn't want me to write down this story in my notebook because he didn't feel safe. He neither wanted nor was in a condition to answer further detailed questions about this incident.

Two of the children were also narrators of the experiences of other children in this regard:

One of them stole a girl in the Saadat Abad cultural square. They took her to Turkey, they took her there... . His friends were with him, they escaped. Then he told his father to bring money... . He went and brought his daughter back.

There is a girl, her name is something, I don't know her name. She was in love with one of the metro kids; she had a husband, but she wanted to divorce him. But this girl went to their house with one of the metro kids and raped her by force. He told me himself, he cried a lot. He told me not to tell anyone.

The child who was selling in the Ashrafi Esfahani area recalled his experience in this regard:

Once a man lowered his car window. Then I got angry, I smashed his glass, because he had taken off his pants. He left out of fear. Once in Naziabad, a man held me, he wanted to force me to do it in the trunk of his car, but I escaped.

The fifteen-year-old girl who sold fortune in Laleh Park narrated the experience of violence of another child worker:

For example, this is that sexual harassment is very high in the park, especially for those of us who are hand-selling. Now this girl who told you ran away to Sabzewari, she had been sexually harassed. Then he couldn't tell his mother, because when he told his mother, his mother didn't believe him. He said you must have done something that the guy came after you. I can't even tell my mom now, mom, this happened to me, she doesn't believe us. But the word of a stranger who doesn't know you, hasn't seen you yet, the word that comes and says yes, your daughter did this, he believes. Then he had to not tell his mother. He was tormented, he left the house. He is also in this park. Now me and my sister are walking in the park, many people offer, he says come on, let's go somewhere, I'll give you this much money, but we haven't been fooled yet.

The experience of this kind of violence among child workers has different forms, the simplest form of which can be a proposal for sexual contact until it reaches rape. In the middle of this spectrum, there are also other forms of violence, such as showing obscene pictures with sexual content, nudity, touching the body of children in secluded places such as inside workshops and cars, asking to touch the body of the perpetrator, and stealing the child and harassing him. In many cases, girls, especially girls who work at intersections, are labeled as prostitutes. Sometimes children in closed spaces and even in some public spaces may harass each other sexually in different ways. Another case that can be mentioned is sexual harassment in the place of residence by relatives or friends. For example, in some workshops that are also the place of residence of workers or in single houses, the place of residence of children, there are forms of sexual

harassment. A few social workers from NGOs expressed their experience of working with children in the field of sexual violence as follows:

In underground environments, because standards are not observed and there is not enough supervision, the risks are higher in this group of children. The probability of violence, bullying, sexual violence is higher than other environments and girls are more vulnerable than boys in these environments.

One can guess. See, the weather now, we're observing it; it's like this. The children never used to say anything. One hundred percent, the sexual issue was among them; the possibility of assault and such damages. I didn't see substances in those workshops. We were several people, and we were spread in the area. Most children in that area had sexual problems and had suffered sexual damages. Yes, they had experienced sexual assault.

Not that I'm saying we had cases where things like this happened; no. But if I want to say, for example, there have been experiences where a child has been subjected to assault, for instance, issues of assault and the like, and due to the experience they had, they no longer resist this issue as much; I mean, they had gotten into these relationships a lot, meaning constantly controlling themselves, like now you're with this person, then with that person, how, and not escaping with this person. You know, afterward, they quickly fall into the cycle that when the family sees that the situation is so bad, they quickly marry the child off so that the story is somewhat settled. But to say that this incident happened at the crossroads, no, but it has been in these areas and in these families.

What I saw, I mean, as someone who worked and saw, the one who is working outside experiences greater damage; I mean, when a child has come, talked, and you've sat down to his words, like, Sir, what an injustice has been done to him! because the issue with children starts at the crossroads, the self-esteem of the children is crushed. The child comes the first time and narrates with bitterness, 'Madam, so-and-so came down from the car and slapped me in the ear', and the second time he's upset, the third time in the midst of his friends, he addresses it that such an incident happened, and you can easily see that the self-esteem of the child is gone. The child gets into the car to prove that he likes a particular car, and things happen to him; it becomes commonplace harassment, and it's very bad. It doesn't matter if the child is a girl or a boy; unfortunately, we see many bad events in this era that perhaps I can say were not so common before; now they have become more diverse.

[Graphics Here]

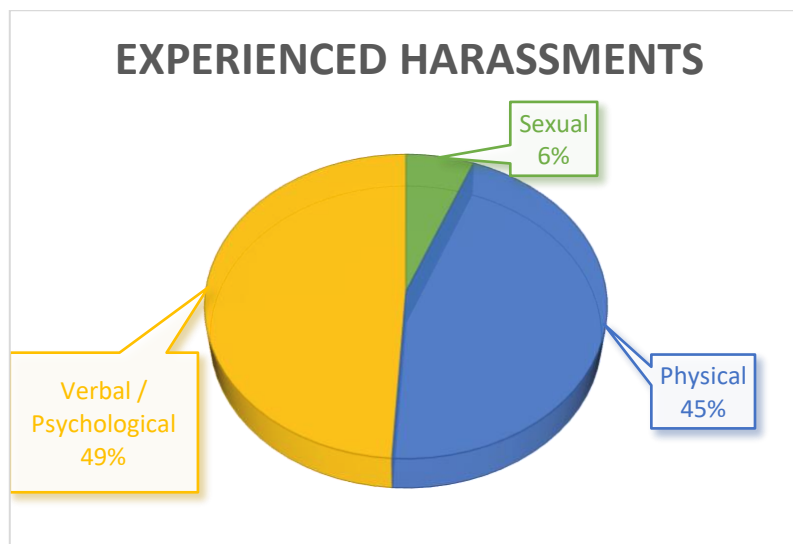


Figure 23 Types of Experienced Harassments by Children (N=159)

Overall, children experience various forms of violence in labour, and it is not exclusive to a particular type of work, although in some jobs, the grounds for stress and violence may be higher, especially in tasks where the child has extensive interaction with society, and their work somewhat intrudes on the daily lives of citizens. In this context, one can refer to jobs such as working on the streets and intersections, including window cleaning, fortune-telling, street vending, garbage collection, work in the city center, such as manual carting of goods, and work in fruit and vegetable markets. In secluded spaces like workshops or the residence of these children, due to the absence of capable guardians, sexual violence may occur more frequently. In many instances, the work itself embodies a form of violence, especially when the child's body and mind become tired of the work, and the child is distressed by it. A child who worked with a manual cart in the Azadi Terminal said:

He didn't bother anything; it's the weight of his load that bothers a person. A person gets bothered a lot; the load is heavy, and you end up with a shabby house. In

the morning at nine, you have to get up and come here until night, keep pulling this cart back and forth; a person's back gets ruined.

A child working in garbage collection on Kurdistan Highway also narrated:

When you put your hand in these bins, it feels weird. Everything sticks to your hand. There are lots of flies. Now that it's summer, the smell of rubbish is suffocating us all, our clothes too.

A child working in the Niavaran area as a porter described his experience:

Sometimes we only sleep for three hours a day; on Fridays, we finish work at midnight, until we come to have dinner and stuff, the load comes from the square. Then we keep coming with loads continuously until morning.

And a child working with a manual cart in the flower market neighbourhood said:

Whether they pay you or not, it messes with you mentally. For me, physically, it might be this rose thorn that bothers me a little, but I solve it with my glove; it's color, and otherwise, there's no harm to it. For example, the bin might be heavy; we might get back pain, and if not, there's no problem.

We are well aware that city trash bins are a source of pollution, and passing by them, especially in the summer, is difficult and unpleasant, and even when passing a few meters away from them, the bad smell reaches our noses. But garbage collector children are forced to bend over

these bins for long hours and separate the rubbish. This issue not only endangers the physical health of the child but also inflicts harm on their psyche, breaking down their personality. In fact, violence against children has various biological, psychological, emotional, and social consequences that manifest in behaviours of “internalization” (such as withdrawal, negative thoughts, depression) and “externalization” (such as aggression). It seems that the more vulnerable a child is or the weaker support networks they have, the more violence they experience. In this regard, a representative of the Supreme Labour Council stated:

The execution of extra work, unlimited working hours for these children depends on the support they receive from the family. Their conditions vary. In one family, both parents may work, and the child may be helping the family, and depending on the support they receive from the family, the employer’s behaviour can also change. But really, the more defenceless they become, the more ruthless we become.



Figure 24 Experience of Various Forms of Violence in Labour

Migrant children also experience violence in a different manner and are unable to defend themselves against the violence they encounter. The account of an Afghan child who worked as a manual cart operator in Lalehzar Street was as follows:

No, you see, we get harassed here; everything happens to us. We, the unfortunate Afghans, we, the unfortunate Afghans, can't do anything. If I say something, they hit me. Even these Iranians hit me, Kurds hit me, harass me; they say don't take the load, and they hit me. We have no power, no documents, we're without documents, we can't say anything to them.



Picture 53 working and street children (Photo by Bahar News)

Exploitation

Among social and economic thinkers, Marx was the one who delved most into the subject of exploitation. He sought the source of profit in the capitalist system and ultimately concluded that the source of profit comes from the exploitation of the labourer's effort—the one who works. In other words, a significant portion of the value-added by the labourer's production was claimed by the capitalist. Consequently, he scientifically demonstrated how the capitalist class exploits the working class, and his scientific propositions turned into ethical statements. This is why some have considered him more than a mere human. For instance, Aron remarked about him: "Since

Marx fought for the liberation of workers, in addition to being a scientist, he was also a prophet.”¹⁷⁷

Marx extensively delved into the issue of child exploitation, particularly highlighting the plight of children subjected to harsh working conditions. He articulated the situation in regions like Shropshire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire, and notably Lancashire, where advanced machinery found its place in expansive factories situated alongside rivers, harnessing their waterwheel-turning capabilities. In these remote areas, a sudden demand for a substantial workforce emerged, especially in Lancashire, which previously had a relatively small and unproductive population. To meet this demand, the expedient solution became the widespread recruitment of apprentices from diverse regions such as London and Birmingham. Thousands of these unfortunate youngsters, aged seven to thirteen or fourteen, were dispatched northward. The prevailing practice dictated that the master, often referred to as a child thief, would supply clothing and sustenance for the apprentices. Their incentive lay in maximizing the employment of children, as their wages were directly linked to the amount of work extracted from them. This exploitative system naturally led to instances of cruelty and hardship.¹⁷⁸

However, Marx considered the issues of inequality, poverty, and exploitation resulting from the organization of society, in such a way that the dominant class, through

¹⁷⁷ Aron, Raymond. (2017). *Main Currents in Sociological Thought (Les étapes de la pensée sociologique)* (Translated by Baqer Parham). Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi.

¹⁷⁸ Marx, Karl. (2015); cited in Vameghi, Maroeh, and Yazdani, Farshid. (2019). *Report on the Status of Child Labor in Iran: Social Harms and Inequality* (Second Social Status Report of Iran 2009-2017). Vol. 2, pp. 95-150. Tehran: Agah.

the exploitation of the working class, impedes their growth, flourishing, and a life of comfort and security.¹⁷⁹

Children working in Iran, especially in workshop jobs and garbage collection, may experience conditions worse than what Marx described. Long working hours, difficult working conditions, and minimal wages characterize the various forms of child labour in Iran. It can be said that in all forms of child labour examined in this study, there exists a degree and amount of exploitation. Additionally, due to the lack of the ability to defend their rights and the absence of effective laws and mechanisms to protect them, children are exploited in the worst possible way. In many cases, employers seek to use them as if they were adults. Statements from some of these employers confirm this point:

I say sometimes these kids are better than a hundred adults.

Better?

Because they're more honest, more obedient, and they are more afraid than young people whose heads are filled with wind. For example, a 12 or 13-year-old, even a 19-year-old, when you say something to them, they want to argue or fight.

It feels good; these smart kids are better than older ones. They handle the job better than older ones. We were able to trust them, and we entrusted them with the job.

The concept of investment mostly relates to the amount of wages a child receives. However, in this research, other

¹⁷⁹ Macionis, John J. (2017). *Social Problems* (Translated by Houshang Nayebi). Tehran: Cultural, Artistic, and Communication Research Center.

dimensions are also addressed. In terms of the amount of wages, almost all children receive very low wages. The following narratives illustrate the level of wages these children receive:

Let's see if they harass a lot here; maybe I'll leave. The moment he harasses and delays my salary until the end of the month, I have to leave. For example, if he delays my salary and harasses me, creates trouble, I have to change my job.

How do you get your rights?

Now that we're doing it weekly, because with everyone we went to, they ate our money. They kept saying today or tomorrow, today or tomorrow. We kept saying, when are you going to give us the money? We saw we couldn't get the money, we left from a few places. Now where we are is new.

Wherever I went, they trusted me a lot, but when it comes to paying, they are not satisfied; they say, dad, you don't know the job at all, you don't come on time at all. I say, dad, we came from eight in the morning until twelve at night and stood. [With a smile] They deceive us. If you want, I'll take you to them. I'm a person who told them this world is not worth it, do you want to eat my money? Gone, the world passes. Sometimes I say hello to them. I'm not a person to take offense, I say maybe this was destined, maybe God wanted it.

Before, I used to get 70 tomans per week; he wouldn't even give half of it and said he would give it to you next week.

One of the employers in the field of child labour rights and wages stated:

The wages of children in comparison to larger workshops are approximately half the price. Even in some jobs, such as working in a car wash, a child may not receive any wages despite working twelve hard and exhausting hours; their only income is the gratuity they receive from the customer.

In confirmation of this point, a child working in a car wash in the Oudin area said:

Here, we are gratuity workers. We don't have any rights here.

Or, one of the shopkeepers in the Qeytariyeh area, speaking generally about employers, said:

As a shopkeeper, I'm looking not to give this money to them.

The age of children is another important factor in their exploitation. Many children lack skills in various jobs, and naturally, in jobs that require skills, they may receive lower wages. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes age becomes an excuse for the employer to pay less to the child, despite more work. Even in jobs that do not require specific skills, and children work as much as adults or even more, employers pay them less. Narratives from employers and the children themselves confirm this meaning:

The wages of children in comparison to larger workshops are approximately half the price, but the working hours are the same; they come in the morning and leave in the afternoon.

The payment of children's wages is different from adults. Adults have labour ministry support. Children, well, they are on their own [smiles]. Adults support their family's expenses; on this account, we consider their wages more; they pay rent, have household expenses, and living expenses.

Because I am a little kid, I get one and a half [amount].

One of the employers present in the Imam Reza flower market regarding the rights and wages of children said:

I calculate the daily wages for them; children may have an income of up to 70,000 tomans, and adults may have up to 400,000 tomans.

One of the employers active in the curtain production industry also said:

The wages of children are much less compared to adults. In this industry, the Ministry of Labour is absent; it has no commitment at all. For example, as an employer, when I come to this sewing workshop and put ten workers here, I say you don't have insurance, no benefits, nothing at all, just come work and get your wages.

In waste work, where a child must pay a monthly amount referred to as "customs" to the employer to be allowed to work within the designated area, there is no significant difference in the amount of money a child pays compared to an adult, unless the child's parents request a lower payment due to the child's younger age and limited ability to collect garbage. However, this situation is not limited to waste disposal work and applies to other jobs such as transporting goods with carts. The commission paid by

children for work is the same as that paid by adults, but their income is usually lower because they handle less load during transportation. Regarding the customs fees, a child working in the waste disposal sector in the Eghlid region stated:

It's not as simple as coming to collect garbage; we have to pay customs. We pay 2500 customs per month. But we are small, so maybe we pay less. For example, my dad goes bargaining with them, says this one is small, calculate less.

In some other jobs requiring skills, such as mechanics and tailoring workshops, children are paid the minimum wage. Employers argue that children lack skills, and they are in the process of learning rather than actively contributing to the work. However, it should be noted that children perform various tasks for employers throughout the day while learning. An expert in the field of child labour mentioned:

In workshops, the wages are much lower than what is outside. A child working in a workshop, the employer claims that you learn something here that you don't know. The wages there are very low, maybe 60 thousand per week.

And two other employers also mentioned:

The kids get paid by us. The kids, for example, can do a job compared to what they already know, when the Padavi that they first come to gets maybe 400, 500.

He works and earns in the beginning. We teach him the job. Just as they taught us the job, we teach them the job; he has his own grip now.

Another aspect of child labour exploitation is the long and irregular working hours. According to existing rules, the working hours are approximately 8 hours a day or about 170 hours a month. However, children may work up to 400 hours a month. For example, children working in fruit and vegetable markets work ten hours a day from Saturday to Thursday and five hours on Fridays. Besides these hours, they spend about four to five hours per day unloading, cleaning the store, preparing fruits and other items, totalling about 100 hours a week and more than 400 hours a month. Children working in waste disposal follow a similar pattern, working in the informal sector at night. They start around 3 to 4 pm with a rented vehicle and work until around midnight or one or two in the morning. In the mornings, they must sort the garbage from 7 or 8 am until noon. A child working in street waste collection described their working hours:

In waste collection, it's tough; you have to collect garbage all night, wake up early in the morning, clean these.

Another waste disposal child working in the Moneirieh square also considered the difficulty of their work due to long hours:

The difficulty is lack of sleep; you have to collect all this garbage at night, wake up early in the morning, clean these.

Long working hours with minimal wages are not limited to these two types of work; it is prevalent in all forms of child labour. Even though they work at least 300 hours a month for the employer, they do not receive any payment for the day they take off and do not go to work. Another form of exploitation is working during unconventional

hours, where children wake up early in the morning and work until late at night, even on weekends.

Earlier, the working hours of children in fruit and vegetable markets and waste disposal were explained; in this section, other types of work are addressed. In jobs like working in flower markets or brick kilns, children have to wake up around 4 am. In jobs like car wash and mechanics, children also work on weekends, especially on Saturdays, and are upset about not having time for rest and play. In some workshops, such as tailoring, working hours may change from morning to night, especially during the summer due to the heat in the workshop environment. In grocery stores, children usually work seven days a week from 7 am to 11 pm, and overall, children's working hours in all forms of work are very high and irregular. Some children's accounts in this regard were as follows:

The difficulty of working here [flower market] is that you have to wake up early in the morning, like four in the morning.

In the car wash, everyone is there, even on Saturdays. In fact, on Saturdays, you have to work more because more cars come.

A child working in a tire shop in the Edam square described his working hours:

I go from eight in the morning until ten at night. They give me 230 thousand a week.

In some cases, employers compel children to work beyond their capabilities, and from the child's perspective, these conditions resemble slavery. Two children working in a clothing workshop shared their experiences as follows:

In the previous workshop, there were two apprentices, four spinning wheels. Then one of the apprentices used to go to the Saba Club during the break. I was there, working at full speed. Then the supervisor said... got left behind [enthusiastically describes]. I said I can't return his workload. He said, 'I don't know, you're working here; you have to be fast.' I said I can't handle the workload for him. He said if you can't work, then don't. I said I won't work right now. I got up and left.

We were two people; each spinning wheel requires one apprentice. This is the norm. For example, on Eid nights, the workload becomes heavy, but in regular months, one apprentice can handle two spinning wheels. No one can handle four spinning wheels for sure. I was in the middle of work, and there were four spinning wheels. In the morning, I would work from twelve to twelve-thirty, and the workload was heavy. He (the supervisor) had already shouted that, 'Hey! Why aren't you catching up?' I said I can't return the workload for him (the absent apprentice). He said if you can't work, then don't. I said I won't work right now. I got up and left.

In some jobs, if children cause harm to tools and materials, the employer deducts the cost from the children's wages. They are unaware that some of these issues arise from the nature of the work or the fact that the child, due to inadequate growth, lacks the skills and abilities to oversee all aspects of the workplace. However, some employers understand that mistakes happen as a part of work and should not be charged to the child. A garment shop owner shared his experience:

I had a pager, I don't remember when, I don't remember ever. I gave him the fabric and told him to take it to a

specific place for sewing. Later, he went and had the fabric in such a way that it stuck to the bottom of the motorbike exhaust. Unluckily, my exhaust was hot at that time. It was three years ago; I paid 1.7 million for the fabric. What can I do? Do I want to ask him for the money? If the poor guy wasn't in trouble, he wouldn't come here to work. Some don't accept it; they blame the worker. Many hit. Well, a kid who is earning 300,000 or 400,000 in wages, I, as a shop owner, look for a way not to give him this money.

Similarly, a business owner running a repair shop mentioned:

[Laughing] We hit them with a whip. No, it's a mistake in the job. Not that it shouldn't be; there is a mistake in the job; the computer is not error-free; it has errors. The word I say is that it should not be repeated, otherwise, there is an error. Usually, I say, I say the word that I say, more in a joking tone. I put my words in a joke to make them laugh, and they laugh more. No, they don't repeat more than twice.

Work in workshops, especially small ones, provides a fertile ground for the exploitation of children. Since the environment in these workshops is small, in many cases, the overnight residence of the children is also inside the same workshops. Therefore, the child is always accessible to the employer, and there are no formal rules or regulations to regulate the relationship between the child and the employer. Other factors, such as these, make children more vulnerable to exploitation. As mentioned, children in these workshops are more obedient.

Labor laws in Iran have effectively provided a basis for the exploitation of children. According to Article 79 of the

Labour Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran, employment of children under the age of fifteen is prohibited. However, due to the lack of enforcement of the law and oversight of various child labour activities, children are extensively engaged in most occupations and trades. They do not enjoy any of the rights and benefits of work, such as the right to complain or insurance. In some cases, employers understand that mistakes are part of the job and should not be charged to the child. A representative of the Supreme Labour Council commented:

The execution of extra work, unlimited working hours for these children, depends on the support they receive from their families; their conditions vary depending on the support they receive. It is possible that in one family, both parents work, and the child helps the family, and depending on the support they receive, the behaviour of the employer can change. But really, the more defenseless they become, the more ruthless we become.

Some employers also shared their views on this matter:

By God, I haven't seen any employer supporting children. Why should I lie, maybe they help them financially, but I haven't seen it. Here, the employer only says, 'Work for me.' He doesn't expect anything else. Now, despite all the talks, I was an apprentice; I was an apprentice in Valiasr Passage, a sewing apprentice, but the employer is not really into this kind of thing to know what you want to do. He just wants you to work, and his money goes into his pocket. He doesn't care if, for example, this child needs rest, needs to play, needs... Of course, when parents don't care about their child, the employer also says, 'Well, if Mom and Dad think this way, I'm like that too.'

In tasks where children work alongside their families or in family workshops, the child is practically exploited by both the employer and the family. These families initially employ the child for income generation, which is considered a form of exploitation itself. When working for the employer, the family takes the child's wages directly from the employer, without the child even being aware of the amount of their remuneration. Afghan children, in particular, usually give whatever they receive as wages to their families, keeping only the minimum amount for their daily expenses. The narratives and accounts in this regard are as follows:

Many of them had come here illegally, and some of the children didn't receive the money themselves; the elder ones would receive the money and send it to the hometown. Perhaps the child had no idea how much they were getting; maybe they were given a small incentive.

I no longer know how much my salary is; it's in my mom's hands.

I transfer my money from card to card [ATM transactions]; I send it home.

When a worker comes here, if we tell them it's 450, maybe the worker tells their mother that they receive 400 tomans. Maybe they keep 50 tomans for their own. Perhaps with that 50 tomans, they won't do much work, because families here are very weak. We must necessarily inform their mothers about the exact amount of wages, as they should come here, see the work, see who they are working with, and understand the working conditions.

Furthermore, the escalating inflation and the significant depreciation of the Iranian rial against the dollar have exacerbated the exploitation of child labour, especially among the children of migrants who are compelled to convert their earnings. In recent years, due to the devaluation of the rial, many migrant individuals from Iran have left, and those who have remained have seen their wages decrease to less than half. Two children of migrants narrated their experience as follows:

It used to be good here; I used to earn 3 million, 3,500 tomans before, but now it's not good. The situation is very bad. Iranian money is worthless now.

The wages are low, yes, 2,500 now that my dollars have gone up. What happened to the Afghan currency! This 2,500 becomes a total of 6,000, it becomes 6,000 Afghanis. Yes, what can you buy with this? Rent for a room... I pay 100 tomans per person for renting a room.

Afghan children, especially undocumented migrant ones without legal documents, are more vulnerable to exploitation. They lack legal identity documents, making it difficult for them to access legal services, and the law does not protect them. An Afghan child spoke about the consequences of not having legal documents:

I worked somewhere, didn't receive my wages for ten, fifteen days. We can't complain because we don't have documents. If we want to complain, they deport us. Now I worked in that alley, asked him for 20 tomans, he didn't give it. I call him, he doesn't answer. Those who have documents and passports can complain; we can't.

In addition to these challenges, children in various forms of labour experience various harms and multiple forms of

violence. When they suffer injuries at work, they have no insurance to cover their expenses, and they have to bear the costs of medical treatment alone. Employers typically do not cover the medical expenses. This is particularly true for Afghan children who, due to their undocumented status, face even greater risks. When they are injured at work, they must allocate a significant portion of their income to cover the medical expenses. In many cases, they avoid seeking medical attention due to their inability to pay for treatment, resulting in irreparable physical injuries. Much of these injuries are also due to the working conditions they endure.

Moreover, the current COVID-19 pandemic further jeopardizes the situation of migrant child labourers and their families residing illegally in the country. These individuals have not received any financial assistance during the pandemic despite their financial hardships and economic difficulties. In case of contracting the virus, they lack the means to access medical facilities. Even during vaccination campaigns, they refrain from getting vaccinated due to fears of legal repercussions and the lack of residence permits, putting their health and the health of their children at risk.

Leisure Time

Human life encompasses various dimensions. In a broad classification, one can say that human life consists of two aspects: “work and effort” and “leisure and enjoyment of life.” However, these dimensions are not necessarily separate. During early childhood, work and effort may take a backseat, and what matters most is for children to live in a way that brings them joy and allows them to grow, develop their skills, and flourish in various aspects. When adults reminisce about their own childhood, they often interpret that period through the lens of playfulness and

the joys it brought. If these experiences are lacking, it feels as though one's childhood has been incomplete. While work inevitably encroaches upon children's leisure time, they strive to engage in activities that provide them with leisure by employing a range of strategies. Leisure time has been defined as "time outside of work, family, and social obligations, during which an individual willingly and by choice engages in activities that promote mental expansion and personal satisfaction" (Neumeier).¹⁸⁰ Neumeier emphasizes that the defining characteristic of leisure, as opposed to other periods in life, is that it encompasses those moments a person genuinely enjoys.¹⁸¹ Interviews conducted with children and experts in this field have revealed that children do not particularly favour work; rather, they yearn for opportunities to engage in play. In the following discussion, this topic will be further examined.

Bourdieu is one of the sociologists who has delved into the discussion of leisure time. According to Bourdieu, leisure time and its choices have roots in an individual's lifestyle, which is connected to their social and economic position. From his perspective, the level of access to various resources, including economic and cultural resources like money, education, and cultural goods, determines the social position of individuals in the social structure. People, based on these positions, adopt specific lifestyles. Bourdieu argues that assets, facilities, inclinations, and tastes resulting from these resources determine individuals' leisure time activities. The lack of access of

¹⁸⁰ Zahedi Asl, Mohammad. (2005). *The Importance and Necessity of Policy-making in Leisure Time*. Tehran: Social and Cultural Studies and Research Center, Social and Cultural Affairs Deputy, Tehran Municipality.

¹⁸¹ Golabi, Fatemeh. (2013). Types of Leisure and Their Impact on the Social Health of Youth. *Journal of Economic Sociology and Development*, 2(2), 69-121.

working children to these resources has played a crucial role in limiting the extent and manner of their engagement in leisure time. For healthy leisure time, numerous functions have been considered, and the dualism has highlighted three crucial functions: providing rest, recreation and reducing fatigue, and personal and social growth through increasing knowledge and connecting with others.¹⁸²

Children in various forms of labour have always tried to have some form of leisure time in their lives, although, for them, work and its difficulties have always been a serious barrier to leisure. As mentioned, individuals' access to assets determines the extent and manner of their leisure time.¹⁸³ Various factors in different forms of children's work act as obstacles to their leisure time. The most important of these factors include a lack of sufficient resources and facilities, long working hours and sleep deprivation, having a second job, not having leave in the job, and residing at the workplace. In some jobs, such as working in grocery stores, garbage collection, working in fruit and vegetable markets, and agricultural work, children work long hours and do not have sufficient time for leisure. A child who was an apprentice in a grocery store in the Narmak area responded to the question "Do you have leisure time?":

¹⁸² Qaderzadeh Omid, Qaderzadeh, Hirsh, and Hasanpanah, Hossein. (2015). Contexts and Resources for Spending Leisure Time among Youth. *Studies and Social Research in Iran*, 4(4), 637-661.

¹⁸³ Golabi, Fatemeh. (2013). Types of Leisure and Their Impact on the Social Health of Youth. *Journal of Economic Sociology and Development*, 2(2), 69-121.

I don't have holidays or anything here; I can only go when an important job comes up. I don't have time for play; I have to work, and that's it all day.

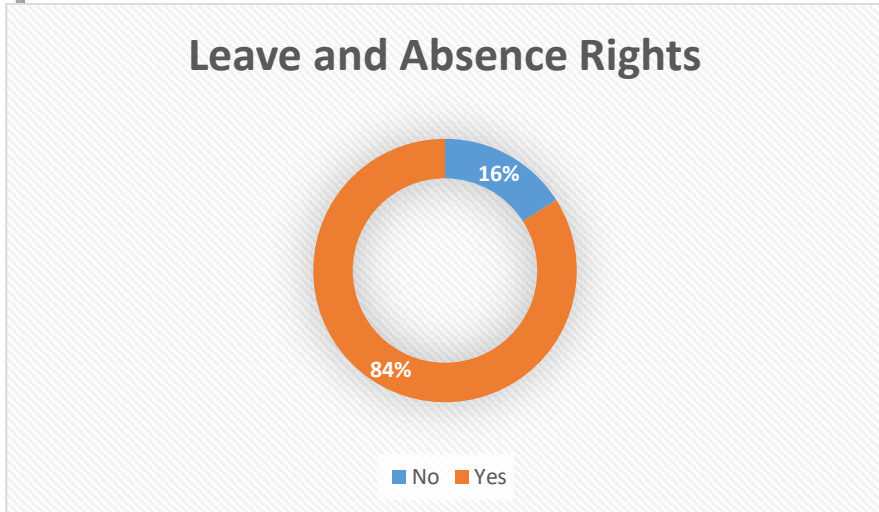


Figure 25 Distribution of children based on having leave or absence from work

In jobs like these, children work from morning till night, and even after the store closes, they have to restock the shelves. One of the working children in these shops mentioned that they can only leave the store or take time off when there are other people to help them. However, “leaving” doesn’t necessarily mean having leisure time and playing; in many cases, it refers to going to the city and visiting family. A child who worked in the heavy load area of Sadeghiyeh shared the following:

We don't have any days off anymore. Everyone here is busy, and there's no time for play. We work from seven to eight in the morning till night. We have dinner, get a little sleep, and then we have to unload the goods at night. Sometimes we can take time off, but then we go to the city.

Three other children also described the limitations of their leisure time as follows:

The employer gives us time off, but it becomes bothersome. For example, they say we have to stay late instead. If I say I won't stay late, they say you don't want to work, go outside; it's that simple. It's the same everywhere.

I don't have any days off; I work every day, even on Fridays and Saturdays. On Fridays and Saturdays, I come in later, around three or four in the afternoon, and stay until ten at night. I don't have any recreation at all. Even now, I really feel like going to the park. It's been two or three years since I went anywhere.

Whenever I have something to do, I can take time off, but it deducts from my salary. Even if I don't come for two hours, they deduct it.

Engaging in heavy and exhausting work has hindered children from having leisure time in their lives. In many cases, after working for a while, they may take a few days or a period of leave to return to their hometown or country and visit their families. However, taking unpaid leave or leave with a deduction from their wages is common in these types of jobs. Regarding unpaid leave or leave with a deduction, a child mentioned:

You have to be at work all the time; your wages will be deducted for a day if you don't come without permission.

In many cases, long and tiring work has caused children to spend their holidays not on play and joy but on rest and personal matters. Children often mention that they

dedicate their days off to rest and cleaning, with no mention of playing. This form of leisure time, which means having no recreation or play and staying indoors, can lead to frustration and depression. Even when children compare their work with others, they may feel resentment and anger. The following narratives clearly indicate that children either don't have time for play and joy or, if they do, their leisure time is very limited and lacks diversity.

On Fridays, we don't come; I stay at home and do chores, wash dishes, and clean the house.

I can't take time off from work. I have one day off per week, and that's on Mondays. I do my chores at home, take a shower, and change my clothes.

On Fridays, my sister comes to work, and I come too. We came to work today because it's a holiday, to get some clothes for ourselves and our sister. Fridays are slower at work.

On the days I don't go to work, I stay in my room. In my room, there's no recreation anymore.

On weekends, I take a shower, change my clothes, and just sit down.

On holidays, we stay at home; we sleep, rest. We don't play or anything. Who has the patience for playing?

At night, we can't do anything anymore; we're tired. We work all week, and on Fridays, we rest [laughs].

On holidays, we rest; we go to the bathhouse, wash ourselves, and go out to play in the alley.

I work all the time, even on Fridays, I don't go anywhere.

On holidays, in the morning, we clean this place. After that, we go to the bathhouse. After taking a shower, we go to bed.

All of the above narratives indicate how these children have been deprived of leisure time and play, and they have allocated their holiday time to personal matters, sleep, or staying indoors and at home. A child street vendor mentioned:

On Saturdays, we're off; we clean our houses, wash dishes, and sit together at home. We're not like this all the time; we go on trips.

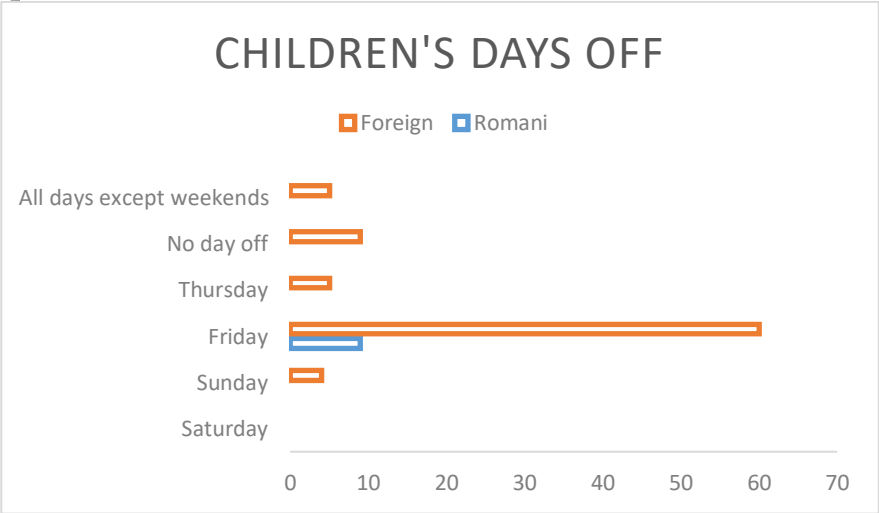


Figure 26 Ethnicity and Holidays

In some activities, such as working on holidays like Fridays, it is the peak working hours for many children. This is because they can work more, sell goods, or collect garbage on these days. Therefore, if they have a holiday on a day other than the weekend or Friday, it no longer gives

them the feeling of a holiday. This pattern is very common in garbage collection, as many garbage collectors work throughout the entire Friday because more garbage is produced on that day, and they are less restricted by official regulations, allowing them to collect more garbage. The accounts of active garbage-collecting children in the Jamaran district support this statement:

Our day off is mostly Saturday, Fridays are busy, we go to work.

On Saturdays, I have a day off, I stay at home.

Afghan immigrant children and other Iranian immigrant children who live away from their families miss their families a lot, and one of the things that brings them joy is contacting their families, especially through video calls. After working for a while and saving some money, they may buy a mobile phone so that they can easily have video calls with their families and reduce the feelings of distance and homesickness. Some children who do not have a mobile phone use their friends' phones to do this because of legal restrictions on buying SIM cards or not having the money to buy a phone. An Afghan child narrates:

Miss, I don't have a phone myself. I give 20 tomans to my friend, and I call home with his phone. Just like that, but with video this time.

In some jobs where a child's place of residence and work are the same, the child does not have any days off and is always available to the employer. Even if the child takes a leave and wants to stay at home, they are still somehow present at the workplace, and the opportunity to fully enjoy their leave is not provided to them. In these types of jobs, the employer usually does not grant leave to the

child, which is considered a double exploitation of the child.

Another aspect of children's lives is play, and not all working children necessarily lack joyful leisure time. Some of them have leisure time and enjoy it. During their leisure time, they engage in various games, visit relatives and friends, go to recreational and commercial centres, and engage in similar activities. The following accounts vividly illustrate the aspect of having leisure time in different situations:

The last time I went to a recreational place, I went to a gym to clean it. I used to go for bodybuilding.

On Fridays, we go to the park.

Yeah, we really love playing. We are kids from this area. We all dream of becoming football players. We play small games, on a grass field. We go to the grass field.

I don't come only on Fridays. I go out and play. For example, we go to the park, or we go to the gaming center.

Every day from one to three, we play football, then we go to work.

I'm free on Fridays; in the afternoon, I go play football.

For example, I go shopping, I go to a recreational place, or I take a rest.

Before, I used to go to Damavand. We came here, and I didn't go to Taekwondo anymore. We came here because the club was very far from our house. If the club is nearby, then I'll go.

When we have free time, we go out and wander around. For example, we go to the park and wander around here and there.

Just the same, we go to the room, we visit our fellow citizens.

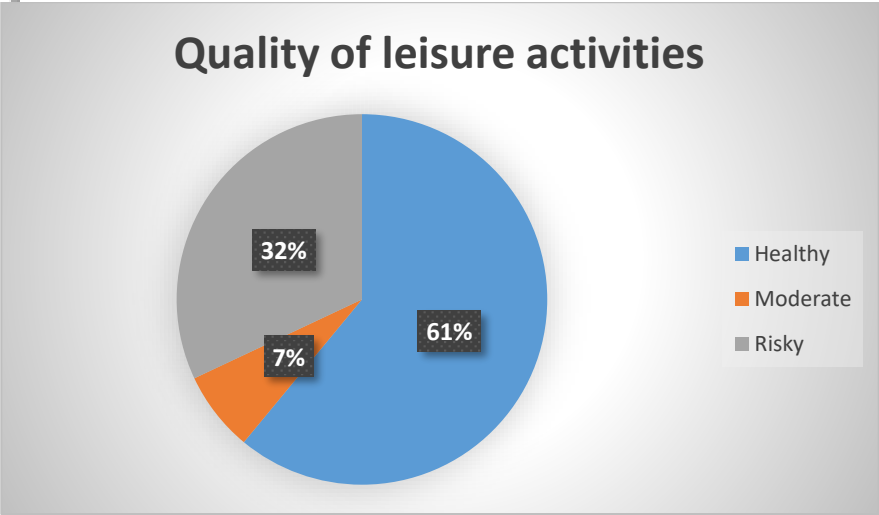


Figure 27 Quality of children’s leisure time (N= 136)

The above narratives clearly demonstrate how play and other aspects of leisure time, such as wandering, shopping, meeting friends and acquaintances, are all part of children’s lives. Sometimes, after working and saving for a while, children buy mobile phones to use as entertainment devices. They store various songs, especially local or national songs, in the phone’s memory and listen to them during their leisure time or install games on the phone to play when they are idle. However, due to their limited financial resources, their options in this regard are also limited. Additionally, most of these children live in low-income and deprived neighbourhoods that lack recreational and sports facilities. In some cases, they live in crime-prone neighbourhoods such as Darvazeh Ghar and Shush, where their families do not

allow them to go out and play, especially after dark, due to fear. This fear leads to strict supervision of children by their families. One of these children had the following experience:

On weekends, I go to the game centre with my friends. I'm not really into gaming; my dad forces me to go. The game centre is not good, it's for addicted kids and smokers. I will never smoke until I die.

In many cases, having leisure time and going out of the house requires financial expenses and having money, which many families of children lack the ability to provide sufficient financial resources, such as giving pocket money. Therefore, children resort to alternative options. For example, since they work, they can keep a portion of the money for themselves instead of giving it to their families and use it to have what they want, such as clothes or entertainment. A child who used to push a handcart in the Shush area mentioned the following in this regard:

For example, I earn 10 tomans every day, I put it somewhere, I save it; on Fridays, I spend it.

Another aspect of leisure time is having negative leisure or fake recreations, which can expose children to various harms. It should be noted that since these children work and have financial resources, they may spend their money on activities that jeopardize their physical and mental health or even engage in risky relationships. One of the interviewees, during an interview in a workshop, came across a subject in this area and redefined it as follows:

I heard from the boss that he has been having a sexual relationship with a sexual worker regularly for a year and pays a relatively large amount for it.

Furthermore, many of these children live and work in labour-intensive environments away from their families, with less supervision and control from family members, and spend more time with their peers. Therefore, the conditions are conducive to engaging in risky behaviours among them. They may also live and cohabit with adults and learn some risky behaviours such as smoking, hookah, or alcohol consumption from them. A child who worked in the Ponak trash collection area stated in this regard:

No smoking, but hookah, why should I lie? Yes, we smoke. It's in the workplace.

Or another child described his leisure activities as follows:

I haven't taken a day off, but I skipped school for a day. We just went out with my friends. We go to the river for water games. The water is scarce now; it's hot, so it has decreased. We go there, close the water and play. We also drink sweat. I don't smoke anymore. I exercise; I haven't smoked in two months, but we drink sweat.

Many children study alongside work, and the combination of work and study puts additional pressure on them, leaving them with no time for leisure and play. In this regard, two children shared their experiences:

I'm not outside much. I just work and go to school. I study on Fridays. I don't have any recreation. I really like studying.

Or when a young girl, who sells goods on the streets in the Park-e Velayat area, was asked what she does on days she doesn't work, she replied:

I help my mother, that's it. I study my lessons.

Some non-governmental organizations and institutions provide opportunities for play and recreation for many children, in addition to teaching them certain skills. They create a space for children to play within the institution's premises and even operate on Fridays so that working children can use these spaces. A social worker was asked about children's leisure time, and their response was as follows:

We try to adapt to the children's conditions; for example, when employers didn't allow the children to come, we would say it's okay, we will send a coach. It all depended on the employer's kindness. Most of the children came on Fridays because we are also available on Fridays.

The coexistence of Afghan children, especially those born in Iran, with Iranian children has led them to learn the recreational patterns of Iranians. In Iran, it is very common to go to the northern regions of the country for recreation on holidays. Afghan children have also learned this pattern and wish to travel to the north on holidays. An Afghan child working in the Shahr-e Rey area expressed such a desire:

Now I tell my dad, 'Look, Dad, let's take a day off and go to the north.' We don't have a car now. We went to Afghanistan, and we wasted all our money. Now we don't have money to buy a car. When he had a car, he only went to the mountains; he didn't go anywhere else. Then I would tell my dad, 'Let's go to the north,' and he would say, 'We'll go.' But we haven't gone yet.

Overall, it must be said that children love to play. They are very upset that they cannot play like many of their peers. Working, especially during long hours accompanied by

physically demanding tasks, deprives children of this opportunity and deprives them of the positive outcomes of leisure time in various dimensions. The experience of one of the social workers in this regard was as follows:

In general, children don't like to work. What I understood is that children want to experience their childhood, to have their playfulness. Sometimes they work in the middle of playing. We don't push them too hard either. But in general, they are still children, they are not of age, fourteen or fifteen years old; they want to experience their childhood, to play.

In addition to the general lack of interest in working, it should also be noted that one of the reasons why some children like to work may be that by working, they have the opportunity to play with other children in the work environment, especially in street work such as street vending.

Nutrition

Human growth has various dimensions, including physical, physiological, psychological, ethical, emotional, and social dimensions. Physical growth takes precedence over other dimensions during childhood, as it is a period where different parts of the child's body are growing. Therefore, proper nutrition is highly important for a child's growth. It is during childhood that individuals enter the period of puberty and experience rapid physical changes and growth. The age of puberty varies among individuals and occurs between the ages of eight and fourteen. During this period, rapid physical changes begin, such as muscular growth, especially among boys, and a surge in height and weight in both genders. Proper nutrition and consumption of all food groups are crucial

during this period. Improper nutrition and malnutrition during childhood can lead to stunted body growth, short stature, decreased cognitive development, recurrent infections, resistance to treatment, and reduced physical activity. In children affected by malnutrition, in addition to reduced physical growth, the prevalence of mental disorders is also very common, and these children may not reach their appropriate physical and mental abilities in later stages of life.¹⁸⁴

In nutrition, three factors are of great importance:

- 1) Sequence: This means that priority should be given to lower food groups in the food pyramid.
- 2) Variety: This means that all food groups should be consumed, and one cannot be substituted for another, as it has adverse effects on the body.
- 3) Proportion: This means that nutrition should be proportional to the age and activity level of individuals.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Pasdar, Yahya; Darbandi, Mitra; Jahanbakhsh, Ali Reza, and others. (2014). Investigating the Nutritional Status of Working Children in Kermanshah City in 1391. *Journal of Sabzevar University of Medical Sciences*, 21(4), 604-612.

¹⁸⁵ Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. (2018). Nutrition in Special Life Periods. *Medical Sciences Journal*, 2(3), 83-92.

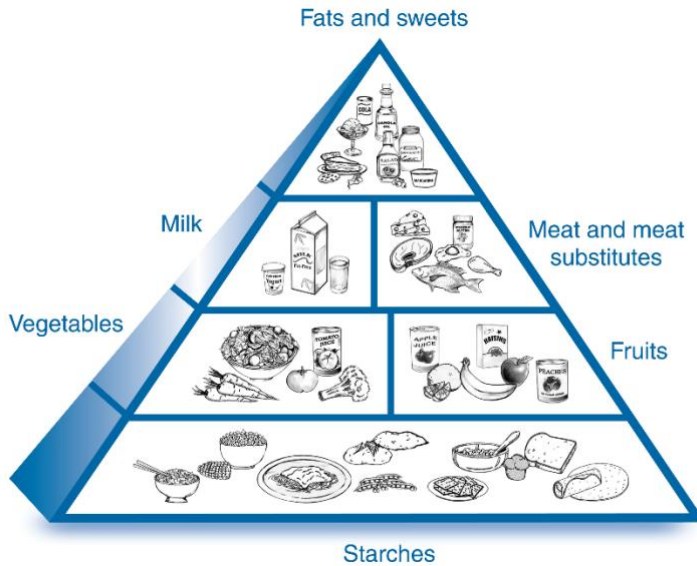


Figure 28 Nutrition Pyramid (source: niddk.nih.gov)

Work and lack of proper nutrition jeopardize the health and physical growth of children. Working long hours, unconventional hours such as at night, and engaging in heavy work, such as carrying heavy loads, have a significantly negative impact on children's health. On the other hand, improper nutrition exacerbates health problems in children. Orphaned children and those who live away from their families suffer more from nutritional problems than other children because they usually lack someone to prepare food for them. In many cases, they live in workers' houses along with another family member or their relatives and friends. In many of these households, food preparation and supplies are done collectively, and some tasks are assigned to children. For example, household cleaning, shopping, and dishwashing are the responsibilities of children, while individuals with cooking skills prepare the food. In such households, there is no meal plan, and the type of food depends on the cooking skills, taste preferences of the cook, and even their daily income. Two children described their nutrition as follows:

We make our own food; my cousin and I. We make everything: rice, chicken, eggs, beans, potatoes.

Lunch and dinner are on our own; the employer doesn't provide them. There's a store there, and we order whatever we want, and at the end of the month, the owner calculates the bill for us. They say it's 200 tomans, it's 300 tomans.

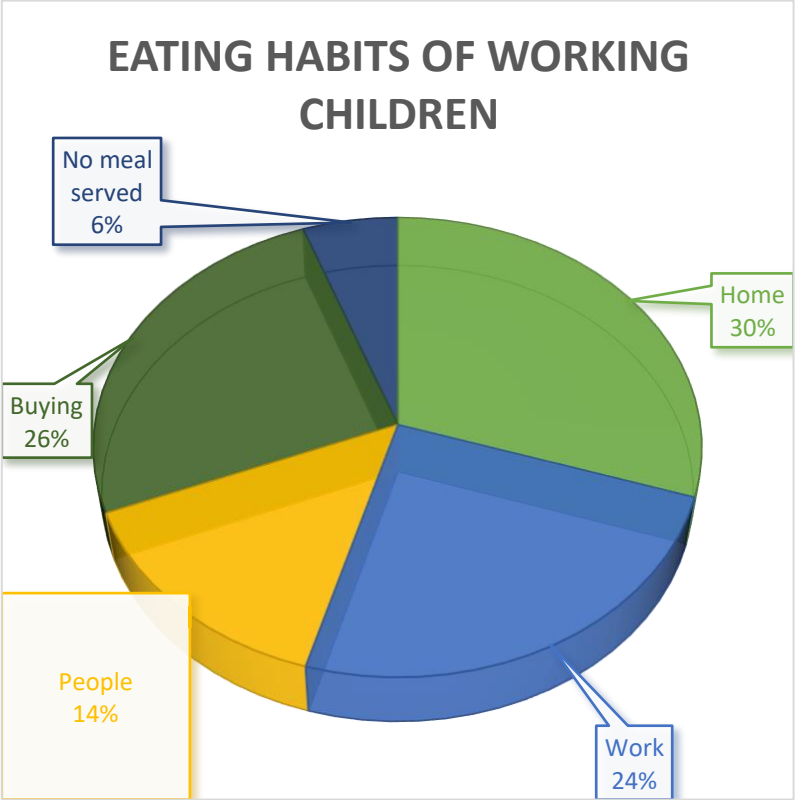


Figure 29 Eating habits of working children based on the location and method of preparation (N=120)

In some communities, workers collectively perform tasks, and each person has a specific duty. However, the division of tasks is often unfair in these communities, with difficult tasks assigned to children who may even experience abuse. These communities lack a food program, and the

type of food depends on the cook's preference and daily income. During periods of reduced child income, financial resources for food decrease accordingly.

For instance, field research revealed that inflation, sanctions, and the doubling of food prices exert additional pressure on children, depleting their essential food items. The rising cost of food leads them to exclude some expensive items like meat from their meals, replacing them with more affordable options like potatoes.

A friend prepares the food, and I handle the cleaning.
We eat potatoes, macaroni, beans, cheese, and similar items.

The nature of the work significantly influences children's nutrition. In some jobs, children have better access to and use of food, while in others, they have less. The speed and working hours also impact children's nutrition. In certain jobs, employers may provide food for children, such as some grocery store owners and market vendors.

In markets, employers often hire cooks to prepare food for children and other workers. A child working in a market in the western city district attested to this:

Here, the employers have hired a cook to prepare food for everyone. He prepares everything: barberry rice with chicken, macaroni, stews, cutlets, kuku sabzi, and meat soup. In the market, the employer is responsible for the food.

Additionally, the availability of fruits and vegetables in markets makes it easier for children to obtain the necessary vitamins. In some grocery stores, the provision of food is the responsibility of the shop owner. The employer either prepares food for employees or allows them to use certain food items from the store, such as

canned goods, sausage, pickles, etc. Children working in these stores complained about the lack of break time and insufficient time to eat.

Contrary to the experiences of some children, there are others who do not have proper nutrition. They, being responsible for covering the cost of their meals, tend to spend less and compromise on nutrition. For example, a child working as a garbage collector mentioned:

I send my money to Afghanistan. Every month, I make 200,000 tomans in profit, and I send the rest there. There's a shop near where we sleep; it belongs to the boss. We buy food from there.

This situation is prevalent in various jobs. For instance, a child working at a car wash in the Darakeh area mentioned:

Our boss hired a cook, and we give him 2,500 tomans a day to make food for us.

Similarly, a child selling flowers in Azadi Square stated:

I bring food from home for myself; I sit in a corner alone to eat. I need to care for my goods and make sure the authorities don't bother me.

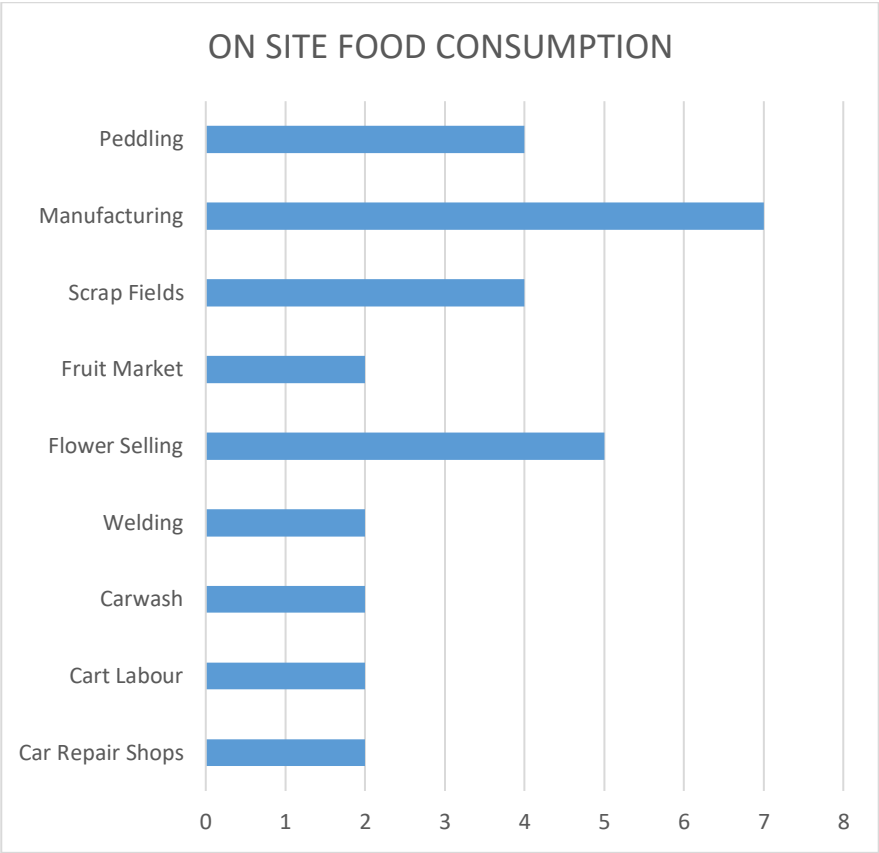


Figure 30 On-site food consumption based on the type of work (per individual)

Various forms of street work have had a significant impact on the nutrition of children. Some of their meals, especially lunch and to some extent dinner, are influenced by their work. They may shorten or even sacrifice their lunch because, at times, there is no time for a lunch break. In this regard, two children working on the streets of the Vanak district expressed the following:

We don't eat lunch. Sometimes my sister buys it, and we go and eat.

I have dinner at night, but I don't eat lunch. We get a cake and have a soft drink.

Purchasing food from fast-food establishments is prevalent among street-working children. Overall, some evidence indicates that children's inclination towards ready-made fast food, such as pizza and sandwiches, is high. The excessive consumption of these foods, especially considering that these children often buy low-cost and low-quality fast food due to financial constraints, has a negative impact on the health and growth of children. The consumption of these foods introduces a considerable amount of saturated fats into their bodies, leading to various health issues in adulthood. However, this doesn't apply universally to all street-working children. Some, particularly those in the northern and central parts of the city, usually ask pedestrians to get them food, and citizens often respond positively to these children's requests due to emotional and empathetic reasons. Two street-working children shared their experiences:

When we're hungry, my friend and I go to the sandwich vendor over there. We ask people sitting there to get us food; some say, 'What do we care?' while others get us food.

I stop someone on the street and say, 'Aunt, I'm hungry, will you buy me food?' and she buys it for me.

Such a solution, despite its positive aspects, also comes with some drawbacks. For example, some children may request food purchases several times a day from different citizens, and some of them have even gone further by reaching agreements with certain shopkeepers. These agreements involve the children saying, "We ask citizens to buy food and similar items for us. After they buy it and leave, we return the food to you, and you pay us the money." However, the opposite situation is also true. In some cases, shopkeepers may refuse to heed the children's requests because, for instance, another citizen has already

bought food for them a few minutes ago. It should be noted that in both cases, what the child perceives as serious harm is their self-esteem, and the influence of street work and life teaches them some abnormalities and behaviours that pose risks to both themselves and society.

Many citizens, because they don't want to provide grounds for misuse against these children through financial assistance, and because they don't know how their financial help will be spent and who it will reach, prefer to make children happy with food promises and provide them assistance. For example, they dedicate their alms for their deceased to the children selling flowers in Behesht Zahra. The flower-selling children in Behesht Zahra benefit from the distribution of sacrificial foods, including various types of dishes and food items. Some citizens also provide food to the garbage-collecting children. Non-governmental organizations are also active in this regard and provide food for children. However, it has been observed many times that children who are not inclined to request food from citizens will either exclude the lunch promise or content themselves with eating cakes and cookies unless citizens voluntarily approach them and buy food for them. Garbage-collecting children who work from 4 pm to midnight (around 1 am) may omit their dinner promise. A garbage-collecting child working in Parke Pardisan, collecting garbage, mentioned the cost of their monthly nutrition as follows:

My food is 20,000 tomans a month. Wherever I reach, I eat lunch. If I don't reach, I don't eat. I don't know where to go, [if someone] says, 'Why didn't you come?' the boss scolds me. I share food with my brother. He comes, we buy it; we sit somewhere and eat. We stack

cakes; we stack ice cream. We don't have rice and meat.¹⁸⁶

In general, citizens' food and alms reach children who are visible in front of them, but they do not reach children who work in workshops or in the metro. In some jobs, especially those where the children's accommodation is far from the city (such as landfill sites, agricultural work, and work in brick kilns) and places where suitable water, food, gas, and other necessary materials and equipment for cooking are not accessible, children's nutrition is more at risk. In these types of jobs, even the workers order their required water, which is sent to them with special vehicles. They keep the water in unhygienic tanks in these workshops for a long time until gradually using it, which can endanger the health of these individuals. A garbage-collecting child living in a landfill site in the affluent Ghanie Abad area reported on how they secure the necessary water:

There is a blue van; it brings us water. For example, we give him 50,000 tomans, and he brings us water.

¹⁸⁶ Children's Rights Support Association. (2010). *Childhood Yawn: A study on the recognition, prevention, and control of the phenomenon of child scavenging in Tehran*.

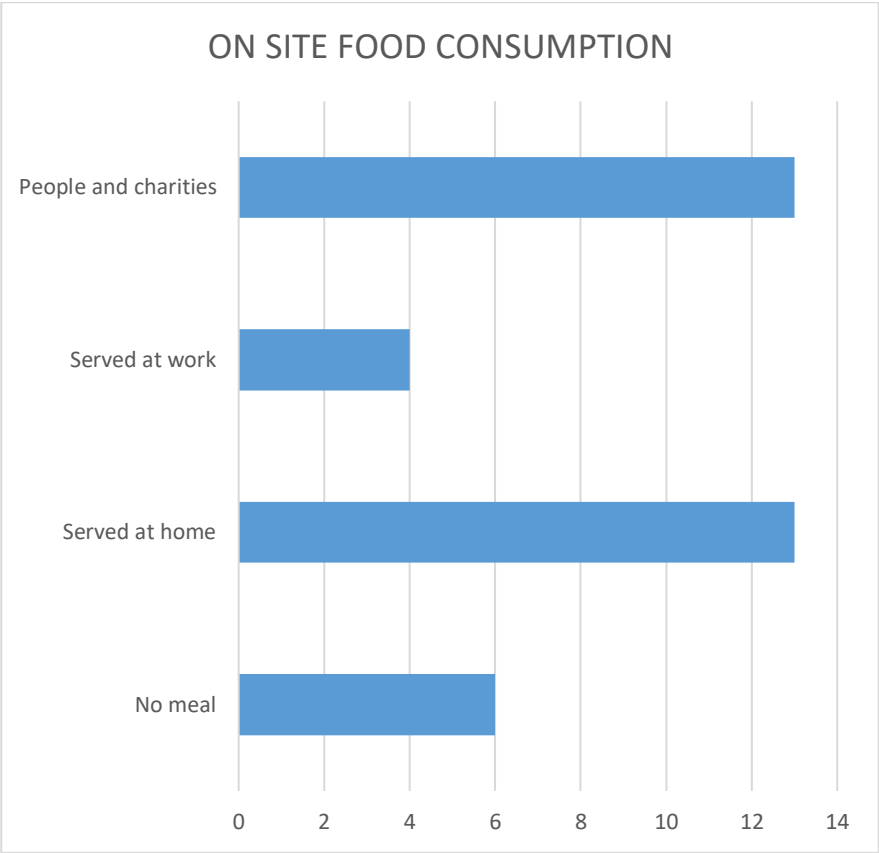


Figure 31 Children Street Vendors’ Nutrition Method (N=36)

Families whose income, or part of it, relies on the child’s income naturally have their food consumption and nutrition dependent on the child’s daily income. These families never buy food monthly or for a specific period; instead, they buy food daily or for a few days at a time. Therefore, fluctuations in the child’s income directly impact the quantity and quality of the family’s nutrition. In recent years, due to the severe inflation of food items and inflation in other sectors, such as housing, the income of children alone no longer covers the expenses of a family. Consequently, many food items have been removed from the shopping basket and tables of this group. In some cases, families put additional pressure on the child to contribute to income and cover household

expenses, especially in families where one of the family members is addicted to drugs (especially the head of the family). This leads to a portion of the child's income being spent on buying drugs, which undoubtedly has a negative impact on the child's nutrition.

In other jobs, such as working in workshops in the city centre, where some employers are responsible for providing food for the workers, children are asked to go to food preparation centres and buy food for the workers. In these cases, the child essentially becomes the proxy for the employer and other individuals present in the workshop. A child working in one of the production workshops near the large market mentioned the following:

The employer buys us food, but he doesn't go; we go.
We take the pot and go to the restaurant; we buy stew.



Picture 54 a street vendor child (Photo by Fararu)

Location of Children's Housing

Housing and secure shelter are among the most fundamental primary needs of every human, defined as one of the basic needs of humans, and governments

worldwide have endeavoured to provide access to it for their citizens and prevent its commodification. It is stated that suitable housing and shelter, in addition to serving as a refuge, eliminate potential deficiencies while preserving the family's privacy and protecting family members from moral dangers, safeguarding the family's dignity against public scrutiny.¹⁸⁷ In Iran, due to the flow of capital into the housing sector, capital accumulation in this area, profiteering, escalating inflation in this sector, and the lack of comprehensive social housing policies, this fundamental need has become highly commodified.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, a significant portion of the population has turned towards living in makeshift shelters, under bridges, and similar situations. As the elderly say, "One end of the spectrum is living in the heart of the garden or the palace, and the other end is street sleeping and graveyard dwelling."

Having suitable housing creates a sense of comfort and tranquillity, fostering a sense of belonging and attachment in individuals. If deprived of adequate housing, individuals will naturally remain deprived of these feelings.

Certainly, working children, being among the poorest strata of society, are more entangled in the housing dilemma than other individuals. According to existing definitions, a considerable number of them are homeless, which will be further discussed. One crucial discussion regarding working children is that the nature of their work

¹⁸⁷ Biyat, Asef. (2012). *Street Politics: The Movement of the Poor in Iran* (Translated by Seyed Asadollah Nabavi Chashmi). Tehran: Pardis Danesh.

¹⁸⁸ Parviz Piran, (2018). "Spatial Inequality and its Psychological Consequences in Iran" in *Social Issues and Inequality: Second Report on the Social Status of Iran (2009-2017)*" (Vol. 1, pp. 21-48). Tehran: Agah.

determines their housing situation. As evidence shows, children engage in various forms of work, and consequently, their housing varies based on the type of work. Typically, children working as garbage collectors in the outskirts of Tehran live in self-made shacks within their waste collection areas or abandoned brick kilns, or in containers within the city, or in waste disposal sites and recycling centres. One of the waste collector children from the Ashrafabad recycling site mentioned:

We live down the city, where we collect garbage. Room by room, everything there is problematic, no water, shops are far, and at night, they steal our belongings.

Another child stated:

Our house is in Farahzad, a big courtyard; we fixed rooms, rented them, and took one of their rooms.

The inadequate shelter exposes children to various hazards: firstly, the absence of safe heating and cooling facilities in these places. Secondly, due to their proximity to workplaces and waste, they face various harmful insects and pollutants, threatening their health. Thirdly, the lack of basic facilities such as toilets and bathrooms, as well as having the same space for cooking and sleeping, can jeopardize their safety and health in various ways. Since entry into these areas is easy, and there is no secure protection, some thieves occasionally target them, stealing children's belongings. Also, because the owners of some of these sites have unlawfully changed the land use and turned it into garbage sites, it has created disturbances for residents in those areas, and the accumulation of waste in these places poses environmental hazards. Therefore, inspectors and officials from public institutions, such as the municipality, occasionally, with the help of judicial authorities and law

enforcement, attack these open spaces and children's shelters and destroy them.

Many working children in other jobs also live in similar shelters or at their workplace. A child from Ardabil working as an apprentice in a shoe store in the Aghdasiyeh area mentioned:

I sleep in the store at night; we sleep here. I go home every week.

Or another child working in a grocery store in Saadat Abad said about his living place:

Sometimes, I sleep in the store; that's where I sleep. I go home once a week.

The inappropriate living conditions make it difficult for children to sleep well and have adequate rest, leading to increased fatigue and exhaustion, affecting both their physical and mental health adversely. In most of these dormitories, different age groups live together, and in many cases, none of the child's family members are with them. As a result, additional pressure is imposed on the child. In the large market where many children work, some of them sleep in passages or on the rooftops. Sometimes, the guard or custodian of the passage rents a part of their shelter to them. One child working as a porter in the markets carrying goods with a cart said about his living place:

We sleep in the passage here with my brother. We have a small room upstairs. It's tough; in the summers, these refrigerators make it very hot, and you sweat in it.

Similarly, many children engaged in jobs like production workshops, such as the production of bags and shoes, live in their workplace, lacking proper ventilation and

adequate lighting. A child working in a bag and shoe production workshop replied to the question “Where do you sleep at night?” as follows:

Right here [in the bag and shoe production workshop]. We gather some stuff over there and sleep here. We lit the gas last year to make it warm; it caught fire.

Additionally, many children working in other jobs, such as in the flower markets, car washes, brick kilns, and some mechanical workshops, also live in their workplaces. A child working in the brick kilns of Shamsabad region described their housing situation:

Here, in our brick kiln, our water ran out. When it ran out, we, the workers, had to come down barefoot because there was no water. We had to come home dirty. Our house had these problems. For example, the ladies could go to the bath in the afternoons, and in the mornings or evenings, they could go to the bath, but when the workers come at night, they can't go to the bath. We have this problem; we sweated, and our bones hurt.

Two children from the Tehranpars waste collector region also reported:

Here, in the recycling. We sleep right there; it's an experimental workshop, Hakimiyeh. Our room is a container. We are three; together with my brothers who are older than me.

We sleep where we collect the garbage. We have two bathrooms and two toilets.

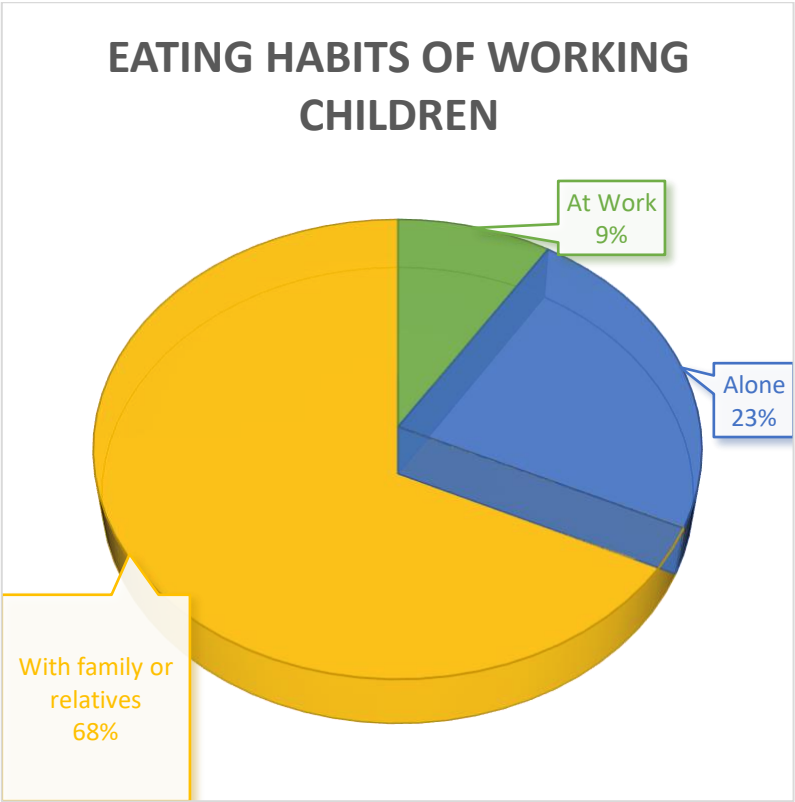


Figure 32 Distribution of Children Based on Housing Location (N=318)

In some instances, children, along with a few friends, family members, and relatives, rent shelters in neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city, such as Farahzad, Shush, Darvazeh Ghar, and southern areas of the city. For example, in Farahzad neighbourhood, sometimes thirty people rent a house together, dividing each room among a few individuals and living together. Due to the lack of social organization in these neighbourhoods, they are vulnerable, and heaps of garbage accumulate next to the children’s homes.

In these places, residents usually have only one room for both resting and cooking. In this type of communal living, tasks are typically divided, with children often taking on cleaning and sometimes cooking responsibilities.

Occasionally, one person with more expertise in cooking may take on that role. A child in this context mentioned:

We rented a house in Farahzad, room by room. We eat our meals there. Yeah, we've divided the tasks. For example, I do the cleaning, and others prepare the food.

Almost all forms of such housing, according to existing definitions, are considered a form of homelessness. Wallace defines homeless individuals as those who choose to reside in places like taverns, grocery stores, bars, theaters, markets, alleys, stations, warehouses, ruined buildings, or open spaces without defense against urban threats.¹⁸⁹ In 2019, the Global Homelessness Institute also developed a framework for understanding homelessness on a global scale. This framework considers three main dimensions of housing or residence to determine who can be considered lacking access to housing with minimal quality.

The first dimension is “security,” encompassing having legal title to occupy the housing, the practical possibility of eviction, the power to exclude others from the space, and the ability to cover rental or mortgage expenses. The second dimension is “physical,” including aspects like quality, strength, protection against weather, provision of basic facilities, protection against pollution and contaminants, and personal and property security against external threats. The physical dimension also relates to the quantity of housing, i.e., housing density. The third dimension is “social,” referring to opportunities to enjoy social relationships culturally appropriate, personal

¹⁸⁹ Aliverdi-Nia, Akbar. (2010). *Sociological Study of Cardboard Sleeping: Causes, Global Experiences, and Solutions (Case Study: Tehran)*. Tehran: Office of Cultural and Social Studies of Tehran City.

security, and property security against others.¹⁹⁰ Based on the above definitions and the information provided about the housing of children, it can be concluded that most working children experience a form of homelessness.

Another category of working children consists of those living with their families. Their work has had a significant impact on their lives because they already had shelter with their families, and later they entered the workforce. Their work affects the type of their housing. Therefore, they return home at night and sleep alongside their families. For example, children working in the streets usually return to their homes and parents at night. Their place of residence is usually in peripheral areas and crime-prone neighbourhoods such as Darvazeh Ghar, Shush, Farahzad, and southern neighbourhoods of Tehran. A mother of a working child who worked on Abbas Abad Street described their living situation:

With my husband, with my father-in-law, mother-in-law, and two younger brothers-in-law, I live in a nine-square-meter room in Darvazeh Ghar.

Sometimes, for various reasons, children may not return home at night and sleep on the streets. For example, most children who use the metro for transportation may sleep on the streets if they miss the last train. Migrant children form another group of working children who mostly work in the streets and spend their nights with their parents and at home. In contrast to this group, the housing of a wide spectrum of migrant children and their families in Tehran is temporary. This situation is prevalent among Afghan children as they may return to Afghanistan or

¹⁹⁰ Nobahari, Mahnaz. (2020). *Investigation of Social Factors of Homelessness in the Metropolis of Karaj*. Master's Thesis, Danesh Alborz University.

migrate to other countries. Residential stability is one of the sources of strengthening social relationships, a sense of belonging and attachment, and, consequently, one of the sources of self-control.¹⁹¹ Migrant children are deprived of this source, making them vulnerable. In farms, especially those engaged in seasonal work, children usually live in self-made shacks or tents and migrate from there after completing agricultural work.

Children living in their workplace endure additional pressure, and this type of residence usually serves the interests of the employer. Employers have more control over them, and when the employer is not present at the workplace, children take on the role of a “capable guardian” to look after their belongings. In the end, it must be noted that they also work longer hours. A child working in a car wash in the Evin area expressed the additional pressure in this way:

We sleep here at night; we all have to work from early morning until late at night.

It should be mentioned that, apart from depriving children of many life opportunities, their residence in this form of housing deprives them of other living facilities. Additionally, it has an impact on their growth and the development of their skills. In some cases, children in this form of housing, especially in single-person housing, may be subjected to assault or harassment, as some children in this context reported incidents of sexual violence by other children.

Certainly, life away from home and family is a life without feelings and emotions, accompanied by longing and

¹⁹¹ [191] Sampson, R. J. & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

sometimes depression. Most children who were separated from their families, especially their parents, expressed a strong longing for them and articulated this longing. The bitter narrative of a migrant child working as a delivery boy in the Yusufabad area was as follows:

When I first came from our city to Tehran, I cried every night; I cried so much until I fell asleep.

It should be noted that in a society where all human needs have been turned into commodities, and only those who have money can provide themselves with housing and other necessities, in a society where officials and policymakers, contrary to the slogans of justice, almost all live in the north of Tehran and district 1 of the municipality, where the quality of housing is on average 80% above the average of other areas, and they build residential complexes like Pasdaran Hills for themselves and monopolize all economic and production resources and have no social policy to empower the poor and make them homeowners, it is natural that children engage in jobs, which are part of child labour and the worst forms of child labour, and choose neighbourhoods where their physical, mental, and social health and safety are at risk.



Picture 55 Images of the living and dwelling places of child labourers in the areas of Harandi, Grand Bazaar of Tehran, Nemat Abad, and Ghani Abad (Photos from the research)

Strategies of Children for Increasing Success and Security in Work

Children engage in various work activities to enhance their income, improve job positions, avoid work-related risks and violence, defend their rights, and address other issues encountered in their work. Like any other human, they have a set of goals and aspirations, facing inevitable challenges in their lives and work. These strategies can be broadly categorized into two types: active and reactive strategies, each with its potential effectiveness.

A reactive strategy can be effective at times, such as a child scavenger avoiding confrontation by moving swiftly between bins, minimizing interactions with citizens, and causing minimal disturbance to ensure a hassle-free

experience. This defensive strategy is expressed by the child scavenger as follows:

I don't care if nobody has work. Just let me greet you;
there's nothing.

Experts in the field of child labour acknowledge that scavenger children, due to their limited interactions, display less reaction to insults and harassment.

An active strategy may be less effective in certain situations. For example, a child may engage in a conflict with an employer or other children for various reasons, resorting to aggression as a strategy, which may not lead them to their desired goal. This can be observed when a child argues and resorts to physical aggression. In this section, we delve into two main groups of strategies: those aimed at achieving success and increased income, and those addressing challenges in work, especially concerning exploitation, harassment, and maintaining security.

Depending on the nature of the work and its complexity, children adopt different strategies for success, including income generation and job advancement. Some children working on street corners and in various jobs acquire excellent communication skills due to the freedom they have in their work. They learn techniques such as observing customers, speaking effectively, dressing appropriately, and, most importantly, evoking the sympathy of people to maximize their earnings. These children convey the message that they are not begging but offering a service or product in exchange for payment. Expressions like "Please buy from me" are common, even if the customer does not necessarily need the item or service. Children, through learned tactics, identify potential buyers based on their likely needs, for example, targeting individuals in cars that may have couples or two

friends. A child flower vendor working near Mirdamad Street describes his experience:

They don't give money here; they give better money where there are couples or friends. Here, for example, this is our turf. If a stranger comes, we kick them out, saying, 'Go wherever you came from.'

Protecting their work territory is another strategy children employ to enhance their income. They know that an increase in the number of individuals or other children entering their territory may lead to heightened competition, affecting their business. Therefore, they safeguard their territory based on groups they have formed, often related to familial, ethnic, or geographical networks. Some street vendors and children working near flower stalls in areas close to cemeteries also utilize this strategy. As a child flower vendor working near Tehran-Qom highway and close to Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery articulates:

You can't fight here. But if a stranger comes, we kick them out. We say, 'Go wherever you came from.' Here, for example, is Maa's turf. If a stranger comes, we kick them out, saying, 'Go wherever you came from.'

The reverse is also true; sometimes, the number of individuals entering a specific area increases the competition, prompting a child to change their workplace and move to another street or location to maximize their income. A child street vendor provides insight into this dynamic:

It wasn't good in Fatemi [Street]. Everyone was on welfare, being annoying, causing trouble, had too many kids, and would beat people. They took my money. My sister said, 'Let's go somewhere else.' We came to Takht-

e Tavous [Street]. It's good here, and our friends are here. The shopkeepers are good to us; our friends are here.

Competition for customers can sometimes lead to disputes among children. Conflicts may arise over serving a customer or selling a particular product, fostering competition that results in increased income. Some children share their experiences of conflicts over customers:

We argue among ourselves; sometimes it's about money, sometimes about the customer. Whatever happens, happens.

At times, our money is taken. Our stuff is taken. Once a guy wanted to take my spot; I called my parents, and we had a big fight. He couldn't be found after that.

Street vendor children also use special methods when selling their products to attract the sympathy of customers; one of their methods is reading textbooks and doing homework in a corner of the sidewalk while working. This strategy might be one of the most heartwarming approaches they use. Sometimes, in public transportation, children might be seen polishing a citizen's shoes, then kissing a part of their foot to seek help and asking them to assist. Additionally, in many instances, parents use one of their children to elicit sympathy. It should be noted that all these methods are learned, and children typically learn these approaches to gain attention from customers, employers, family, and peers. In the absence of proper supervision and essential support for the situation of working children, they are exposed to various risks, one of which is receiving incorrect training for earning more income. When responsible institutions neglect the support and education

of these children, leaving them to their own devices, individuals who exploit and benefit from them seize the opportunity to train and educate the children in their own interests. It is observed that many working children, in their efforts to gain sympathy from citizens for assistance, use phrases such as “I’ll earn money for the household,” “I have younger siblings,” “My parents are sick and ailing,” and similar appeals.

Among street children, some adhere strictly to earning a lawful livelihood due to their family background, religious beliefs, and constant guidance from their families. In contrast, another group, influenced by the incompetence of their guardians and constant presence on the streets, engage in illegal activities such as theft. These children usually become troublemakers for their peers on the streets and sometimes steal their belongings and money. However, since this group of children has more freedom of action and higher self-confidence, they do not remain silent in the face of theft and defend themselves at any cost.

One of the most important strategies of garbage-collecting children is to work without drawing attention and to stay in the shadows. They work like ghosts on the streets and alleys, without attracting anyone’s attention. By using this strategy, they create security for themselves while working. Also, since most of these children are Afghan and live away from the city and urban communities, they do not know the citizens well, do not understand their language, and are suspicious that interacting with them may jeopardize their safety in case of confrontation or conflict. In some areas, especially in the northern parts of Tehran, when these children are hungry and need food, they may approach citizens because they have previously helped them, and they have inadvertently learned that they can socially interact to receive food. Sometimes, street children solve their problems by themselves and do

not seek help from others. A child who worked as a delivery person in a pizza shop said:

If there's a problem in the workplace, I solve it myself, I don't tell anyone. I don't like to tell someone about my problem; I solve my problem myself.

Extreme weather conditions such as heat or cold and intense sunlight might hinder the work of street children and cause them discomfort. Therefore, to reduce environmental risks, they may change their workplace. A child selling goods in the metro, explaining the reason for changing his workplace, said:

Sometimes when I see that the sun is too strong, I leave from here and work inside the metro.

Children working in production workshops, sewing, and similar jobs seek success and job advancement. They understand that acquiring more skills, having obedient children, and, in common terms, being “good listeners” while gaining the trust of the employer lead to greater success in their work. For children working in grocery stores, job advancement leads to the position of cashier. Their strategy to reach this position involves being efficient in physical work, handling customer satisfaction in various ways, and, most importantly, gaining the trust of the employer. Throughout their work, they employ different methods to demonstrate to the employer their capability to perform the job. For instance, at times, they request to go behind the cash register and calculate the items customers have purchased. Success for children working in freight involves reaching the last stage of cashiering. This position requires less physical work, involves unloading cargo during the night, and offers higher wages. However, not all children reach this stage as there are always others willing to perform such tasks.

In the freight sector, those working in warehouses may attempt to upgrade their position by moving their workplace inside the store or booth. This shift not only involves less physical labour but also allows for interaction with customers, enhancing the overall enjoyment of the job. Gaining customer satisfaction and rearranging the items they purchase are some of the strategies employed by these children to increase their income through tips. Some may resort to speaking ill of their colleagues to the employer, a tactic used to secure a higher income and job advancement. This behaviour is common in various jobs where different individuals collaborate to complete tasks for the employer.

In crystal-making, most children prefer working in the packaging section, where the work is easier, and the heat is less bothersome. They tend to avoid working near the furnace, referred to as the “gateway to hell,” especially during hot seasons. They may even go to great lengths, such as splashing water on others, to demonstrate their skills and advance to the packaging section. Children working as motorbike couriers or in food delivery prefer working in the northern areas of the city, where there is more work during the day and better tips. The living arrangements for this group are often in neighbourhoods like Farahzad, where they lead independent lives.

In flower shops and flower markets, children collaborate with customers to receive tips. They strive to capture customer satisfaction by categorizing flowers, tying ribbons around bouquets, or offering additional services. Children working in flower markets with carts guide customers to specific shops, helping them and performing various tasks to earn tips and higher wages. In car washes, children perform additional tasks such as thorough cleaning, extra floor scrubbing, and demonstrating precision and skill to receive higher tips and satisfy customers.

In waste-related jobs, children engage in negotiation to increase their income. They buy waste directly from customers and sell it to store owners, encouraging waste sellers to sell at lower prices and buyers to purchase at higher prices. In tasks like welding, polishing, and mechanics, children aim to transform from mere apprentices into skilled mechanics by cleaning the shop and providing tools to the owner, obtaining parts from other stores. Their key strategy is learning the necessary skills and proving their proficiency to the employer through skillful execution of tasks.

In household chores, children compete with their peers, often family members, to perform fewer tasks. In agricultural farms, children strive to demonstrate loyalty to their employers, working harder and using their local knowledge to gain the employer's satisfaction.

Another category of strategies involves children coping with harassment, abuse, or ensuring their safety and dealing with exploitation. In this dimension, children use a wide range of strategies, from passive to entirely active, with varying degrees of success. In workshop jobs where the employer is present and children work for them, due to their experience with harassment and violence, children choose various strategies, one of which is changing jobs. They believe that changing the workplace or job helps them escape the exploitation of a harsh and authoritarian employer. The narrative of a child working in a polishing shop reflects this approach:

I don't tell anyone about the problems I have; what should I say? I don't say anything. I go and say you are harassing me; there are many shops, they have offered me a lot.

To minimize exploitation and prevent being cheated out of their rights by the employer, some children may request

weekly payment of their wages, as expressed by a child working in a butcher shop:

Now that we've made our wages weekly. Because, in front of anyone we went to, they would eat our money, saying today, tomorrow. We used to say, when will you give us this tomorrow? We saw that we couldn't get the money anymore; we left from several places. Now where we are is new.

These strategies employed by children in various jobs reflect their resilience and adaptability in navigating the challenges they face, be it in the pursuit of better opportunities, increased income, or coping with unfavorable working conditions.

It is true that previously it was explained that sometimes children change their workplace or type of work due to exploitation, harassment, earning more income, or any other reason. However, it should be mentioned that they do not always do this, and one of the reasons for not changing their workplace is fear – fear of new spaces and new people. This is especially true for girls, as they are afraid of facing new people who may subject them to sexual violence. An activist in the field of child labour stated:

You see, regarding the employer himself, we can't take any action, but usually, we encourage them to change their workplace. Why have you stayed here for three years, for example? Look, someone is working in such and such a place with a better salary; you can do it too. It's usually challenging to move kids from a place where they have found a sense of security for several years. Because they value the sense of security they have found in a place. It really is a sense of security, and they

are afraid to go to a new workshop; they say, well, at least this employer doesn't harm me, for example, or here, all are women; I'm afraid to go somewhere where there might be men. Because they have that fear, it is essential for them to maintain the old place, to stay there.

Another strategy they employ is to cope with harassment and express violence, especially street children. Since these children may experience a lot of harassment in the street environment, they often react harshly to this harassment.

I've had several fights myself with passing cars. For example, today, a patrol passed by; I cleaned its windows. Then it lowered its window and gave me a nasty insult. I answered back. I'm not the type to let someone say something, and I don't respond. Whatever they say, I respond.'

Seeking help from support networks is another strategy that children use to reduce violence and exploitation at work and in the workplace. The social and support networks of these children usually include family, friends, relatives, and acquaintances. In many cases, children enter the workforce through these networks. For example, a child who migrates from Afghanistan to Iran enters waste picking or street work through these social networks. This process is almost present in all forms of work. For instance, children working in workshops, especially girls, feel safer when working with their families. The narratives of children about these support networks were different, and some of them are as follows:

If there is a problem in the workplace, I tell my father, I tell my mother, I tell my brother.

No one bothers me here. My aunt's son is here, my cousin is here. No one bothers us; they are here.

For example, if someone older than me bothers me, I tell my brother. Once a boy came and threw a stone here; I told my brother, and I worked here; he went after him.

If someone bothers me, I'll go and fight with them. I'll go to my mom and dad and tell them, and so on.

Sometimes these children may choose more passive strategies, so much so that they do not even seek help from their support networks and accept violence and harassment. Some narratives of children indicate these passive strategies:

I have no problem here; it's just sometimes there are arguments.

If someone bothers me... well, what can I do? I do nothing.

One time someone bothered me; I control myself. I don't argue.

If, for example, something makes me upset, and it makes someone else upset, I don't say anything. Then, I go somewhere quiet and talk to myself; then, I write in my diary.

I solve my problem myself; I don't tell anyone. I don't like to tell anyone about my problem; I solve my problem myself.

Reliance on religious beliefs is another strategy employed by children to alleviate the pains resulting from work and the experience of violence and exploitation. The narrative

of a child working as a street vendor reflects this approach:

I was a kid; we fought so much, got beaten so much, and we also fought back. Now, I think maybe I should have let them beat me, but I wouldn't beat them. Most nights, I would think, for example, 'God, they beat us.' I would confide in God; I couldn't tell anyone and upset them unless someone saw.

Children working on the streets are more exposed to the organizational schemes of government entities such as welfare and municipal authorities than other children. Especially those who have worked on the streets for a longer period have mastered the skill of evading the authorities easily. Escaping from authorities is another strategy for children to continue working without getting caught, as evident in the following two accounts:

I have never been caught by welfare or the municipality. I escape. We stand here, go under this tree, work, and when we puncture the last time, we go. We puncture the tire with a knife.

No, the municipality comes; I give them one or two balloons, they calm down and leave. Well, once they came, they could seize my stuff; once they took thirty-five of them, all of them. No matter how much I pleaded and begged, they said no, I won't give them back. Took all the balloons.

Welfare and the municipality come, and we escape as much as we can. We go towards home because if they catch us, they take us away. Once they caught my brother.

Establishing and developing relationships with other individuals in the street work environment is another strategy for children to cope with challenges and risks. A street vendor narrates his use of this strategy:

I have friends here, with all the peddlers. They care about me. Once someone bothered me, all the peddlers poured on him, called the police, and took him away. Uncle... he's the fruit seller, and he's very good. If I need money and haven't worked, he says, for example, 'You want 50 tomans tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, whenever you can, pay me back, make it installments.' He's a good man. If we're hungry, he shares his food; we eat fruits, he says nothing to us, nothing at all. If there's a problem, Uncle... helps us.

Creating and expanding relationships with others who work is another strategy for children to seek support when needed. The following accounts demonstrate the use of this strategy:

I have many friends here; then my friends are all girls, and they are polite, and their age is higher than mine. My closest friend here is named...; she comes in the evening. If I have any problem, she helps me.

If I have work, for example, if it's a heavy load and I can't take it alone, I call them, and they come to help me. Even if there's no phone, they are close, in that big alley; I call them, they come to help me. Now the few people who were with me were my friends.

For example, some I go to say, 'Don't you want gum?' They say, 'Come and sit with us, let's talk, and later you can sell to us.' You have to sit with them. I have a friend;

he came with me one day; he helped so much that I couldn't sell my gums after he left.

As mentioned, street children, in various locations such as parks and the metro, experience different forms of violence. Many of these children are of Afghan origin. They may have read in their schools or in non-governmental organizations and in their textbooks that if they encounter a problem on the street, they can seek help from the police. However, when they face a real issue and seek help from the police, the police not only fail to assist them but may even humiliate and arrest them due to their nationality or illegal presence on the streets. The narratives of two Afghan children regarding street encounters are as follows:

Some are rough, some are kind, nervous. It depends on how someone fits into our position. Most of them are mean. Some are nervous initially, then apologize later. Of course, some of them, not all, are rude, or they exaggerate; I go to the officer and tell him. Although the officer doesn't help us much. For example, they make bad suggestions; I go to my place and this is not compatible with me. I'm forced to get to work; I pick up a big stone to show everyone what kind of person I am. The officers say if you're bothered here in this park, it's better to go to your country. And I say my country isn't safe. If it were safe, I would go there; I wouldn't stay here.

I got hit yesterday; a check hit me here [points to the back]. If I tell the police, he says, 'Yeah, Afghan, go away.'

In general, due to the lack of identification documents and fear of arrest and deportation, refugee children may

choose more passive strategies. They have often experienced humiliation and negative labels such as “Afghan” from Iranian children and others in their neighbourhoods, schools, and workplaces. As a result, their self-esteem in facing risks and protecting themselves may not have developed or may have decreased. Consequently, they are more likely to employ passive strategies. The following narratives support this issue:

We don't fight with Iranian kids; it's not our country anymore. They talk, we lower our heads, and we move on. They may give us a hard time eventually.

We worked, but they didn't pay us. We didn't complain anymore; an Afghan shouldn't complain.

We get harassed here; we become everything. We're the unlucky Afghans; we're the unlucky Afghans, we can't do anything. If I say something, they hit me. Even the Iranians hit us, the Kurds hit us, they hit us. Now that they don't hit, they avoid us. He says, 'Don't take the load,' and hits me. We don't have strength; we don't have documents, we're without documents, we can't say anything to them. He says you're Afghan, don't take this. If that guy tells him, I give it to him; I can take it. If not, I can't anymore. We had fights; we got beaten several times, man.

Many refugee children have been present in institutions of non-governmental organizations for education and support. It is expected that, due to the presence of numerous professionals such as social workers and psychologists, these organizations can support them against violence and exploitation. However, it seems they have not been entirely successful in this regard. The experience of one researcher during data collection with

working children about their support networks was as follows:

One of the incidents that happened during interviews with children in this school was that none of the children mentioned the association or any of the staff as a trustworthy person in response to the question 'If you have a problem, who do you tell?'

This may be due to reasons and factors articulated by the staff of these organizations:

You see, we sometimes guessed, we said, for example, why sadness, this and that. We gave it to the psychologist there, said, go talk to him. We tried to at least deal with it professionally. No, a ground had to be prepared for them to speak. For example, we said what is it, your heart is tight for your family. He said no or yes, ma'am, it's been a long time since we saw them, we miss them. But they didn't point to that specific case. They didn't point, they were afraid, about their family, seeing their mother, they wouldn't say anything. They were afraid of the same thing that brought this disaster upon them, the conditions that would send them to prison. Yes, because he came illegally, no card, nothing.

It is possible that children in work environments may also face difficulties, but it is clear that they do not trust individuals, organizations, etc., and do not feel secure to talk about it. The issues they expressed were problems that they perceived as likely to happen.

We can't say it's entirely complete. It depends on whether the child has learned to speak up and feels the urgency of the issue in their mind; there is a significant need for action. Sometimes, children tell us things, and

after some follow-up, the mother says she came out of work, it wasn't good; her employer didn't treat her well. But due to the continuous communication we have with children and families, we say, Speak up, call us, we are here to serve you, our duty is to follow up. It is taking shape, but it hasn't reached that complete stage yet, given their closed culture. Well, it is taking shape, and based on our observations, our interactions with the children have been good.

Perhaps it can be said that since children do not have the ability to defend their rights, they are not able to effectively use their support networks, or their support networks are inadequate. If they seek help, they are not well-supported. The government and existing laws also do not support these children, and even legal and executive authorities perceive violence and harassment from their employees. In general, practical strategies for children do not yield the desired results for them because violence, abuse, various risks, exploitation, rights violations, long working hours, disrespect, and witnessing unpleasant events are part of their life experiences in the workplace.



Picture 56 Image of a working child (Photo from Etemad Online)

Child labour and Health

Various forms of child labour, both due to their nature and the working conditions, as well as the events and incidents surrounding the work, pose risks to the health of children in various dimensions. Therefore, they are referred to as child labour. The best definition of “health” is stated in the World Health Organization’s constitution¹⁹² in 2017: “Health is not merely the absence of disease and infirmity but complete physical, mental, and social well-being.” In identifying a healthy individual, it can be said that a healthy person is someone who is not ill, free from physical defects, adaptable to environmental changes, has sufficient power to manage life affairs and resist unexpected events, has a balanced psychological personality, and is socially harmonious with others, free from greed, oppression, and envy, optimistic, and well-mannered.

¹⁹² Constitution of the World Health Organization

Generally, there are two different approaches to defining health:

1) The disease-oriented approach is limited to the presence or absence of illness in various physical and mental aspects. From this perspective, health is a state in which there are no symptoms of illness in an individual, and health is the ultimate goal of medicine. In this view, the role of environmental, social, and psychosocial determinants is ignored.¹⁹³

2) The health-oriented approach defines health as possessing a high degree of well-being. Based on the health theory, a healthy individual is assumed to have excellent levels of health indicators. Real health reflects the process of empowerment and the ability to live a good life.¹⁹⁴

In definitions, health encompasses four essential dimensions: physical, mental, social, and spiritual. This study focuses on examining the first two dimensions among working children. As mentioned, child labour jeopardizes their health and hinders their proper growth. In the context of work hazards, it was explained that children are exposed to risks such as working in extreme cold and heat, working in fields irrigated with sewage, breathing polluted air on the streets, exposure to chemicals, burns, cuts, fractures, accidents, illnesses, amputation, and even death. They are forced to handle heavy loads in various jobs such as manual material handling, waste collection, working in fruit and vegetable markets, grocery stores, and production workshops. In jobs like waste collection, mechanics, polishing, welding,

¹⁹³ [193] Blanco, Amlio and Dario Diaz. (2007). Social order and mental health: a social well-being approach, *psychology in Spain*, 11, 61-71.

¹⁹⁴ Sajjadi, Hamira. (2001). "Assessment of Social Health." *Social Work*, 8, 39-49.

and carpentry, the excessive noise and loud noises pose a significant risk to their hearing. Welding also affects their vision health, and all forms of child labour come with significant risks, as discussed in the section on work hazards.

These activities, besides directly harming children, create disturbances in their physical growth. When they reach older ages, due to various illnesses such as back problems and other physical issues, they may be unable to work, leading to premature retirement, just as their parents experienced in middle age due to physical problems and mental illnesses. In addition to working long hours daily, these children lack proper nutrition, and some of their meals are omitted, or the variety of food groups they consume is limited. Sometimes, their work becomes so prolonged that due to the unavailability of food, they cannot have regular meals. Migrant children, both foreign and Iranian, living away from their families in Tehran, in labour environments or with single individuals, face these problems more than others. Besides, various mental problems threaten them, such as physical and sexual assaults. A garbage collector child who was engaged in collecting garbage in the Punak region described his lifestyle:

I don't eat; I don't eat anything in the morning until ten at night. At eleven, I go home, eat something. There's nothing to eat. Sometimes I eat a grilled chicken, something. Sometimes there's nothing. We have a carpet in our house, a wardrobe, and the refrigerator is broken. My TV is shaky. We have no curtains, no blankets, nothing. My wish is to have a phone.

As the above accounts indicate, due to the unavailability of food, children are deprived of some meals, and sometimes they ask citizens to buy food for them. Since

children have not yet reached full cognitive development, they are often unable to recognize the hazards of work properly. On the other hand, due to the nature of childhood, they like to play and sometimes play with each other in the street or in their workplace, unaware that playing in these environments may be risky for them. During play and jokes, they may suffer damage due to their environmental characteristics or harm each other. An activist in the field of children stated:

I remember talking to a mother, explaining to her that working on the street is dangerous; the child may get hurt, become like this or that... She said, 'Yes, I know all that, but what should I do? I need the money.' She hit the child on the head with a joke, set him on fire, just a joke! They took him to the hospital, the association covered half of the expenses. The child is now fine, studying, had a transplant. After this incident, she contacted me a couple of times and said you told us. I told her not to let him go to the crossroads anymore, but now I see sometimes he still goes to the crossroads; it's necessary. You see, the discussion doesn't work with us; it has to be treated at the root. In my opinion, we need to improve public welfare; here, it's the government's job. We are a wealthy country; some have seized the wealth for themselves. If there is no poverty, no parent would send their child to the street in the scorching heat of summer, at noon, or in the winter. Sometimes in winter, the air is so cold that no one can come out of the house, but that child is at the crossroads. Well, it's coercion now. Just consider this municipality. The municipality is supposed to provide services. We had some children, and I was responsible for them; we gave them a container in Young Men's Park; it was the municipality's suggestion. They gave us this container;

it had nothing. We equipped it ourselves, but they expected everything from us, why, for example, they didn't report these things to us, why they didn't show pictures, a long list of their expectations they sent to us. First, it's your duty. Second, you want us to cross our red lines for the little work we did! The child comes there; I, with my age, go play with the kids, shoot, play with them; we did everything so that the child just comes to play, have a childhood. Our coaches who came to help, sometimes they took pictures, I said, no, the kids should not, I'll take it myself. Once the kids wanted to take pictures of themselves there; I said, kids, no, let's not cross our red lines. But the municipality wants to include these among its achievements, while its duty is to address poverty; poverty that makes children go to the streets.

The issue that jeopardizes the health of children and their families is the failure to seek medical attention when they become ill or injured. There are two reasons for this reluctance: one is mental, meaning their beliefs about health, and the other is poverty and the overwhelming cost of treatment, especially for Afghan children and their families. These two components are interconnected and inseparable.

Some children, when they fall ill or get injured, do not go to hospitals or health centres for treatment. They believe that their problem, whether it's an illness or an injury, will improve over time. The quotes of two children support this idea:

I was cooking; I was making macaroni, spilled it on my foot, my foot got burnt. At first, I thought it would get better on its own. Then, I put on shoes and worked; my foot got infected. Finally, I went to the hospital.

Since I was born, whenever I got sick, I tried to get better myself.

The heavy healthcare expenses for Afghans and uninsured Iranian children are very high. Sometimes, due to the fear of these exorbitant costs, they do not visit medical centres, and this, in turn, may have a negative impact on their health in the near future. When they are compelled to seek medical help, they may end up paying a significant portion of their income for healthcare services for several months. A child who worked as a construction labourer recounted:

Once I got injured at the construction site, I went to Taleghani Hospital; they charged me 2 million Tomans.

Although these incidents are work-related accidents, and the employer should cover these costs, since these children do not have work contracts and are not covered by insurance, the employer avoids paying for the medical expenses of the injured workers. The experience of not seeking medical care is also observed in many families of these children. It can be said that one of the reasons these children enter the workforce is the damages and diseases of their parents, which are the result of their work during childhood. This flawed cycle persists continuously in poor families, becoming deeply rooted. These children are forced to cover their family's expenses by working and are considered the breadwinners. One child shared his life experience in this regard:

I live with my mom, dad, and siblings. My dad has a nervous disorder; he gets angry, throws a fit, faints for a year. Once he hit me on the head until I passed out; I became unconscious. We can't take him to the hospital; we bought the best medicines for him, but he didn't get better. People helped us sometimes, but we can't afford

to take him to the hospital. Sometimes we get sick too, cold, sore throat, bellyache, shoulder pain, back pain, headache, these kinds of things. We get sick, but we don't go to the doctor; we buy medicine.

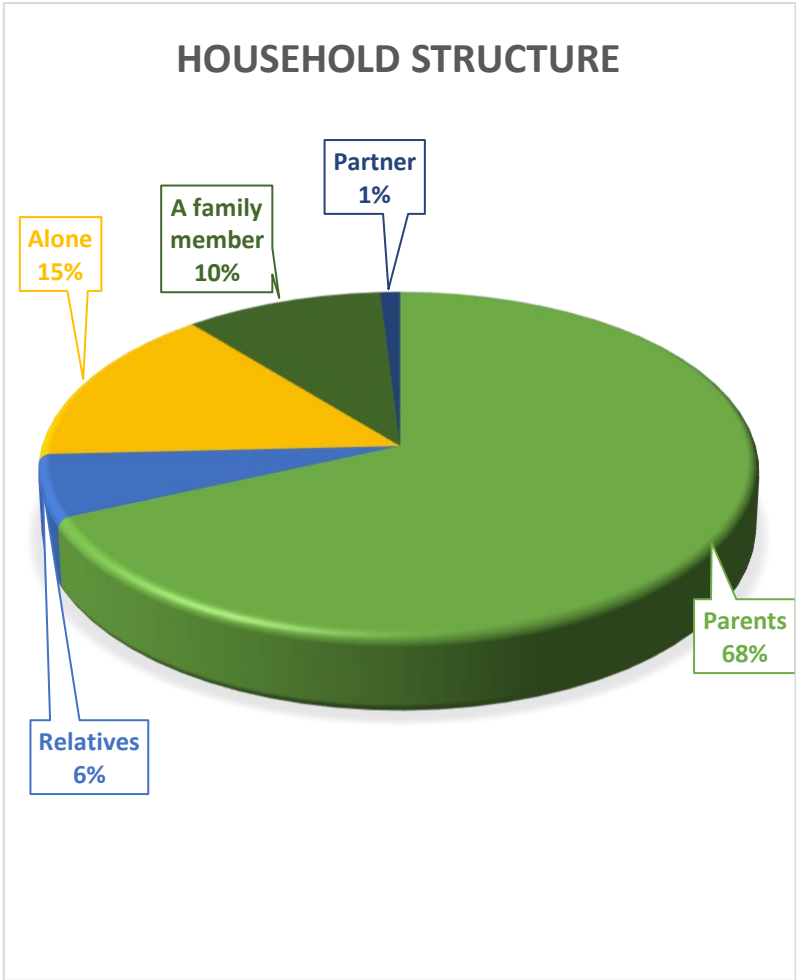


Figure 33 Household Structure of Labouring Children (N=293)

Currently, the challenge of the coronavirus and the prevalence of COVID-19 is another issue that child labourers are facing. This virus not only harms children's businesses in many ways but also exposes them to the risk

of infection. Child labour is prevalent in environments where the likelihood of exposure to the disease is high, such as working in confined spaces in manufacturing workshops, operating hand-operated machinery in crowded markets and transport hubs, handling waste bins filled with virus-contaminated masks. While there is no evidence available regarding the percentage of child labourers who have faced the virus or contracted it, it cannot be assumed that they are immune to this disease. A child involved in waste collection near Shariati Hospital recounted the situation with contaminated masks:

We go to these garbage bins, and there are lots of masks thrown in; we don't have gloves, and our hands touch them...

Another dimension of risk is the impact on the mental health of child labourers, a common consequence in all forms of child labour. Working in challenging conditions, long and unconventional working hours, experiencing violence and exploitation, becoming victims of crimes, sometimes working away from family and home, working in workplaces with individuals who do not have age compatibility with children, experiencing apprehension by welfare and law enforcement authorities in some forms of work—these factors repeatedly endanger the mental health of children. They face problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, victimization, in some cases working in isolation from family and home, working in environments with adults who do not have age compatibility with children, experiencing apprehension by welfare and law enforcement authorities in some forms of work—these factors repeatedly endanger the mental health of children. They face problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, victimization, and unpleasant emotions like anger, sorrow, and distress, as well as feelings of failure, frustration, and resentment. Children

working as street vendors, for instance, may feel a blow to their self-esteem as they often request and sometimes plead for the sale of their goods, and in some cases, face humiliation. Narratives from some working children reflect the psychological harm they endure:

The difficulty is that you always have to beg, say please buy it for the love of God. Sometimes people insult you. You think to yourself, what is this?

The difficulty of our work is that we have to forcefully clean the glasses. Some people don't like it, we insist, but they still don't give us money. For example, after cleaning the glass, they don't pay. I say to myself, instead of the beginning, he said he wouldn't pay.

Migration and breaking ties with some social resources and, as a result, the lack of emotional attachment derived from them, coupled with the pressure of work and the opportunities available to children in the work and street environment, lead some of them to engage in risky behaviours, such as drug use and risky sexual relationships. Working in the company of adults also exposes them to some criminal opportunities, and they may learn these behaviours from adults. Smoking, using some light drugs, consuming alcoholic beverages, and engaging in risky sexual relationships are present among some working children, especially older ones. A employer, based on his several years of experience, mentioned the impact of adults on children:

For example, they become addicts quickly, very quickly; it's because of the work environment... You see a kid comes into a gathering, for example, a kid comes into a gathering, hears things he shouldn't hear, sees things he shouldn't see, they do things in front of that kid that

they shouldn't do. The kid, for him, it becomes normal; a series of events for him becomes normal and natural... For example, excuse me for saying it plainly, for example, the boss picks up his girlfriend from the workshop after working hours. He says in the workshop; the kid sees it. For example, the shopkeeper sits in front of the kid's sweatshop, nothing else, the kid becomes normal to him. He knocks a little more bone figuratively or becomes a practical act. Or, in the morning, you come here, the smell of hash, everything, completely revives your soul, you sit happily, smile, smell it, you sit happily. [These sentences are said in jest and for fun].

A child living in the Shamsabad waste disposal site also spoke about drug use:

No, we have big ones there; they don't let us smoke hashish in the room; some of them, who smoke, have their own room.

Another factor that jeopardizes the mental health of children is the experience of sexual harassment. As evidence from the previous sections indicates, some children have experienced sexual harassment. When asked about their experience of sexual harassment, they usually recount the experiences of others or mention that some girls tell of violence and sexual harassment in the workplace or parks. The experience of these events is one of the bitterest experiences that any person may experience in their life, and its consequences remain in the minds and psyche of the child for many years, causing various damages such as feelings of shame, self-loathing, depression, anxiety, and worry. As children, especially girls, are afraid to be identified as the victim of violence and harassment, they do not report their experiences of

this harassment to their support networks, and it is very likely that the child will bear the burden of this alone for many years and sometimes until the end of their life.

Some children migrate to Tehran with the guidance and assistance of their relatives to earn income and save money for the future so that they can return to their hometown or country in the near future and establish a life for themselves. However, not all of them succeed in this regard, and due to the inability to save and make progress, they no longer have the opportunity to return to their hometown and remain in Tehran despite unfavourable conditions. The sense of humiliation is one of the feelings that this situation gives them. Because they have not learned some life skills easily, they easily enter harmful circles that endanger their health. For example, in some jobs where they may be in contact with the opposite sex (girls or boys), they easily become attached to them and may spend all their daily income on them. For this reason, since they have not been able to save, they refrain from returning to their hometown or country.

Currently, the dilemma of the coronavirus and the prevalence of the COVID-19 disease is another challenge that working children are facing. Besides harming children's businesses in many ways, this virus has also exposed them to the risk of infection. Working children are mostly in environments where the risk of contracting the disease is very high, such as working in confined spaces in production workshops, manual labour in markets and crowded areas, garbage collection, and handling trash bins filled with virus-contaminated masks. While there is no available evidence that a few percentages of working children have faced the virus and contracted it, it cannot be assumed that they are immune to this disease. A waste-collecting child near Shariati Hospital, describing the situation of contaminated masks, stated:

We go to these garbage bins, and there are lots of masks thrown in them; we, who don't have gloves, touch them with our hands...

Another dimension of risk is the impact on the mental health of working children, a common consequence in all forms of child labour. Working in difficult conditions, long and unconventional working hours, experiencing violence and exploitation, becoming victims of crimes, sometimes working away from family and home, working in work environments with individuals who do not have age compatibility with the child, experiencing arrests by welfare and law enforcement personnel in some forms of work, and instances of these kinds have repeatedly jeopardized the mental health of working children. They face problems such as depression, anxiety, aggression, victimization, and experiencing unpleasant emotions like anger, sorrow, and distress, failure and frustration, and a sense of resentment. In jobs like street vending and working at intersections, because children ask for the sale of their goods and services, their self-esteem is damaged, and they are humiliated. Narratives from some children remind us of the psychological dimensions of these problems:

The difficulty is that you have to beg all the time, say 'please, buy it for the love of God.' Sometimes people insult us. One thinks, 'What is this job?!'

The difficulty of our work is that we have to wash the windows by force. Some people don't like it, and we insist a lot. For example, after we clean the glass, they don't pay. In my heart, I think instead of saying 'I won't pay from the beginning.'

Migration and detachment from some social resources and, consequently, the lack of emotional attachment arising from them and the absence of social control derived from these resources, and on the other hand, the work pressure and opportunities available to children in the working and street environments make some of them prone to some risky behaviours, such as drug use and risky sexual relationships. Smoking, the consumption of some light drugs, excessive drinking, and risky sexual relationships are present among some working children, especially older ones. One employer, based on his several years of experience, expressed the susceptibility of children to adults:

For example, they become addicts very quickly; it's because of the work environment... If a child comes into a group, for example, the child sits in a group, hears things he shouldn't hear, they do things that shouldn't be done in front of the child. The child gets used to it, meaning some events become normal and natural for him... For example, pardon me, I can say it easily, for example, the employer raises his daughter in the tailoring shop after working hours. He says the child is in the tailoring shop; the child sees it. For example, the shopkeeper sits in front of the child, nothing else, the child becomes used to it. He breaks a bit more bone figuratively, or an action is done. Or in the morning, you come here, the smell of hashish is everywhere, it revives your spirit, you sit happily, you smile, you smell it, and you sit up. These sentences are said humorously and jokingly.

A waste-collecting child who was working near Shariati Hospital shared his account of contaminated masks:

No, we have big ones there; they don't let us smoke in the room; some who use it, they have rooms themselves.

Another factor contributing to the pressure on working children, especially Afghan migrant children, is the experience of discrimination and exclusion they face in their living and school environments. However, this experience is not exclusive to Afghan children. For example, because Iranian children migrate to Tehran with their extended families, they often choose to settle in the outskirts of the city and in inappropriate neighbourhoods. This group of children, after some time, becomes familiar with the lives of other citizens in different neighbourhoods, and observing so much inequality makes them feel defeated. When asked why he works, a working child residing in the marginal neighbourhood of Farahzad responded:

I want to work so that my father and I can buy an apartment. Here, there is no home; they are all ruins. Look, the neighbourhood is full of garbage, all the houses are broken down, there are only two streets, and no proper alleys.

Living in the Farahzad neighbourhood as one of the informal and worker settlements in the northern areas of Tehran has given this feeling to the child, but perhaps he does not know that the skyrocketing housing prices are one of the mechanisms that have turned Tehran into a place of exclusion from life in the city to the margins. These children not only experience these unpleasant feelings in the neighbourhood but also in school. When they know that there are other children who, unlike them, do not work and are not forced to work to cover their living expenses, they realize that there is another side to life, a side that comes with the availability of relatively comfortable facilities.

Many times, Afghan children are expelled from government schools by Iranian children and are labelled as “Afghan” and “dirty,” and they are not allowed to participate in group games. The account of an Afghan child who was moving with a cart in the Shush region described his experience in this area:

In school, they call us Afghan! Dirty! Why did you come to Iran? Don't you have your own country! I don't say anything; I just say we are all Muslims, and we should not insult each other. God created us all Muslims.

The combination of working and going to school also causes working children to experience multiple pressures. Classes, the lack of the possibility of studying at home, small rooms, and sometimes the crowdedness of the family on one side and work on the other side make these children experience double pressure. Also, from one side, the employer restricts the regular schooling of these children, and on the other side, teachers in schools and NGOs expect these children to reach their classes and homework like an ordinary student. However, this is not possible for working children, and it only causes them to experience increased pressure, putting their physical and mental health at greater risk and often leading them to leave school, as a migrant child who had come from Ardabil to Tehran recounted:

I left school; we are working now.... We couldn't both work and study.... Until I finished the sixth grade. Then we didn't have money for the house; our rent was overdue, so I came to work.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
SUMMARY,
CONCLUSIONS, AND
STRATEGIES FOR
CHILD LABOUR
REDUCTION**

Overview

The combination of factors discussed in previous chapters, including poverty, social disorganization, inequality, informal and underground economies, migration, and ethnicity, has perpetuated child labour in underdeveloped societies. These issues have led to the perception of child labour as an intractable problem in these communities. Essentially, underdevelopment is the key driver of the continued existence of child labour in underdeveloped countries. Sociologists identify authoritarian governance, poverty, and social inequalities as the primary reasons for underdevelopment. They believe that as long as social justice is not established, this sequence will persist. Child labour disrupts the natural growth and education process of a child, posing risks and acting as a fundamental obstacle to the development of skilled and healthy human capital.

Poverty and inequality contribute to involving children in various levels of labour. Nationally, inequality leads to an unfair distribution of resources, opportunities, and capital among different social-economic strata and geographic areas. Unequal resource distribution results in certain social groups, such as ethnic and racial minorities, women, and those living away from investment centres, i.e., the marginalized, being deprived of resources, opportunities, and capital. Naturally, the consequences of these inequalities lead to the deprivation and marginalization of a portion of the population from development, resulting in their vulnerability to child labour.

However, inequality and poverty are not limited to national levels but also manifest globally. Global economic division of labour and associated unequal dependence and marginalization of certain countries have

created a deep divide between developed and developing nations. This disparity is the result of various factors, but globalization of the economy and unequal division of labour at the global level have played a significant role. In a historical process, industrialized countries exported industrial goods to developing countries, resulting in the destruction of local industries. Some governments in these societies, being dependent on central countries, did not resist this flow. The entry of industrial goods into these societies led to the destruction of local industries, the absence of infrastructural foundations, and the industrialization and development of the economies of developing societies. This left them dependent on importing raw materials and industrial products. During this process, the trade balance of these countries became negative, and the flow of value-added shifted from peripheral and semi-peripheral countries to central countries. This unequal exchange played a significant role in global inequality and poverty, creating a conducive environment for child labour.

People in poor societies (peripheral or developing) migrate to developed countries, especially the poorest among them, to seek opportunities, work, and income. Today, we witness widespread migration among these countries, some of which occurs illegally through human trafficking networks. International or national migration flows are significant factors contributing to child labour. The migration between countries or internationally has become so important that researchers like Castles and Miller (2003) and Koser (2006) refer to it as the age of migration or the third transition of the population. According to the United Nations, the migrant population worldwide exceeded 244 million in 2015, roughly equivalent to the population of seven countries in the world.

Iran, being a developing country, experiences various class-based, spatial, sectoral, and identity-based inequalities, including gender, ethnicity, religion, and sect. From the early 21st century, with the onset of the development movement, a significant portion of industrial and service investments has been made in central Iran, especially Tehran. The population of Tehran, which was around 300,000 in the early century, reached approximately eight million and three hundred thousand in the 90s, and the population of Tehran Province exceeded 16 million. This indicator clearly shows the deep-seated inequality and profound consequences that have left the Iranian society. Therefore, residents of peripheral areas, along with their children, migrate to Tehran for various reasons, including job opportunities and income. Alongside the deep inequality and poverty in Iranian society, the policies to combat poverty and empower the poor have not yielded tangible results.

Certainly, Iran has not been immune to international migration flows. Iran is both a migrant-receiving and migrant-sending country. Due to the war and insecurity in Afghanistan, Iran has been hosting Afghan migrants for about four decades. These migrants migrate to Iran legally and illegally through trafficking networks. Iran's migration policy, especially towards Afghans, is such that it does not attract skilled Afghan migrants. Instead, most unskilled and untrained Afghan individuals who have no other choice select Iran due to linguistic and cultural proximity (e.g., Herati persons) and consider it a bridge for migration to Europe. Today, a significant portion of child labour in various cities, especially Tehran, consists of Afghan migrants. On the other hand, due to US economic sanctions and international sanctions, inefficient methods in the country's administration, and low economic growth in four decades, especially in the first two decades after the revolution, part of Iran's

population has migrated to other countries. Today, Turkey and Iraq have also become destinations for Iranian migrants.

It is under these national and global factors and currents that we witness child labour today. The most important of these factors and currents include global unequal division of labour and, consequently, the economic dependence and marginalization of some countries, lack of development or uneven development at the national level, migration flows both internationally and nationally, and the absence of coherent policies to combat poverty and empower the poor. Of course, child labour is not reducible only to macro-level factors and is influenced by various other factors at different levels. However, the overarching direction is from macro to micro.

Today, we observe children in Tehran engaged in various activities, such as street work, work in government-controlled centres and public institutions like the Fruit and Vegetable Market Organization or recycling workshops, workshops, waste collection, service work, etc. A significant portion of these activities occurs in the informal economy, where there are no laws for monitoring, and the government monitoring system is ineffective. Work in this sector is not insured, wages are low, and there are many risks involved. Some activities in the informal sector, such as street work, are done independently, but this form of work also poses various health risks to children. In this chapter, which is the chapter of solutions, we first briefly review some findings from the domain-oriented research model, then delve into the solutions.



Picture 57 A picture of a working child in Mahallati flower market with his handcart (Photo from the research).

Summary and Conclusion

The model presented in this section illustrates a logical process of causal factors, underlying causes, intervening factors, central phenomena, strategies, and consequences of child labour. The key causal factors of child labour include the development gap, tension and conflicts in Afghanistan, family poverty, and unemployment. The development gap points to the unequal development that has taken root across the region. Development policies have predominantly targeted central provinces such as Tehran, where most industries and service activities are concentrated, leaving other areas, particularly peripheral regions, underdeveloped. As a result, many individuals, especially children, migrate from underdeveloped areas to Tehran in search of employment.

Afghanistan, as Iran's eastern neighbour, has been involved in recent decades in instability and conflicts, leading to widespread insecurity in the society. Insecurity,

coupled with severe poverty, especially in rural areas, has driven migration from Afghanistan to Iran. Today, many child labourers in various forms are observed to be Afghan nationals.

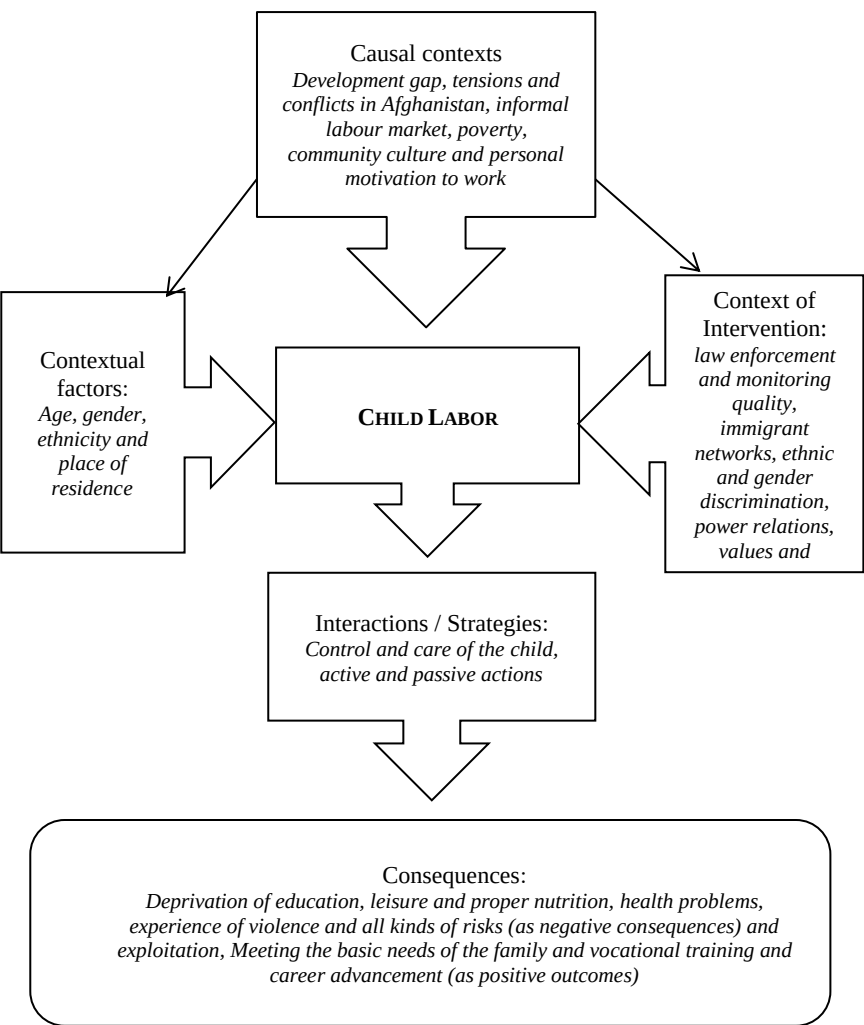


Figure 34 Grounded Model of Child Labour Forms

Another cause of child labour is the poverty and unemployment of families, which is interconnected with the aforementioned factors. For example, unequal and imbalanced development results in the deprivation of a

segment of society from its benefits, becoming a major driving force for poverty and unemployment, especially in peripheral and ethnic-religious regions of the country. After the revolution, Iran experienced a significant population increase, more than doubling over the past four decades. Contrary to population growth, economic growth has not been evident, with negative economic growth rates observed in some years due to sanctions and macroeconomic policies. The increase in population, coupled with low economic growth, has led to higher unemployment and increased poverty. In these circumstances, families utilize child labour to compensate for some of their expenses.

We give our money for house rent. We don't spend our money; we just give everything we earn for house rent and such. Our rent is 800 tomans. We also paid a 6 million tomans deposit. My brother, who hits me for my money to the landlord's account, also takes 1 million each month, which adds up to the house expenses.



Picture 58 Image of a working child in an industrial crystal factory in the Khirabad region (Photo from the research)

Neglect and Single Parenthood are among the causal factors of child labour. Some family heads, due to reasons such as addiction, illness, and unemployment, are unable to work and provide for their families. Moreover, other family heads have lost additional children, compounding the families' poverty. This poverty leads children into the cycle of labour. The poverty resulting from neglect and single parenthood indicates the ineffectiveness or inadequacy of the country's supportive policies. Responsible institutions are obliged to support orphaned and neglected children to prevent their involvement in labour. Ultimately, children's interest and motivation to work are additional causal factors. Some children desire to work to earn income, achieve independence, or assist their families with expenses. However, children's motivation to work is influenced by the social environment they live in. When families are poor and unable to meet their children's needs and desires, failing to support them, children engage in work to fulfil their aspirations. These aspirations may include buying a bicycle, covering educational expenses, helping the

family, and similar goals. A social worker operating within the large Tehran market area commented on this:

Some of my kids see their friends going to work... Now, for example, one of them comes and says his friend wants to buy something because he has worked, and he has money in his hand... He also wants to have money for himself and spend it. He starts asking his parents to let him work, and they grant him permission. For him, it becomes a trend, and he feels proud of it. Even families are in a kind of competition, telling their children, 'Look, that guy is going to work, why are you sitting at home? See, he earns 15 tomans, 20 tomans, or 100 tomans at home; you can't bring anything. You have to earn as well.' He does this, enjoys it, and shows off to them.

Intervening factors in child labour include the enforcement of laws and their supervision, migrant networks, ethnic and gender discriminations, power relationships, residence, and values and attitudes. According to Iran's labour law, working children under the age of fifteen is prohibited, yet many children below fifteen are observed working. Some work in the informal economy, while others engage in formal sectors such as workshops, brick kilns, grocery stores, crystal and glass factories, agriculture, flower markets, greenhouses, and similar activities. Unfortunately, labour inspectors lack effective supervision over these practices, enabling employers to bypass labour laws and exploit child labour. Even when inspectors visit workplaces for oversight, employers conceal child labourers in various ways. Migrant networks facilitate connections between origin and destination, providing opportunities for child labour. As witnessed, children from certain ethnicities are more active in specific types of work. For instance, garbage

collectors are mostly from Herat, or children working in cargo transport are predominantly from Kurdistan Province. These instances emphasize the significance of migration networks in linking to work opportunities.

Another intervening factor is ethnic and gender discrimination. Some ethnic groups and women suffer from structural discriminations, limiting their access to political, economic, and military opportunities. Despite a significant increase in the rate of female-headed households in recent decades, they face structural obstacles, restricting their access to opportunities, leading to increased poverty. Power relationships are also a factor as the absence of laws regulating the employer-employee relationship in the informal sector and the evasion of laws in other sectors allow employers to exploit the workforce, effectively subjecting them to exploitation. It is essential to note that the employer holds power over families of working children, and any complaints from the families provide the employer with rights, avoiding confrontation.

The residence of children plays a significant role in shaping their work. For example, children working in the Farahzad district are more involved in mechanical and street work in the northern areas of Tehran, especially in Municipality District 2. In central Tehran, some children enter production workshops, while in the southern regions, children engage in agricultural sectors and brick kilns. The last intervening factor is the values and attitudes of children towards work. As mentioned, attitudes are structural, encompassing beliefs, cognition, and emotions, with values being desirable elements. Work is desirable for some children, and they hold a positive attitude towards it because it allows them to achieve their goals. For example, in places where education does not connect to employment and structural obstacles exist, like in the case of immigrant children and those living in

impoverished areas, work provides a path for them to achieve their objectives.



Picture 59 Image of the residence of some working children with their families in the farms south of Tehran (Photo from the research)

Age, gender, and ethnicity also play a crucial role in child labour and its manifestations. In many jobs, age is a determining factor. For instance, in tasks like street vending, glass cleaning, flower selling, and small trades, younger children tend to be more successful as they can better evoke empathy from others. On the other hand, in certain jobs that require physical strength and precision, such as construction, garbage collection, mechanics, tailoring, and welding, older children are more prominently involved, although younger children may still be present in these activities. Similarly, gender and ethnicity also influence the nature of child labour. Girls are more engaged in domestic work, home-based activities, tailoring, and street vending since many social norms oppose their involvement in other forms of work. Even if girls are involved in street vending and other small

trades, before reaching adulthood, they require permission from the male family members, and after that, they are expected to work within the confines of their homes.

Two central phenomena in this research are the informal labour market and exploitation. The informal labour market has been chosen as a focal point due to its transformation into one of the most critical sectors for child labour today. Various jobs performed on the streets, such as waste collection, handcart transport, and work in some production workshops, constitute the predominant forms of child labour in the informal labour market. This sector is not regulated by laws and, therefore, lacks supervision. Consequently, it has become an area prone to exploitation and abuse of child labour. In this sector, most children receive only about one-fifth to one-tenth of the real wages they should, even though they might work longer hours. There are no fair contracts between employers and children, no insurance coverage, and in many cases, employers withhold their wages. In case of injuries, children themselves are responsible for exorbitant medical expenses.

Faced with the challenges of labour and its conditions, children, their families, and their advocates adopt a range of strategies. The key strategies include controlling and caring for the child, normalization, mediation, stakeholders' involvement, and active and passive responses. Each of these strategies has been explained in detail in the previous chapter. It can be said that, in order to mitigate the issues and problems of child labour and reduce the exploitation of children's families and advocates, a broad range of actions is undertaken. These strategies sometimes succeed and sometimes do not. For example, advocates' support for children, mediated between the child and the employer and family, educational and skill-building classes, and even

suggesting jobs with fewer risks and opportunities to learn a profession are among the key strategies.

Child labour encompasses two sets of consequences: one group has negative and undesirable outcomes, while the other, under specific conditions, can be positive and favourable. The main negative consequences include deprivation of education, lack of proper recreation and nutrition, health issues, exposure to violence, and various risks. These consequences have led to the classification of these types of work as child labour, prompting governments to work towards eliminating them. Another set of consequences of child labour includes positive and favourable outcomes—albeit positive considering the child's living conditions and the type of work performed. These include skill development and responsibility. It is essential to note that these positive results do not apply to strenuous and harmful work for children but encompass activities that allow the child to learn skills alongside their natural growth process, which can be useful for future livelihoods.

Executive Solutions for Reducing Child labour

The paradigm model presented in the previous pages has effectively outlined the areas and consequences of child labour for us. The proposed solutions for child labour are based on this model and a set of suggestions in various dimensions. A significant portion of the issue of child labour is not solely legal or legislative; rather, it stems from social and economic relations. Simply prohibiting child labour legally does not solve the problem; instead, it requires a series of social and economic measures. In this section, in order to eliminate and reduce child labour and empower the families of working children and the children themselves, a set of solutions is proposed. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, various forms of

child labour in Tehran have become more prevalent than before, and the emergence and prevalence of these forms have occurred based on various causes and factors identified in this research. This chapter discusses the proposed solutions presented in this research. These solutions have arisen from the core results and findings of the research model and are fundamental to eradicate and completely eliminate the phenomenon of child labour, addressing the root causes and factors contributing to the occurrence or the initial context of this phenomenon.

1) Unbalanced Development in the country based on the urban-rural model and discrimination against certain ethnic and religious groups is one of the main factors causing poverty and deprivation for a significant portion of the people in this land. Today, many families and children from peripheral areas, predominantly belonging to specific ethnic groups, migrate to Tehran and other major cities permanently or temporarily to find work and meet the basic necessities of life. While economic and social development in the country has emphasized balanced development, deep inequalities still exist across this land. Therefore, planning organizations such as the Budget and Planning Organization, as well as other government institutions, should pursue positive discrimination plans in their programs to develop peripheral areas. This approach aims to witness some degree of development in these regions, as they are currently major centres of migration and, consequently, the origin of child labour.

2) In many peripheral areas of the country and even among lower-class segments, economic opportunities related to limited education are scarce. When education does not lead to employment, families do not invest in the education of their children, as they believe this investment will not yield returns in the future and will not result in their children's employment. Consequently, families do

not support the education of their children and may even discourage them from pursuing further education. As mentioned earlier, parents believe that education does not lead to employment and that vocational training in practical work enhances their job prospects. However, the occupations chosen by children are not only physically demanding and harmful from a young age, with severe physical and mental consequences, but also these jobs are not permanent. As soon as these children become unemployed, they will still experience the vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment. Additionally, these jobs, due to the strenuous nature of the work and early entry into the job market, lead to early retirement, and individuals experience significant physical consequences in their youth and middle age. Even for the children themselves, continuing education is not a viable option because they know that achieving their goals, such as finding a job, cannot be realized through education. Therefore, attention to employment in these areas, especially jobs related to education, is essential for preventing child labour and empowering them through continuing education.

3) Identifying working children and their families in a national plan and designing comprehensive programs to combat poverty and empower families is one of the fundamental solutions. In Iran, the responsibility of supporting social victims lies with the Welfare Organization. This organization, with the help and collaboration of other organizations with support and educational missions, such as the Relief Committee, the Social Affairs Organization, the Ministry of Welfare, Cooperation, and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, the Foreign Nationals Affairs Office, and the Ministry of Education, should identify children at risk, those who have dropped out of school, and those condemned to forced labour. Through empowering their families, these

organizations can rescue them from the cycle of forced labour. This path will be facilitated by improving the economic status of families, covering the educational expenses of children, and providing employment for household breadwinners. These supports are not only economic but should be tailored to the needs of children, such as health, housing, education, and nutrition. In recent years, plans such as the identification of children who have dropped out of school and assisting them in returning to education have been implemented. While these plans are valuable in themselves, it must be acknowledged that without reducing the poverty of families, these children may still abandon education and return to work. In this regard, some government support for these children and their families should be contingent on the child's continued education. Mojtaba Mousavi Chelak, the head of the Iranian Social Work Association, stated in an interview:

The first step the government should take is to approve a multi-layered social security system as a law that includes an identification and social support system. [Children] are identified proportionally to their conditions and sometimes receive periodic social support under special circumstances and are connected to insurance organizations, receiving continuous benefits from insurance systems. The second step is to identify workshops, establish connections with them, facilitate children's access to receive social assistance according to their needs, and create a framework for enjoying civic rights as children in society. Naturally, in informal work environments, dealing with centres employing children is addressed.

4) Child labour among migrants, especially Afghan migrants and refugees, is widespread. Legal migrants are deprived of many opportunities, such as employment in various occupations and having adequate housing.

Structural discriminations exacerbate their poverty, leading to issues incurring significant costs for the country. Therefore, it is recommended that a series of policy and legal interventions be implemented to eliminate structural discriminations against them, enabling their families to connect with income-generating occupations. Additionally, it is essential to ensure that these migrant children have access to free education. Migrant children often face structural barriers and procedural constraints in the education sector. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should develop comprehensive plans for the education of these children without imposing obstacles on them and their families. A manager from an association related to child labour expressed:

See, these people have entered a country where we are not good hosts to them at all. Even the registration in schools is a project in itself. Every year, they have to go to the immigration office, get a letter from there. Some days, the immigration office issues the letter, some days it doesn't. It's a project for a child to enter school, and the school looks at them with a disdainful glance. For example, I remember there was a janitor in their school – separating Iranian and migrant students, morning shift for Iranians and afternoon shift for migrants. The janitor of the morning shift became the teacher of the afternoon shift. Maybe that janitor was an educated person, but this difference in roles distresses the children. The children are very aware of the difference in quality between morning and afternoon, even though neither of them has quality, but this is worse than the quality itself.

5) Some children lack any form of identity documents, making it impossible for them to continue their education

in schools. It is necessary to issue identity documents for these children and then take steps to enable their education. A manager from a support organization for children in this field stated:

The major problem is our unclear policy towards Afghans; either they should come, get an identity, get a visa, come officially and be accepted after a while, or they shouldn't come. They are coming in large numbers, but with zero facilities. The reality is that we don't have proper policies, neither for these children nor for Iranian children. We don't have policies; we don't want to eradicate poverty. We support entrepreneurs when we should support factory workers because entrepreneurial work is temporary.

6) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are one of the very effective pillars for supporting children's rights and protecting them from labour and its hazards. The findings of this research also indicate that these organizations play a significant role in supporting child labour. However, for optimal efficiency, these organizations need support, especially legal and rights-based support. In the governance area, it is necessary not only to take a security perspective but also to support them in various ways, as they are among the few entities that have managed to provide effective support to child labour and their families by bringing citizens together. It is also necessary for the Ministry of Interior, using various mechanisms, especially education, to empower these organizations towards the rehabilitation of child labour and for the parliament to draft and approve laws for these organizations.

7) Some children enter the labour cycle due to neglect, lack of supervision, and issues resulting from it, such as poverty. Although the Law on the Protection of Orphans and Neglected Children was passed in 2013 and

communicated to relevant institutions, this law does not cover foreign migrant children, and it is not well-implemented in the case of Iranian children. Government and governance organizations, such as Welfare and the Red Crescent Society, need to identify these children and support them economically until they become self-sufficient. They should also provide opportunities for the guardianship of these children by those willing to accept guardianship. For example, there is a growing demand for adopting children through mothers, while with some plans and mechanisms, these families can be convinced to adopt working children.

8) The Law on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child labour and its supplementary recommendation were approved in 2001. Article 3 of this law states:

According to this convention, the term ‘worst forms of child labour’ includes the following cases:

- a) All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and serfdom, and the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- b) The use, procuring, or offering of a child for prostitution, the production of pornography, or pornographic performances.
- c) The use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, especially for the production and trafficking of drugs, as defined in relevant international treaties.
- d) Work that, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.

In another part of this law, concerning hazardous work, it is mentioned:

When determining the types of work referred to in paragraph (d) of Article (3) of the Convention and identifying places where such work exists, attention must be paid to the following cases:

- a) Work that exposes children to physical, mental, or sexual abuse.
- b) Work in underground, underwater, in dangerous heights, or in confined spaces.
- c) Work with dangerous machinery, equipment, or tools, or work that involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads.
- d) Work in unhealthy environments that may expose children to hazardous substances, agents, or processes, or expose them to temperatures, noise, or harmful vibrations.
- e) Work under extremely difficult conditions, such as working for long hours or during the night, or working in a place where a child is abnormally restricted to the employer's workshop.



Picture 60 Image of a child working in the scrap iron section in the Khalaazir region (Photo from the research)

Many forms of child labour investigated in this research are considered among the worst. These include tasks such as waste collection, welding, manual handling of goods, street work, work in fruit and vegetable fields, work in brick kilns, household chores, work in agricultural farms, and the like. Now, the question that comes to mind is: Why, despite the approval and enforcement of the law prohibiting and urgently eliminating the worst forms of child labour, which was enacted in the year 2001, are we still witnessing the most blatant and worst forms of child labour? One possible answer to this question is that adequate mechanisms for the implementation of this law have not been put in place, or existing government entities, such as the Ministry of Welfare, are not properly enforcing this law. Therefore, it is recommended that this pioneering law in the prevention of the worst forms of child labour be fully and effectively implemented, and supervisory bodies, such as the Islamic Consultative

Assembly and the Expediency Discernment Council, exercise closer oversight over its implementation.

9) High-population families are another factor contributing to child labour. Some of the studied children live in large and very large families. Studies have also shown a direct relationship between poverty and a higher burden. Therefore, it is suggested that population policies pay special attention to not increasing the population among poor households. There is concern that emphasis on population growth, by restricting some family planning programs, may lead to an increase in the population among poor families. The increase in population among these families only exacerbates some of the more serious issues, such as child labour. Therefore, it is suggested that family planning programs be accessible to these families, and support, especially financial support, be conditional for heavily populated poor families. This condition may include not having more children, sending children to school, and not using their child labour. In this regard, it is recommended that health centres in these neighbourhoods provide free education services and awareness programs for family planning, and this initiative should start from the most vulnerable areas.

10) Some of the studied children mentioned that one or more members of their families are addicted, and due to the economic strain resulting from addiction and the inability to provide for the addict's expenses, children in the family are forced into work. Proposed solutions to reduce the link between child labour and parental addiction include: rehabilitating addicted parents to health through organizations that cover children, such as NGOs and welfare, by providing counselling to the addicted individual and conducting addiction recovery classes. Prevention of addiction and introduction to addiction recovery camps, with the consent of the addicted individual and the use of motivational

approaches in working with addicted caregivers, are also suggested.

11) The cost of education and an inefficient educational system with low-quality schools and teachers are another factor contributing to child labour. Children during their educational period only incur expenses for the family, and these expenses are only compensated when they start working after completing their education. Some families living in areas with low educational quality believe that due to the low quality of education, their children will not have the ability to compete with other educated children in the future. Therefore, the possibility of compensating the expenses of a child's education in the future will not exist. Consequently, the family decides to send their child to work. Also, the commercialization of education and its high costs have put additional pressure on families, especially lower-class families, for education. This is particularly true for Afghan children without identity cards who cannot benefit from free education in government schools. Some children work to cover their educational expenses. For example, the exorbitant costs of university entrance exams, including exam books and preparatory classes, have created destructive competition among students and their families. In these circumstances, where there is no news of educational justice, a child either has to sacrifice university classes and exams or engage in financial relationships that require them to work. Work naturally disrupts their studies. Therefore, it is suggested that education in deprived neighbourhoods and poor families be completely free, and even help be provided to this group of families. NGOs also need to focus some of their support on this area. Moreover, considering that most of Afghanistan's child labourers are from the statistical community and many of them do not have identity documents, and, consequently, do not have the right to free education in government

schools, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and organizations dedicated to child labour and organizations dedicated to the education of foreign children take action to make education costs free for foreign children or provide funding for their education expenses.

12) Some children have dropped out of education or continue their education at older ages. This group of children struggles to adapt themselves to school and classroom lessons. Therefore, in order for them to continue their education and progress, they need more services, such as counselling, psychology, extracurricular classes, and innovative teaching methods, which should be made available to them.

Social worker at a local NGO in the Farahzad neighbourhood stated:

They perceive some harm within themselves. Part of it relates to the idea of life skills education. For example, a recurring issue among working children is the lack of time management skills. They don't have time management, so when they encounter a problem, they face challenges and think that others are pressuring them. This becomes a mental issue for them. Another crucial topic is the discussion of effective communication, which they often lack. Of course, they have the right to feel that way. For instance, the child who has now entered this workshop was a street vendor for a while. For example, as he says, when he used to say, Aunt, buy socks from me, he might now hear an insult or face a harsh response. The expectation for him to handle such interactions is quite demanding. When they enter something like a workshop, they need to be taught these skills. Another important topic that

children often do not know about is the discussion of self-care. Up to now, these self-care teachings must be seen in relation to the age of the child in this section. Another issue that has driven them is talent identification. They should be driven towards something where they can learn a skill and feel a sense of accomplishment; that I can create something. Because, in this field, I myself had a successful experience here. One of our children who was a street vendor, in the first year I came, was referred to me due to aggressiveness. After talking, we took an aggression test, and we saw that his test was positive. A little later, his depression was high, and so on. Then I realized that he was being insulted and harassed for selling socks on the street, and this was a significant problem for him. He would say, for example, I feel like hitting people sometimes because they always talk to me. Then there was a proud boy; I talked to him. For example, some promises that we make and that he does this work, on the condition that he doesn't work. We saw that it couldn't be done, with that method, I couldn't reduce or eliminate his work. Then I said, well, if you want to work, what kind of work do you like? You say no to this work, what kind of work do you like? He said, I really like to do mechanical or carpentry work. Then I talked to him about Farahzad, you know Farahzad, we talked to a carpenter there; this gentleman is highly educated and very cooperative. We talked, and my son went to him, and now he still works there in the summer, he studies, meaning his relationship with his employer is extremely good, and he has achieved a sense of satisfaction. Sometimes, in my opinion, you need to

enter through a door with children. They need to work, but they need to be guided towards the right job.

13) Access to educational facilities must be equal for everyone, ensuring that children in deprived and marginalized areas can benefit from them near their place of residence. Statistics have shown that many children drop out of school due to the lack of access to educational facilities and government schools in their residential areas. As mentioned, many children live in places such as brick kilns, agricultural farms, waste disposal sites, and the like, where there are no schools or non-governmental organizations near them. Mechanisms need to be devised to contemplate the education of children in proximity to these areas. Mobile schools and container schools can be viable options. In this form of education, other life skills can also be imparted to children. This approach is essential to address the educational disparities and challenges faced by children in underserved regions, fostering a more inclusive and accessible learning environment.

14) Vocational training can be provided for older children, especially those above fifteen years of age. It should be emphasized that education must be tailored to the age and physical and mental conditions of the children. For instance, the educational needs of a seven-year-old child would differ significantly from those of a fifteen-year-old. This highlights the importance of offering age-appropriate and developmentally suitable vocational training programs. This approach acknowledges the diverse needs and capacities of children at various stages of their adolescence, ensuring that the educational content aligns with their evolving abilities and requirements.

15) It is recommended that children be educated about their rights in schools and non-governmental

organizations. Additionally, they should be taught strategies for self-support and seeking assistance from supportive institutions, especially when their rights are violated in society. A social worker from the Empowerment Center for Children in the Herat region expressed:

The solution for cultural problems is to elevate them from the lower cultural level they are at because the economic growth is intertwined with the advancement of their cultural level, both within their families and for children to understand what actions to take, how to behave, even in their workplace. A signal in this regard is given by social workers, reaching both families and children. The solution to reduce the damage is, figuratively speaking, to make the child aware of having more contact with a social worker and family with the employer of the child and provide awareness. The awareness given includes issues, figuratively speaking, both physical and mental, and issues of assault and improper behaviours, figuratively speaking, with the employer. The employer is not fond of their looks and eyebrows. As for a solution, I cannot find one other than telling the child, for example, Sir, don't go to work. Empowering them or finding someone economically to help the family. These are the two main solutions. But to empower all children economically is not within the scope of our professional mission. We only guide them; we are not even their values; we are their counselors in the fields of social, cultural, and economic aspects. To the extent that we can help families. Why? Because, fundamentally, the child is not under our authority. It's not like a welfare institution where the child is here day and night; you can implement any program for them.

The child spends two hours with you, three hours with you. Then they go into society, then they go into their family. Perhaps in many of the issues, you have conveyed to them, talked to them, and even educated them culturally. However, still, when they are in that atmosphere, over time, they may forget what you did and what you said. Not that it hasn't had an impact, no, but because we are separate from them, the effects are much less on the family.

16) As the evidence from the previous section demonstrated, some cultural frameworks and misguided attitudes about children are another factor in child labour. Beliefs and attitudes such as “a boy must work to become a man” or “a girl doesn't need education because she must get married,” result in girls doing household work instead of attending school to prepare for marriage. These frameworks, mostly collective in nature, emerge within an economic and social context. Therefore, to eliminate them, alongside addressing their economic and social roots—which is poverty—educational courses should be provided to combat these beliefs, and proper parenting courses should be arranged. This responsibility falls on welfare organizations, social service bases, community centres, and non-governmental organizations in impoverished and marginalized areas. It is also suggested that women's organizations and social service centres, upon awareness of such structures within families, intervene seriously, portraying the family with the dimensions of the created pattern, delineating roles, and providing other specialized interventions, such as psychological and counseling services, to prevent such patterns. The role of social media and group media should not be overlooked, especially the national radio and television. Considering that private radio and television do not operate in Iran, the national radio should take its

educational and cultural mission seriously and prioritize community awareness in various programs.

17) Sudden economic changes resulting from war and natural disasters leading to migration to neighbouring countries for higher wages have a close relationship with child labour. Based on the evidence in this research, a significant percentage of working migrant children, especially Afghans, have engaged in illegal migration, and currently, they lack identity documents for residing in Iran. Another contributing factor to child labour among migrant children is the restrictions on them and their families for working and owning property, such as housing and shops, forcing them to engage in informal jobs and involve their children in work. Besides the issue of the consequences of illegal migration for migrants and the host community, the conditions of illegal migration are a considerable concern that needs to be controlled and directly monitored with minimal harm to individuals. In this regard, the following solutions are proposed:

- Preventing internal migration of children below the legal age alone and illegal external migrations. Controlling internal migration of children can be achieved to a considerable extent at passenger terminals, and by prohibiting and controlling such migrations at borders, terminals, and tourist and passenger centres, their rates can be significantly reduced.
- Establishing strict migration laws and closely monitoring their enforcement.
- Supporting migrants who have become citizens legally.
- Combating human trafficking schemes, especially combating traffickers, and considering preventive penalties and laws.

18) The informal labour market has become one of the main areas of child labour today. Alongside other

proposed solutions, attention to this sector is essential for eliminating child labour. One of the most crucial recommendations in this regard is the Recommendation 204 on the Transition from the Informal Economy to the Formal Economy. While this recommendation does not directly address the elimination of child labour in this sector, it provides suggestions that, if implemented, would have a significant impact on empowering poor families and consequently reducing child labour. Some key points of this recommendation are explained below due to its importance:

In the section on goals and competencies, the recommendation suggests the following guidelines to members:

- a) Facilitating the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy, while respecting the fundamental rights of workers and ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihood, and entrepreneurship;
- b) Supporting the creation, preservation, and sustainability of reputable economic institutions and businesses in the formal economy, along with the coherence of the overall economy, employment, social supports, and other social policies;
- c) Preventing the informality of formal economy jobs.

The recommendation also proposes the following principles to members in the section on designing coherent and consistent strategies for facilitating the transition to the formal economy, which should be considered:

- a) Diversity of characteristics, conditions, and needs of workers and economic units in the informal economy and the necessity of addressing this diversity with specific approaches for each case;

- b) Opportunities, laws, policies, methods, and national priorities for the transition to the formal economy;
- c) The fact that various and multiple strategies can be used to facilitate the transition to the formal economy;
- d) The need to create coherence and coordination across a wide range of policy areas to facilitate the transition to the formal economy;
- e) Promoting effective support for human rights for all participants and stakeholders in the informal economy;
- f) Achieving decent work for everyone through adherence to fundamental principles and rights at work, in law, and in practice;
- g) Updating international labour standards to provide guidance in specific policy areas (refer to the appendix of this recommendation);
- h) Promoting gender equality and non-discrimination;
- i) The need to pay special attention to women, youth, migrants, the elderly, indigenous people, nomads, AIDS patients, people with disabilities, domestic workers, and farmers whose livelihood is particularly vulnerable to the most serious deficiencies in decent work in the informal economy, and so on.

The transition from the informal to the formal economy not only strengthens the national economy but also plays an effective role in reducing family poverty by offering decent work. Additionally, as this sector of the economy shrinks, one of the areas of child labour gradually diminishes.

19) The necessity of collaboration among NGOs and other local institutions for mutual reinforcement in supporting working children is another practical and recommended solution. Evidence indicates that the interaction between NGOs is not always effective, and in some cases, it appears

as unhealthy competition and distrust. One reason for this is the different approaches they choose to support children, and sometimes these approaches are not universally accepted. Therefore, in order to eliminate child labour and empower them, interaction and collaboration need to be established among NGOs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child can serve as a basis for guiding the direction and actions of these organizations and institutions. Additionally, governance often challenges NGOs, potentially impacting their efficiency and effectiveness. One of the major challenges in this regard is that NGOs are pluralistic, and despite the attention given to NGOs, the government's perspective on them in laws and development programs is political and security-oriented. Findings also indicate that some NGOs lack the necessary capabilities and have shortcomings in dealing and interacting with the government, which has led to government distrust towards all NGOs. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate and approve regulations and laws related to NGOs in this field. The government should listen to the voice of NGOs, and its dealings with them should be within the framework of laws, with a removal of the security-oriented approach.

20) Another issue that NGOs face and receive criticism for is the issue of job placement for children. In this regard, a crucial question that must be answered is: Should NGOs find jobs for children or not? Before addressing this question, it must be mentioned that NGOs' argument regarding job placement for children was that they guide children from high-risk, futureless jobs towards jobs with lower risks and possibly involving the learning of a profession. They have also found jobs with minimal risks for some children in certain fields and, figuratively speaking, have provided job placement for them. Now let's return to answering the posed question. The response to this question can be given based on the definition of child

labour and the existing approaches to supporting children. In other words, these two elements provide the foundation for answering the question. As mentioned, child labour is defined as activities that deprive children of their potential and dignity from childhood, are harmful to their physical and mental growth, and have the following characteristics:

- They are physically, mentally, socially, and ethically hazardous and harmful to children.
- They hinder children's education in the following ways:
 - Deprive them of the opportunity to attend school.
 - Force them to leave school before completing their education.
 - Compel them to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.¹⁹⁵

There are also several approaches to combating child labour and supporting children:

1. Welfare Approach: According to this approach, working children are those from impoverished backgrounds who need assistance. This approach does not seek to change the existing situation, and some of its suggestions for supporting children include:

- Providing healthcare services and hygiene care.
- Supplying tools and protective equipment.
- Organizing recreational activities for children and providing housing for families.

¹⁹⁵ ILO. (2017). *Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and Trends, 2012-2016*. Geneva: International Labour Organization Geneva.

It seems that this approach justifies child labour and contradicts the definition of labour and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. **Growth-based Approach:** According to this approach, working children are individuals from poor backgrounds whose abilities need to flourish. Examples of interventions under this approach include:

- Providing daily care facilities.
- Offering formal and informal education as well as vocational training.
- Creating alternative employment opportunities.

3. **Rights-based Approach:** Based on this approach, it is essential to create a political space for working children and strengthen their position to be observed and heard. Examples of interventions based on this approach include:

- Organizing, lobbying, and promoting political participation.
- Increasing awareness of child labour in communities.
- Legal reforms and improving the enforcement of labour laws, such as eliminating child labour and enhanced monitoring.

These three approaches represent different perspectives on addressing child labour and emphasize different aspects, including welfare, growth, and the fundamental rights of children.

The three international labour organization approaches, which are a combined approach involving multiple strategies, are as follows:

1. *Preventive Strategy:* The goals of this strategy include strengthening legislation and its enforcement, improving educational opportunities, implementing various reforms

or enhancements to establish suitable education systems, attracting all boys and girls, increasing household income, and raising awareness of the worst forms of child labour.

2. *Rehabilitation*: Primarily involving the provision of healthcare services, counseling, skill-based education opportunities, and gender-sensitive educational opportunities for children outside child labour.

3. *Protection from Exploitation and Hazardous Work*: Through legislation, enforcement of labour standards, and improvement of working conditions.¹⁹⁶

Drawing from these considerations, it becomes evident that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in addressing the issue of child labour, necessitating a nuanced and conscientious approach. Rather than actively seeking employment opportunities for children within hazardous forms of child labour, NGOs should, where feasible, advocate for part-time positions that prioritize the safety, health, and overall well-being of children. Crucially, these positions should be designed to accommodate educational pursuits, ensuring that children's learning experiences remain unimpeded. The scope of jobs examined in this study, encompassing even those offering vocational training prospects such as various mechanical roles, is deemed detrimental to children. This is primarily because they either hinder educational pursuits or impose an excessive burden of lengthy and strenuous work, often leading children to forsake their education. NGOs, cognizant of these challenges, can strategically choose from a set of approaches aimed at the complete eradication of child labour. One proactive strategy involves NGOs, in their

¹⁹⁶ Children's Rights Support Association. (2010). *Childhood Yawn: A study on the recognition, prevention, and control of the phenomenon of child scavenging in Tehran*.

fight against child labour, encouraging employers to provide healthcare and protective services for working children. Alternatively, NGOs may take the initiative to furnish these services themselves in any form deemed suitable for addressing the complexities associated with child labour. Importantly, this intervention not only contributes to mitigating the immediate challenges faced by working children but also establishes a foundation of trust with families. By demonstrating an understanding of the economic conditions of these families with empathy, NGOs not only prevent various other harms but also facilitate an environment where families feel comfortable sharing their concerns in the face of unforeseen events. In essence, these actions by NGOs do not formalize child labour; rather, they embody a concerted effort to diminish the vulnerability of children to exploitative work, emphasizing the importance of holistic well-being and education over precarious labour practices.

21) In embracing a welfare-oriented approach to mitigate the detrimental effects of child labour, workshops can proactively engage with workplaces. These collaborative efforts involve encouraging employers to provide on-site facilities and services aimed at minimizing the harm to children. Moreover, workshops can orchestrate educational programs tailored for employers, fostering a deep understanding of children's rights. This comprehensive strategy not only addresses the immediate challenges associated with child labour but also endeavours to cultivate an environment conducive to the well-being of children. Within this context, a manager affiliated with a non-governmental organization expresses alignment with this approach, stating:

There was an NGO that had done something in this area, we documented these. In Tehran, a lady... had worked on it. There were two or three NGOs, I'm not

sure of the exact number because these are old, but there was a project on how to work with a CFR approach so that the employer becomes responsible. Companies, you know, that had recycling businesses, for example, gave free things or gave these in exchange for something for a workshop. For example, suppose a workshop lacked toilet facilities; they provided them, as well as various other things. The workshops in question could simultaneously combat child labour and invite employers to provide health and protection services for children, or they themselves could provide these for working children in any form. NGOs can choose various strategies to completely eliminate child labour. For example, while combating child labour, they can invite employers to provide healthcare and protection services for children, or they themselves could provide these for working children in any form. NGOs can choose various strategies to completely eliminate child labour. For example, while combating child labour, they can invite employers to provide healthcare and protection services for children, or they themselves could provide these for working children in any form. These initiatives represent various collaborations with employers; some provide various free services to working children, while others collaborate directly with employers and offer various educational programs. Overall, these initiatives are diverse and aim to reduce the harms of child labour.

22) The current iteration of organizational plans, as alluded to in their existing form, not only purports to empower and eradicate child labour but, as elucidated in the text, inadvertently inflicts harm upon these vulnerable individuals in various ways. In lieu of persisting with organizational plans or introducing a revamped version

labeled as a “Social Support Plan,” which appears to offer no discernible superiority over its predecessor, a paradigm shift is advocated. A novel approach, identified herein as the “Social Support Plan,” should prioritize the establishment of robust identification and attraction systems within neighbourhoods and areas where working children are predominantly settled. These innovative systems are meticulously designed with the explicit goal of identifying children engaged in labour and, through a humane process devoid of violence and fear, attracting and assimilating them into support networks. The subsequent phase entails providing empowerment services tailored to the unique needs of these children. Essentially, a departure from punitive measures is proposed, urging the adoption of services rooted in encouragement. This transformative shift aims not only to redress the immediate issue of child labour but also to instill a sense of agency and positive development in the lives of the affected children. In parallel, it is imperative for welfare organizations, municipalities, governorates, and other responsible institutions operating in this domain to forge close collaborations with unions and experts specializing in children’s rights. Prior to embarking on any action or formulating a new plan, a meticulous examination of the issue from the vantage point of these experts is indispensable. This approach ensures that the implementation of executive actions does not inadvertently subject children to additional harm and abuse. By incorporating the insights and expertise of these specialists, the collaborative efforts of governmental and non-governmental entities can be channeled towards initiatives that not only mitigate child labour but also prioritize the holistic well-being and protection of children, safeguarding them from any unintended negative consequences in the process.

23) The existing research landscape in the country has predominantly directed its focus towards observable and tangible manifestations of child labour, inadvertently sidelining the more concealed and intangible forms that may potentially inflict greater harm upon children. Notably, the research in this domain has been somewhat myopic, failing to delve into the obscured realms of child labour, including but not limited to domestic work, child trafficking, the exploitation of children for criminal activities, and child labour prevalent in rural areas. This oversight has resulted in an incomplete understanding of the multifaceted nature of child labour, impeding the development of comprehensive interventions. Furthermore, the research in this field has been remiss in giving due consideration to the structural underpinnings of child labour. It has yet to explore the intricate reasons behind why certain families within a society find themselves marginalized and impoverished, ultimately contributing to the vulnerability of children to exploitation through labour. Unraveling the complex web of societal dynamics, economic disparities, and systemic issues that perpetuate child labour is crucial for devising targeted and effective strategies to address its root causes. Moving forward, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in research focus. Future investigations should prioritize a nuanced exploration of both the hidden and overt dimensions of child labour, encompassing qualitative and quantitative studies. Understanding the intricacies of these diverse activities is imperative to formulate policies and interventions that are not only responsive to immediate concerns but also address the deeper structural issues at play. Qualitative studies can illuminate the experiences and perspectives of children engaged in less visible forms of labour, providing valuable insights into the nuanced challenges they face. Simultaneously, quantitative studies should aim to quantify the prevalence of these hidden forms of child

labour and analyse the systemic factors contributing to their persistence. By adopting a comprehensive approach that encompasses both the visible and concealed aspects of child labour, future research endeavors can contribute significantly to the development of holistic solutions that prioritize the well-being and rights of all children, irrespective of the nature of their labour.

24) Addressing various forms of child labour necessitates tailored solutions for their eradication. It is imperative to recognize that eliminating child labour within the informal sector demands distinct strategies compared to those applicable in the formal sectors. Remarkably, the absence of employment within the formal sector is governed by specific legal frameworks. To illustrate, the labour law, as delineated in Articles 79 to 85, explicitly prohibits child labour under the age of fifteen. However, under certain conditions, there exists a provision that permits labour for individuals aged fifteen to eighteen. Efficient enforcement and vigilant monitoring of labour laws within the formal sector undoubtedly serve as potent measures to thwart numerous manifestations of child labour. Rigorous implementation of these laws acts as a deterrent, creating a formidable barrier against the exploitation of underage workers. By ensuring that legal provisions are strictly adhered to, authorities can effectively curtail instances of child labour, contributing to the broader goal of eradicating this societal ill. Furthermore, when addressing specific sectors like waste picking, a targeted approach is indispensable for complete elimination. Municipalities play a pivotal role in this endeavor by overseeing the implementation of regulations pertaining to dry waste collection. By regulating and monitoring waste management practices, municipalities can significantly mitigate and eventually eradicate child labour associated with waste picking. This comprehensive oversight ensures that the conditions conducive to child

labour are dismantled, fostering an environment where the rights and well-being of children are prioritized.

25) Ultimately, it is recommended to implement solutions in a way that each responsible organization, considering its duties and authorities, takes the responsibility for implementing the solutions. Through short-term, medium-term, and long-term planning, the organization should intervene in the micro, intermediate, and macro structures and utilize experts familiar with children's rights. It is essential to remember that a significant portion of this responsibility lies with the Ministry of Labour, Cooperation, and Social Welfare. Initially, certain labour laws need to be amended and enforced to prevent child labour. Welfare policies should support impoverished families and working children to prevent their involvement in the work cycle. The final point is that responsible organizations, in many instances, have not only failed to reduce damage but have also added to its prevalence through isolated and inconsistent actions. For instance, currently, in ministries such as Welfare, Education, Health, Judiciary, Police Force, municipalities, and other institutions, there are departments or offices with titles like "Social Damage Reduction" or "Prevention," claiming one of their fundamental duties is to empower families and prevent child labour. Each of them asserts positive steps in this regard, despite the fact that individual and uncoordinated actions without collaboration with other institutions may not yield significant results. For example, the Prevention of Educational Harms department could collaborate with the judiciary to identify children who have dropped out of school and entered the workforce. The judiciary department within the judiciary could confront employers and families exploiting children. The Ministry of Health could create conditions to prevent children from working due to their parents' illness. The Ministry of Welfare could

plan to empower families, and the municipality could identify and cut ties with contractors exploiting children. It is evident that all these solutions and suggestions, under the umbrella of multi-agency collaboration, drawing on their specialized insights and the experiences of child rights activists, will be achievable. The long-term result will be a reduction in the number of children subjected to forced labour.



Kameel Ahmady is a British-Iranian scholar working in the field of social anthropology, with a particular focus on gender, children, ethnic minorities, and child labour.



آوای بوف | AVAYEBUF

Traces of Exploitation in Childhood

Comprehensive Research on the Forms, Causes and Consequences of Child Labour in Iran

Kameel Ahmady & colleagues

ISBN : 978-87-94295-16-1

©2024 Avaye Buf

Denmark

avaye.buf@gmail.com

www.avayebuf.com

avayebuf.com