

# **Situation Analysis of Child Labor in Commercial Areas of Islamabad City**

**Irfan Nawaz**

Social Welfare Officer, Ministry of Human Rights, Pakistan

Email: irfannawazawan@gmail.com

**Alia Shaheen**

Social Welfare Officer, Department of Social Welfare and Baitul Maal,

Government of Punjab, Pakistan

Email: aliachoudhary4@gmail.com

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i2/2021 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i2/2021>

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of study was to conduct a situation analysis of child labor in commercial areas of Islamabad city. For that purpose, data was collected using purposive sampling. Fourteen case studies were taken from different areas of Islamabad. On the basis of obtained information, it was found that child labor is an outcome of various reasons. Most dominant reasons were poverty, migration, lack of interest in education, and absence of adult in a family. Alarmingly, children who involved in child labor are exposed to various hazards. Exposure to hazards threatened their physical as well as psychological health. Additionally, abuse was also common among child laborers. Children were abused by various means like slap, hit by objects, snap and bullying. In line with the above facts, it is need of the hour to restore these children as healthy and productive unit of society.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

Child labor is one of most prevalent phenomenon of the world, predominantly occurring in developing nations. Mostly, in developing nations, children cannot enjoy childhood and they are forced to child labor. No doubt, Childhood is a crucial part of human life. Every child should enjoy the pleasures of his childhood, parents' love and eternal care. Unfortunately, every child may not enjoy this pleasure. Pakistan, being developing country, is also facing the menace of child labor. The child labor is a complex and multifaceted problem because Child labor is not only economical issue but it has other dimensions too. Child labor deprives a child from proper development and growth. It may also expose a child to various forms of violence and his right to play could be suppressed. Alarmingly, ILO believed that 12 million children are working in Pakistan and UNICEF stated that about 10 million children are involved in child labor in Pakistan (Tribune, 2015).

There are certain International Conventions that provide safety nets to eliminate Child labor. Article 32 of Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) demands for recognition of the rights of children to be protected from economic exploitation and work that is likely to be hazardous or affects their health, education, moral and social development. Nevertheless, the International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions 138 and 182 clearly stated that child labor refers to involvement of any child that is younger than 12 years in any economic activity and children 12-14 years old engaged in more than light work, worst forms child labor — slavery, prostituted, forced into illegal activities or exposed to hazards. Pakistan has ratified both conventions. Along with international commitments, Government of Pakistan is also striving to eliminate Child Labor by taking various legal measures in Constitution of Pakistan 1973. Article 11 (3) of constitution states that children below the age of 14 years are prohibited to work in any factory, mine or other hazardous employment. Similarly, Article 37 (e) states that it is a responsibility of state to ensure that children are not employed in such conditions those are not suitable to their age, and sex.

There are two other significant legislations directly deal with Child Labor. Firstly, Shops & Establishments Ordinance 1969 that prohibits employment of children having age less than 14 years in any establishment i.e. shop, private dispensary, theater, cinema, commercial establishment, industrial establishment, hotel, restaurant, circus, or any other place of public entertainment. Secondly, Employment of Children Act 1991 has determined 14 years as threshold of child labor. On the other hand, De Silva (2007) evident that children at workplace were frequently exposed to physical and verbal abuse and different forms of violence. So, it is imperative to consider legislations indirectly deal with child labor. The Criminal Law (Second Amendment) which was enacted on 18<sup>th</sup> march, 2016 criminalizes the cruelty to children and sexual abuse. Along with, The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Child Protection Bill, 2016 has also been drafted which aims at providing protection and care to children from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. After that, National Commission on the Rights of the Child Bill 2015 has also been under consideration of Standing Committee on Law and Justice for effective implementation of international conventions. Aforementioned legislations are instrumental in curbing all sorts of hazards of child labor such as cruelty to children, abuse and exploitation.

In this way, the purpose of the study was to highlight the prevalence of Child Labor in commercial areas of Islamabad city. Moreover, this study aimed at finding out core determinants of child labor and highlighted the health risks associated with child labor. On the basis of findings, sound suggestions put forward to curb child labor effectively.

## **1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Children are considered as future of any nation. Verily, it only becomes possible with provision of healthy and productive environment to children. Historically, footprints of child labor can be traced in different ages. In primitive societies, children were also involved in some sort of labor. In late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, during the industrial revolution, children were also recruited for work in Europe. In the most advanced societies, child labor may be found in different situations. Moreover, commercialization may also encourage child labor. Therefore, this study targeted the metropolitan city and its commercial sectors to find out the prevalence

of child labor. It is alarming that child labor is practiced in most sophisticated units of society that are dominantly surrounded by educated people and also under the strict surveillance of government departments who are working to end child labor.

### **1.3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Child labor is one of the persistent social problems of Pakistan. Child labor is existed in various spheres of social life. Some areas are yet neglected. The policy perspective of Child labor is primarily focus on child labor in establishments. Though, it also existed in other areas that also need attention of the policy initiatives. This study tried to provide the statistical evidence of this phenomenon. In addition, this study is pivotal in highlighting the various issues related to child labor in commercial areas of metropolitan cities as it highlighted the determinants, health risk associated with such type of labor and extent of abuse. In this regard, a detail analysis of this phenomenon would help in curbing child labour at gross root level.

### **1.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study has certain limitations. Firstly, it is clear that it is not possible to cover all the areas of child labor in a single study. Therefore, this study only targets the children working in commercial areas of Islamabad. Secondly, it is a short study/survey to highlight the existence of child labor in commercial areas of Islamabad.

### **1.5. ORGANIZATION OF STUDY**

The first portion of the study provided the brief view of child labor and various safety nets to eliminate child labor. Then, second portion of the study is based on methodological foundations and major findings. At the end, the study provided the conclusion and sound suggestions to curb the menace of child labor specifically in Islamabad.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This portion provides brief amount of already existing knowledge on the studied phenomenon. Sahu (2013) investigated the nature, magnitude and determinants of child labor and its contribution in the workforce at early age in Cuttack City of Odisha. Based on primary data, the regression results showed that household income has negative impacts on the working hours of the child labor. Moreover, children's personal wish to work has a positive and significant impact on employment of children. Major reasons were poor families, meager financial resources. There is greater need to increase community participation in creating awareness among people, and enhance free education mechanism to reduce child labor in India.

Nafees et. al. (2012) aimed at reviewing the available literature on child labor in Karachi, assessing the activities of various organizations working for child labor and to get insight of child laborers. Authors prepared the list of organizations which were focused on child labour in Karachi and in-depth interviews were conducted with resource persons of these organizations. Focus group discussions were conducted to know the child laborers perspective. It came forth that major reasons of child labourer were economic backwardness and abuse by parents. Most

of the children involved in rag picking, cleaning cars, and begging etc. organizations were working in their capacity for curbing child labor but still there was a lack of capacity building and resource constraints. In this way, it is suggested that there is a need of adopting a sustainable approach toward ending child labor.

Ndjany and Djienousassi (2010) aimed at developing understanding of child labor in Cameroon. Specifically, they find out the characteristics and determinants of child labor. Data was obtained from Cameron survey on employment and informal sector. The results showed that child labour has been found in the households which are around sex and kinship and it differed as per household type. Moreover, child labor is also determined by both, internal and external, factors to the household.

Rena (2009) said that menace of child labor is growing and its association is poverty cannot be denied specially in developing nations. It is important to identify vulnerable groups and point out their problems with respect to Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The research on child labour represent in this respect a largely untapped resource of knowledge for policymakers in the fields of education programme and poverty reduction programmes. An attempt was made in this article to demonstrate how increased education opportunities and increased welfare reduces child labor.

Khan, Hameed and Afridi (2007) determined the characteristics of child labor in car workshops of Peshawar. A descriptive survey was conducted by selecting 32 workshops randomly. Through a questionnaire, major findings came forth that majority of children are illiterate or low education. Their earning from this labor is also lesser and their family earning hand had low or no education. Most of the fathers of the children were unemployed. Moreover, various health diseases like diarrhea were common among those children.

Khan (2000) tried to find out the socio-economic characteristics of child working in auto workshops, determinants and as to what extent they are exploited. A comprehensive interview schedule was designed which covers two dimensions i.e. child aspect, employer aspect. On the basis of data collection, it was found that child labor was high in auto workshops. Moreover, child labor was also existed in authorized workshops and it was clear violations of Convention on the rights of child (UNCRC). It was suggested that there is a need to conduct studies on child labor in context of specific groups and also it is necessary to extend the welfare services in this regard.

Above literature shows the research gap in addressing the issue of child labor in context of commercial areas i.e. local markets. Majority of studies addressed the child labor in broader context and none of the study focused on this specific issue.

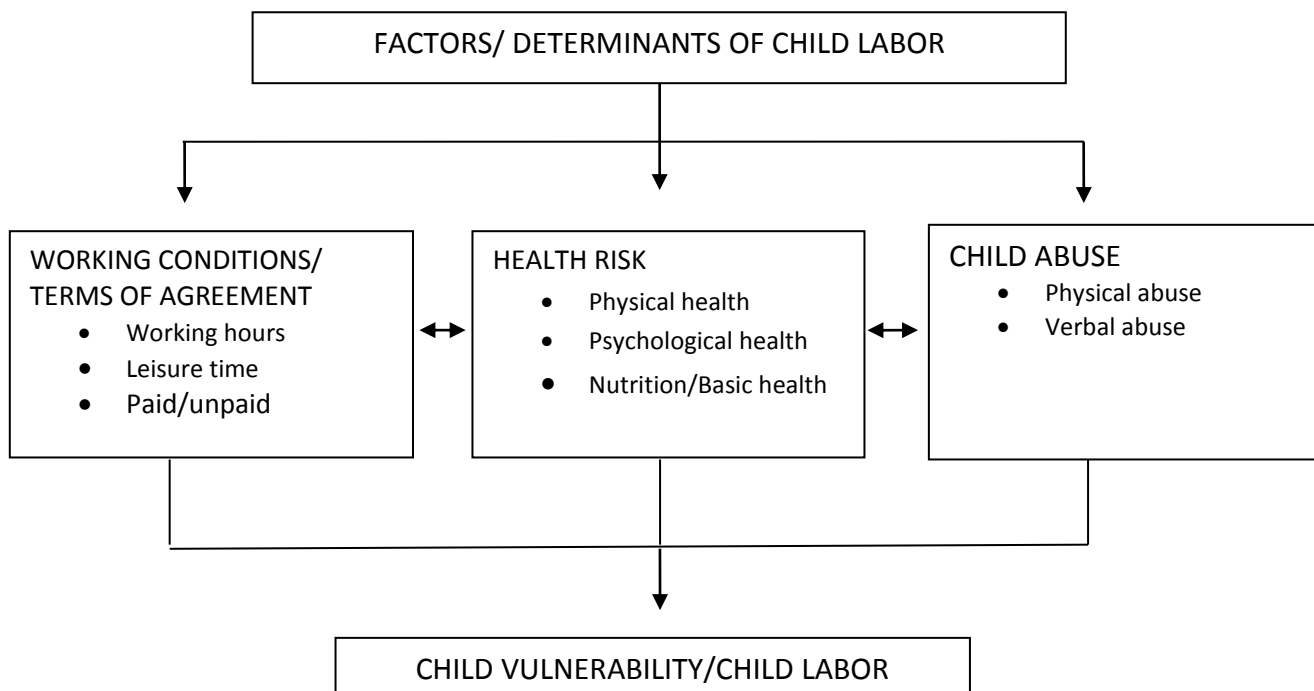
### **3.1. METHODOLOGY**

Researcher pointed out commercial areas of Islamabad by purposive sampling where the possibility of child labor is greater. The following areas are chosen for data collection by purposive sampling:

1. Abpara Market
2. Poly Clinic Hospital
3. G-6
4. G-7 Markaz
5. G-9 Markaz/Karachi Company
6. G-10 Markaz
7. Faizabad surroundings
8. Khana Pul

For data collection, Interview Guide was designed based on following thematic areas:

**Figure .1: Thematic Areas of study**



Thematic areas were designed after a three sessions of discussions with the following Social Scientists, and child rights Experts:

1. Mr. Khalid Latif, Director, NCCWD
2. Mr. Haroon ur Rahman, Deputy Director, NCCWD
3. Mr. Aziz Iqbal, Deputy Director, Ministry of Human Rights
4. Mr. Muhammad Ibrar, Assistant Director, NCCWD

Moreover, a Case Study method was used, Researcher took 14 case studies of those children who were working in commercial areas of Islamabad and having age less than 14 years.

### **3.2. UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY**

Islamabad is a capital of Pakistan that is situated between the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Paktunkhwa. This city is divided into eight major zones: Diplomatic Enclave zone, Administrative

zone, Educational Sectors, Industrial zone, Commercial Areas, Green Areas, and Rural Areas. The city climate is humid subtropical climate with five seasons: Winter, Spring, Summer, Rainy Monsoon and Autumn. According to 1998 population census, the population of Islamabad is 8,05,235 inhabitants (PBS, 2014).

### **3.3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

This research is qualitative in nature. Therefore data was analyzed through information obtained from case studies. Then, findings were drawn and supported by previous literature on the same phenomenon to ensure validity. Results were divided in five major categories i.e. socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, determinants of child labor, workplace, health risks associated with child labor, and child abuse.

## **4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**

Considering the Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, it was found that majority of respondents were male. It was probably due to selection of specific areas or sectors (commercial areas). Situation may be different in domestic work. It was shown that involvement of male children was higher than female children in commercial areas of Islamabad. Then, majority of children were from Khyber Pakhtoon khwa (Peshawar, Sawabi), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Mohmand Agency, North Waziristan), and Afghanistan. Few children belonged to Punjab and Sindh also.

### **4.2. DETERMINANTS OF CHILD LABOR**

Various reasons of child labor in commercial areas of Islamabad came forth. The foremost reason was meager financial resources that pushed children into child labor to uplift low economic status of household. Moreover, some children were forced by family and some are voluntarily indulging into child labor for earning.

*“My father has lower income that is not enough to run our house therefore my mother advised me to help father in earning and sent me for work with my father.”*

(Case Study 3)

In line with the above findings, various studies also concluded that meager financial resources are one of the major determinants of Child Labor. Parents involve their children into labor to reduce risk of any interruption caused by loss of job by adult household member or to increase financial status (Guarcello, Mealli and Rosati 2002; Grootaert and Patrinos 1999; and Rena 2004). Basu and Van (1998) and Basu (1999) also supported the causality of poverty and child labor.

It is glare that Pakistan has been striving to counter terrorism within the country. This continuous warlike situation also forced many families to migrate specially from western borderline areas. This influx towards urban areas of Pakistan caused to increase child labor in larger cities like Islamabad.

*"Our village fell prey to terrorism. We left our home, land and school to save our lives. We had travelled many days and nights on truck and finally reached here. Now I am working rather going to school because we need money more than education."*

(Case Study 9)

Third major reason of child labor was lack of interest in education. Schooling and interest in education is one of important aspects that encourage child labor (Khan, 2000; Siddiqi and Patrinos, 1995).

*"Education is of no worth. I am earning and I am better than those who are unemployed after getting higher education, isn't it."*

(Case Study 5)

In Pakistan, majority of families are single-earners therefore in case of any disability/illness/death of breadwinner put that family into financial crisis. Consequently, a child comes to work outside for ensuring their economic survival.

*"Six months ago, my father was hit by an unknown car on a road in Gujranwala. Due to excessive bleeding he is paralyzed. Now he cannot work and he was sole breadwinner of the family. Being elder son, I had to work to sustain our livelihood."*

(Case Study 12)

#### **4.3. WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT**

Working conditions in which children were working were not favorable. Some children were working in open sky as they are exposed to extreme weather. Such extreme conditions threaten their health. Nevertheless, majority of children were working more than ten hours and few of them have even no breaks in the schedule.

*"Our breaks depend on work in workshop, sometimes we have even no time to take lunch."*

(Case Study 1)

Unfortunately, children working in auto workshops were more vulnerable. They were using mechanical instruments and work in hazardous situations. They were not well aware of basic hygiene and first aid in case of emergency/incident. Moreover, children were also hired as conductors in buses. In such labor, a child had to travel excessively.

*"I get up around six in the morning and go to bus stand where bus driver waits for me. Our bus route is from Gujar Khan to Faizabad. We complete two trips in a day on same route and I reach back at home around 11<sup>th</sup> o'clock at night."*

(Case Study 5)

#### **4.4. HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD LABOR**

It has already been shown from above findings that working conditions are not safe and healthy for children. Risks may be greater for such children in development stage. It was found in the study that children involved in child labor were facing different health problems. Due to work more than their capacity and long working hours, body pain and fatigue were common among those children. Children who were working in auto workshops often use mechanical instruments and involve in hard physical activities that may cause severe injury. In such hazardous situations, there is greater physical as well as psychological impact on children's health. In line with above findings, O'Donnell et. al. (2002) also found in their study that Child labor could have severe effects on child's health and psychological makeup.

#### **4.5. CHILD ABUSE**

It came into light that children working on workshops had higher ratio of abuse. They were often slapped by the owner, sometimes hit by the object, and face foul language during work. Child abuse is more common in child labor as majority of child workers were beaten up by their Boss/Ustad (Khan, 2000).

*“Once I remember that I plugged wrongly the fuse in car wiring. As my boss got to know that he threw Screw driver from distance that hit me hard on elbows.” (Case Study 14)*

Among them, children who live along with workshop workers were also bullied and snapped by elder co-workers. In case of children who were working on general/grocery stores said that customer’s behavior towards them was often annoying.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that existence of child labor cannot be denied in commercial areas of Islamabad. Moreover, child labor is an outcome of various reasons. Most dominant reasons are poverty, migration, lack of interest in education, and absence of adult in a family. Alarmingly, children who involve in child labor are exposed to various hazards. Exposure to hazards threatens their physical as well as psychological health. Additionally, abuse is also common among child laborers. Children are abused by various means like slap, hit by objects, snap and bullying. The presence of child labor in commercial areas is one of the emerging threats for the society. These areas are economically strong and they must be checked by the authority to eliminate child labor. In a nutshell, this grave situation risks future of many children working in Islamabad as laborer. They need immediate attention to restore themselves a healthy and productive unit of society.

#### **6. SUGGESTIONS**

There is a dire need to be vigilant on the part of government to address child labor based on zero tolerance policy. Following is the suggestions to eliminate child labor in Islamabad:

1. Education and sensitization is an important part to bring change. For eliminating child labor, multidimensional approach should be opted. All the stakeholders like parents, children, and owners should be sensitized through seminars, group meetings, and conferences in various places of Islamabad.
2. The capacity building of personnel of Government’s Ministries, Departments, and Civil Society Organizations working on eliminating child labor must be ensured so that they can better deliver their services and produce desirable results.
3. Technological infusion in larger cities is greater. Therefore, technology can be also a productive tool to aware people about menace of child labor. Firstly, Mobile is one of most effective tools in creating awareness on such issues. Public messages campaign could be launched through SMS service because mobile is most usable device across ICT level. Secondly, Fm radio can also be aired public service messages and roadside sign boards can also be placed to aware people that ultimately reduce child labor.



4. Child labor in industries is predominantly discussed but informal child labor like working on small shops, auto workshops, and roadside hotels is still unaddressed. It must be also consider and gather statistical facts about actual quantity of children involved in it.
5. Monitoring and inspections teams should be mobilized under concerned department to check child labor in Islamabad.

#### **Future implications**

In future, various aspects can be researched of child labor. Firstly, this study is limited to metropolis city of Islamabad. Similar studies can be conducted on other metropolitan cities of Pakistan. Secondly, detailed studies can also be initiated in each dimension of the current study. Thirdly and lastly, child labor is diversified phenomenon and exists in various forms. In this way, there is a need to conduct a comprehensive study to address all the possible dimensions of child labor.

## REFERENCES

- Basu, K. and Van P.H. (1998). The Economics of Child labor, *American Economic Review*, Vol. 88, N3, pp 412-427
- De Silva, D. H. (2007). Children needing protection: experience from South Asia. *Archives of disease in childhood*, 92 (10-), 931-934
- Desk. (2015, June 11). Against child labour: World's third largest underage workforce in Pakistan, *The Express Tribune*, Retrieved from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/901992/against-child-labour-worlds-third-largest-underage-workforce-in-pakistan/>
- Grootaert, C. and H. Patrinos. (1999). *Policy Analysis of Child Labor: A Comparative Study*. New York: St. Martin's, Press.
- Guarcello L, F. Mealli and F Rosati. 2002. Household Vulnerability and Child Labour, The Effect of Shocks, Credit Rationing and Insurance, UCW paper Florence. (Available at: [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=453900](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=453900)) Retrieved on 05th September 2016
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2007). *What is meant by child Labour. Elimination of child Labour*. ILO Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. (Available from URL: <http://www.ilo.ru/ecl/def.htm>.) Retrieved on 02th September 2016
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2010). *Accelerating action against child labour*. Global report under the follow-up to the ILO declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work. Report to the International Labour Conference, 99th Session. International Labour Office, Geneva. (Available at: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_126752.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_126752.pdf)) retrieved on 04<sup>th</sup> September 2016
- Khan, E. A. (2000) Socioeconomic Aspects of Child Labour- A Case Study of Children in Auto Workshops, *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, Vol.6, No.1 93-111
- Khan, H., Hameed, A., and Afridi, A.K. (2007) study on Child Labour in auto workshops of Peshawar Pakistan. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*. V. 13, No. 06
- Khan, R. I. (2000) Socioeconomic Aspects of Child Labour-A Case Study of Children in Auto Workshops *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, Vol.6, No.1
- Nafees, A. A., Khan, K. S., Fatmi, Z., Aslam, M. (2012). Situation analysis of child labour in Karachi, Pakistan: a qualitative study. *Journal of Pakistan Medical Association*, 62(10), 1075-1082. Available at: [http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan\\_fhs\\_mc\\_chs\\_chs/139](http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_fhs_mc_chs_chs/139)
- O'Donnell O., Rosati F.C. and E. Van Doorsaler (2002), "Child Labour and Health: Evidence and research Issues". Working Paper. Understanding Children's Work Inter-Agency Research Cooperation Project. Innocent Research Centre, International Labour Organization, United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank.
- Pakistan Bureau of Statistics*. (2016). Retrieved <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/other/yearbook2014/16-5.pdf>
- Rena, R. (2009) The Child Labor in Developing Countries: A Challenge to Millennium Development Goals. *Indus Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, 3(1):1-8 (Spring 2009) <http://indus.edu.pk/journal.php>

- Rena, R. (2007). Child Rights' Convention and Its Implementation. *Indian Ocean Digest*, 22 (1&2):1-11, (January- December).Hyderabad, (India): (CIOS), Osmania University, Hyderabad.
- Rena, R. (2009) The Child Labor in Developing Countries: A Challenge to Millennium Development Goals. *Indus Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, 3(1):1-8
- Sahu. K. K. (2013) An empirical study of Determinants of Child Labour, *International Journal of Science, Environment and Technology*, Vol. 2, No 3, 2013, 423 – 433
- Siddiqui, F. and Patrons, H.A. (1995). Child Labour: Issues, Causes and Interventions. Education and Social Policy Department Discussion Paper # 53. The World Bank, Washington, D.C

**Interview Guide**

**“Situation Analysis of Child Labor in Commercial areas of Islamabad”**

**Interviewee:**

**Date:**

Expected Total time: 15 mints

**Interviewer:**

<b>Time allocated</b>	<b>Area of questions</b>	<b>Interviewee response</b>
1 to 2 mints	Socio-economic background of respondents	
3 mints	determinants/ Reasons for Child labor	
3 mints	Working conditions/ Terms of agreement	
3 mints	Health issues	
3 mints	Child abuse	