

# The Dilemma of Child Labor Practice in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

**Nigel Kama**

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

**Budi Eko Soetjipto**

Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

**Puji Handayati**

Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

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## Abstract

*Child Labor is a controversial issues practiced in many developing countries. It is not a new phenomenon and has been observed over decades that, economic, society, culture and poverty forces poor families to send their children to work, which results in a serious problems. Child labor can leave many severe consequences on children and their families. In addition to that, children usually work to contribute and provide financial support to their families. This research paper provides child labor predicament in Port Moresby and their activities. Data has been collected from participants in Port Moresby including 2 Teachers, 5 Child Laborer, 5 Community/Society Leaders, 5 Parents and 1 company officer. The results from this study explain the reasons which forces children to work financial constraints, cultural tradition, society and poverty. This paper also recommended possibilities that governments, societies, and communities should cooperate in a better way with each other to reduce child labor.*

**Keywords:** Child Labor, Poverty, Culture, Society

## Introduction

Child labor use in developing countries continues to be a controversial issue often debated at international forums (Basu and Van, 1998; and Maskus, 1997). Child labor is generally characterized by low wages, long hours of work under dangerous, hazardous, unhealthy and unhygienic conditions, which could lead to poor physical and mental development (Kruse and Mahony, 1998). In fact, it is not a new phenomenon, but rather one, which was extensively practiced in Europe, particularly in Britain, during late eighteenth and early 19th century (Brown, 2001). The International Labor Office reports that children work the longest hours and are the worst paid of all laborers (Bequale and Boyden 1988). Though

restrictions on child labor exist in most nations, many children do work. This vulnerable state leaves them prone to exploitation.

Children are the greatest gift to humanity and Childhood is an important and impressionable stage of human development as it holds the potential to the future development of any society. Child labor is a serious problem and a challenge for many developing countries. Many countries have enacted various laws and have taken serious initiatives to eradicate child labor, but still the problem is very widespread throughout the world (Lee, 2007). Furthermore. The impacts of poverty and insecurity can lead to significant disruption in families, interruption to education, harm to health and nutrition, exploitation, harmful labor, migration and displacement. Children living in poverty lack protection from abuse, and get little support to recover from harm (Harland-Scott, 2016).

This paper aims to examine the role of child labor based on the financial constraints and to seek a better possibilities to reduce child labor practice. Under the existence of ILO Conventions and Labor Laws in Papua New Guinea (PNG), although child labor is not mentioned or implementation of the restriction and prohibition of children involvement in labor industry. Given current situation of child labor in Port Moresby, such an approach is strongly recommended to maintain public confidence in appropriate engagement of children's activities and, a better way of practicing child labor includes possibilities of engaging children to their appropriate age and their involvement accordingly.

### **Literature Review**

To sum up, the phrase "child labor" today is a pejorative term that differs from the broader and less value-laden "child work." In general, "child labor" refers to children under 18 years old who work in both the formal and informal sectors, in conditions that are harmful or potentially harmful to the child. Underpayment of children for their work and other forms of exploitation, are also included (Bachman 2000).

The international debate on what constitutes child labor and how working conditions can be improved has particularly been waged in the framework of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The 1973 Minimum Age Convention and the 1999 Convention to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labor cover the main topics that have been discussed over the years. In this regard, a continuum exists, ranging from acceptable to unacceptable forms of child labor (sometimes labelled as 'child work' versus 'child labor'). Tolerable might be 'light work which is not likely to be harmful to [children's] health or development, and which is not such as to prejudice their attendance at school', carried out by children of at least 13 years of age. Unacceptable are all kinds of abusive, exploitative and dangerous work, or as the 1999 ILO Convention stipulates, 'forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict'. This standard, which also includes the use of children for prostitution, and activities that are illicit or harmful to health, safety or morals, regards everybody younger than 18 years as child.

Although perceptions on child labor also depend on cultural traditions, levels of economic development, and social conditions, a wide consensus exists on the unacceptability

of the worst forms of child labor. This is shown by worldwide support for the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rapid ratification of the 1999 ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

There have been numerous cases of child labor use and abuse and thus, a number of organizations including the regional ILO office have called for an examination of child labor practices in PNG and the neighboring Pacific countries (Kaitani and Fatiaki, 2011). In Port Moresby the capital city of PNG, children from different sectors of the community are engaged in the worst forms of child labor including commercially workers are child workers, illicit activities and hazardous work involved. The solution to the problem lies in financial obligation, which refrain children to exercise in accordance to their age and ability. The Government and other organizations compliance with labor regulation must do the needful step to bring about a solution that minimize and given a better platform of controlling the practice of child labor. In a sense to put an end to poverty, illiteracy, narrow thinking, which can automatically end child labor.

### **Methodology**

The method of analysis is qualitative with case study approach. Primary and Secondary data was used for the purpose of this study. The primary data has been collected with the help of interview guidelines and observation record sheet from 2 teachers, 5 child laborers, 5 community/society leaders, 5 parents, and 1 company officer. Observation recorded by observation sheet as primary data alongside in depth interview result and primary documentation. The secondary source data collection is from parenting and child labor data from various reports on labor standards, statistics data of International Labor Organization (ILO), Department of Labor and Industrial Relation of PNG, and through ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor website online. Research location and the data collection was in Port Moresby the capital city of Papua New Guinea. Data analysis on this study done after the collection of data, transcribed all data as interpretation into written form.

Triangulation conducted to verify data objectivity. Methods and sources triangulation has used such as matching between depth interview result and observation result, also matching primary data and secondary data. Furthermore, researcher reduced the objectivity, by taking several expert and colleague opinion. Collected data had been classified, reduced and displayed, to make it fit and proper to analyze further.

### **Limitation of This Study**

This research is a case study that was difficult to collectively gather other information's from the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children. The discussion in this research hasn't been able to explain the exploitative of children rights. This phenomena can only be observed and it is difficult to identify whoever involving but this practice has been common and secretly done within the sex worker and whoever being as middleman. Another limitation in this study is that the researchers are unable to determine the reference or indicators of assessment on every aspect discussed, the objectivity of this study are only generated from triangulation between sources and methods.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **A. Laws and Regulations**

In 2015, Papua New Guinea Government made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government adopted the country's first National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor and commenced implementation of a new social program aimed at identifying children working on the street and ensuring that they are returned to safe living situations and to school.

Firstly, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relation (DLIR) distribute awareness in other access ways to bring the message across to all schools, churches, youth groups, associations, in order to alert the wider community of the global perspective of international children right's protection.

Secondly, the Department of Community Development (DCD) completed three studies (1993, 2000, 2010) on Street Children in PNG highlighting the issue of street children as an emerging social issue (Sali, 2010). The involvement of the department play important role been identified the core problem of street children. Regarding DCD initiative, also to continue develop awareness reaching street children by proactive community outreach programs.

Thirdly, some non-government organizations (NGO's) have assisted street children in many ways. These include assistance provided by the "Tembari Children's Centre" at 7 miles (Port Moresby), who provided them early education and served the children food and provided money. The "Save the Children Fund" also assisted children who had unwanted pregnancies, such as single mothers and those who were sent away from home. Another organization that assisted street children was the "Institute of Mercy" in Australia. It supported people living on the edge such as those living in poverty. The government assistance be provided to those organizations to push forward the tireless effort and minimize the problem.

Moreover, the laws do exist on child labor, the legislative review highlighted that these laws were usually silent and that the implementation of these laws was unsatisfactory, even though there was a structure in place for implementation. There are other legislatures that relate to child labor laws, some of which include; (IPEC, 2011)

- a) The Lukautim Pikinini Act 2009;
- b) The Apprenticeship and Trade Testing Act 1986, that sets the minimum age for apprenticeship at 15 years;
- c) The Mining Act that sets the minimum working age at 16 but does not allow females to work underground;
- d) The Defense Act that sets the minimum enlistment age at 18 years.

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 1).

**Table 1. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)	Implement and enforce child labor laws.
Department of Religion, Youth, and Community Development	Enforce the Child Bill ( <i>Lukautim Pikinini</i> ).
Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Sexual Offenses Squad	Enforce laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in illicit activities.

Source: Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2015

The International Labor Organization (ILO) issued the conventional acts that every country is participating would ratified with ILO to eliminate and eradicate child labor in its worst forms practices. There are two ratification child labor act which differentiate child labor and what it means; (a) child labor and working child (b) worst forms of child labor.

a) Child Labor and Working Child – comes under the ILO Convention Act Number 138. This act 138 ratified in national act number 1/2000 about minimum age to enter the work. The act clarified that under the age of 15 should be monitored and work under supervision, given light work, short period working hours, satisfactory wages, and safe working area. Specifically, the convention act 138 allows children to work and earn, developing their skills to be independent and productive in the future but should be in terms and conditions.

In the perspectives of PNG as one of the developing countries, people do belief in early age involvement of children in such activities could endure their future burdens and help growing mentally and physically stronger to be able to survive. PNG cultural and tradition system is stronger in case of early age experience to gain confidence. Mostly, children have been started working in such labor activities since at the age of 6 or 7. On the good side, if the working children involvement are not harmful and could earn a decent earning, that may develop them into independent and be productive. But the work turns out to be hard labor and unhealthy, it causes big problem in terms of depriving their ability and rights.

b) Worst Forms of Child Labor – comes under the ILO Convention Act Number 182. This act ratified under labor law number 13/2003 about elimination of child labor. The act clarified that child labor be banned and eliminated. Actually, the worst parts of child involvement needs to be eliminated are the extreme forms like child trafficking, slavery and sexual exploitation. Many children and even adults whom experienced in their childhood felt and regarded as outcast of surrounding community and the society. Children being migrated from other centers to the city are either forcefully without their consent or trafficking. Those are the ones who ended up in hard labor, i.e.... working as house boy/girl 24 hours a day with low wages, exchange for money by trading in early marriage especially girls, sex industry, and so forth.

Regarding the act 182, it is mentioned that children under 18 should keep away from engaging in life destruction activities and instead be formally educated and have some kinds of qualification skills to survive. Working at the early age by looking in a long run, it is not

helping children's rights to be part of this new era of technology and of course fit in the society. Therefore, children supposed to be mentored and nurtured, which can guide them through the process of learning.

## **B. Child Labor Predicament**

Many children have to work in order to be able to go to school and cover the direct costs of household income. ILO states that if a child combines school with work it might be difficult for him or her to attend school because of long hours work can interfere with class or homework (ILO, 2004). However, studies argue that child labor does not have an impact on children's school attendance. These include ; Omokhodion and Odusote (2006), they argued that child labor and schooling may not be linked because many child laborers who attend school also work , to enhance family income and school fees. . For children in Kenya, Moyi (2011) shows 45% of the children in the study combine work and education, only 5% of the children devote their time exclusively to work. Haile and Haile (2011) using survey data from rural Ethiopia show that boys are more prone to attend school and to combine school with family economic activity. However, girls are more apt to combine domestic work with school or involved in domestic work with no school attendance.

Port Moresby has become the fastest growing number of children employed than most other centers in Papua New Guinea (PNG). According to the government of PNG, approximately half a million children in the 6 - 14 age group do not go to school and are engaged in some occupation or others around PNG. 80% of the children work in hazardous conditions (UNICEF, 2014). A large number of children work in agriculture, companies, streets, industries and houses. Poverty has often been cited as the reason for child labor in PNG.

Studies have demonstrated that the most notable reason for this problem is being poverty (Bhat & Rather, 2009). Decisions about child labor and schooling are generally made by parents. If the family live below the poverty line, parents see children as part of contributor in their family income. Basu (1998) used a theoretical model of child labor, where he showed the only reason parents send children to labor is because of their low income.

Culture in PNG cuts off the common process. There is a belief that human beings grow and develop, get learning, become experienced, by doing a job. Why should someone wait until adulthood if all of these things can be achieved at a younger age? Furthermore, the child's self-autonomous is a necessity in PNG culture. In recent years, some organizations including NGO's, Human Rights Watch, did some surveys on unacceptable behavior of child being involved. It has concluded some of the fact in cultural traditions belief that children should practice in early age in order to be independent.

The economic conditions given the lack of family support and people have to survive within their income. In a family if one of the parents or either both parents earn an income, maybe the wages, the salaries or some income takings are not enough to cater for the entire family. That pushes children to do sort of unbecoming activities to help support when needed. No matter, how the family's economic situation, whether the family is poor or affluent, it has become a tradition for generations.

The findings of this research explains that the average daily income of child laborer is 15-30 USD or PGK 70-100. This amount of income does not include the earning of young sex workers. Although young sex workers included into the child labor category, they are special case. With such revenue, some of them are able to meet the necessities of living for three days, some of them able to give a living for families for one day and some of them can save for their school fees.

Regarding the young sex workers is another problem. Through the limitation of this research, this phenomena can only be observed and it is difficult to identify whoever involving but this practice has been common and secretly done by the owner of a brothel's and the sex workers. The children were engaged in commercial sex work or prostitution through different avenues: brothels, guest houses, night clubs, along the streets, in settlements, and through pimps.

But, one of the most frequently discussed is about the nature of willingness. A short explanation about willingness is: we cannot say even once, there is child labor practice, if those children are willing to do the work. The implication about this is the third parties who regard this as a problem, cannot restrict those children from any kind of work. Because they have self-confidence and feel the need to fight for their lives. And also some of them are proud if they can give something back to their families like siblings and parents.

The result of the interview and questionnaires to the teachers, children, parents, company officer and society/community leaders, it is very intense and difficult to automatically change a part of lifestyle in the society. In terms of society rooted, belief and the mindset of every individual cannot be quickly over turn or could not change their ability, practice and way of living. Children involvement in labor work is quite fascinating and parent's belief that it's a way of being helpful and contributing to ease the needs, so that it could immensely dissolve hardship and daily living standards. For those household that are in disorder and dysfunctional which the outcome being seen as children are the benefits and eventually paying the price by involving extremely in unwanted activities

A Basic Model of Household Decision-Making; A generic Becker (1981) type household decision model such as the one articulated by Rosenzweig and Evanson (1977), Pörtner (2001c), or Cigno and Rosati (2000) and summarized by Schultz (1997) assumes that the household acts to maximize utility, which is a function of the number of children, the schooling per child, the leisure time per child, the leisure of the parents, and a composite consumption good. Household Budget Constraints; as noted by Cigno and Rosati (2000), families that are liquidity constrained cannot spend the return on their investment in their children until they have entered the labor force. Once the oldest children in the family begin working, the household budget constraint is relaxed, permitting more investment in the human capital of younger siblings.

Consciously or not, training-kind education in PNG is more dominant than formal education. This natural training by parent to their children have similarity with one of development program in human resource management field. Just-in-time training, are

training's that is closely linked to the pressing and relevant needs of people by its association with immediate or imminent work activities. It is delivered as close as possible to the time when the activity is taking place (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The difference between natural training which child labor took and just-in-time is quite vast. First, formal education basis. This formal education basis is different between child labor and normal employee or laborer. Generally, normal employee/laborer had been take formal education in particular degree, while child labor has not been or currently undergoing formal education. Second, proper just in time training directed by human resource department, using procedural and structured method, while child labor directed by their parents and mostly by force. This force is taken as needed, until the children shifted from being forced to their willingness.

Furthermore, this natural training has made child labor skillful and experienced in the future. While formal education is deemed inadequate in PNG. Both of these things give parents consideration to determine the future of their children. When family economic conditions are inadequate, assessment of poor quality education in the eyes of parents, then they will train their children in the work environment. After all, the concept of learning by doing will be the winner of the dilemma between difficulty of earning a living as well as the expensive and poor quality of education in PNG.

## **Conclusion**

This research recognizes that in some actual circumstances, working can help children develop skills, maturity and responsibility, preparing them for the future including employment, parenthood and participation in adult society. This occurs when children of an appropriate age for the task, receive appropriate pay and work in safe environments, balancing work with school and play. Exploitative child labor however, does not have a positive effect on children's lives. Any work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, interferes with their schooling or exceeds a minimum number of hours should not be tolerated.

Many children that are vulnerable to harmful or exploitative child labor suffer extreme poverty. In many instances it is the norm for them to help support their family. When this work puts that child at risk of harm, the immediate and long-term consequences of this can have a negative impact on that child and also their family and community. To eradicate this harmful practice a complex and integrated response is required that discourages dangerous practices. This must include educating and informing communities about potentially harmful practices to a child's mental, physical and social well-being, providing alternative income sources for families and increasing access to education opportunities for children.

Based on the interview and data gained through questionnaires from the participants concerns and views on this research and researcher's suggestion that, suggested actions below are identified that could advance to reduce, avoid and elimination of child labor, including its worst forms in Port Moresby and other centers within Papua New Guinea to ensure.

*Legal Framework* - (1) Determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations. (2) Raise the minimum age for light work to 13 to comply with international standards and ensure that the law's light work

provisions are specific enough to prevent children from involvement in child labor. (3) Ensure that the law specifically prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. *Enforcement* - Make data on labor law enforcement publicly available, including the number of child labor violations found and the number of penalties imposed and collected. (2) Institutionalize training for labor inspectors, including training for new labor inspectors at the beginning of their employment and subsequent refresher courses. (3) Establish a mechanism to receive child labor complaints. (4) Strengthen the inspection system by ensuring that inspectors conduct routine or targeted inspections in addition to those that are complaint driven. (5) Provide inspectors with the resources necessary to enforce labor laws and other laws required to protect children from the worst forms of child labor. (6) Establish a referral mechanism between law enforcement officials and social services agencies to ensure that victims of child labor, including in its worst forms, receive appropriate support services. *Government Policies* - Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into existing policies. (2) Endorse the National Action Plan to address trafficking in persons issues, including the trafficking of children. (3) Implement the Universal Basic Education Plan to ensure that basic education is compulsory for all children and that the compulsory education age is equivalent to or greater than the legal minimum age for employment. *Social Programs* - (1) Institute programs that address the issue of sexual violence in schools to ensure that children, especially girls, are able to safely access education. (2) Monitor schools to ensure that extra educational fees are not imposed on children for the mandated term of free education, as defined by national policy. (3) Institute programs that assist children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in all relevant occupations or activities, especially commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work.

### **Recommendation**

Future researchers should seek to examine and review national laws regarding child labor. It is essential to know how the national law defines child labor. An employer needs to understand the content of the National Labor Code and other laws that relate to child labor. It is against the law for a company to break the rules concerning minimum age and hazardous work. The international definitions of child labor define the minimum age for different types of work, the worst forms of labor for those under the age of 18 and the criteria for light work. These definitions are set out in two International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions on child labor: Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Work and Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. (ILO Conventions, 1999)

Ensure that all workers in the business know how child labor is defined: in international standards, in the law of the country and in the sector in which the business operates. For example, they can look at the Constitution, child labor laws, regulation and ordinances, forced and bonded labor laws, occupational safety and health laws and regulations, minimum age legislation, etc.

In addition to the recommendation, while these issue continues to be growing concern in developing countries, there are some possibilities supporting the points given for these unfortunate children should be looked at in creating options to tackle child labor and put in

action. The first possibilities is to create more unions to protect and prevent against child labor. With more unions, more people will be encouraged to help against child labor and they will be aware of what is really happening inside the work force. Unions and grassroots groups are increasingly recognizing direct connections between worker rights and the fight against child labor. Second possibilities to stop and prevent child labor is to give education to these children. By doing this, these children will succeed in life and they will be occupied with going to school and not being forced to work. The only downfall to this option is that it will take time, money, and the cooperation of the government and community to build these schools and enroll these children. Third possibilities is to change how the public views this problem. If addressing issue can change how the people see what child labor does to the children, more people will be determined to stop it and want to help. And the final possibilities is to create a minimum family income. Many families need child labor or they wind up putting their kids out on the streets or selling them in order to survive. If there's way that can help these families come out of poverty and get a steady money income, more and more children won't have to work in these type of conditions.

However, considering the fact that the government would be the one who has to support this system, and the government may not be as enthusiastic about supporting such an idea. The government may not even have the capability to do so especially if it is a developing country and economically unstable. In addition, country like PNG has reputation of unstable government, politically driven agencies and in worst case; corruption occurs within every system of the country. It may take longer and need time but the better it addresses and starts, changes may happen within the next few years.

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### **Corresponding Author**

Name :Nigel Kama  
Affiliation :Universitas Negeri Malang  
Country :Indonesia  
Email :kuppwurayer@gmail.com

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