

Child labor processes in the city of Mashhad: A narrative study

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ABSTRACT

It has been more than a decade that the phenomenon of child labor has become a social problem in Iran. Though universal, it has certain features in every society. In the present study, the processes of child labor formation in the city of Mashhad as one of the cities of Iran have been investigated. The study population in this study were working children living in Mashhad in 2015. First, the files of 345 working children were reviewed through documentary method. A profile of the working children situation was provided. Then, the narrative research method was employed to find these processes and narrative interview technique was used to obtain the description of the lives of these children. After fifteen interviews, theoretical saturation was obtained. Sequential and fragmented sections that were effective in bringing children to work were then extracted as sub-narratives. In this way, the general processes through which child labor forms were determined in a pattern. The results show that most of working children have family support. This means that they turn to work and live on the streets while their families are aware of this. These children are driven to work on the streets in four processes of being a member of an immigrant family with economic poverty, having a family following labor culture, having irresponsible parents, as well as being a member of a beggar family. In all processes, there are interrelated factors at three macro, intermediate and micro levels that underlie child's labor. At the macro level, economic problems lead to the formation of two huge migration waves to the city of Mashhad. Poor immigrants settle on the outskirts of the city and are in an unfavorable economic situation. At the intermediate level, the critical living conditions of working children such as domestic violence, lack of access to education (especially among foreign immigrants), preference for work over education, the prevalence of having a begging-based lifestyle and addiction of family members can be mentioned. Findings of the study at the micro level emphasize the relationship between the working children and the offending or working peers. In these situations, working children may become addicted and be forced to work to pay for drugs, or be driven to work under the influence of their friends to gain economic benefits such as buying favorable snacks or playing games on the net at game centers. However, it was also found out that the children's families also benefit from and encourage them to work.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of child labor is a problem faced by all countries of the world. Statistics on the number of working children in the world are not accurate and clear. In 2008, the total number of working children in the world was estimated as 352 million. The geographical distribution of working children is 61% in Asia, 32% in Africa and 7% in the United States. About 117 million of these children do dangerous works. About 200 million working children are also required to do forced labor (International Trade Union Confederation, 2008). Another report was published in 2016 based on data from the International Labor Organization (ILO). The report states that there are 152 million working children between the ages of 5 and 17 worldwide, 73 million of

whom do hazardous work (International Labour Organization, 2017). About 40 percent of working children are homeless, and another 60 percent work on the streets to support their families financially (Fernandes & Vaughn, 2015). Contrary to what is believed, the phenomenon of child labor is not just a problem in developing countries; rather, working children are found in all parts of the world. However, developed economic systems and economies in transition have the least number of working children. (Hilowitz et al., 2004). But the phenomenon is more prevalent in developing countries, Africa, Latin America and Asia (Pinzón-Rondón, Hofferth &, Briceño, 2008; Lam & Cheng, 2012). Moreover, the situation of children in these countries is more critical and the workload and working hours of children are more (Ray, 2002; Doocy, Crawford, Boudreaux, & Wall, 2007; Beegle, Dehejia, &

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Gatti, 2009; Sim, Suryadarma, & Suryahadi, 2017).

The socio-economic structure of Iran as a developing country over the past 50 years has been formed in such a way that despite the decrease in the number of working children in the world, has had an increase in this number. In fact, the roots of the formation of Iran's socio-economic structure can be traced back to the 1960s. The rise in oil revenues and the resulting economic boom in the 1960s increased Iran's per capita income from about \$ 200 to about \$ 1000. This could record one of the highest economic growth rates for Iran (Iran Planning and Budgeting Organization, 1977; Looney, 1982), but it could not reduce the income level difference between the rich and the poor classes of the society (Graham, 1980; Mosleh, 1983; Pesaran & Gahvari, 1987). Land reform¹ nailed the last nail in the coffin of tribal-rural society. Land reform was able to eradicate the tribal and agricultural system, which had already fallen into disrepair (Gasirowski, 1992; Katozian, 1998; Furan, 2009).

With the collapse of rural and tribal construction and, as a result, land reform and the migration of villagers to cities, the phenomenon of informal settlements showed itself as a serious problem (Soodagar, 1990). The informal settlers suffered from a difficult economic situation and their living conditions were far removed even from the middle class (Kamali, 2002; Halliday, 1979). On the other hand, the regime's economic and social programs led to severe regional inequality, the widespread pattern of which in that period is evident in the dispersion of the country's industrial, medical and educational facilities (Abrahamian, 2010). The important point is that the Islamic Revolution took place in 1979 and the revolutionaries declared their support for the lower classes of society (Rafipour, 1997; Dadgar, 1998). But after a few years of revolutionary atmosphere and with the end of the war in 1989, a developmental government came to power. This government pursued privatization policies (Pesaran, 2000).

The result has been a continuing trend of rural-urban migration (urban population from about 30% in 1961 to more than 75% in 2019), informal settlements and neighborhoods (about 25% of the urban population) (National Statistical Yearbook, 2019) and an increase in the absolute and relative poverty rates in Iran (Raghfar, Babapour, & Yazdanpanah, 2016).

Also a consequence of this situation has been the growing number of working children on the informal settlements of cities. In the 1986 census, 315,000 children aged 6 to 14 were working (National Statistical Yearbook, 1986). In the 1996 census, this number reached to about 400,000 children (National Statistical Yearbook, 1996). According to the Labor Force Report, in 2017, about 500,000 children aged 10 to 17 were working (Labor Force Census Plan, 2017). One of the official statistics on child labor is their dropout rate. According to the 2016 Population and Housing Census, there are 2,386,112 children aged 6–19 who have dropped out of school, accounting for 14.7% of the total child population (Vameghi, Dejman, Rafiey, & Roshanfekr, 2015), but unofficial statistics put the number at more than 3 million (Vameghi, Rafiey, Sajadi, & Rashidian, 2011). According to the data of IRMIDHS², the number of working children in Iran can be estimated as between 1.6 million to 2.1 million (Iran's Multiple Indicator Demographic and Health Survey, 2015).

The increase in working children in recent years in Iran has not been limited to Tehran and has been observed in other major cities, including pilgrimage cities (Fouladian, 2014). Mashhad is the most important pilgrimage city and also the second metropolis of Iran. In this city, the shrine of Imam Reza as the most important religious shrine of Iranians is located (Marzolph, 2014). This shrine annually hosts nearly 30

million Muslim pilgrims (Eshaghi, 2015). For this reason, the economy of this city is mostly based on tourism and religious tourists.

In terms of geographical location, the city of Mashhad is located in eastern Iran neighboring Afghanistan. The presence of Afghans has long existed in the form of temporary and permanent migration to Iran for a variety of reasons, including linguistic and cultural similarities with Iranians, but in the last four decades, the three main waves of migration of more than three million Afghans have persisted in Iran (Rostami-Povey, 2007).

Among other cities, Mashhad has been the most important destination for Afghan immigrants for various reasons, including economic and religious reasons (Abbasi-Shavazi and Glazebrook, 2006). This wave of foreign migration along with the waves of domestic migration has caused the city of Mashhad to have the highest number of development of informality and informal settlements in Iran. In a way that more than 30% of the population of the 3-million population city of Mashhad are the poor informal settlers (Fouladian & Rezaei Bahrabad, 2019). In view of the above, it should be noted that the socio-economic structure and the development of informal housings and poverty in recent years has led to a continuous increase in child labor in the city of Mashhad. Accordingly, the situation of working children in Mashhad has become a social issue.

Therefore, in this study, the effects of socio-economic processes in the emergence of the phenomenon of child labor are identified. Identification of these processes is through recognizing the social, economic and cultural determinants and how these factors affect the incidence of this phenomenon. Moreover, the effect of children's family conditions on the formation of child labor and the social relations of working children with peers, parents, and etc. are investigated. Because the problem of child labor is a multifaceted phenomenon, it is necessary to pay attention to the processes that turn a child into a working child and lead him to work outside of the house.

The questions of this research are as follows: Which social conditions draw children to gradually work and be refrained from childhood and education? How are the main social processes affecting child labor in the city of Mashhad formed? In this study, first, by examining the files of working children in the Welfare Organization of Mashhad, a general description of the situation of these children is provided. Then, the social, economic and cultural processes affecting the phenomenon of child labor are identified; that is, how social, economic, and cultural processes co-shape the phenomenon of child labor are pinpointed.

2. Literature review

Child labor is not a trivial phenomenon; it remains a pervasive global problem, particularly in developing countries. According to the International Labour Organization (2013), one out of every six children aged 5–14 are engaged in child labor in the developing world. Since it is important to identify the factors affecting child labor, they have been studied and reviewed in previous studies. Various factors have been investigated in the literature. This has generated a large body of theoretical and empirical work trying to understand why altruistic parents would choose to send their children to work. Child labor is a multifaceted problem. Variety of factors contribute to the engagement of children in child labor. Key amongst them is the family and its character (Bowly, 1998). In industrial societies, most working children do not leave their homes because of social and economic problems, but to escape family problems, physical abuse, being neglected by the family, sexual abuse, and to get freedom “to work or live” on the streets. Researchers in India, Latin America, and South Africa have cited physical abuse and is the inability of parents to meet their expectations and their desire for financial independence as major causes for forming a street child. In Colombia, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, poverty and its consequences are also a major cause of children leaving home (Ali, Shahab, Ushijima, & de Muynck, 2004). In China, poverty in the first place and migration from rural to large cities in the second place are the main causes of

¹ Land reform was a law according to which land was taken from large landowners and divided as smallholders among farmers.

² Iran's Multiple Indicator Demographic and Health Survey (IRMIDHS) is performed every 5 years in Iran. Because this survey is a population-based study, it covers all aspects of child labor, including domestic work.

Table 1
Factors affecting the incidence of working children in past research.

Research	Influential factor	Factor type
Arezoomandi (2003), Ahmadi Khoei (2004), Ali et al. (2004), Golpazir Sorkheh (2005), Lam and Cheng (2008), Behdarvand and Mardasi (2013)	Migration	Macro and structural level
Wiencke (2008), Vameghi, Sajadi, Rafiey, and Rashidian (2014) Plummer et al. (2007), Akbari (2009), Sud (2010), Grugel and Ferreira (2012), Kayiranga and Mukashema (2014) Sud (2010), Jafarzadeh (2013)	Population growth, urbanization growth, suburban growth Poverty, unemployment and class inequality	
Grugel and Ferreira (2012) Pinzón-Rondón, Hofferth, and Briceño (2008), Zare Shahabadi (2009), Kayiranga and Mukashema (2014) Plummer et al. (2007), Afshani et al. (2012), Behdarvand and Mardasi (2013), Öncü et al. (2013), Kayiranga and Mukashema (2014) Jafarzadeh (2013) Hosseini (2006), Akbari (2009), Zare Shahabadi (2009)	Being rejected from home, being socially rejected, being rejected from education Weakness of the government in caring for working children Parental violence against the child, parental violence and conflict with each other, parental addiction Addiction, family breakdown, parental imprisonment, parental divorce	Intermediate level and social environment
Aranciola, Aransiola, Bamiwuye, Akinyemi, and Ikuteyijo (2009), Mathur, Rathore, and Mathur (2009), Lam and Cheng (2012), Zarezadeh (2013) Hosseini (2006), Reza (2016)	Being rejected from the family Family dimension, parents' education, monthly family income, father's employment status, mother's employment status Child personality, ability and mental capacity of the child to deal with life problems, puberty problems and their consequences, children's adventure on the street Enmity and resentment between the child and the father, enmity and resentment between the child and the mother, corporal punishment of the child at home, discrimination between children in the family, corporal punishment of the child at school	

working children. Family problems such as parents' separation, family conflicts, abuse and being neglected are of secondary importance (Cheng & Lam, 2010). In Brazil, poverty and violence are synonymous with the concept of working children. On the one hand, children are neglected and abused to help support their families, their parents' unemployment, to move to cities, and on the other hand, children are taken to the streets in search of freedom and to do creative and entertaining activities (Rosenblatt, 2012; Fernandes & Vaughn, 2015). Makiva (2009, Quoted from Naterer & Godina, 2011) identifies the absence of parents, unemployment or imprisonment, abusive behaviors, violence and alcoholism of parents as factors in the prevalence of child labor. Studies in Rwanda have highlighted the political and social situation, cultural challenges due to genocide, child dropout, family conflicts, family absenteeism due to death or imprisonment, poverty, scarcity and lack of food and basic needs lead to child labor (Tudoric-Ghemo, 2005; Kayiranga & Mukashema, 2014). Similarly, research in Pakistan and Bulgaria present similar factors such as poverty, large families, urban sprawl, domestic violence, expulsion from school, dropout, unsupportive and neglectful parents, have shaped the phenomenon of working children (Ali et al., 2004; Tudoric-Ghemo, 2005). In terms of family and behavioral factors, issues such as disintegration of and disruption to the family as a social organization, the absence of proper roles in the family, lack of parental care, parents' divorce, absence of parents, a feeling of insecurity in the family due to behaviors such as parents' quick temper and reproach and blame from parents, physical abuse by parents, substance abuse in the family, children's dependence upon parents, the inability to withstand family demands due to low age, and finally, a lack of necessary care in the family. Economic factors such as poverty, the inability of family to finance children, and lack of food are contributing to the process of child labor (Plummer, Kudrati, & Yousif, 2007; Sud, 2010; Kayiranga & Mukashema, 2014).

Based on what has been presented in previous studies many factors have influenced the incidence of working children. These factors can be classified into three levels: 1. Macro and structural level (general, social, economic and cultural) 2. Intermediate level and social environment (such as family, parents, household assets, etc.) 3. Micro level and Individual (such as gender, the child's feelings for others, the child's behavioral experiences, etc.). Table 1 presents these factors along with the components affecting them.

One of the structural factors mentioned in studies conducted in Iran is the issue of migration and urbanization (Arezoomandi, 2003; Ahmadi Khoei, 2004; Golpazir Sorkheh, 2005); accordingly, the phenomenon of working children is a by-product of a society that is exposed to wide-spread migration and rapid urbanization. The results of research show that in Iran, under the influence of two patterns of migration (from Afghanistan³ and Pakistan) and domestic (from villages and small towns to large cities), a rapid growth in the population of these cities has been witnessed. One of the negative results of urban growth is the large number of poor people who live on the outskirts of cities and in informal housings without adequate facilities (Sheikhani & Amanian, 2010). These individuals live in the realm of economic-social life of cities but are not integrated into the social system of the city. Their lack of professional skills and their inability to join the formal relations of the city's economy and constant unemployment make them more vulnerable than others (Aghabakhshi, 2002).

As shown in Table 1, based on the results of various studies in Iran (for example, Hosseini, 2006; Akbari, 2009; Zare Shahabadi, 2009), variables related to the economic status of the family have a serious impact on child labor. Depression, anger, anxiety and frustration of parents in the face of poverty, unemployment, social alienation and lack of basic services, lead to violent and abusive behavior with children and forces children to run away from home. In such a situation, lack of facilities to promote children to a better situation, such as lack of access to educational facilities and tuition fees, along with the lack of support from families bring about persistence of child labor on the streets (Sud, 2010; Jafarzadeh, 2013). This is especially evident among two groups of families of working children: first, Afghan immigrants who are in Iran illegally, and second, Iranians who do not have an identity card. Both groups are denied access to formal education and therefore have to send their children to the labor market (Zand-Razavi and Rahimipour Anaraki, 2011). It is worth noting that about ten percent of the population of Mashhad are Afghan immigrants or people without identity documents.

Some children also suffer from unfavorable family situations such as

³ The number of legal Afghans living in Iran is one million and 27 thousand and the number of illegal Afghan refugees is estimated to be between one and a half to two million people (Shahni, 2010). At least a third of them are under the age of 18 and are generally forced to work.

breakup, addiction and violence. These are effective in making children work; In Iran, parents of 29.3% of children are divorced or separated without a formal divorce (Vameghi et al., 2011) According to the findings of Roshanpajooch (2003) about 62% of these children have been abused by their families. Arezoomandi and Roshanpajooch's study (2010) also shows that 70% of the street children that they have studied have experienced corporal punishment in the family; Punishment was 22 percent among poor non-street children with similar experiences.

At the individual level, these severe punishments and difference in treating among children by parents have created a feeling of discrimination and enmity between the child and parents, and this has led the child to gain financial independence through running away from home and working on the streets (Hosseini, 2006; Reza, 2016).

3. Methodology

The characteristics of the research topic and the nature of the research question determine the choice of research methods; therefore, two methods have been used to study the child labor processes, documentary method and narrative analysis method. Using the documentary method, the files of working children kept in the centers of Mashhad Welfare Organization⁴ were examined. Each of these children has a complete case file in the welfare organization. In this study, data from 345 cases of child labor in 2015 were analyzed. In this study, among the qualitative approach methods, the method of narrative analysis has been used to discover the processes⁵ that lead to child labor. In this method, the initial situation is described first (i.e. where did the story begin?). Narrative events are then selected from a multitude of experiences and presented as a coherent set of events (how did the events occur one after another?). At the end of the events, the situation is plotted (what happened?) (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). In narrative analysis, the researcher collects descriptions of events or happenings. Then, he presents them as a story using a plot (Tolouei & Khaleqpanah, 2008). This analysis helps in identifying the life history of these children and the factors that have led them to be working children. Finally, the models of child labor processes are extracted.

In this study, in order to analyze the narrative, narrative interviews conducted with working children admitted to "Shahid Arab Working and Street Children's Center" are considered as a narrated story. These stories stem from children's experiences in their lives. There is a temporal connection in these stories; in this way, we started asking each child open-ended questions about their family characteristics and information, and we tried to recount their childhood memories in chronological order so that we could identify the main events of their lives. In process analysis, the stages of emergence/continuity, accumulation, turning point, absence and unique characteristics of individuals in different periods of life have been considered.

Two methods of theoretical sampling and temporal sampling have been used. In theoretical sampling, the samples are selected consciously according to the objectives of the research and to cover the whole research problem (Flick, 2012). Therefore, in order to select children for interview, the files of children kept in a welfare center were first examined. The children who were present at the center when the

researchers were present and who wished to be interviewed were then selected for interviews. We tried to interview as many children as possible who had different social backgrounds. For time sampling, children who were kept in the welfare center at different and not the same time periods were selected. Each child was kept in the research center for less than two weeks. Based on this, a total of fifteen interviews were conducted to outline the general processes of child labor.

4. Research procedure

After coordination with the Welfare Organization of Mashhad and passing the administrative steps, a letter of permission was issued to interview the working children of the Shahid Arab Center. After referring to this center and explaining the purpose of the research to the experts of that center, the necessary arrangements were made to interview the working children admitted to the Shahid Arab Center. The researchers were then introduced to the children as new educators so that they could communicate more easily and we could obtain real information about their lives and the process of starting work through in-depth narrative interviews.

The researchers were at the center for about two months from morning to evening. About a week we were able to connect well with these children and start conducting interviews. The interviewees were young children; therefore, it was not possible to conduct in-depth long interviews. As a result, interviews had to be conducted in two, three, and sometimes four rounds. This could also verify the statements of the interviewees. On the other hand, it deepened the interviews. In these interviews, the child was asked to tell his or her life story. During this narration, purposeful questions were asked; Questions about family members, the child's condition and the general course of life. By asking these questions, an attempt was made to completely reconstruct the child's family history, how the child's life went, and how the child started to work. In all interviews the goals of the session were clearly and comprehensibly explained to each child. The researchers emphasized the children's right to participate in the study. The researchers also took the children's oral consent for the interviews. The children were asked to participate in the interview with pseudonyms without their last names. Children were also free to enter or leave the interview at any time.

In this study, following Cresswell (2012), the following strategies have been used to increase the validity and reliability of research data:

1. Describing when there is little inference: In this study, the authors of the paper have provided a rich description of the process of child labor in order to better understand and deepen the research findings by providing evidence, examples and quotes from interviews with working children.
2. Researcher's angles: The interviewers' experiences of how to deal with and talk to working children were exchanged between the interviewers themselves. The interviews were coded by three coders. The codes were then compared and standardized during the exchange process.
3. The researchers' long-term engagement with the research environment and their constant observations in the research environment, including trusting with the children, learning the culture of that environment and controlling misunderstandings caused by the researcher or research informants (such as welfare experts and helpers working in the center who were in contact with the children)
4. External diagnosis: During the research, the members of the research team studied the findings and expressed their opinions; therefore, external raters were involved in the development of the research.

⁴ Every year, about 400 to 600 working children are gathered through social institutions from the city of Mashhad and are organized in the Shahid Arab boarding center for a short time to be either returned to their families or be taken care of in welfare centers according to the situation of their families.

⁵ Process means that sequences of action or interaction that are related to a phenomenon are formed and expanded over time (Strauss & Corbin, 2012, p. 145). A process can be thought of as a progressive chain of actions or interactions that change over time and space, sometimes in response to a situation or context, and sometimes it remains constant. This action or interaction may be regular, intermittent, sequential, or coordinated, and in some cases chaotic. What constitutes the process of action or interaction is its progressive nature and its various forms, and the advancement of all related components towards a single goal (Strauss & Corbin, 2012, p. 185).

Table 2
Interviewed working children features.

Pseudo name	Age	Education	Work type	Work reason	Description
HAMIDREZA M	9	illiterate	Beggary	Parental coercion	Addicted parents
RAMIN M	15	illiterate	construction/ Beggary	Stepfather coercion	Divorce of parents and living with stepfather
SAJJAD	10	illiterate	Beggary / Theft	Family financial needs	Addicted and begging father
SAEED	10	Dropout	scavenging	Brother coercion	Father's disability
ISMAEEL	12	Elementary	Selling flowers	Living alone	Escaped from home and lives in the park
MOHAMMAD	14	illiterate	Beggary	Paying for addiction	Addicted father, mother and child
MORTEZA	12	illiterate	Selling omens and dua	Family needs	Emigration from Afghanistan
MIRZA	15	Elementary	Street peddling	Personal interest in work	Emigration from Afghanistan
MIKAEEL	12	Studying	Street peddling	Family needs	Addiction and then the bankruptcy of the father
ABBAS	10	illiterate	Street peddling	Living alone	Divorced parents and ran away from home
ASGHAR	11	Dropout	Street peddling / Beggary	Father and brother coercion	Mother addiction and father unemployment
MOHAMMAD JAVAD	12	Dropout	Beggary	Living alone	Father imprisoned and ran away from home
YAHYA	11	illiterate	Gum selling	Father coercion	Mother's death and father's addiction
BESMELLAH	12	Dropout	Flowers selling	Interest in having financial independence	Emigration from Afghanistan
AMID	11	Dropout	Street music performing	Family needs	Living on the outskirts of the city

4.1. Identification and categorization of the factors related to the formation of working children in interviews

As mentioned, in this study, fifteen working children admitted to the care center for working children were interviewed. The characteristics of the interviewed working children are summarized in Table 2.

4.2. Overview of the situation of working children in Mashhad (Findings of cases in welfare centers)

After extracting useful materials and indicators from 345 cases of working children of Mashhad Welfare Organization, the most important descriptive findings were as follows: The highest age group of working children with 44%, were children in the age group of 12–15 years. Also, the lowest age group of working children with 8% were children in the age group of 7 to 8 years. These values indicate that in the cases reviewed, the maximum age at which these children were used by their families or relatives was 12 years or older. In the cases reviewed, 56% of the children had primary education and 24% of them were illiterate. Only 20% of the children had secondary education. This finding indicates that the opportunity for education of these children is very limited due to the conditions created for them. In addition, 68% of these children had dropped out of school. 16% of working children could not enroll in school due to economic and cultural poverty of the family and other issues; only 16% of them were studying.

The data in the files showed that 80% of the fathers of working children were illiterate or had primary education. And only 20% of them had secondary education. Also, 86% of the mothers of these working children were illiterate or had primary education. And only 14% of them had secondary education. In general, the socio-economic level of the families whose children were working was very low.

The data in the reviewed files also showed that 62% of the working children had Iranian citizenship and 38% of them were Afghan citizens. Also, 68% of working children lived with their parents and the other 32% lived away from their parents.

It was revealed that 48% of these children were engaged in labor and manual work, 40% of these children were engaged in begging and 12% of them were engaged in street peddling.

Furthermore, 50% of the fathers of working children were employed. 38% of them were unemployed, fugitives or prisoners, and only 12% of them were self-employed, albeit having a low income. Fifty percent of mothers were housewives, 36 percent were low-wage workers, and 9 percent were beggars.

It was found out that 72% had no history of addiction and 28% of whom had a history of addiction worked to pay for their addiction. Also, more than half of child caregivers (52%) had a history of drug addiction. Addiction of family heads is important; because families

have to pay for the addiction of family members in addition to living expenses. In most cases, these costs are borne by the children.

Based on the examination of the files of working children of Mashhad Welfare Organization, 56% of working children lived in large families. 32% of them lived in families with a medium population (4 or 5 people). Only 12% lived in lowly populated families; Of course, it should be noted that the number of family members is effective in increasing the cost of living; therefore, it is necessary for the child to work.

It was also found out that 44% of the parents of working children had a history of divorce. Accordingly, lack of stability in the families of working children is very significant. Also, more than half of the parents of working children (51%) had a history of remarriage.

In the following section we examine the distribution of the residence of working children with files in the Welfare Organization of Mashhad.

Based on the analysis of data on the residence of working children in Mashhad, it is clear that most working children live in Bahonar, Al-Timur, Sheikh Hassan, Rade Meysam and Mehriz. All these neighborhoods⁶ are considered to be the most marginal where the lowest urban groups live. These neighborhoods are also considered to be the living quarters of Afghan refugees and the families without identification documents (see Fig. 1).

4.3. General processes of formation of a child labor

To extract the process models of child labor, the story and narrative of each child was first drawn in the form of a linear model. Individual models were then compared and merged based on causal commonalities to highlight “central stories” and central processes. In the end, four main and axial models were developed. Although the general processes of child labor have overlaps, in this section, among the factors of child labor, several ideal types are constructed based on Weber's definition of the ideal model.

Accordingly, the four general processes of child labor are abstracted and depicted, and it is possible that child labor might be a mixture of these processes or only involve one of these processes; For example, a child who has moved with his family to Mashhad due to economic poverty from another country and whose parents are addicted, has had a combination of two or three of the processes affecting his labor. This abstraction separates different facts from each other to show how different factors affect child labor. Parts of social reality that are presented in the four general processes of child labor are highlighted.

In fact, although the authors believe that social reality always includes various causal factors as well as contextualization, this abstraction and typification leads to two effects. Firstly, further emphasis on

⁶. Mashhad has 154 neighborhoods.

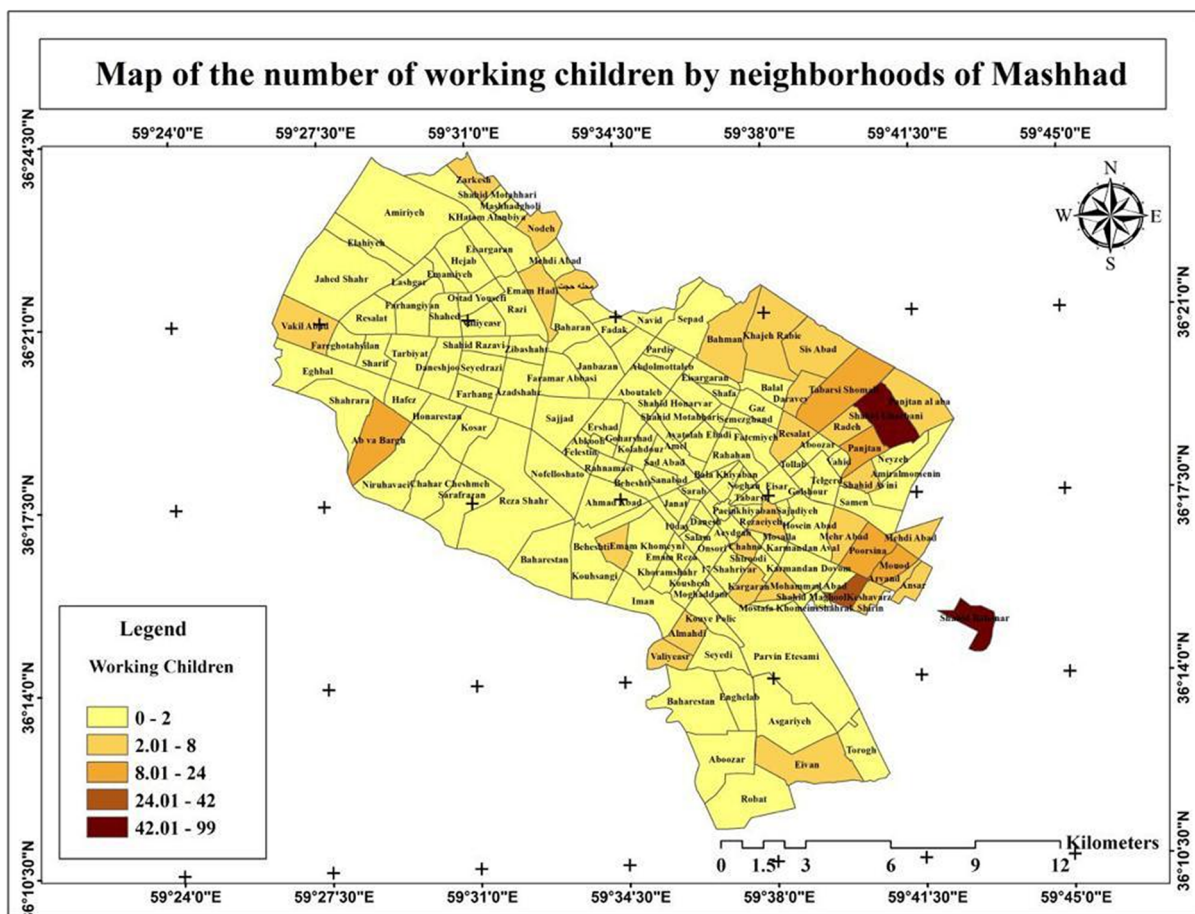


Fig. 1. Map of the number of working children in the city of Mashhad by neighborhoods.

some causal factors is put. Secondly, through typology, the effect of different causal factors (which are different according to the conditions and are important in terms of type) can be extracted (see Chart 1).

4.4. An explanation of the first process of formation of child labor: the economically poor migrant family model

The child's family migrates due to unfavorable economic conditions (economic poverty at the origin). Most of these relocations are from villages or surrounding cities to central cities and Mashhad is one of the main cities and destinations. However, for Afghan families migration occurs from one country to a central city in Iran.

After the child's family migration, the father turns to some low-income manual labor (family economic poverty at the destination) due to illiteracy or lack of work skills (family cultural poverty). A decrease in the child's family income causes the family to face difficulties in earning a living and this leads to the father's lower position in terms of social status.

These conditions, along with parents' addiction, will hinder the provision of adequate welfare facilities for the child; thus, potentially depriving the child of parental supervision (irresponsibility and lack of parental supervision).

The factor of irresponsibility or absence of parental supervision affects this model in three ways

4.5. The first sub-process

The negligence of addicted parents for the children in the family will result in their addiction. The addicted child can no longer continue education. Therefore, the child has to work in order to pay not only for his drugs but also the parents'.

Mohammad: "My parents were addicted and used drugs in my presence. My mother has been using opium to calm me down since I was born. My body was getting used to it. "Drug abuse is not so enjoyable but if you don't use it you will have severe pain in your bones..... One night I had little money to buy meth (Methamphetamine), I said to myself I will wait even until morning to get the money to buy meth".

Morteza: "My mother was addicted. When I was 5 years old, my mother used to send me to buy drugs. After half an hour that my mother would use her drugs, she would leave home and I would go and use the remainder. When I used drugs I had no mood for studyinglittle by little I dropped out of school and my mother would not say anything because I would work instead. Now that I work and pay for her drug we use drugs together".

4.6. The second sub-process

The child's family migration due to poor economic conditions forces them to live in poor suburban neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are generally occupied by addicts with whom the child starts socializing. Therefore, the presence of addicted parents or relatives along with living in the suburbs of Mashhad, are considered as the most important factors underlying the child's addiction. Interacting with addicted acquaintances leads child's addiction and the child has to work to pay for drugs. This will make him/her a working child.

Ramin: "My stepfather was addicted and was always at home. He forced me to work to pay for his drugs. After a while, he told me to use drugs to feel good and be able to work. I had good feeling the first days I went to work. I would work better. By the way, my friends also use drugs. After a few days I was trapped. I had pain when I didn't use drugs so I did it again. Now I need to work every day to pay for my and my stepfather's drug".

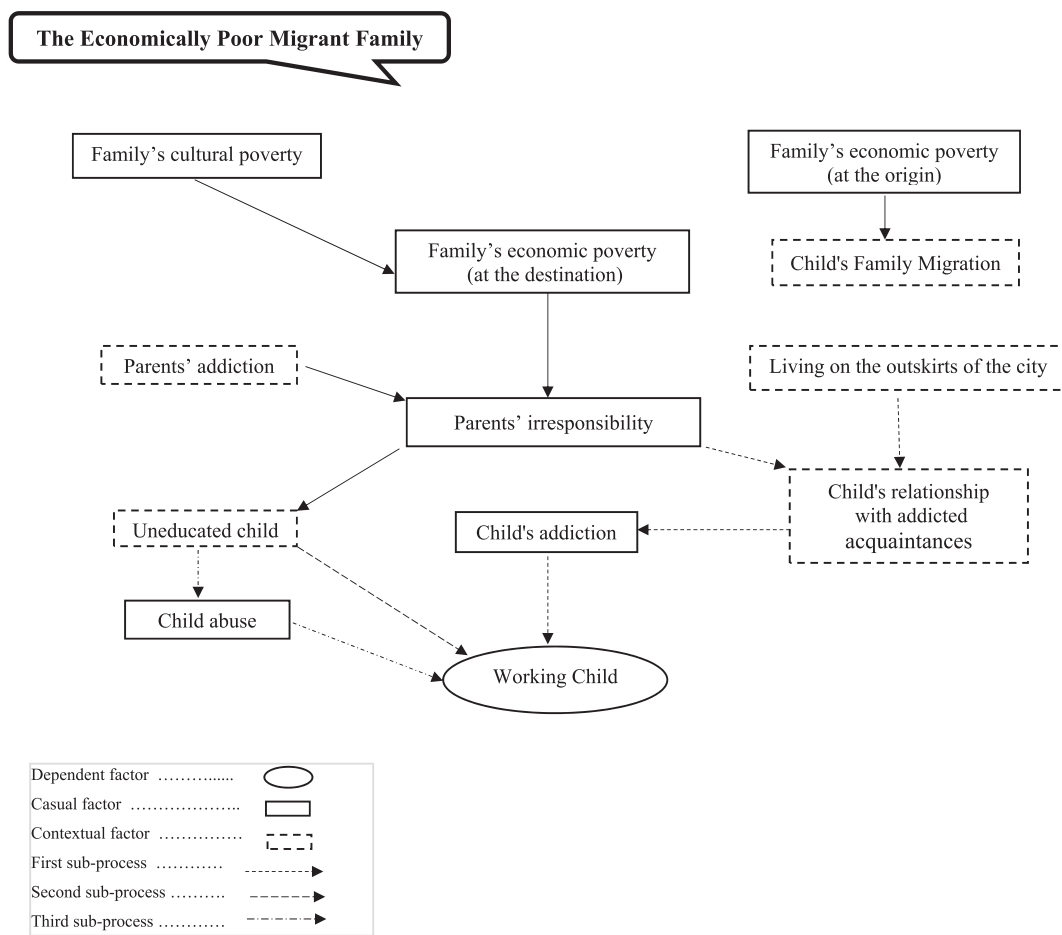


Chart 1. The first process of formation of child labor.

Hamid Reza: “my mom and dad are both addicted. They use opium and meth. My mom goes to my aunt’s house who is also addicted during the day. My dad is a construction worker. He won’t give us any money to play or buy anything even if he earns money. He only buys drug and gives it to my mom to use every night.....I didn’t get education...the only work I can do is street peddling to buy drugs for myself and use beside my friends or sometimes go to game centers”.

4.7. The third Sub-process

After the addicted parents prevent the children from attending school (parents’ irresponsibility), they use them to support the family (child abuse). As a result, children turn to work due to parents’ force and this creates a working child out of them (see Chart 2).

Ramin: “When my mother became addicted, my father divorced her and he went to Tehran My mother married someone who was also addicted. My stepfather beat me at home One day he said you don’t have to go to school anymore He didn’t even buy bread for me and my mother to eat. ”My mother’s leg was broken. I had to work to pay for my mother’s food and opium“.

Saeed: “I was 7 years old. My father smuggled fuel in Sarakhs,..... When my father’s hand was shot, he could no longer continue smuggling and forced me to go to work ... I had to sell religious papers and so on...”

4.8. An explanation of the second process of formation of child labor: having a work culture family model

The working of most of the child’s family members, along with the

positive attitude of the child’s family network (immediate family and relatives) toward working and the appreciation of child’s working in the family network (if the man does not work, he is not a man and is not honorable), motivates the child to show a desire to work (the subculture of working).

Morteza: “Sometimes my father tells me to go and work to become a man. My uncles and aunts encourage me and tell me to go and work. They say that if you go and work hard and you will learn something, it will benefit you in future, so I work. I spend half of my income myself and I give half of it to my mother to spend for the house expenses”.

Mikaeel: “I do not get tired of working and my mother loves me very much and encourages me. I am never tired of working anymore. In general, I feel good when I work. My mother is happy with me when I go home from work. This motivation built in the child by his family members and his family network allows him to communicate with other working children (communicating with working peers). In other words, due to the subculture of working in the child’s family network and the positive attitude of this family members and the family network to work, the child acquires a positive attitude to working. Furthermore, this positive attitude inspires the child to work.

Mirza: “Many Afghan children do peddling. All the children in our family work. My cousins work as construction workers ... my cousin sells handicrafts ... and I like to work and peddle”.

Amid: “I am a peddler. My brother also sells omens near the shrine of Imam Reza. My cousins do business like us. They sell on the road (highway). There the municipality cannot arrest them.”

Two factors are the basis for the child to spend his free time (due to dropping out of school) with other working children (the child’s relationship with peers): on the one hand, the child’s family living on the

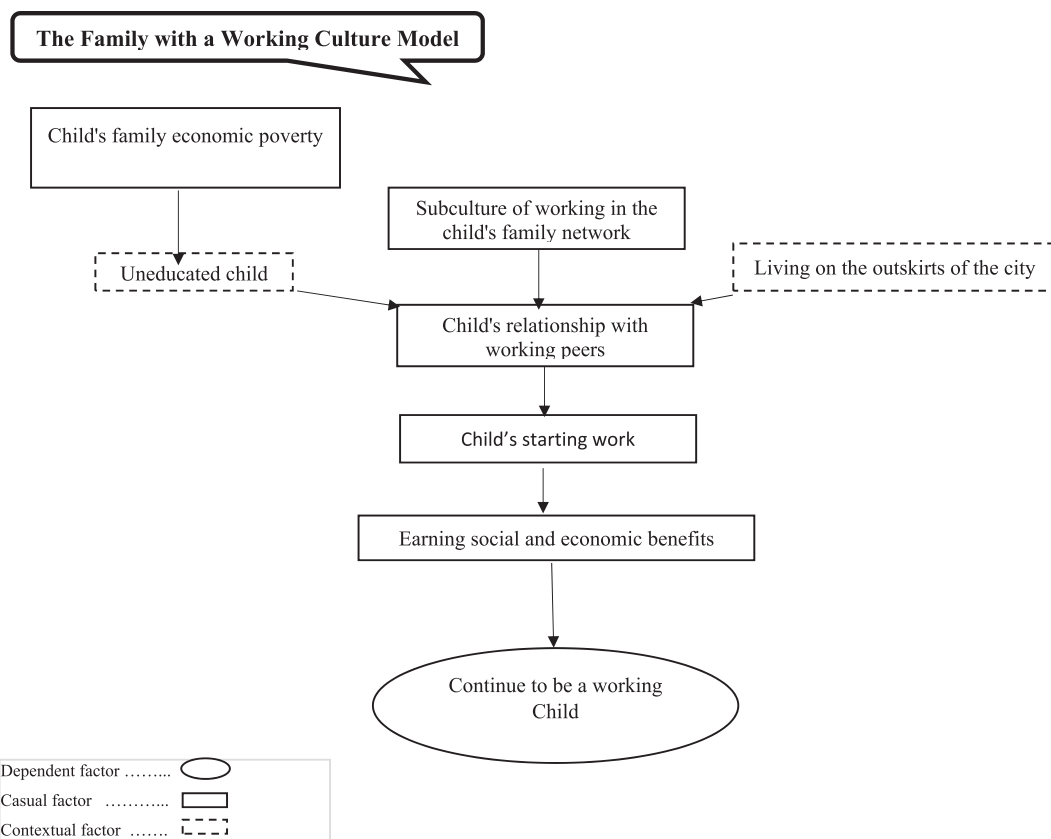


Chart 2. the second process of formation of child labor.

outskirts of the city and on the other hand, the child's dropping out of school due to family financial problems.

Morteza: "I am the eldest son in my family. My mother is sick and my father is a worker. Any money he earns, is spent to treat my mother's disease I could not go to school because I did not have a birth certificate, so I was always in the streets whole day to night... one day our neighbor's sons who were going to sell chewing gum asked me to join them.....When I found out that I can earn a good amount, I started to go to work..... I am happy that I can earn money for my family, so that my siblings can eat something".

Besmellah: "Most of our families from Afghanistan live in Iran; as we cannot enroll in schools, most of our relatives' children work here and I also sell chewing gum"

As is the process continuing, while the child communicates with working peers, he/she is informed of the ease of earning money. This easiness makes the child eager to work. The child earns a good profit after working for a while. Making a good profit helps the child to have fun (gaining social and economic benefits).

Yahya: "When I knew that while selling chewing gum, people would give a 5000-toman bill for a chewing gum of 1000-toman worth and would not take the change and would donate it, it was very good".

Ismaeel: "When I sold my flowers, I earned 90,000 tomans a day. I used to go to game centers and play with the money".

In general, the ease of earning money by the child brings him financial independence. These benefits allow the child to continue working and not to give up (see Chart 3).

Besmellah: "I went to work on 17th Shahrivar Street with our neighbor's son. We entered a two-story market. There, an apprentice in one of the shops taught us how to sell religious papers or. Then we went to the street and said sir! Buy religious papers, madam! Buy religious papers "And I

sold two religious papers which was worth 500 tomans In the first hour, I sold two thousand four hundred tomans, the income was good."

4.9. An explanation of the third process of formation of child labor: Irresponsible parents model

The illiteracy or low literacy of the father (cultural poverty) and his incompetence causes his involvement in false jobs earning a low income. Ultimately, this leads to unfavorable economic conditions in the family (economic poverty of the family). This economic poverty creates tension in the child's family (family disorder).

Mikaeel: "My father was a construction worker, whatever he earned, he would spend on drugs. My mother had no money ... She was always fighting for a piece of bread in our house ... I decided to go to work myself".

Hamid Reza: "My father is a worker and he did not give me any money and my mother was hungry herself ... My mother argued with my father because of me, but he beat both of us".

Once a family disorder develops, the parents do not pay attention to their child and they do not support the child's welfare and finance (parents' irresponsibility). As a result of this irresponsibility, the child seeks to earn an adequate income so that he or she can become financially independent and have fun as a child (gaining social and economic benefits).

Hamid Reza: "I was hungry and there was nothing to eat in our refrigerator. I went to the street and begged. I begged and used the money to buy bread and ate it. I was hungry".

Mohammad Javad: "My hair was long, but my father did not give me 5000 tomans to go to the hairdresser to cut my hair. Then, I finally begged myself. I made 35,000 tomans in one day and went to cut my hair ... I went to the game center and spent the rest of it on playing".

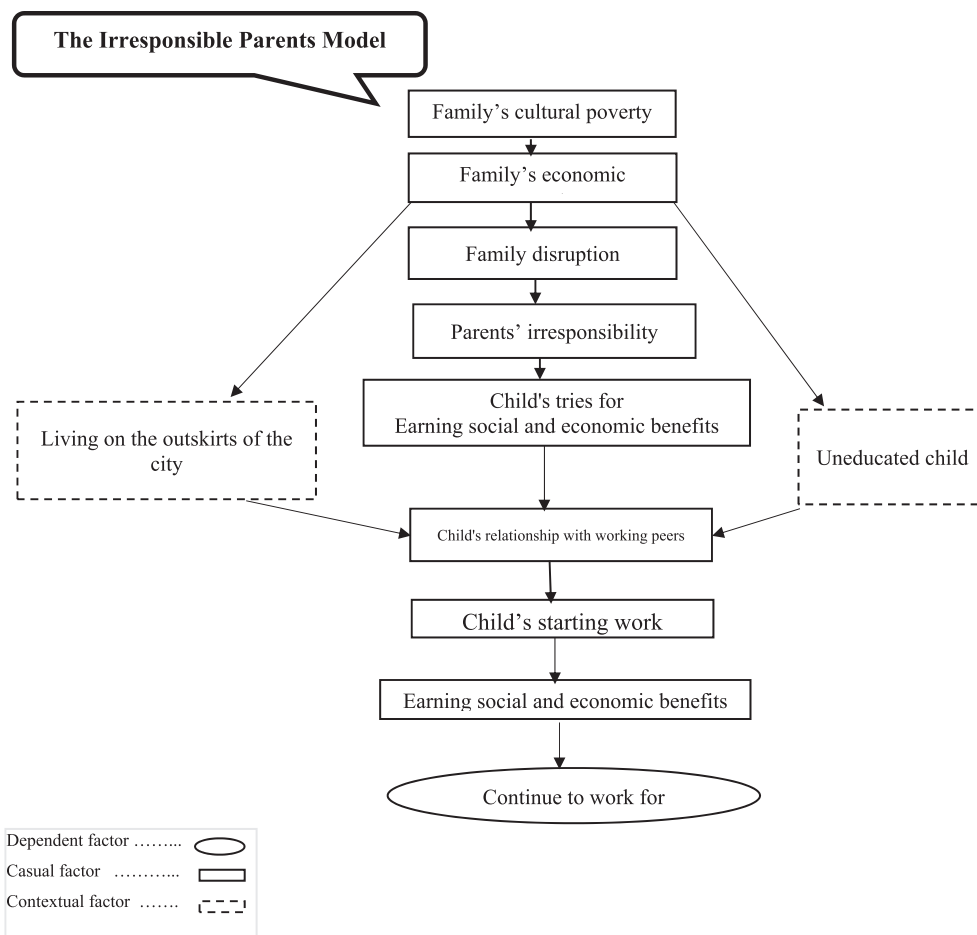


Chart 3. the third process of formation of child labor.

Subsequently, the child tends to connect with other working children for to gain an easy income (the child's connection to working peers). It is worth mentioning that the two factors of living in the suburbs and the child's lack of education facilitate the formation of this connection.

Amid: “Where I live, all the children work and most of the families are not in a good condition. I made friends with some children and went for selling chewing gums with them. I have now learned and work. The income is good”.

The many social benefits of working make it possible for the child to work and continue to work and not to give up easily (see Chart 4).

Sajjad: “When I used to sell chewing gum with my friends, after work we would go to the game center in our neighborhood. I used to play football there. I like football very much. My neighborhood kids call me Messi (the famous footballer). Then, I would take 5000 tomans of money to play in the game center and to buy snacks and football give the remainder to my mother”.

Having a culture of begging in the family means that the child's family members are engaged in begging. Parents then use the child as a workforce to support themselves (parents' instrumental use of the child).

4.10. An explanation of the fourth process of formation of child labor: the beggar family model

Having a begging culture in the family means that the child's family members are engaged in begging. Parents then use the child as a labor force to provide living expenses (parents' child abuse).

Ali Asghar: “I am 11 years old; I have been begging with my mother for about 7 years now. My mom uses meth and didn't let me go to school. My sister studied up to the sixth grade. She dropped out of school and is now begging with my mother and me. My elder brother takes his wife and his newborn uptown to beg”.

Also, child abuse stems from another process. The divorce of the parents and the remarriage of one of them makes the child to stay with a single parent (dysfunctional family). This problem is exacerbated by the addiction of one of the parents. Because the child's family is in disarray, the family income decreases (family economic poverty). As a result, the parent is forced to use the child as labor to provide living expenditure (parents' child abuse).

Saeed: “My father sold opium ... When the police arrested my father and he went to prison, our life became very difficult. My mother married someone who was also addicted. The cost of her addiction was high and that is why she did not give us money. A woman taught my mother to beg ... I did not like begging but I had to do it”.

Following this process, after the child is abused by the family, he/she starts working. The ease of earning money, along with the city-wide donations charitable to the child on the part of people, creates a good benefit for the child's family (the child gains social and economic benefits for the family). Evidently, the child also has a share of this income, but the amount of this share is determined by the parents and not the child.

Earning a considerable amount from child labor, the family encourages the child to continue working. Of course, this encouragement is partly due to parental coercion. Child's working increases the family's income level (child abuse); thus, the child continues to work.

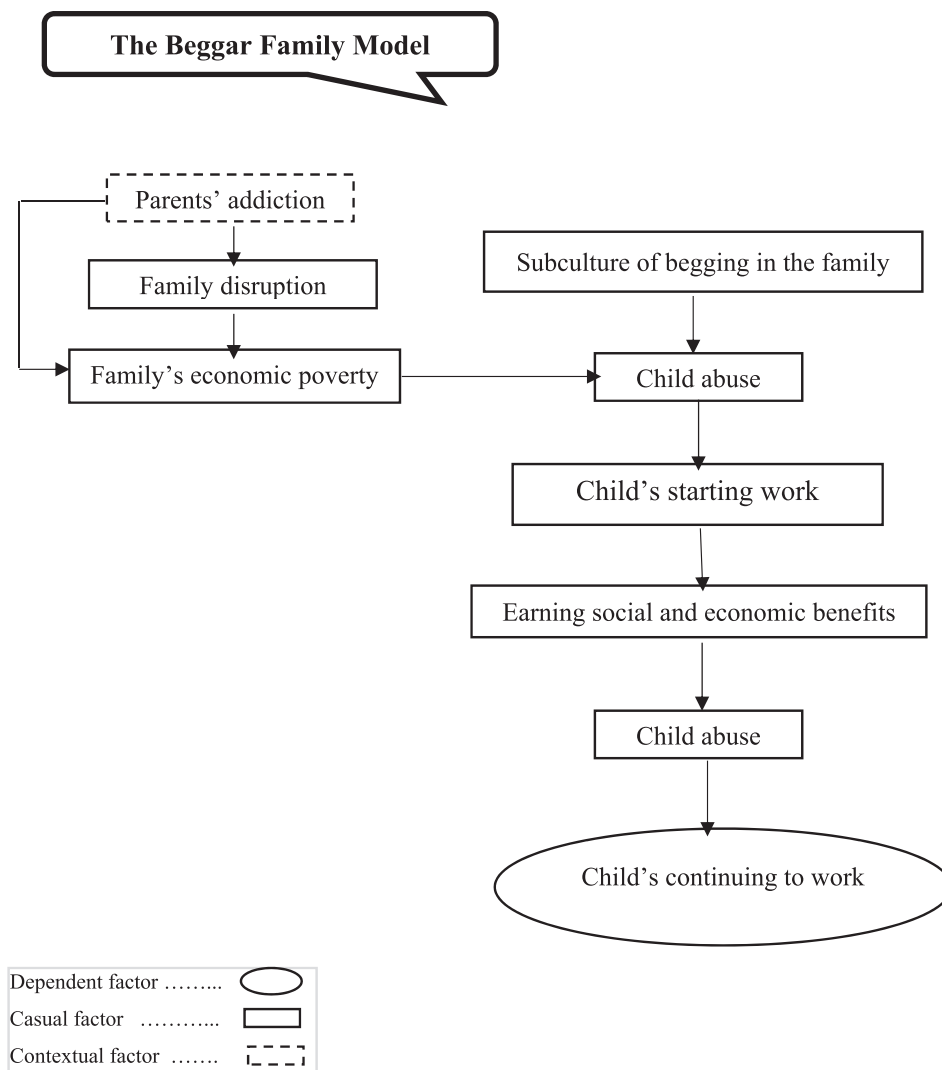


Chart 4. the fourth process of formation of child labor.

Ali Asghar: “When I was 7 years old, my mother took me out of school and forced me to go begging with her We first went in front of a pharmacy uptown. My mother showed my injured leg and told that she wanted to buy medicine for me. A woman gave us 50,000 tomans ... this amount was enough for some days of our expenditure”.

5. Discussion and conclusion

According to official and unofficial statistics, there are about 17 million children living in Iran, and estimations show that more than 2 million of them are working children. The majority of the families of these children live on the outskirts of major cities and are not in a good situation as far as education and food security are concerned. These children are exposed to numerous physical, sexual and psychological traumas, especially domestic and street violence.

The present study sought to first provide an overview of the situation of working children in the city of Mashhad and then to address the question of through what processes these children are driven to work and get involved in child labor. Contrary to the common belief that street children are homeless or have escaped home, etc., the findings of this study on the participants and files revealed that most of the children had family support. It seems that they turn to work and live on the streets while their families are aware of this and even on their advice, or independently of the family, and return home at nights. In the same

vein, various studies in Colombia, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Mexico have shown that 90% of street children have maintained contact with their families (Aptekar, 1994, p. 9).

What we are facing is the phenomenon of “working children on the streets”; Children who have a home and a family, but spend most of their time working on the city streets.

Some of these children turn to work on the streets on their own free will to help their families under the influence of very severe economic pressures and some under the influence and compulsion of their parents and elders.

The present study findings indicated that the children studied in Mashhad get involved in child labor through 4 processes: family immigration due to economic poverty, family following a model of work culture, having irresponsible parents, and being a member of a begging family.

There are interrelated factors at three levels of macro, intermediate and micro which underlie the phenomenon of child labor.

At the macro level, the economic and political problems of Iran's eastern neighbor, Afghanistan, on the one hand, and the resulting poverty due to drought and unemployment in villages and small towns on the other hand, have led to the formation of two large waves of migration to Mashhad, which has an active tourism economy.

Poor immigrants have been forced to live on the outskirts of Mashhad. Most of the families of these children are forced to do low-wage part-time manual labor due to lack of job skills; it is on this basis

that families find themselves in unfavorable economic conditions. According to Bates' theory (2000), the father as the head of the family is not able to earn a living (Quoted from Seif, 1989). As a result, the families experience tension due to the economic problems caused by low income. Poverty and economic problems are key factors in almost all research models. But in addition to economic problems, other factors also play a role in the process of child labor. They include unfavorable living conditions for children, such as domestic violence and addiction of family members.

Numerous studies have confirmed the role of both factors of economic status of the family (for example, Ferguson, 2005; Ward & Seager, 2010; Khan & Hesketh, 2010) and the unfavorable conditions of families in child labor.

What this study on the intermediate level factors and social environment adds to the previous findings for the causes of child labor (Plummer et al., 2007; Afshani, Askari-Nodoushan, Heydari, & Noorian Najafabadi, 2012; Behdarvand & Mardasi, 2013; Öncü, Kurt, Esenay, & Özer, 2013; Kayiranga & Mukashema, 2014) are the roles of economic factors and adverse family conditions that have received less attention. These two factors entail children's lack of access to education as well as attitudes and behaviors resulting from belief in work culture in their families.

For example, in the family model holding a work culture, parents do not send their children to work because of irresponsibility; rather, they believe that working is a valuable notion and should be considered in life. Interestingly, working children raised in these families feel responsible toward their family's situations.

According to the research findings, among the intermediate level factors, in Iran, access to formal education for Afghan children is not possible without a residence card. It is also common among Afghans to prefer working to education for children. Additionally, for Afghan children, funding for education is another barrier to their access to education. Hence, a combination of cultural and legal barriers related to children's access to education, along with their family's need for an income, forces them to take the streets and work.

Immigrant children, particularly illegal immigrants, have similar conditions in other parts of the world. Children from neighboring countries such as Cambodia, Burma, India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam come to Thailand to work with family or friends because of war, political conditions, and economic problems. Many of them are peddlers in the streets. These children are also often denied access to educational facilities due to illegal residence (Vungsiriphisal, Auasalong, & Chantavanich, 1999). Immigrant parents cannot send their children to school without legal documents. Instead, they secretly take informal works.

This set of factors occur in various ratios in different ethnic and national groups of children. This set is itself affected by different structural conditions. For instance, the critical economic situation of families stems from different underlying factors. In the case of Afghan children, the unfavorable economic conditions of their families are due to migration, informal residence, and lack of access to appropriate employment. These cases do not apply to most Iranian families.

For Iranian families who do not have a birth certificate, the employment status and economic conditions of the family are largely rooted in their lifestyle. The lifestyle of this group of Iranian families is due to cultural backgrounds, limited integration in the central urban society, and various legal problems such as not having a birth certificate.

Among these families, according to an old tradition, working on the streets is the main role and duty of children, and education and training have a low prominence. Among other Iranian working children, in addition to the family's need for child labor, the high costs of education forces many children to work on the streets. Likewise, the low flexibility of the education system in receiving tuition fees from children in low-income families causes children to work to improve. This issue is especially evident in semi-industrial workshops on the outskirts of Mashhad.

Another factor that is central at the intermediate level is having a begging subculture.

A child who lives in a begging family learns how to earn money, how to attract the attention of others and how to arouse the emotions of people in the community from the family members and others around him/her. The child becomes socialized in an environment where s/he learns how to make more money for the family through begging and play the role of a professional beggar.

It is worth noting that child begging behavior is not a form of criminal behavior. The technique is learned from the immediate groups such as friends and family. Therefore, working children learn how to successfully beg as well as how to justify their begging by reasoning. They are encouraged to do so by their families, who often have poor conditions. The important issue in this type of child labor is that begging will let them earn considerable amounts in cities such as Mashhad. For that reason, children who experience this type of work, which is relatively easy and has a high income, usually dislike to do difficult jobs and do not feel the need to learn more skills. Due to the upsurge of this type of children in Mashhad, the biosocial factors and whys of the phenomenon may be studied through further research.

In the present study, findings of micro-level factors are presented which have not been mentioned in previous studies on working children in Iran. Children's living on the outskirts of the city connects them with peers who face a variety of social ills. If these peers are criminals and delinquents, these children are more likely to be trapped in social harms.

Then, children having parents who are delinquent, addicted or thieves, etc., or friends and peers who are delinquent are vulnerable. Moreover, children living in slums such as the outskirts of the city and suburbs where the presence of criminals is certain may become addicted and delinquent as a result of interacting with them. According to Sutherland (1947), the more contact a person has with deviant individuals and groups in society, the more likely he or she is to develop deviant behavior. The addicted child has to work to pay for his drugs and chooses to work on the street; because s/he sees this as "a strategy for adapting to difficult situations" (Quoted from Panter & Smith, 2000: 184). According to rational choice theory, a child's dependence on addiction causes him/her to consider working on the streets as a rational choice to meet drug needs (Hosseini, 2005).

Research in Pakistan, Ghana, Egypt, and Thailand (Habib et al., 2007; Wutoh et al., 2006; Watthayu, Wenzel, Sirisreetreeru, Sangprasert, & Wisettanakorn, 2011; Ismayilo, 2007) also shows that street children are at risk for addiction. This can be a factor in their eagerness to work and pay for drugs. As stated by welfare statistics, the age of addiction has decreased and the number of children involved in addiction has also grown in recent years in Iran; therefore, conducting research on the social conditions and contexts of addicted children can increase our awareness of their conditions.

Children on the outskirts of the city can easily buy their favorite snacks or play for hours in game centers¹ based on the amount they can earn. As a result, subcultures for leisure formed among working children on the outskirts of the city distinguish them from other children in those areas (this style of leisure requires economic power) and the spread of this subculture among suburban children is an encouraging factor in tailoring them toward work. Children who are sometimes fatigued with the poor quality of suburban schools are reluctant to go back to school, and practically a large number of them prefer to work. Despite the complications and deprivations they experience on streets, most of them are looking for the positive features for finding ways to get rid of family problems.

Indeed, working children try to learn ways to have fun on the streets; consequently, they imitate other working children and choose a kind of "pattern learning" for themselves. In other words, working children try to behave similarly to other working children in order to achieve the same rewards that they have received; accordingly, the child works in the same way as other children and is rewarded.

The proof for this is the fact that working children continue to work. They are often gathered through relevant organizations, but when they are put back in a situation through which they have already been rewarded, they repeat their behaviors.

The researchers of the present paper encountered limitations, the most important of which was lack of access to working children working in agricultural or industrial units on the outskirts of cities. Certainly, research on the social contexts of these children's work, given the large size of their population, can be effective in policy-making to solve their problems.

6. Compliance with ethical standards

Authors declare the following statements:

- Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest
- Research did not involved Human Participants and/or Animal
- Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Author contributions

Authors contributed equally to the manuscript.

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