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The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labor in small industrial workshops in Diyala province

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Abstract

With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of child labor has increased due to the deteriorating economic situation in the country, which has affected all aspects of economic life, especially poor families suffering from the consequences of the pandemic. Iraq, in particular, witnessed various manifestations that lasted for quite a while, including peaceful demonstrations for rights that affected the economic and social situation in country The percentage of child labor in Diyala province according to the cluster survey was 6.0% and about the human rights organization in Diyala province showed that 70% of child workers in Diyala province are displaced families due to the conditions of war experienced by the region.

Keywords COVID-19 pandemic, Child labor, Economic life, Diyala

Introduction

Coronavirus or COVID-19 is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first identified in Wuhan, China in 2019 and rapidly spread across the world. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced it as a pandemic (CDC, 2020a ; Park, 2020; Zhang, 2021).

Since then, it has infected more than 5 million people in the United States, and the death toll continues to rise to more than 219,000 at the time of publication (CDC, 2020b). U.S. states that initially emerged as epicenters for COVID-19 were able to decrease community transmission with shelter-in-place orders, mandatory masks, and social distancing measures. COVID-19 can rapidly spread from one human to another through respiratory droplets produced through breathing, singing, talking, coughing, or sneezing. COVID-19 continues to be spread in the community in multiple states, prompting a reversal of reopening plans (CDC. 2020c; Van Bavel et al., 2020).

Child labor is an old phenomenon in some Arab countries, including Iraq, especially when it comes to certain sectors such as agriculture, small traditional crafts, informal industries

such as garments, small factories, and industrial workshops such as blacksmithing, carpentry, bakeries, ovens, and construction (Nicola et al., 2020). Iraq, in particular, witnessed various manifestations that lasted for quite a while, including peaceful demonstrations for rights that affected the economic and social situation in the country, in addition to the impact of the country, as in most countries of the world, to a global pandemic that has greatly affected all aspects of life, especially the working class in all fields (UN-HRC, 2015).

The causes of child labor and its increase in the light of the Corona pandemic

With the spread of the Corona pandemic, the number of child labor has increased due to the deteriorating economic situation in the country, which has affected all aspects of economic life, especially poor families suffering from the consequences of the pandemic. According to the Office of the Human Rights Commission, which noted a rise in the number of child workers despite the risks they face (UCW, 2011).

The health urban that caused the interruption of the study, which encouraged some parents to be in the labor market to help increase the income of the family. The low wage sought by children for their work in industrial workshops and other

work encouraged employers to exploit them, especially in popular places that are far from legal control. Also exploited by employers in the argument of saving them from want and need and joining groups that may affect their lives and behavior.

Although laws are prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 15, they are not enforced and are not enforced within the community (Government of Iraq, 2013). Lack of awareness among families and lack of attention to the risks to children in the face of the Corona pandemic due to the spread of the virus. The transformation of the workplace from industrial areas near the markets to the interior of the housing units with the increase of this situation with the presence of the Corona pandemic that visited on this, in addition to the price of land expensive and high rents and tax evasion in commercial areas, which encouraged the exploitation of young people at work due to easy access, which brings economic savings (Al-Amal Association & UNISIF, 2015).

The number and proportions of child labor in Diyala province

Although there are no accurate statistics on the number of child labor in Iraq now, the World Health Organization (WHO) statistics show that the number of working children in Iraq has reached 800,000 children aged 5-14.

The percentage of child labor in Diyala province according to the cluster survey was 6.0% Table (1) and about the human rights organization in Diyala province showed that 70% of child workers in Diyala province are displaced families due to the conditions of war experienced by the region. According to the results of the 2018 multi-indicator cluster survey, child labor in Iraq from 5-14 years.

Table 1: Percentage of child labor in each governorate in Iraq.

Governorate	Child labor Percentage (%)	Governorate	Child labor Percentage
Duhok	8.6	Karbala	5.3
Nineveh	5.5	Wasit	7.0
Sulaymaniyah	7.1	Saladin	6.3
Kirkuk	10.0	Najaf	7.6
Erbil	13.1	Al-Qadisiyyah	7.6
Diyala	6.0	Muthanna	3.6
AL- Anbar	6.0	Dhi Qar	8.3
Baghdad	4.8	Maysan	10.2
Babil	13.2	Basra	4.9

Areas of child labor in Diyala

Agriculture, especially in rural areas, if children work to help the family. In addition to their work in collecting garbage from quarantine areas.

- Work in restaurants, ovens, bakeries and confectionery.
- Factories of the manufacture of bricks and cement that threaten their lives to the dangers.

In addition to craftwork and work in the service of houses. Some solutions and proposals to address the phenomenon of child labor.

Developing the community and family role to protect children and contribute to addressing this issue. Also working with competent institutions and organizations to prevent the owners of shops and industrial workshops from exploiting and employing their children . And lastly; not allowing parents to exploit their children and deprive them of education through institutional awareness committees and activating the role of media and social media platforms by introducing programs that explain the disadvantages of child labor and its health, precious and physical risks to the future of the child (Khoder, 2016; Falah, 2016; Baghdad Post, 2017).

Conclusion

With the spread of the Corona pandemic, the number of child labor has increased due to the deteriorating economic situation in the country, which has affected all aspects of economic life, especially poor families suffering from the consequences of the pandemic.

Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares no conflict of interest

Consent for publication

The author declares that the work has consent for publication

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