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Gender differences in child labour: A systematic review of causes, forms, features and consequences

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Abstract

Child labour has been a cause of concern in many social, political and administrative circles for several decades; nonetheless, child labour research, regulations and initiatives have mostly concentrated on boys, presuming that the needs and requirements of girls are the same as those of boys. As a result, working girls often became 'invisible', yet they make up a very large proportion of working children. A global study project conducted in 2002 shows no substantial difference between girls and boys in economic engagement, but, in many societies, girls and boys are perceived differently. Typically, girls are perceived to have a lower value; hence they are considered to be inferior to their male counterparts. Both girls and boys are vulnerable to child-labour exploitation, albeit in different ways. Boys and girls have different coping strategies and deal with different problems of child labour in various ways (Kolomiyets & Murray, 2004).

It should be noted that the prenatal and early childhood environments, as well as states of children's health, are significant predictors of their intellectual development, educational achievements and future health. Child labour, in its different forms, compromises a child's physical and mental health, as well as their education, growth and development (International Labour Organization, 2004). These effects of child labour, in turn, have a significant impact on the health and success of parents, particularly mothers, and threaten the potential of upcoming generations. Although girls are exposed to far more types of work than boys, due to societal attitudes toward the different roles of boys and girls, girls frequently face greater hardship and are more likely to be exploited. There are some gender differences in child labour, which necessitates further investigation. Society prescribes the types of tasks that are usually performed by girls and boys, and gender is a key factor in work organisation. Gender roles as key cultural determinants, along with family status and tradition, play important roles in the types of work activities that boys and girls undertake.

Addressing child labour with a gender focus is essential, since the causes and factors that lead to child labour may differ for girls and boys, they may experience work differently, and each gender group may experience different consequences of their work as children. Therefore, in dealing with child labour, it is necessary to consider gender an important factor. We can better plan to address the problem of child labour if we know more about the children involved in a specific child-labour activity. We can also focus on understanding the gender-related causes of child labour and devise strategies to prevent the use of children for labour and reintegrate them into school. For example, the empowerment initiatives available for street children may not be appropriate for mixed-sex groups; thus, considering a 'gender-sensitive approach' to recognise, prevent and solve child-labour problems could be helpful. The importance of a gender-sensitive approach to eliminating child labour is highlighted by the fact that standard definitions of 'child labour' tend to underestimate girls' work, while boys' and girls' economic activities, and the consequences of those activities, can vary according to the type of work they undertake. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to highlight the gender aspects of child labour by systematically reviewing studies in the field of child labour and seeking answers to the question 'What are the gender differences in child labour in terms of its amounts, causes, forms, natures and performances?'

Keywords: Worst forms of child labour, gender, children, grounded theory, Iran

Introduction

Child labour has been a cause of concern in many social, political and administrative circles for several decades; nonetheless, child labour research, regulations and initiatives have mostly concentrated on boys, presuming that the needs and requirements of girls are the same as those of boys. As a result, working girls often became 'invisible', yet they make up a very large proportion of working children. A global study project conducted in 2002 shows no substantial difference between girls and boys in economic engagement, but, in many societies, girls and boys are perceived differently. Typically, girls are perceived to have a

lower value; hence they are considered to be inferior to their male counterparts. Both girls and boys are vulnerable to child-labour exploitation, albeit in different ways. Boys and girls have different coping strategies and deal with different problems of child labour in various ways (Kolomiyets & Murray, 2004) [28].

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Addressing child labour with a gender focus is essential, since the causes and factors that lead to child labour may differ for girls and boys, they may experience work differently, and each gender group may experience different consequences of their work as children. Therefore, in dealing with child labour, it is necessary to consider gender an important factor. We can better plan to address the problem of child labour if we know more about the children involved in a specific child-labour activity.

We can also focus on understanding the gender-related causes of child labour and devise strategies to prevent the use of children for labour and reintegrate them into school. For example, the empowerment initiatives available for street children may not be appropriate for mixed-sex groups; thus, considering a 'gender-sensitive approach' to recognise, prevent and solve child-labour problems could be helpful. The importance of a gender-sensitive approach to eliminating child labour is highlighted by the fact that standard definitions of 'child labour' tend to underestimate girls' work, while boys' and girls' economic activities, and the consequences of those activities, can vary according to the type of work they undertake. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to highlight the gender aspects of child labour by systematically reviewing studies in the field of child labour and seeking answers to the question 'What are the gender differences in child labour in terms of its amounts, causes, forms, natures and performances?'

Theoretical Review

This section examines the theoretical literature, focusing on the concepts of child labour and gender. Work is not always harmful to children and can be healthy or even beneficial, but some forms of child labour can seriously impair children's development and socialisation. To decide whether children's economic activities are healthy or harmful, the international community uses the following yardstick.

- ***Child work*** is considered to

1. Be light work (less than 14 hours per week) for children 12 to 17 years of age.
2. Be unharmful to the child's health and development;
3. Not impede children's education or vocational training; and
4. Not be dangerous in nature.

- ***Child labour***

1. Is regular work (14–43 hours/week);
2. Causes physical or psychological damage;
3. Hinders education and mental and/or physical development
4. Involves a child under the minimum age set by ILO Convention No.138.
5. Is hazardous work as defined by the provisions of ILO Convention No.182 (Haspels & Suriyasarn, 2003) [16]

According to Homer Folks, the chairman of the US National Child Labour Committee, the term 'child labour' is generally used to refer to 'any work by children that interfere[s] with their full physical and mental development, the opportunities for a desirable minimum of education and their needed recreation' (Bhat, 2010) [6]. According to the International Labour Organization, the term 'child labour' is often defined as work that deprives a child of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children. It prevents children from attending school in the following cases:

a. It deprives them of the opportunity to attend school and forces them to leave school before finishing it; or
b. It forces them to mix attending school with very long and heavy work (Vameghi and Yazdani, 2019, p.97) [42].

Gender aspects in child labour are increasingly being addressed by the United Nations, non-governmental organisations ('NGOs'), and civil-society forums. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the international community realised that the rights of girls were not receiving adequate attention. Several resolutions have been adopted within the framework of the Human Rights Group, the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee, and the Commission on the Status of Women (the 'CSW'), calling for greater attention to be paid to the rights of girls. Recently, the ratification of Convention No. 182 on the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Recommendation No. 190 have given serious consideration to girls in terms of neglect, violation of their rights and workspace exploitation.

Even in child labour, there are many gender differences, with girls and boys facing different opportunities and limitations based on the tasks they perform. When discussing this topic, it is important to distinguish between 'sex' and 'gender'.

'Sex' refers to biological differences between men and women that cannot be changed. The sexuality of children has significant impacts on their lives. While biological factors become extremely influential as children approach puberty, boys and girls are treated differently from almost the moment they are born. How girls and boys are treated and how they are expected to be treated is affected by their gender.

'Gender roles' refer to the activities that boys and girls are expected to do (Haspels & Suriyasarn, 2003) [16]. 'Gender' might thus be described as the social and learned relations

and interactions between boys and girls. The process of socialisation –through which children learn how to behave– is not gender-neutral, but shapes the different roles and responsibilities assigned to boys and girls according to their genders. As children grow up, they learn and imitate the behaviour of those around them, sustaining such social relations as gender inequalities. Girls, for example, often follow the conduct of other girls and women in their environments. In the same way, a boy's behaviour may be affected by those of his father, other male relatives or a role model. These gender roles are reinforced by gender values, norms, and stereotypes prevalent in any society (Amorim *et al.*, 2004) [3].

Several studies to find the most important causes of child labour have, without considering gender, pointed to such factors as poverty and low family incomes, low-wage occupations, parental illiteracy or illness, disability, penal servitude of the father, addiction, death of the head of the household, abandonment by the father, temporary and seasonal jobs, family coercion, family livelihood assistance, poor parenting, unfavourable family conditions such as a breakup, violence, legal bans on education, the recent economic pressures as a result of intensifying US sanctions against Iran, the outbreak of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, family indebtedness, escape from an unhealthy family environment, a crowded family, rising education costs, the prevalent culture and beliefs in some communities about child work, and immigration and its high costs. Children may enter the labour cycle for a variety of reasons, including immigration, identification with role models, to learn skills and grow in life, family provision, buying such essentials as clothing or phones, or self-expression of power and autonomy (Khan & Hesketh, 2010; Salmon, 2005; Sensoy Bahar, 2014 and 2016; Kazeem, 2012; Ahmady, 2021; Zare, Hajizadeh Meimandi & Akbari Ghortani, 2009; Vameghi *et al.*, 2015, etc.) [40, 36, 37, 24, 1].

In terms of demand, families are one of the main beneficiaries of child labour; many children are unpaid family workers. Many employers also employ low-wage-earning children for some tasks; nevertheless, it appears that, in addition to the economic benefits, other reasons such as easier management and a lack of awareness of children's rights make employers more interested in hiring children than adults (Vameghi *et al.*, 2015) [40]. Some children enter the work cycle with their family networks, a fact that demonstrates the important role of the family in child labour. A substantial proportion of children are introduced to the work cycle by a family member or acquaintance. In some jobs, such as street work, children have higher capacities to evoke compassion and earn more. This motivates both parents and employers to use them more. On the other hand, almost all studies have indicated that one of the reasons for working children entering the work cycle is to help support the family; for example, Afghan children in Iran always send a large part of their incomes to their families in Afghanistan (Ahmady, 2021; Imani & Nercissians, 2011; Association for the Protection of Children's Rights, 2019) [1, 19].

However, in a study on girls' work, the most important reasons for their work were identified as living in broken families, the need to support family, their marginalisation and helplessness, which also included living in extreme poverty, under powerful control, and their double exploitation (Mir Hosseini & Ghorbani, 2019) [29].

Regarding gender and the causes of child labour, the literature points to gender discrimination, parental preferences and gender expectations. In terms of household welfare, evidence suggests that increasing household welfare may not be enough to reduce child labour and that additional investments in infrastructure, such as drinking water and child health and care, are required (World Bank, 2005). According to research, providing a drinking-water network in Yemen's urban areas reduced girls' chances of getting involved in child labour by 2%, while increasing their chances of attending school by 16%. These effects were less noticeable in boys, indicating that girls play an important role in water provision (Guarcello & Lyon, 2003) [14]. The findings also show that reducing household childcare costs increases girls' school attendance. Also, Glinskayai, Lokshin & Garcia, in their study in Kenya (2000) [13], discovered that a 10% increase in government childcare funding increased the enrollment rate of older girls in schools by 3%, while having no clear effect for boys. This evidence suggests that providing low-cost childcare to girls can reduce home and domestic work and improve their educations.

Family shocks and crises also have impacts on child labour. The findings show that boys and girls devote different amounts of time to diseases. According to the findings of a study in Peru, illness among young children decreases factory attendance among older girls (Ilahi, 2001) [18]. Using data from Indonesia, Pitt and Rosenzweig (1990) [33] discovered that a 29% increase in the incidence of children's diseases decreased older sisters' economic participation in the labour market by 25% and their school attendance by 15%, while their participation in home care increased by 53%. Adult employment is another issue. When both parents work outside the home, the work of children, particularly girls, is frequently replaced by unpaid domestic labour. Ilahi (2001) [18] discovered that when mothers' employment outside the home increases in Peruvian urban communities, both girls and boys become more involved in domestic work, but this ratio is far higher for girls. Other factors that drive children to work include family disputes, home breakdowns, physical or emotional abuse, political situations and natural disasters. According to Wille (2001) [43], boys are more susceptible to peer pressure to work, whereas girls are susceptible to both family and peer pressures. In terms of demand, women and girls are preferred over men and boys because they often work harder, even in difficult conditions. They have been socialised to be obedient workers who work hard with minimum demand or protest (Haspels & Suryasern, 2003) [16].

Child labour, in the end, widens the gender gap by negatively impacting women's employment. A variety of mechanisms could contribute to gender inequality. One mechanism operates through gender-based parental preferences as a result of cultural norms, religion and tradition. Biased preferences can negatively impact on girls' time allocations in the family and their abilities to accumulate human capital, thus imperilling their job prospects. Another mechanism may work through training. Even if no gender preferences exist, unfavourable labour-market conditions for girls in terms of paid work result in inadequate investment in their educations, which has even more damaging consequences. The latter mechanism could be activated by widespread participation in home farming and domestic labour, which is likely to generate a unique type of knowledge that is difficult to transfer to other activities. Child labour, in particular, creates a vicious cycle for women, resulting in low primary skills and poor labour-market outcomes when compared to men

(Haspels & Suriyasarn, 2003) [16].

Methodology

This research has a specific research question and utilises a systematic review as the methodology. This type of review aims to systematically search for solutions to questions and evaluate the findings of research on a specific topic or issue, or to bring together findings and evidence that focuses on a specific question. This is accomplished through consistent and well-organised procedures and processes.

The data from these studies are extracted and analysed by employing consistent and specific methods to identify, select and critically review the preliminary research on the subject (Ghazi Tabatabai & Vadadhir, 2010, p.63). Therefore, the current study aims to review research on child labour with a focus on gender, as well as the relationships between these studies, using the requirements of a systematic review method, which includes a targeted search, selection of appropriate studies with a focus on the research topic, and gathering their findings to arrive at synthetic answers to study questions.

This study followed a seven-step process that is commonly used in systematic review studies. The steps in this procedure are as follows: (1) composing inquiries; (2) looking through scientific databases; (3) selecting research relevant to the study's subject and objectives; (4) evaluating the research quality; (5) gathering and analysing data; (6) presenting the findings; and (7) discussing and drawing conclusions from the data.

The statistical population of this study includes all studies on child labour that have been conducted and published in Iran and abroad. After gathering these studies and assessing their quality, 37 studies were chosen, which includes 26 external studies from 1990 to 2020 and 11 internal studies from 2009 to 2001.

An Overview of Statistics

According to global estimates, 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were labouring around the world in 2020, accounting for one out of every ten children. Nearly half of all working children – 72 million – were in hazardous work conditions that jeopardised their development, safety and moral development. At all ages, boys are more likely than girls to engage in child labour. Boys have an 11.2% employment rate, compared to 7.8% for girls. When the definition of 'child labour' is expanded to include domestic work that lasts 21 hours or more per week, the gender gap in prevalence between boys and girls aged 5 to 14 is reduced by almost half. Rural areas have higher rates of child labour. Rural working children number 122.7 million, compared to 37.3 million children in urban areas. Child labour is almost three times more common in rural areas (13.9%) than in urban areas (4.7%). Agriculture continues to extensively use child labour, both boys and girls (70%, which is equal to 112 million). That includes a large number of young children.

The following are regional child labour statistics. Of the child-labourer population

- Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 23.9% (86.6 million);
- Central and South Asia for 5.5% (26.3 million);
- East and Southeast Asia for 6.2% (24.3 million);
- North Africa and West Asia for 7.8% (10.1 million);
- Latin America and the Caribbean for 6.2% (8.2 million); and
- Europe and North America for 2.3 (3.8 million).

Labouring children's proportions by age and gender are as follows

- 10.9% of boys and 8.4% of girls between the ages of 5 and 11;
- 11% of boys and 7.5% of girls between the ages of 12 and 14; and
- 12.2% of boys and 6.6% of girls between the ages of 15 and 17 (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021).

There are no accurate estimates of child labour in Iran. Using census data from three periods (the results of the 1996, 2006 and 2011 censuses), Vameghi and Yazdani (2019) [42] demonstrated how child labour disrupts the process of 'empowerment and socialization' of children in a practical sense. At least 7.5% of Iranian children aged 10 to 18 are labourers, and, with the inclusion of domestic workers, up to 15% of the total child population in Iran are labourers. According to the 2011 census, the population of working children – i.e. actively working children (792,833 people) – has increased to 1.62 million, including domestic workers. Finally, the results indicate that child labour is more prevalent in rural areas than in cities. As children grow older, they are more likely to work, and there is a higher rate of work by boys. The proportion of girls working has been found in various studies to range between 8% and 54% (Vameghi & Yazdani, 2019; Vameghi *et al.*, 2015) [42, 40]. In a 2008 study of over 27,000 working children in urban and rural areas across the country, 80% were boys (Keshavarz Haddad, Nazarpour & Kafshgari, 2014) [25]. In all studies of urban and rural working children, boys are employed more than girls, but it appears that the gap between boys and girls is narrowing in rural areas. For example, in the study conducted by Keshavarz Haddad, Nazapour and Kafshgari (2014) [25], the ratio of girls to boys in urban areas was 8:92 (%), and in rural areas, 23:77 (%); girls account for 20% of working children. Also, a study of rural working children in Kashan and Jahrom shows a relatively higher rate of girls working (Vameghi & Yazdani, 2019) [42].

Statistics on child labour do not accurately reflect the reality of gender-based labour, and there are some issues to consider. In older age groups, the work participation of girls decreases in comparison to that of boys; however, as their participation in economic activities declines, their participation in unpaid domestic service rises. Girls' work is not counted for a variety of reasons, including not being considered as being 'active' in family workshops and domestic work. Domestic labour has traditionally been regarded as a simple and safe task for children, particularly girls. However, it is extremely hazardous to children and has been identified as one of the worst forms of child labour (Amorim *et al.*, 2004) [3]. Because child labour is often invisible, many people are unaware of its prevalence. According to poll results, there are more 'unemployed' girls than boys, indicating that they are neither in school nor working. Unemployed children may do nothing, but it is also possible that their parents do not consider the tasks their daughters perform to be a real form of labour (Cigno, Rosati, & Tzannatos, 2002) [10]. This is especially important for girls in developing countries, as they tend to do more domestic work than boys (World Bank, 2005).

The perceptions of parents also contribute to the underestimation of girls' labour. For example, girls who

plant, weed and harvest crops may be perceived as assisting parents/employers rather than 'working' (Bhat, 2010) [6]. These girls are not counted as agricultural workers if they are not paid, receive non-cash wages or their parents/employers do not consider them to be employed. Girls are frequently perceived as 'assistants', even when their work takes up many hours of the day and interferes with their educations. Similarly, domestic work is frequently viewed as 'preparation for future household tasks' or as 'one fewer mouth to feed', when the girl lives elsewhere. Some other girls work in covert jobs such as prostitution.

Because most of this work is done in the informal and illegal sectors, determining the severity of the problem and its impact on children is difficult. Using this approach, we can explain the small number of boys who work in covert jobs. Prostitution, for example, is widely assumed to be a female job, but assessments conducted in various countries display that boys are also involved in prostitution, albeit more covertly (Kolomiyets & Murray, 2004) [28].

Types of Work

Some jobs are primarily performed by boys, such as construction work, while others are primarily performed by girls, such as domestic work; still others are performed by both boys and girls, such as street work. The type of work has a significant impact on the work of both boys and girls.

Based on existing research, the table below shows the most common types of work for boys and girls. It should be noted, however, that the type of work based on gender can vary depending on culture and region.

Table 1: Types of Work by Gender

Type of work	***Gender***
Agriculture	Girls and boys
Domestic work	Mostly girls
Car Services	Boys
Street work	Girls and boys
Prostitution	Girls and boys, mostly girls
Mining works	Girls and boys
Scavenging	Mostly boys
Construction works	Boys
Grocery stores and shops	Boys
Restaurant and hotel jobs	Girls and boys
Transportation services	Boys

Although both boys and girls work in agriculture, some evidence suggests that boys are more likely to work in this field than girls. The reasons for this are some tasks being hard and tedious, the need to work with agricultural implements and the sexual harassment of girls who work alone (Kolomiyets & Murray, 2004) [28]. Work in this sector covers a wide range of tasks. Even though both boys and girls are involved in this work, there is a division of labour. Boys are more interested in forestry, hunting, fishing and grain farming, while girls are more interested in growing vegetables and poultry (Schultz & Strauss, 2008) [34].

Domestic work is another type of child labour that is prevalent throughout the world. It includes a variety of tasks such as household chores, cooking, cleaning, laundry, caring for the employers' children, caring for the elderly and disabled, gardening and assisting employers in running small businesses. In rural areas, this can include keeping animals, cleaning their shelters, farming and some small businesses such as carpet weaving (Blagbrough, 2008) [8]. In this type of work, the family regards the employer as another family member and thus another protector and caregiver of their child. They wrongly believe that domestic work provides an opportunity for their children to be educated, that it is not harmful to them and that it also prepares girls for gender roles. In this form of labour, the children work long hours, must always be available to employers, may not receive wages, have to work and live away from their main family for extended periods, have to work and live with the employer, and may experience physical, sexual and humiliating abuse (Ahmady, 2021) [1]. In many parts of the world, girls are more involved in this type of work, but in some countries, such as Nepal, boys are more present. There is also a strong link between child domestic labour and child trafficking for labour exploitation both at home and abroad. Illegal (and often covert) child labour and commercial sex are two examples. Although trafficking for prostitution has received significant attention from state authorities, society and the media, trafficking of young children for domestic work is a relatively newly recognised phenomenon (Haspels & Suryasern, 2003) [16].

Street work is the other type of labour that involves both girls and boys and includes such tasks as selling different materials (handicrafts, fragrant materials, vegetables, tissue paper, wound glue, various foodstuffs, flowers, etc.), providing such services as weighing, washing car windows or fortune-telling, or even direct begging. Children enter this type of work at young ages because they can earn more money by stimulating the sympathy and favour of the people.

Afghan and Romani families form a dichotomous field of study in Tehran. Working outside the home is generally not accepted in Afghan households, but they send their daughters to perform street work for limited periods due to poverty; however, families are less likely to allow their daughters to work, at least in some types of work such as street work, at older ages – particularly after puberty, when girls' physicalities change. The reasons for this can also vary. One of the reasons that families are concerned in this regard is that their daughters' chastities are being exposed. Most importantly for these families, their children should be ready for marriage after puberty. Girls' work contradicts family and community values and beliefs that a girl should be a housewife and serve her husband (Ahmady, 2021; Vameghi *et al.*, 2015) [1, 40].

On the other hand, the work of girls is accepted and even considered advantageous among the Romani people. In this community, work for girls is a tradition and a way of life.

Among them, many men retire at young ages and the work of girls and women provides income and a means of subsistence for the family. Because many Romani do not have birth certificates, they face legal restrictions on education and employment and are thus legally barred. This is the basis for girls' work – their adult men are unable to enter the labour market, making it impossible for them to attend school, and thus they begin to work. Having many children, including daughters, means more income for the family. Savings and assets earned through work are also an economic advantage for these girls when it comes to marriage. These girls will be working for the rest of their lives. They must collaborate with their mothers and sisters and with other daughters to support their families as long as they live with their parents. After marriage, which usually occurs at young ages, these girls are still the primary labour force in their families, so we see the phenomenon of married and labouring young girls (Ahmady, 2021; Mir Hosseini & Ghorbani, 2019; Vameghi *et al.*, 2015) [1, 40, 29].

Another issue is the work of girls in rural communities, where the findings show a high proportion of labouring girls. According to data from one study, 71% of girls work in rural areas. Their work is primarily organised by kinship networks. They work long hours doing domestic labour, working on farms and with livestock, and in some cases for others. In some communities they may spend many hours a day, for several years, weaving carpets. Working girls are common in these communities and play an important role in family life. Their families believe that girls' work not only allows them to learn and earn money, but also prepares them to assume gender roles in the future (Firoozabadi & Rezaniakan, 2014; Vameghi & Yazdani, 2019) [42].

According to global estimates of child labour, millions of children are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Girls are more likely than boys to be sexually exploited commercially, but data on boys is scarce. It is becoming clear that boys are also involved, sometimes even more so than girls. Because access to girls and boys involved in commercial sexual exploitation is difficult, the gender image is biased and does not necessarily reflect reality. Research into the causes of this type of work points to such factors as poverty, quarrels, abuse, poor law enforcement and a lack of political will and resources to stop it, broken families, a lack of social support, living with single parents, the need to support the family, parental coercion, escaping from family problems, the need to reach economic independence, peer influence, a desire to earn an 'easy' income, a lack of alternative job opportunities, war, gender discrimination and traditional marriage practices. In some cases, child marriage, divorce and the resulting poverty force girls into such jobs. Tourism has had an impact on the demand for this type of work in some societies, such as Jamaica, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. Boys are more likely to work as street sex workers, while girls are more likely to work as institutionalised prostitutes. The findings also show that most girls do not attend school and have a high dropout rate; additionally, their work is full-time and there are no holidays. Girls face numerous problems in this line of work, including severe psychological and physical harassment, rape, abduction, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, coercion to use drugs and harassment by government agencies and the police. Because of the social stigma attached to prostitutes, reintegrating these girls into 'normal society' is a difficult process. They sometimes prefer to stay in brothels rather than be sent to rehabilitation centres. While boys who leave brothels to live more normal lives may find it easier to adjust, girls are frequently rejected and society regards them as 'already used' girls (Kolomiyets and Murray, 2004) [28]. Although no independent studies have been conducted in Iran, reading between the lines of social studies reveals that some children in the country are also engaged in this type of work (Vameghi *et al.*, 2015) [40].

Girls are absent from some jobs. Scavenging is one of these jobs in Tehran, which is mostly performed by Afghans (Association for the Protection of Children's Rights, 2019; Vameghi *et al.*, 2015) [40]. There are two main reasons why girls are largely absent in this and other male-dominated jobs such as construction, transportation, and so on. The first reason is that society has already defined this type of work as primarily masculine, and girls 'cannot' do it because of the prevalent gender expectations. The second and most important reason is related to the organisation, approach and outcomes of such jobs. Scavenging, for example, requires labour relations and is carried out through a contract between contractors and employers; this type of work is performed by men as, by nature, it is physically demanding and exhausting. The most important aspect is the way the job is done, which includes several features that forbid the involvement of girls and women. Primarily, this is a job that many young girls cannot enter because it is frequently performed by illegal Afghan immigrants. Also, it necessitates working unusual hours and staying at work. Scavenging requires children to work long hours. Part of the work is also conducted at odd hours, such as late at night. The other point to consider is that scavenging necessitates sleeping in recycling centres and landfills, which girls are not permitted to attend, due to cultural norms. In general, this type of work makes it more difficult for girls to do. This is not to say that girls do not get involved in garbage collection; in some cases, in some Tehran and Karaj suburbs, they may spend some time scavenging together with their families or acquaintances (Association for the Protection of Children's Rights, 2019).

Girls and boys both work in industries such as manufacturing and mining. Girls almost entirely work in textiles and sewing crafts, as well as private household services, whereas boys are more involved in the production of wooden furniture, construction-site preparation, retail, grocery stores and public stores. In India, most girls work in industries such as clothing, matches, fireworks and tobacco-growing in Tamil Nadu, or the bracelet industry in Firozabad (Bhat, 2010) [6]. In some cases, young women migrate with their children from rural areas to work in factories or other manufacturing workplaces (Haspels & Suryasern, 2003) [16]. Girls, like boys, work in the mining industry. Small-scale mining is a family business in Ghana, Niger and Peru, and the girls do everything from mining to processing to retail, as well as providing support services. They are involved in gemstone extraction and turning, transporting rubble from pits, sorting ores and crushing rocks (International Labour Organization, 2007b) [22]. Children also work in a variety of activities in Iran's industrial sector. The boys often work in workshops for bags, shoes and clothing, in welding and scrap work, in carpentry and crystallisation workshops, in machine-repair services, as well as in plant breeding and production centres. Girls also work in industries such as crystal making, sewing and stitching, jewellery making and packaging. Boys enter these jobs to learn more skills for the future, whereas girls enter to earn money in jobs such as the crystal industry, jewellery

making and the packaging of goods to help support the family (Ahmady, 2021) [1].

Work and Income

Gender differences in activities can be significant in some countries. Boys have a higher rate of participation in market work and a lower rate of participation in domestic work. In middle-income countries, for example, girls are 18% more likely to engage in domestic work and approximately 30% less likely to engage in paid labour (Amorim *et al.*, 2004) [3]. Wage labour for women has increased globally in recent decades, a process that is known as the 'feminisation of employment', but many of these jobs are of low quality. Boys excel at 'paid' jobs in Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon, Somalia and Egypt, while girls excel at 'unpaid' jobs in the same countries. Girls are significantly more involved in 'domestic work' than boys. This is also true for more developed economies like Turkey and Portugal. Women typically earn two-thirds of men's earnings, and women continue to earn less than men at all levels of education. Only a portion of this income disparity can be explained by differences in education and work experience, implying that gender discrimination in receiving equal pay for equal work remains prevalent. The same seems to be true for girls. On average, they are paid less than boys for the same type of work. For example, in Bangladesh, half of the female domestic workers are paid only as much as 28% of the boys in the same job (Kolomiyets and Murray, 2004) [28].

Evidence from studies indicates that children work to help support their families; thus, they have little control over their incomes. In many cases, families include their children, including their daughters, in the work cycle and control them, appropriating their incomes (Ahmady, 2021; Vameghi *et al*., 2015; Vameghi and Yazdani, 2019) [1, 40, 42]. The type of work also has a significant impact on this issue. In some jobs, such as those done for employers or in the workplace, because the child's parents (particularly in the case of girls) agree on the amount of the wage and because there is no relationship between the child and the employer, the wage is given directly to the child's parents or legal guardians. In some cases, the family's head pays a portion of the income to keep the child satisfied and working (Ahmady, 2021) [1].

In domestic work, where girls are more likely to be present, children often do not receive direct payment for the work they do. Some work for shelter, care or food, while others work for money. Their wages may be paid to their parents, or their parents may send them to the employer's home to work off the family debts. The employer may keep the child's wages and refuse to pay them for a variety of reasons, including the child not having reached the legal age and to simply deny the child access to her money. Children may work for relatives or strangers (UNICEF, 1999). In some jobs, such as workshops, girls are paid very little and have little control over their earnings; however, in street work, the child earns more and has some control over it. In some cases, particularly in street work, girls work to meet some of their basic needs, such as clothing and food or education (Ahmady, 2021; Mir Hosseini & Ghorbani, 2019) [1, 29]. In general, girls have little control over their earnings because they must pass them on to their fathers, mothers or husbands. Many women in East Asia are responsible for the household expenses. In such cases, women have control over their daily expenses, but are frequently responsible for earning the necessary income. Furthermore, research continues to show that when girls and women control their incomes, they spend it more on meeting the basic needs of their families than do boys and men (Haspels & Suryasern, 2003) [16].

Risks and Vulnerabilities

Child labour is often defined by its problems as work that is 'depriving children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development and preventing children from attending school' (International Labour Organization, 2007a) [21]. Different types of child labour, regardless of gender, have negative consequences for these children; some risks and injuries are common in all jobs, while others are specific to certain jobs. The so-called 'worst forms of child labour' are associated with the greatest risks and injuries.

As previously stated, a substantial proportion of children work in agriculture and domestic work. The most significant hazards and problems of working in agriculture include working in cold and heat and under the sun, getting injured, being exposed to toxins and sewage, working long hours, exhausting physical work, back pain and other pains, working in dust and mud, sunburn, insect infestations and nuisance, exposure to some dangerous animals, heavy load handling, and lack of access to health services and facilities (Arnold *et al.*, 2020; Hurst, 2007; Mull & Kirkhorn, 2005; Mirakzadeh, Zarafshani & Karmian, 2016). Because agricultural work is more often performed in rural and suburban areas, child labour is more common in these more disadvantaged areas, thus exacerbating inequalities. Because sexual harassment of girls is prevalent in agricultural work, fewer girls work for payment. Most rural girls should have a companion when working on farms, and they do not work alone (Kolomiyets & Murray, 2004) [28].

Domestic work has traditionally been regarded as a simple and secure task for children, particularly girls. However, it has been increasingly demonstrated that domestic work can be extremely hazardous to children and is regarded as one of the most dangerous forms of child labour. Because child labour is largely invisible, many people are unaware of its prevalence (UNICEF, 1999). Major domestic-work problems and injuries include overwork; loneliness; depression; anxiety; long and tedious workdays; carrying heavy loads; handling dangerous objects like knives, hot pots, axes and sickles; unhealthy living places; and inadequate and unhealthy food; as well as humiliating behaviours, including physical, verbal and sexual harassment. In some cases, parents have misunderstandings about work, believing that not only does it not harm their daughters, but also it trains and prepares them, or that domestic-child-labour employers are not exploiting their children, but helping them support themselves and their families (Black, 2005). The amount of support received by a child domestic worker is determined by the employer. If the child is underpaid, overworked or abused, the only option is for him or her to leave work (UNICEF, 1999).

Using time-series data about 7- to 15-year-olds, Burrone and Giannelli (2020) demonstrate that child labour is associated with vulnerability and is motivated by girls. Age also had a decisive effect, as the work studied only harmed children under ten years of age. Domestic work had such a negative impact on young girls that those under the age of 13 were the most vulnerable. Child labour on family farms was also linked to a great amount of harm. These findings highlight the decisive role of child labour in determining the gender-

based employment disparity.

Working on the stree*t al*so has a wide range of consequences, such as long periods walking and standing and, therefore, extreme fatigue; violence; clashes with other children and citizens; accidents and injuries; malnutrition and starvation; exposure to high-risk behaviours; being exposed to immoral conduct; arrest and confiscation of goods; working in heat and cold; breathing polluted air; becoming a victim of crime; and the accompanying feelings of shame and humiliation. Female children are reported to be subject to high levels of sexual harassment in this line of work (Ahmady, 2021; Vameghi *et al.*, 2015) [1, 40]. These children are subjected to government collection schemes and, as a result, face significant violence. In some cases, these collection schemes have caused families to take their children from the street to workshops, where they face greater risks and vulnerabilities (Ahmady, 2021) [1].

There is no denying that both girls and boys are subjected to the worst forms of child labour. However, it is essential to consider that, because of the expectations, duties and social responsibilities placed on girls, they are frequently more vulnerable to the dangers and harms of work and exploitation. According to research conducted in the mining sectors of Ghana, Tanzania and Niger, girls frequently work without protective equipment, resulting in problems such as long hours, fatigue, abdominal pain, cuts, coughs, headaches, dizziness, respiratory problems, burns, contact with fine dust and toxic substances, a high risk of accidents, high-intensity physical activity, illness, serious lifelong injuries and even death. One of the most serious issues that Tanzanian working girls faced was sexual harassment, abuse and commercial sexual exploitation (International Labour Organization, 2007a) [21].

The findings also show that, in terms of such indicators as education, play and happiness, girls in India lose up to 80% of their childhoods in jobs like clothing, match making, fireworks, tobacco growing, etc. In many industries, girl children are brutally exploited. They are sometimes subjected to sexual harassment. In this country, the social preference for boys causes girls to be undervalued, undernourished and undereducated, even though they work harder, and denied any opportunity to broaden their personal, social and intellectual horizons (Bhat, 2010) [6].

Other consequences of child labour include dropping out and abandoning school. More than 70 million children worldwide do not attend primary school, and many more do not attend secondary school. Even more children enrol in school without attending regularly. Most of these children are working children. Dropout rates among girls are higher than those of boys in many countries, and one of the causes is child labour. When compared to boys, the education of girls appears to be a poor investment for many parents. When faced with limited resources and high financial demands, parents often prefer to invest in their sons' educations rather than lose the vital role of their daughters in the family economy (Bhat, 2010; Kolomiyets and Murray, 2004) [28, 6].

Finally, because boys and girls engage in different types of work at different stages of their lives, the impact on their future market outcomes is different. According to research conducted in Mexico and Brazil, the payoff for future labour-force participation is worse for girls than for boys. In Mexico, a return to basic work experience could compensate for men's payoff income, but this does not happen for women. These findings may indicate that boys are more likely than girls to gain marketable work experience for future careers, whereas girls gain experience as domestic workers that is not transferable to other occupations (Knaul, 2001; Gustafsson-Wright & Pyne, 2002).

Summary and Conclusion

The influence of traditions, beliefs, norms and opportunities has turned gender into one of the most important contemporary social determinants and thus affects many aspects of life, including changes and choices. Child labour is an important phenomenon that has turned into a social issue in recent years and is influenced by gender. Despite some similarities, girls and boys experience child labour in different ways in terms of causes, types of work, methods and consequences. Girls work alongside boys, but are not counted for a variety of reasons, including the invisibility of their work, prevalent misconceptions by parents that their labour is not 'work', a lack of payment and the covert nature of some jobs; some of these causes also apply to some types of male work. For example, the reference to girls as 'unemplyed' in many poll results can be read as they are neither attending school nor working, but they may be working without social recognition.

Gender bias and the social preference for boys, cause parents to pay more attention to boys, investing in their growth and success, and make girls victims of boys, limiting their opportunities for growth and development. There is a venue for girls to find employment; however, their efforts are not recognised. Gender expectations and discrimination, parental preferences and some special cases such as illness in the family or both parents working outside the home are the main reasons for girls' work and their consequent double exploitation at work. Similarly, the tendencies for girls to work hard in difficult conditions and to obey their employers have increased the demand for female labour. Although both girls and boys are forced to work as a result of poverty and other unfavourable circumstances, some studies show that these factors affect girls more than boys and that, in some cases, boys work for personal economic independence (Wille, 2001) [43].

Because of cultural perceptions and gender expectations, available opportunities and work-organisation methods differ for boys and girls, depending on the type of work. Jobs that require strenuous physical work, immigration, living away from home and settling at work, such as scavenging and construction work, are often performed by boys. In Iran, Afghan boys are primarily considered suitable for these types of work (Association for the Protection of Children's Rights, 2019). Girls are more involved in domestic work and agriculture. Contrary to popular belief, domestic work exposes girls to serious risks (Blagbrough, 2008; UNICEF, 1999) [8]. They also participate actively in street work, because girls are better able to gain the sympathy of citizens and earn money (Ahmady, 2021) [1]. According to another classification, boys are more likely to be in the market for paid work, whereas girls are more likely to be in unpaid domestic work and services. When girls are paid, they do not receive equal wages under equal conditions and they have less control over their incomes, which is often given to their fathers, mothers or husbands. Boys' work experiences and skills can be transferred or extended to other future jobs, whereas this is less true for girls.

Child labour has serious consequences for both boys and girls, with the consequences being worse for girls due to

social expectations and gender norms. Sexual harassment is one of the consequences of child labour that is primarily geared toward girls. Even the fear of harassment and the loss of girls' chastity and honour, which begins at puberty in some tribes, reduces the tendency of girls to work outside the home, particularly on the street or in agricultural work.

By reviewing studies in the field of work with a focus on gender, we see significant gender disparities and differences in child labour. Despite these differences, particularly in Iran, researchers, legislators, policymakers and children's-rights activists have not adequately addressed this issue.

Researchers must conduct research in this field to further address this issue and provide sufficient information about it. Without adequate information and knowledge, inadequate policies and interventions are implemented, which will be ineffective in eliminating child labour and reducing its harms.

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