

**Parental Involvement and its Relationship with their children involvement in
Intergenerational Persistence of Child Labor in Mechanical Workshops in Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa**

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Abstract

Globally, the issue of child labor is more hazardous and specifically more vulnerable as well as deplorable in underdeveloped and developing countries. This research study has its unique dimension of child labor from the perspective of intergenerational persistence of child labor specifically in mechanical workshops of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The objective of the study has mainly focused on the parental involvement in child labor at their early age of life and its relationship with their children's involvement in child labor that leads to intergenerational persistence. The researcher designed descriptive research questions followed by a qualitative phenomenological research approach to investigate the issue. The targeted population comprised of children working in mechanical workshops, their parents who were/are also involved in work and remained child labor during their very early stage of life. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques for data collection. Two major research instruments (semi-structured interview guide and a Focus Group Discussion) were used to collect data from the respondents. The data were analyzed, and major themes were discussed in the light of secondary data. The major findings reflect that large family size, age of child, family nature, family social norms, parent's personal behavior, household composition, siblings and relatives' involvement in mechanical workshop, were the major structural factors of intergenerational persistence of child labor in mechanical workshops.

Keywords: *Persistent of Child Labor, Intergenerational, Parental Involvement, Relationships, Mechanical Workshops*

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1. Introduction

In Sub-Saharan World and Africa, children are socialized in child labor which in return shows that socio-economic activities in African countries have enhanced the exploitation of children in this regard (Shendell, Noomnual, Chishti, Sorensen Allacci, & Madrigano, 2016). It has been considered as a significant predictor in child labor and in fact it is parents who influence their children in different labor work. In most of the cases it is because parents give lesser value to education of their children, their attitude towards children, their own life experiences while the prevalence of poverty intensify this practice at large (Boyden, 2018). In persistence of child labor, parents are involved and equally responsible because most of the decisions related to child labor are taken by parents. Research studies showed that parents' involvement in child labor during their childhood are closely related to persistence of child labor among their children (Munir et al., 2021; Nandi & Ashraf, 2017; Suryasari et al., 2020). The study of Nasereddin Hodrob (2021) in Jordan on parental perceptions of child labor and the implication for educational policy indicated lack of trust of parents on the products of education, cultural norms which are contradictory towards education, and work preferences of parents are among major factors which make parental involvement a strong predictor of child labor in early ages of their children.

Child labor persistence has a close relationship with the process of future earning evictions and investment in human capital however, in some cases, the literature from economic perspective explains labor as a proliferation of economic activities only (Mbebi, 2018). In this regard, Basu and Van (1998) used the initial work of Becker (1967) and Rosenzweig and Evenson (1977) from the economic perspective and developed a theory of child labor where the labor of the child depends upon the poverty of the family. The family head decides with the assumption that if the income of child labor is up to the family's desire they send their children to work, if the income is not up to the family's desire they send their children to school and the same theory has been adopted by many researchers and agreed upon family income (poverty) is the main originator of child labor. In contrast, the theory was also challenged by many field experts with the view that poverty is not the sole factor held responsible for child labor but there are certain other associated factors that contribute a lot to child labor. The associated factors have been explained in light of the following models:

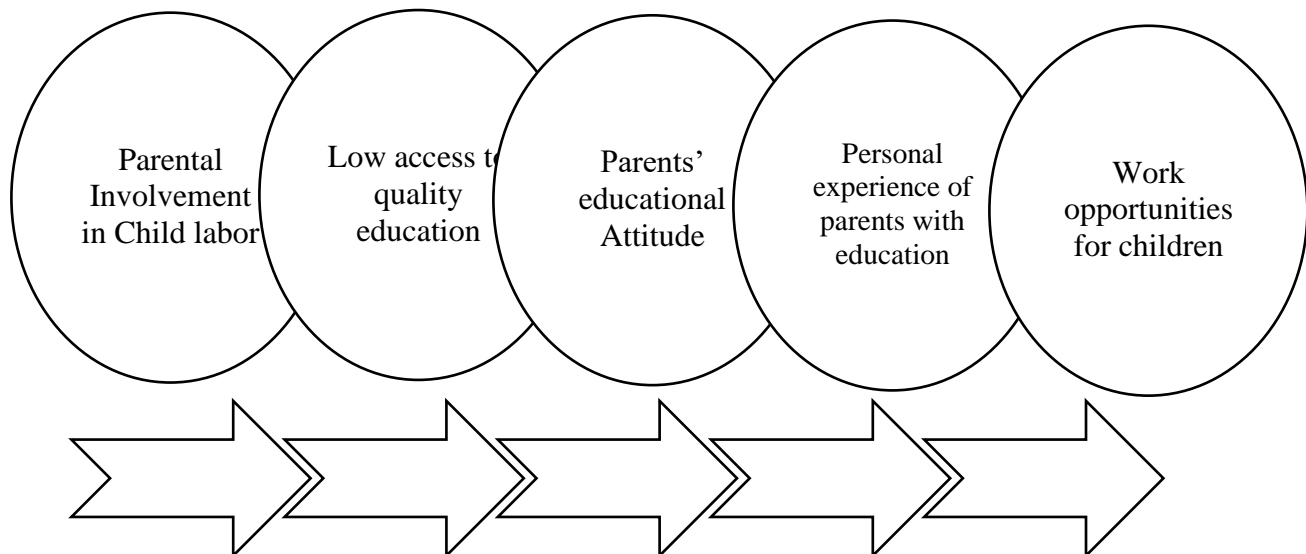
1. The first model is closely related to the Basu and Van (1998) theory where the decision of parents either to make the child work or be schooled majorly depends on the trade-off between investment in education and its return (cost-effectiveness of education). If the return rate of education is less in relation to its cost, then parents send their children to work as well as select this option in the situation where a certain type of knowledge is more cost-effective as compared to education or schooling (on-job learning).
2. While explaining the second school of thought, Boutin (2012) viewed that there are some obstacles that affect child supply to the labor market i.e. the initial obstacles represent the dysfunctional nature of child labor and the land market when adults of the family are not enough competent to satisfy the exploitation of the land market effectively. In this case, the family heads have two choices; they can hire labor from the external market to continue their work or opt for sharecropping if labor in the external market is expensive, not available or even the labor market is not available nearby, the family heads in compulsion employ family minors in work. Therefore, any factor that reduces the cost of labor which is associated with children leads to a decline in sending children to school. The second set

of constraints is associated with the credit imperfections which lead to child labor and explains the situational monetary needs of the family, where they must make decisions about their assets- children's education time, and other physical assets. In such a situation, parents mostly prefer children's school time to secure the physical assets and use children as alternate.

Concededly, based on the research studies parental involvement is a strong predictor of child labor which is highly influenced by quality of education, access to quality education, poverty, cultural norms, parents' personal experiences with education and demand of labor in labor market.

2. Parental Choice Theory

This theory is closely related to poverty trap theory where parents or household heads have limited options for their children education, trainings and skills development and choose to select child as income source. The decisions are made by parents on behalf of the child and therefore it is called parents' choice theory of child labor persistence. The economic constraints of family and absence of opportunities for free education are among the major reasons of parents' choice. Dammert and Galdo (2013) agreed that intergenerational persistence of child labor can also be explained in the light of parental choice theory, and they consider that parents' decisions are influenced by a host of family related factors. The parents send their child for labor as they need more income to satisfy household needs or they need to have additional/extra resources to invest on their children education. Therefore, sometime children also made these decisions on behalf of their parents to be the source of income for family. The study of Beegle et al. (2006) added another dimensions of child decision to work instead of education and they call it sense of autonomy and independence. Basu and Van (1998) also argued that parental choices are not their own wishes but they have been trapped by multiple factors such as poverty, low income sources, high inflation rates, expenses on children education, and perceived value of education in the market. In such scenarios elimination of child labor is closely associated with the eradication of the factors that affects parents' choices.



3. Methods and Procedures

The study concentrates on explorations of family social structure with its relational adversities as a major determinant of intergenerational persistence of child labor working in mechanical workshops of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. It was imperative to explore this research phenomenon by following qualitative research design with special concentration on the

background determinants responsible for child labor persistence from one generation to another generation. Likewise, this study intends to explore life experiences of the study participants in their natural setting (mechanical workshops), therefore, phenomenological research design with thematic analysis from qualitative approach have been adopted by researcher. The descriptive survey method was adopted for data collection in the field through self-designed interview questions and focused group discussions. The interview questions were used for one-to-one interviews from children working in mechanical workshops while focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with parents/guardians of children working/worked in mechanical workshops through personal visits. For locating study participants children working in mechanical workshops were included and whose parents also remain child laborer during their childhood. A total of 20 study participants (child labors working in mechanical workshops) and 32 participants in three Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) constituted sample group of the study.

Thematic analysis techniques has been to analyzed data because in qualitative research studies the most frequently used method is thematic analysis technique by researchers. For thematic analysis the interviews data were transcribed as it was recorded through mobile phone and notes were also taken during face to face interviews along with focus group discussions (FGDs). Codes and sub-codes were sorted in the light of research objectives and questions where major themes and sub-themes were identified which was helpful to answer research questions and discuss themes in the light of available literature.

3.1. Objective of the study

To explore parental involvement in child labor and its relationship with their children's involvement in child labor persistence

4. Results and Discussion

As discussed in methodology in current study, thematic analysis method was used as a tool of data analysis to interpret and present the collected data in a good manner and sequence. The following discussion shows family social structure with various relational hardships being responsible for child labor persistence in mechanical workshops of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

4.1. Parental Involvement in Child Labor

Parents influence family decisions making processes in almost all spheres of life. They are the ones who decide about the future of children. It is evident in most of the published literature that 90% of children are sent to work by their parents due to multiple purposes including financing the family, supporting parents in nourishing their siblings, and paying rent, utility bills, and food (Christianakis, 2011; Cummings, 2016). The field information in the current research study stated that parents decide about child labor for their children where they can learn mechanical skills which are far better than education and some of them believed that due to poverty they have no choice but to send a child for earning instead of learning. There were five major themes identified under the research question from collected data of the study participants which included lack of children's interest in education, unsupported and uncongenial school environment, working siblings and relatives in mechanical workshops, parents' educational status, and family businesses in mechanical workshops. The following model represents the interplay of such variables in connection with the child labor:

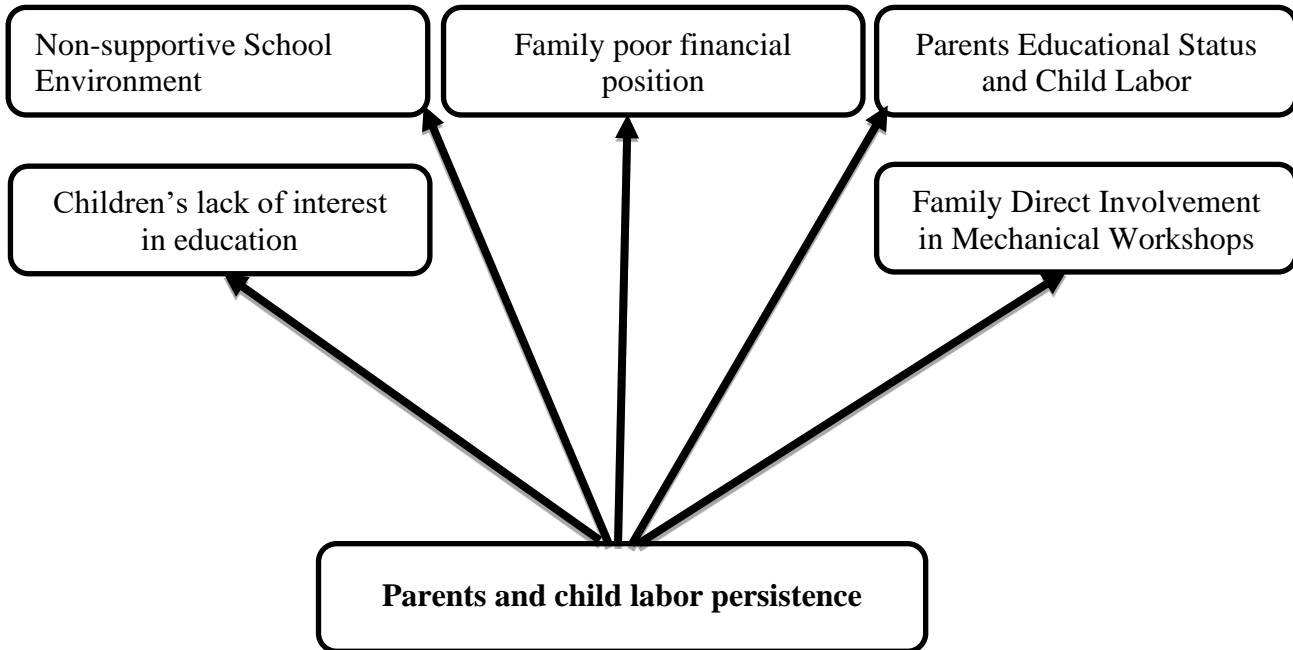


Figure 4.1 Parents related factors which lead to the persistence of child labor

Further, it is also believed that sometimes parents directly send their children to workshops due to unavoidable circumstances and indirectly influence their children's decisions towards labor work during their childhood intentionally or unintentionally. In this regard, Banstola, Acharya, and Shin (2019) concluded that parents, in extreme compulsion bring their children to work in bricks' factories during childhood instead of sending them to schools.

Likewise, the field information regarding parents' decisions revealed that mostly fathers take decisions regarding child work in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and send children to work in mechanical workshops because of their failure in schools. However, there are various additional factors that directly or indirectly influence this decision, such as poverty, the need for labor for certain work with increased demand for work, or the absence of a labor force in the market.

The other additional causes have been discussed in the following themes.

5. Children's Interest in Education and Increase in Child Labor

Jenkner and Hillman (2004) explain that the education of children in poor countries is associated with compromised indicators of the quality of education which sometimes leads to poor decisions of children regarding education. The study added that children getting an education in an overcrowded classroom, following a theoretical curriculum taught by untrained and unqualified teachers often decreases children's success in school. The study concluded that child interest in schooling is closely associated with school nature, learning facilities, and teachers' competence.

In relation to this aspect, parents of the child laborer under study discoursed that most of the time decision related to child work in a mechanical workshop is based on a lack of interest in education and schooling. They said that their children were not good in their studies and have no interest in school, which were reflected in their school attendance, academic marks, and unpleasant attitude towards education therefore, fathers sent them to a workshop for learning skills in mechanics, *kharad* work, and engine, etc.

In response to parents' perspectives on children's interest in education, children were of the view that school is a difficult place to stay, and therefore they join workshops to get rid of it.

Furthermore, some participants added that they belong to very poor families, and assumed them competent enough to support their families financially, and have joined mechanical workshops. One participant told the researcher:

In school, I do not feel well because I was supposed to memorize the subjects in which I have no interest at all, neither I am good at memorizing things, I always feel annoyed, struggling with school stuff, which was out of my range and comprehension, that's why my teachers never like me (SWCH-L/SPIEA-10/01).

There were multiple associated stories related to a lack of interest in school which has led to workshops forever at a very early age. On a supplementary question in focus group discussion why do parents send their children to workshops on failure in school or lack of children's interest in school? Some answers and responses were quite astonishing one parent added:

These children are left with no choice with parents, as the local situation is supportive for children where they can be influenced by numerous hazardous people involved in crimes, drugs and other socially and morally ill activities to which parents cannot leave their children exposed, in such situation workshops are far better places where they can learn some foundational skills of earning their livelihood, can support their families and future as well (SWLE-FDGEA-44/03).

In this regard, Dessy and Pallage (2001) while presenting a theory of the relationship among child labor, parents' decisions related to their children education or labor work and firms skilled-based technologies adaptation, explained that capital investment in children for long-term returns to parents in the presence of immediate earning (labor force required for skill-biased technologies of firms) is quite difficult where the current opportunity of earning is sure as compare to future, often motivate them to send their children to work.

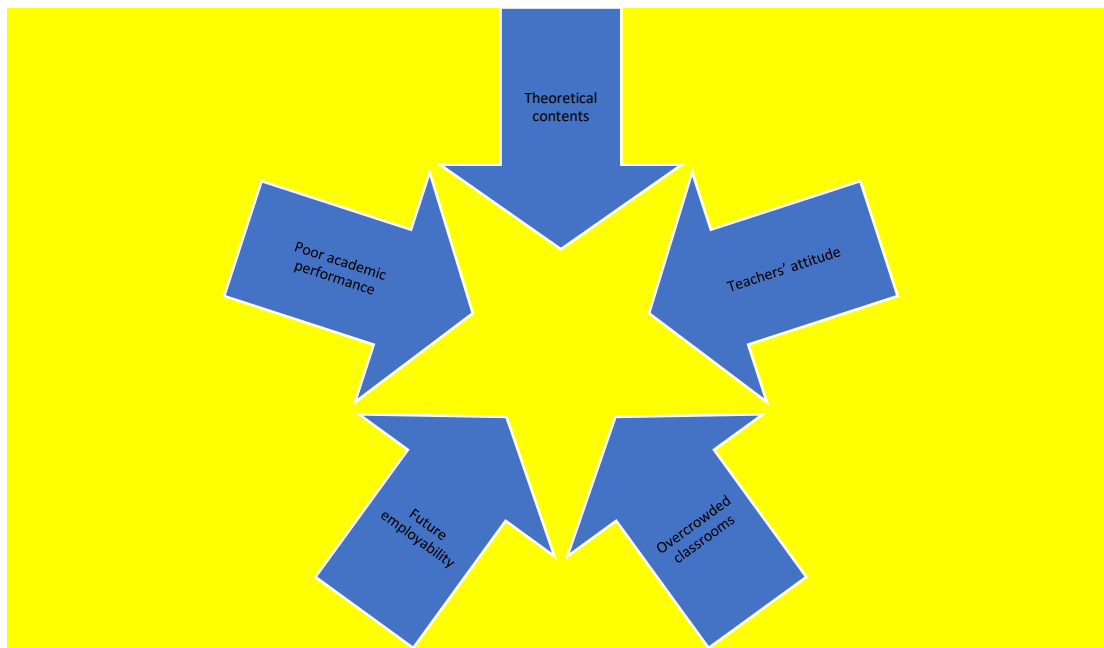


Figure 4.2 Reasons for lack of interest in education

Unfortunately, same is the case in the education system of Pakistan, which lack skills, quality, and practicality and only produces a clerical staff. On this, the findings of Maya-Jariego (2017) add the story of Peru concerning children's movement "BUT WE WANT TO WORK" against child labor elimination. The background reason was the stagnation of the education system, low

attention to the special educational needs of primary and secondary school students, and enlarged inequalities of access to primary and secondary education in the rural areas of Peru.

6. Unsupportive School Environment and Child Labor Persistence

Jia, Konold, and Cornell (2016) believed that the school environment has direct and strong influence on the educational attainments of students. Al-Mahasneh (2018) supported the view of Jia, Konold, and Cornell (2016) and stated that an attractive school environment retains students in educational activities and motivates them for learning directly or indirectly. However, the vice versa can result in negative effects where the student's dropout ratio increases, as the students do not consider themselves secure.

Most of the children who attended schools sometimes were not satisfied with the school environment where respect for intelligent students, overcrowded classrooms with no individual perspective was weighted, and every student was treated on the basis of their educational performance. In some cases, it was students' family relationships and personal tuition that gives them priority over other students, lower facilities of individual learning, a harsh attitude of teachers, bullying of elder students and abusive language were some of the major factors that reflect the unhygienic learning atmosphere in school which played a significant role in parents' decision related to work of children. Some of the participants commented that they leave the school and education due to the school environment. One of the stories in this regard is,

Apart from so many other things outside of the school, most of the time many drugs addicted people were present like hashish users, cigarette smokers, etc. and within the school, there were also some personnel (teachers and supporting staff) who were used to smoking and filters for smoking stuff were even in classroom dustbins. That made me fed up with schooling because even some students in grade fifth were also engaged in smoking. So I felt no such differences between the inside and outside school environment and felt the same. Furthermore, the teachers were only kind to intelligent students and were harsh to dull students that is why I am here in front of you (SWCH-L/SPIEA-15/02).

It is obvious that the school environment is not supportive and is one of the major reasons for students' dropouts who are employed in different segments of life (workshops, farming, shop keeping, scraps, transports, and begging). Sometimes these children are captured by the militants and alike groups who use them for other disastrous purposes. It is important to mention that schools are not for teachers, but for the community who can make it a place for learning, if there are problems related to the school atmosphere, local community members can make a complaint to the district educational officers and can bring it into the notice of local bodies' representatives. These are effective channels where problems related to schools are effectively resolved, but as responded by the focus group participant, some people when making up their minds about something make it happen by all means.

7. Family Poor Financial Position and Child Labor

Owoyomi (2018), Herz and Epstein (2021), and Ali & Sohardardi (2022) believed that parents send their children to work in any sector for earning due to their poverty. Among many factors responsible for child labor family economic positions and extreme level of poverty is a significant source of the persistence of child labor. Similarly, Hafeez and Hussain (2019) concluded that child labor in Pakistan is related to the weak financial position of families, as they are unable to pay the educational expenses of their children, and therefore have one option of pushing their children to work which means poverty is closely related to child labor in all segments of life.

Almost all researchers and experts are agreed that the major cause of child labor is extreme level poverty and parents in financial crisis send their children to mechanical workshops because they

are unable to meet their educational and other expenses. It is also of great concern to mention that when the overall family income is not sufficient for home expenses children's employability plays a significant role for their parents in two respects, one is that they are not supposed to spend on child education and the second is child earning contribution to family wealth.

The field data from some of the study participants considered themselves as the only source of income for their family, or a significant source of income who contribute to the family income to survive. For instance, a story of a participant revealed that;

I used to work in the workshop to support my widow mother, the workshop owner give me from one hundred and fifty rupees to three hundred rupees per day depending upon workshop sales or clients, some portion of this amount is spent on our daily expenses and the remaining amount are credited for rent of house which is three thousand per month, at evening time when I go home there is a restaurant who gives me some surplus food that I bring to home for mother and other siblings (SWCH-L/SPIEA-12/07).

Another child was of the opinion that, *my parents are poor and I work with my father so that we can treat my younger sister, and pays back our family loan, that we got long ago for some domestic reasons (BKCH-L/SPIEA-15/09).*

The emotional compulsions and traps along with the extreme level of poverty are also responsible for the intergenerational persistence of child labor in mechanical workshops for which mostly parents are responsible.

8. Family's Direct Involvement in Mechanical Workshops

There is considerable evidence like farming, the workshop industry is also heavily relying on a low-cost labor force because workshop owners are unable to pay high amounts of money to adults for work and assistance and get a cheaper labor force in the form of child labor. Similarly, those families who are directly involved in mechanical workshops, they do motivate their low performing (in schools) children to join workshops with the belief to will learn mechanical skills which will be better for their future lives and also like to orient their own kids at an early age with workshop business. In this connection, Webbink, Smits, and De Jong (2012) add that among many types of child labor, there are some hidden child labors which they studied in 16 South Asian and African countries and have divided into two big sections i.e. the "household" and the "family business". According to Webbink et al., (2012), nearly 15 hours per week children are working in family businesses and a mechanical workshop is one of those family businesses.

The data also revealed that in mechanical workshops, there are some families who own it; it is their family business and traditions they got from elders long ago. The researcher asked the participants how they entered that workshop. One of the respondents recorded his response as:

This is our own workshop for the last two or three generations where my grandfather, then my father, and my elder brothers, and I are working in it, so it is our family business. I came here for learning different mechanical skills along with my school, after school at 1:30 PM, I used to come over here and work with my Dada (father) and Lala (elder brother), one of my brothers who was an expert in Khairad works is now working in Saudi Arab since 2017. As a student in grade 6th, I considered myself far better than my peers, and believe that before my matriculation I would be good enough in certain mechanical work, and I am taking keen interest because my Dada (father) promised me that after my matriculation, he will send me to Saudi Arab where I will earn more money than in Pakistan (UDCH-L/SPIEA-13/03).

This reflects that family business is one of the most significant factors that lead to the encouragement of child labor which is a hidden one and which cannot be controlled easily. Because it is closely related to the belief system of the general masses which needs regular and persistent

measures to be taken and is also a long-term process. Furthermore, the above-mentioned themes extracted from parents' involvement in the persistence of child labor are significant in continuing child labor from one generation to another.

9. Conclusions

The research study concluded that parental involvement has a strong relationship with **their** children involvement in Intergenerational Persistence of Child Labor in Mechanical Workshops in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Poor financial position, children increase interest in child labor, poor education system and family direct involvement in mechanical workshops are the key factors in child labor persistence specifically in workshops at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The themes along with the responses of the study respondents proved that family allow their children to mechanical workshops due to poor financial position. Moreover due to poor education system the children are attracted towards child labor. Similarly the study concluded that family direct involvement in mechanical workshops influence their children towards child labor because their parents compel them to continue it as ultimate family business. Moreover the study concluded that unsupportive school environment like over-burdened classrooms, bad infrastructure facilities, poor learning environment etc. detract students from learning process therefore children prefer to work in early ages of their life. It is important to note that mostly participants were belonging from uneducated families therefore they were directly influenced by parents to join work instead of education in their early ages of life.

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