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Original Article

Problems Associated with Child Labor: Implications in Addressing Compulsory Education in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Considering the hindrance of child labor to ensuring free, quality education, this study explores the implications of child labor in addressing education for all children. It especially stresses the problems of child labor and implications on compulsory education. To this end, the embedded case research was employed to explore the issue in-depth. Data were collected using guided interviews, document analysis, and observation. The sample of the study consisted of 60 children of 7 to 14 years old engaged mainly in shoe shining and lottery selling works due to their potential interventions with schooling time. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic data. The content analysis and the narrations were applied to analyze qualitative data. The findings indicated that the demand for children's support of families (46.7%), and rural-urban migration (76.6%) were found to be the major reasons for children's labor engagement in the study areas. More than 76% of the child laborers left their origins with or without their parents, mainly for economic reasons. Lack of commitment to implementing laws of protection, and shortage of rehabilitation and safeguard programs are challenging child labor reduction practices. Consequently, child labor hindered the participation of children in schooling activities. The article emphasizes the importance of prioritizing sustainable child labor protection and ensuring the means of survival for poor families. It highlights the need for remedial social programs to support families in need, helping them find alternative sources of income to replace their child's employment, in order to achieve the goals of compulsory education. Understanding the interplay between child labor and compulsory education is a crucial concern for policy planners, and advocacy groups working on children's behalf.

Keywords: child labor, compulsory education, rural-urban migration, protection

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

One major difficulty with respect to the understanding of child labor is its definition (ILO, 1995). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), a person with an age of less than fifteen is considered a 'child' and a child is a 'laborer' if he/she is 'economically active' (ILO, 1996). However, there are variations in the minimum work age restriction and the type of labor among different nations, which might make the definition of child labor ambiguous. For instance, the UN (1989) defines child labor as "all forms of economic exploitation, any work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development". Similarly, UNICEF (1997) claims that child labor is exploitative if it involves any of the following:

> "Full-time work at a too early age; too many hours spent working; work that exerts undue physical, social, or psychological stress; work and life on the street in bad conditions; inadequate pay; too much responsibility, work that hampers access to education; work that undermines children's dignity and self-esteem, such as slavery or bonded labor and sexual exploitation and work that is detrimental to full social and psychological development" (p.24).

This depicts that since children are performing both economic activity and household chores in different combinations, it is necessary to consider hours in economic activity and household chores together for a more complete picture of the time intensiveness of work. Thus, child labor strictly is emphasizing children who are engaged in different job activities.

Child labor is the unpalatable human aspect of a very young person having to do manual work beyond his/her physical capability. It is one of the most atrocious forms of human rights violations that cannot be eradicated without ensuring compulsory primary education. Education is a human right and a key factor in reducing poverty and child labor. Its goal achievement especially addressing access to all has an interchanging effect on childhood labor.

A child labor has a longer-term aspect that hinders the human capital formation activity which in turn might hurt the future (Psacharopoulos, 1997). Thus, understanding the interaction between education and child labor is critical in achieving both the compulsory education and child labor elimination goals. According to the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC), the elimination of child labor and compulsory education are becoming "interconnected"

global goals (ILO, 2006). This is not only because education is a major means of keeping children out of the labor market but also because many out-of-school children are engaged in child labor and their work acts as a barrier to accessing education.

As rightly argued by Guarcello *et al*. (2008) efforts to achieve compulsory education and the progressive elimination of child labor are interlinked. Directly or indirectly, they are affecting each other. Thus, one can understand that education is a key element in preventing child labor, and child labor in turn is acting as the major obstacle to accessing education. Consequently, since the connection between child labor and lack of access to education has long been recognized, the International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions on child labor call for access to free basic education for those removed from the worst forms of child labor, and state that the minimum age for employment shall not be less than the age for completion of compulsory schooling (ILO, 1994).

Studies showed that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence of child labor in the world (Moyi, 2010), Ethiopia can never be exceptional. In light of this, Ethiopia has ratified the two ILO core conventions on child labor (i.e., minimum age convention No. 138 and Elimination of worst forms of child labor convention No. 182). But policies and concrete interventions for addressing the child labor problem have not yet been put in place (Dawit, 2010). Additionally, Ethiopia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in May 1991. Constitutionally, Article 36 of the nation is totally devoted to the rights of children stating that every child has the right to not be subjected to exploitative labor practices (FDRE, 1995).

Despite the efforts, the problem of child labor in Ethiopia remained significant where nearly 60 percent of children work to supplement their family income, and half of them were at hazardous jobs (Dawit, 2010; Nardos, 2006; UNDP, 2004). While it is stressed that child labor in Ethiopia is considered one aspect of educating children to socialize in the community and learn the essentials of life skills as they grow into adults (ILO, 1995). This might have resulted from a failure to distinguish between moderate and excessive, or exploitative, forms of work. To this end, though attempts have been made to introduce the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) strategy to reduce poverty, the strategy did not include explicit measures against child labor (UNDP, 2004).

In addition to its impact on human capital formation, child labor has serious consequences that stay with the individual and with society for far longer than the years of childhood (Zerihun, 1996). Currently, the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of halving poverty and achieving compulsory education are highly being affected and face difficulty in elimination of child labor. Though the achievement of the SDGs is considered a comprehensive vision of development, child labor remains a serious obstacle to achieving a number of the goals including compulsory education. Child labor has obvious implications for meeting the goal of universalizing primary education (Betcherman *et al*., 2004). Thus, because of its implications for schooling, child labor must be addressed if the rights to an education at the heart of compulsory education are implemented meaningfully.

However, Ethiopia still lacks a compulsory education commandment which in turn leaves children vulnerable to various forms of child labor (ILO, 2020). The social programs working to combat child labor are insufficiently targeted sectors with a high incidence of child labor. The available scanty information in relation to child labor in the country reveals an alarming image. The growing number of working children in sub-Saharan Africa had been linked to many factors including, economic stagnation, orphanage, and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS (e.g., Admassie, 2002). Like in many other sub-Saharan African countries, a large number of children in Ethiopia join the labor force usually below the age of 14 (Dawit, 2010). According to the results of a 2015 national child labor survey, almost 16 million children from the ages of 5 to 17 engaged in child labor indicating that more than 41% of children were engaged in working and about 31% of children were combing working and schooling activities (ILO, 2018). In Addis Ababa, the 2005 National Labor Force Survey showed that out of the total 222,239 children, 17, 769 were working in various informal sectors in the city (CSA, 2005).

The recent study's report about the status of the nation's out-of-school children counted 19.6% and out of these, 7.6% of out-of-school children are found in the capital city (MoE, 2022). The recent data also confirmed that child labor has increased steadily and reached 14.7% due to the rapid urbanization of the capital city (UNICEF Ethiopia and CSA, 2020; ILO, 2018) and large-scale migration from rural to urban areas with 6% of all Ethiopians moving from rural to the cities (Bundervoet, 2018). Thus, though scanty, the findings undertaken on the child labor-related aspects in the capital city showed that child labor is more widespread starting at an earlier

age. In addition, while the problem in diverse ways is affecting access and equity of education, the information on the situation of children involved in child labor is strictly limited.

The study shows that the types of work children engaged in are diverse mainly including work like household chores, shoe-shining, selling 'kolo' and bread, selling lottery tickets, weaving, transport, and trading practices (Nardos, 2006). However, most people feel that shoe-shining, selling lottery tickets, and working as taxi assistants are normal activities that cannot be considered child labor (UNICEF, 2003). These activities are believed to be harmless in urban settings. However, pertinent to child labor is that children are working at the expense of schooling, and the defining characteristics of each of the child labor categories need to be considered (ILO, 2011).

Despite the strong association between different forms of child labor and educational attainment (Getachew *et al*., 2005); the situation in Addis Ababa has not been adequately studied yet. This reveals that child labor in the capital city is less recognized as one of the major social problems (Dawit, 2010). In this regard, what is being done to reduce it and encourage children to attend schools has remained unfixed. Particularly, though it is a common practice for many children to work at home or in the fields rather than be educated, the extent of practices in eliminating child labor and encouraging children to attend education in Addis Ababa is less studied. Therefore, undertaking a study is found to be critical to explore the problems associated with child labor and the implications on compulsory education. It generally, investigates questions associated with the determinants of children's participation in work or education; the implications of child labor on compulsory education goal achievement, and challenges that face the elimination process of child labor (in this study's context, child labor, categorically focuses on children involved in shoe-shining, and lottery selling activities).

Specifically, the study assesses problems of child labor and its implications in compulsory education at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia which is identified as one of the parts of the nation where child labor is most commonly practiced and served as a transition center of child trafficking and 7.6% of out-of-school children are hosted in (ILO, 2020, MoE, 2022).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The research design employed in this study was an embedded case method, greatly emphasizing on the qualitative study to understanding the case in detail and undertaking an in-depth description of the questions raised and supported with numeric data analysis mainly for the demographics of child laborers. An embedded case study is often used to provide context to other data offering a more complete picture and detailed information about what happened in the program and why (Patton, 2002; Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

2.2 Source and Methods of Data Collection

The study used both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources include key informants from various offices and child laborers in different informal sectors. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis. The interview was conducted mainly with child laborers, an officer from Addis Ababa City Labor and Social Affairs, an expert from the Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau, and a communication officer from the National Lottery Office. The observation was undertaken with children from different working places regarding their work activities and for information on type of works they are engaged in as well as data on working hours including the evening sessions. Furthermore, documents were consulted related to the policy and strategy issues in the practices and challenges in the elimination of child labor. The policy documents like education policy, labor proclamations, and articles of the constitution, national and international ratified laws and legislations have been consulted carefully.

2.3 Samples and Sampling Procedure

This study employed primarily non-probability sampling methods. Given the mobile nature of child laborers in both lottery-selling and shoe-shining children, sample selection was not an easy task. To this end, sample selection relied on convenience and stratified purposeful sampling procedure which leaves room to have key informants with in-depth information on the issue. This, sampling technique paved the way for getting sample respondents anywhere in a public space, on the street, in the workplace or in market areas or community bus stations at any time Therefore, the sample of the study consisted of 60 (38 males and 22 females) 7 to 14-year-old

children who engaged in shoe-shining activities and selling lottery tickets, assuming the accessibility of the works for children to easily enter to the child labor.

In addition, they are easily observable and relatively time-consuming and intervene with class time since both work and education need the engagement of a child at the same time. Consequently, the selection of samples was to a large extent a convenience technique. Some of the child laborers were suspicious of giving information due to fear of unfamiliarity. Accordingly, none of them allowed me to record and take pictures in the workplace. To tackle such problems by gaining the confidence of child laborers, going over and socializing using adult workers in the same area was mandatory. Accordingly, the child laborers and parents or guardians (in few cases to support children) were involved in guided interviews. The key informants from Addis Ababa City Labor and Social Affairs, the Addis Ababa City Education Bureau, and the National Lottery Office were also included in the study using purposive sampling considering their closer responsibilities to the issue.

2.3 Methods of Data Analysis

After the required data have been collected, content analysis was undertaken in reducing, sense-making effort and identifying core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2002). Therefore, data collected through various methods were labeled and categorized into themes so as to identify patterns and associations. While percentages and frequencies were employed to make use of the demographic data obtained numerically. Thus, the quantitative data were set in the qualitative data during the analysis due to the focus of the study on textual case analysis. In the qualitative data analysis, entirely changed pseudonyms were used for privacy purpose. Hence, the entire names used in the interview data analysis are pseudonyms.

2.4 Ethical considerations

Initially, a permission letter was sought from Jimma University to collect the data from the research sites. Based on the given permission, the list of target respondents was accessed and the required samples were identified before starting to collect the data. Then, the information is provided to the research participants so that they can understand the purpose of the study. Participants were also informed about the absence of both potential risks and benefits due to participation in the study. In addition, the collected data were confidential and anonymous in

order to keep the rights of the research participants. Moreover, respondents were informed that their involvement in the study was totally voluntary and that they would withdraw from the research at any time. More importantly, any communication with concerned bodies was not carried out without the consent of the research respondents and their guardians/parents. Finally, the data were distributed to the respondents on a face-to-face basis and filled with the assistance of data collectors.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Characteristics of child laborers

The age group is a crucial variable in the analysis of the conditions of the children involved in child labor. In that regard, Table 1 shows the distribution and percentage of the age of children who participated in this study. Most of the children who had been interviewed are 13-14 years old comprising 25 (41.7%) of the total respondents. The other 33.3% belongs to 10-12 years of age and the remaining 25% belongs to the age group of 7-9 years. This indicates that most of the child laborers in the study areas fall in the age level of 10 to 14 comprising 75 percent of the respondents in this study's case.

Table 1. Age of child Laborers

Age of laborers	Frequency	Percentage
7-9	15	25
10-12	20	33.3
13-14	25	41.7
Total	60	100

Table 2 shows the gender distribution of the child laborers who participated in the study. Accordingly, one can observe that the majority, (i.e., 63.3%) of the respondents were males and the remaining 36.7% were females. This is mainly due to the work categories that this study has emphasized. It mainly looked at child laborer activities, lottery selling, and shoe shining traditionally identified as male-dominated works where girls are expected to engage in household duties more than boys. Only few (16) parents or guardians were participated to support child laborers during interview sessions.

Table 2. Gender of respondents

Categories of Respondents	Gender	
	Male	Female
Working children	38(63.3%)	22(36.7%)
Officials	14(53.8%)	12(46.2%)
Parents/guardians	6(37.5%)	10(62.5%)

3.2 Why are children working?

Understanding why children work is essential for designing appropriate interventions that reduce child labor and increase educational attendance (Guarcello et al., 2008). However, it is rare to have only a single reason for why children labor engagement instead of school attendance (ILO, 2021). The data obtained using interviews and document analyses depicted that there are many grounds for child laborers to engage in work at an early age. Some of the major causes are treated below.

Economic deficiency of parents

The social status of parents of working children is commonly to blame for a child to engage at work instead of attending school. Directly or indirectly the economic problem forced children to engage in productive activities. Especially, this seems common practice within households with relatively large family sizes. One of the informants, a 13-year-old boy said:

> *We are five. My mother sometimes collects fuel-wood for sale; my father works on a daily basis. His work is on and off. Consequently, scarcity of food and other necessary things in the house is a common phenomenon. Last year I was combining working and schooling. But this year, my father advised me to stop schooling and to spend all the time in shoe-shining activities. Since then, I have been working the whole day here (CL, Feb 2021).*

This explains that unbalanced economic status urges children to shoulder major household responsibilities. Similarly, a 14 years old boy engaged in selling lottery tickets, explained that

> *Before coming to Addis Ababa, I was working with my family who are economically poor. They have six children including me. None of us is attending school. I am working every day without rest even on holidays and weekends. The work needs daily struggle for survival. I am doing this work not only for myself. I am serving my family. I have to cover their clothes and some other expenses (CL, Feb 2021).*

Besides their need for food and housing, child laborers are taking part in the labor market to fill the economic gap of their families. This gradually drives children to engage in productive activities paying no attention to its effect on development and education.

Migration and its causes

As can be observed in table 3, most (76.6%) of the child laborers who participated in this study migrated from various parts of the nation to the capital. Quite similar to this analysis, UNICEF (2020) finds out that both voluntary and involuntary migration aggravate the situation of child labor. Narrated data indicated children left their origin for economic reasons, peer pressure, and family disintegration (see qualitative analysis below). The children who were interviewed in this study came to Addis Ababa from various parts of the nation mainly for economic reasons. The respondent's history reveals this as follows.

> *I came from Marawi, (a small town in Western Gojjam) with other friends who were engaging in lottery ticket selling. I was very eager to work hard and get significant income for myself and my parents. Before coming to Addis Ababa, I was working with my family. My mother was happy when I told her to come and work in Addis Ababa (CL, Feb 2021).*

Table 3. Migratory status of a child laborer

Migratory status of a child laborer	Frequency	Percentage
Migrated to Addis	45	76.6
Never migrated	15	23.4

Consequently, the main intention of children who are involved in child labor in this strange city is either to subsidize their families' income or to ensure their own economic independence. Coinciding with this finding, a study also revealed that 55 percent of child laborers in Addis Ababa are those who migrated from various corners of the country (ILO, 2020) The study by Assefa (2000), also strengthens that the reasons why child labor highly prevailed in Ethiopia is associated with migration.

Moreover, factors such as family conflicts and divorce may push children to migrate from their origins. For instance, the case of one of the child laborers who engaged in shoe shining activities fortifies this argument. He explained that

I came here (Addis Ababa) a year ago after my father had created conflict with my mother. They were always in a quarrel. We had everything we needed. But they are always in doubt. The conflict got worse as time went on. Finally, my mother decided to leave the village and stay our lives. And then we left the origin to hide. Since then, I engaged in such activities to get our livelihood (CL, Feb 2021).

Hence, family disintegration results in the migration of guiltless children and makes them stay out of school. Another cause of children's migration is peer pressure. Among the lottery ticket sellers, most of the subjects of this study were migrants. These children left their homes for Addis Ababa due to peer pressure and the desire to make a better living by working on a seasonal basis. All of them are out of the schooling system. Some of them are dropouts and some others have never started schooling before. For instance, a 13 years old lottery seller, who came from Gojjam described that:

I came to Addis Ababa six months ago to work and get money. There have been friends who worked here. They took different items to their family when they returned home and bought sheep and goats to be herded. Their activities motivated me to come to Addis Ababa and do the same for my parents. One of my friends told me that things are attractive in Addis Ababa. I accepted all that he said and decided to come here (CL, Feb 2021). This shows that there is migration even without a push from parents because of peer pressure to engage in different activities at an early age.

The abolition of the shift program of the Education System

The Education Bureau of Addis Ababa is practicing a full-day schooling program. Some of the research subjects claimed that they were against this system. They prefer the shift program that gives a chance at least to combine working and attending education to the full-day program. Accordingly, one of the subjects of the study who is working in shoe shining blamed that

It was possible to attend school either in the morning or in the afternoon session if there is schooling in a shift program. As a result, I could work in my free time. However, since the shift program does not exist throughout the city, I couldn't attend school. I attempted to combine work and education. But it was difficult to continue. Finally, I prefer survival to education and decided to work (CL, Feb 2021).

Accordingly, children had the chance to combine work and education before the shift program was brought to an end. However, the abolition of shift programs in the education system could not allow children to share their time to work and education equally. In this regard, the

educational planning officer in the Addis Ababa city education bureau argued that the abolition of the shift program was an urgent response to the provision of quality education. According to the interviewee,

> *The full-day program is a costly action that requires an additional burden from the government for educational facilities and additional classrooms. In order to fill the gaps in educational goal achievement and maximize access to quality education, the abolition of shift programs is considered a requirement (CLO, Feb 2021).*

This shows that a full-day program in the education system has been set as one of the requirements for accessing quality education. Nonetheless, economically disadvantaged and migrant child laborers working for survival were not considered at least to combine work and education. This is especially crucial when one considers the working hours of children engaged in diversified economic activities. As I have been informed from the interviews and evidenced from observation, children in lottery selling are working for at least 14 hours a day. They work from 7:30 a.m. early in the morning to 9:30 p.m. in the evening, whereas shoe-shining children are working for 10 to 12 hours a day. For instance, Alem is eight years old. I found her selling lottery tickets in the evening (8:45 pm) at one of the *kebeles* 'groceries' in the city. She explained that:

> *I am selling lottery tickets moving every public place up to 9:30 pm in the evening. Of course, after 7:30 p.m., I am working with my mother. People buy the tickets empathetically. Mostly, in the evening, the market is relatively attractive. But it is not an easy task to move here and there at night. After certain times, I get very tired and fail to sleep (CL, Feb 2021).*

This shows that though young workers are given a right to special protective measures by Proclamation No. 377/2003 of the Labor Law to work for a maximum of seven working hours per day (ILO, 2018), in reality, children are working for long hours at an early age using immature physical and mental stamina.

Moreover, they do not have time to play and interact with their age mates and friends; they do not get enough time for rest. A 12-years-old lottery seller reported "I feel unhappy when I see my age groups playing in fields. I spend all the day selling the lottery tickets. It is boring to work all the week without rest. I have no time for rest, play with matches" (CL, Feb 2021).

Furthermore, working children feel that they are most exploited, abused, and obliged to work for long hours a day without having rest and playing time at an early age. The following case can be

taken as significant evidence here. The participant is 10 years old and living with her mother and two brothers. She is supporting her mother in baking *injera*, caring for her sibling, and selling lottery in opposite shifts. She remarked that:

> *I hate the work that I am engaged in. I am out of school. I am not playing with my mates. It is too boring, and tiresome. But I have no alternative to leaving it because it is the only means to survive; my mother has no salary to cover the daily expenses at home (CL, Feb 2021).*

Similarly, a 14-year-old who is working in shoe-shining and carrying different properties in the street was blaming working at this age.

> *I am working the shoe-shinning and carrying different luggage from car and taxi as well as from market to home. I am working here in the street whatever the work comes. However, it is not attractive. It is tiresome and boring. Sometimes sunny and dusty; in other times rainy and muddy, this is life in the street working. Mostly I dislike working in this situation. But what can I do, it is a matter of life (CL, Feb 2021).*

Thus, it seems that children are obliged to work and survive. It is not a matter of luxury rather it is a matter of survival to work rather than play and attend education at this age. As child laborers argued, they detest their work and involvement in the labor market.

Regardless of variations in their work involvement, the following table summarizes the reasons for children's engagement in labor activities with rank indicating the level of priority reasons.

Table 4. Ranks for the core reasons for work engagement at this age

Core reasons	***Ranks for the reasons***		
	1st	**2nd**	**3rd**
To support family economically	28(46.7%)	20 (33.3%)	12 (20%)
To have daily food	16 (26.7%)	18 (30%)	26 (43.3%)
To buy material for education	3 (5%)	5 (8.3%)	5 (8.3%)
To Enjoy working (Hobby)	5 (8.3%)	5 (8.3%)	10 (16.6%)
Peer influence	6 (10%)	8 (13%.3)	6 (10%)
For Independence	2 (3.3%)	4 (6.7%)	3 (5%)

Economic support for their family is the first reason why 46.7% of the respondents were engaged in child labor activities (Table 4). While, for more than 33% of children, economic support of the family is reported to be the second reason for their labor engagement. On the other hand, about 27% of children primarily engaged in labor activities to have their daily food.

Table 5: Schooling status of a child laborer

Schooling practice	Number	Percentage
Dropout	33	55
Attending evening program	9	15
Attending regular program	2	3.3
Never attended	16	26.7

As shown in Table 5, more than half (55%) of participants were dropped out of school. And, more than one-fourth of the children did not attend schooling in any form. Only 18.3% of children were attending schools both in regular and evening sessions while engaging in child labor. By implication, it is a problematic phenomenon for child laborers to attend schooling in parallel with working.

Table 6. Family status: with whom are you living?

Child laborer lives with	Number	Percentage
Mother and father	8	13.2
Only mother	15	25
Only father	9	15
Grandparents	12	20

From Table 6 above, one can dictate that only 13.2 percent of children who are engaged in work are living with both mother and father. Plenty (40%) of the child laborers are living with single parents mainly with a mother (25%) and a father (15%) while 20 percent of children were parented with their grandparents. This also showed the role of parenting situations in engaging in labor or schooling activities.

3.3 The Challenges in Child Labor Protection

Ethiopia became a Pathfinder country under Alliance 8.7 in 2019 to accelerate progress toward achieving commitments under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7. This target calls for the eradication of child labor by 2025, and the elimination of forced labor by 2030 (UN Ethiopia, 2019). The government participates in and implements several programs to combat child labor. Regardless of these efforts, the social programs and legal concerns do not sufficiently target sectors with high incidences of child labor, such as domestic work (ibid).

Most child laborers are engaged in the informal sectors regardless of their interests and age. Some of the children seriously hate their work and the environment in which they work. Like it or not, they have to work and spend much of their time working for survival. This in turn makes the attempt at child labor protection a bit complicated. Its realization is not an easy task. Rather, it is a difficult activity that requires a collective effort of many stakeholders including labor and social affairs (LSA). In light of this, an officer in the LSA has been interviewed to explain the practices in the child labor elimination process. Accordingly, though child labor is a funding-based activity, the financial capacity of LSA ties the elimination process to staying disabled. Despite the high expectations of the office, mainly because of limited financial and professional capacity, the action of eliminating child labor in Addis Ababa remained immature. She argued that:

> *The nature of child labor is related to funding capacity, which needs negotiating with the funding agencies, to research, treat, and encounter all the challenges. Additionally, the concern of establishing rehabilitation programs is not a trend at regional and national levels. Even NGOs involved in child labor are not working for rehabilitation (CLO, Feb 2021).*

Furthermore, since child labor is age sensitive issue, the identification of a child's age seems awkward trend in the study areas. According to the officer, most of the child laborers are not willing to report the exact years of their age. "They may report by adding on or reducing, certain years in their actual years of age depending on the assumption of request" (CLO, Feb 2021). Mostly they attach the age-related questions with assumed benefits they are thinking of losing or getting. It is difficult to regulate the problem unless the children have a birth date certificate to show their years of age.

Finally, though children are vulnerable and need closer follow-up from different stakeholders including informal sectors where most child laborers are engaged, it seems that the law itself remains somewhat deficient. The interviewee said that:

> *The issue of self-employed children in informal sectors is not included in Proclamation No. 377/96. But most of the children are engaged in self-employed activities. Besides, the implementation of the policies and strategies designed by international, continental, national, and regional governments is not yet working further (CLO, Feb 2021).*

Accordingly, since child labor is illegal, their work is hidden and practiced in areas far from the accessibility of law. In addition to this, child laborers working in different sectors as commission workers are facing a problem due to the incompleteness of the law. For instance, in institutions like the National Lottery Administration (NLA), child laborers are working for a certain commission. The data depicted that most of the child laborers in the study areas are directly or indirectly participating in selling lottery tickets. In this regard, the Communication Officer of NLA was interviewed regarding child labor and its challenges. In that regard, the interviewee revealed that lottery-selling children are customers of the institution. He strongly argued that:

> *Lottery ticket selling is an activity open to every citizen who has an interest and capacity to perform the work. There are no benchmark rules or minimum criteria to be fulfilled by the sellers. It is participatory regardless of education and training, sex, age, and other related categorical requirements. Similar to other customers, children can participate without any discrimination. They are commissioned for the works (CLO, Feb 2021).*

This shows that since NLA has not set rules for children to be engaged or not to work in lottery selling, seemingly it is encouraging child labor which in turn has resulted from the openness of child labor law.

4. DISCUSSION

As the government strives for compulsory education, the need to understand child labor and its consequences on the issue is critical. Thus, this study was designed to explore the implications of child labor in accessing education emphasizing those children engaged in lottery selling and shoe-shining activities in Addis Ababa city. To this end, this part discusses the major findings obtained through data analysis.

According to the findings, parents' economic reasons are leading problems forced the children, who participated in this study, for child labor engagement. The working children participated in the study are from disadvantaged economic backgrounds and reported that they are obliged to work for survival. Correspondingly, studies indicated that the high rate of child labor in Ethiopia that prevents children from receiving an education is associated with poverty (Guarcello *et al*. 2008; Assefa 2000). Therefore, poverty is an obstacle most often invoked as being the major barrier to education.

Additionally, children are migrating to the city alone or together with their parents and relatives or friends for several reasons, mainly considering it as a household strategy to ensure the economic survival of all the household members (Stark, 1991). Consequently, child migration was found to be another reason for the participation of children in the labor market in the study areas due to the fact that since migrants do not have any option to get their subsistence in a strange city, child labor has been considered as an immediate solution for their survival. The findings show that most of the respondents migrated from different parts of the country mainly due to rural poverty, family disintegration, and peer pressure. Accordingly, none of those migrants who participated in this study was attending education while working at least 10 hours a day and seven days a week, getting hard at least to combine work and schooling. This has an alignment with the earlier findings which pointed out that 'migrant children' with less financial capital' are more immediate to engage in informal jobs like daily labor and shoe shining activities (Erulkar *et al*., 2006; Bezu & Holden, 2014). However, the migration is still considered as the extension of poverty and comes to be one of the alternatives to reduce world poverty (Clemens *et al*., 2016).

Moreover, regardless of its role in quality education, a full-day schooling program is found to be a contributing factor to the occurrence of child labor in the study areas. Though the full-day education program has a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education, the program is blamed due to its contribution to the withdrawal of children who are obliged to seek to combine schooling and work. In line with that, analysis made by Orkin (2013) using data from Young Lives indicated that though the full day schooling a positively affects the academic achievement, it may worsen a gap between wealthier and poorer children.

Especially, it blocked the intention of the disadvantaged children who intended to attend education in one shift and work on another shift. The quantitative study conducted by Tassew (2008) also indicated that children who engaged in labor to support their families were less likely to be attend the full-day schooling. Undeniably, full-day schooling has a crucial impact on the quality of a child's education to acquire a rewarding skill for a worthwhile a later life (Muse, 2018). However, laborers are near targeted with todays on the spot life challenges that obliges them to combine laboring and schooling in balance. Thus, whenever one thinks about work and education the issue of time should be a target of consideration since child laborers need to allocate their time to work and education. Migrant children do not have options to meet their basic needs other than working. To secure subsistence, work is unquestionable which in turn requires adequate time. Consequently, the abolition of shift programs in the education system could not allow children to share their time with work and schooling. Therefore, the full-day schooling program encouraged the incidence of child labor in the study areas and transformed children from part-time working to full-time laboring.

The findings also depicted that child labor is hindering the educational participation of children. While schooling helps the child to grow 'cognitively, socially, and emotionally is seriously endangered by child labor (UNICEF, 2003).

Many people and organizations advocate compulsory education to reduce and eliminate child labor. In this regard, ILO (2004) argued that the effective implementation of compulsory education makes children less available for full-time work. However, this idea is either far away from the context of the study areas or completely ignores the actual problems of working children from poor societies. This strongly influences the achievement of access to education for all to remain unfeasible.

The data also show that various NGOs are working to improve awareness of the problems related to child labor in the study areas. Although awakening activity is crucial in child labor reduction, it alone will take nowhere sometimes. The paucity of rehabilitation centers was also identified as a major challenge in preventing child labor (ILO, 2018).

The lack of adequate legal protection and its implementation is another challenge in child labor reduction. Notwithstanding the presence of several laws in different legal documents dealing with child labor, there is a huge gap in its implementation. According to the FDRE Constitution

Article 9 (4), all international conventions and agreements signed by Ethiopia are part and parcel of the law of the land (FDRE, 1995). Nevertheless, the enforcement of the laws is weak and 'incomplete' (LSA, 2011) which seeks strong collaborative effort from government agencies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the problems associated with child labor was examined with special focus on its implication to compulsory education. Based on the findings obtained, it is possible to conclude that education in the case of child laborers who came from poor families is considered as an extra thing or a leisure time activity. Because the main reason for the involvement of children in labor is to stay alive. It is "a matter of survival and what to eat" question that forces children to spend their schooling age at work. Thus, priority has to be given to the means of survival of poor families in order to achieve the goals of "Compulsory Education" through remedial programs.

Additionally, there is not any optional program for these laboring children to attend education alternatively in the city level. This in turn assures uneasiness to accessing education for those children who are engaged in laboring activities. Though international organizations and the national government targeted increasing the school participation of children through universalizing education, the context in the study areas shows that "compulsory education" could not be an option to solve the problem of child laborers since making a fair choice between survival works and education was compulsory. Hence, social programs supporting families in need and assisting them to find alternative income to replace their child's employment are essential to prevent child labor.

While since there is no action-oriented established system for a rehabilitation program; child labor remains a never-ending reality in the disadvantaged society. It is easy to have a slogan for breaking child labor, but where to bring all those child laborers is a chronic feature left to unlock. Thus, rehabilitation program is vital for sustaining child labor protection and considering the establishment of safeguarding based programs.

The lack of adequate legal protection and its implementation is another challenge in child labor reduction. The child labor law does not prevent the exploitation of child laborers in various informal sectors; rather, it prevents the right to be employed in formal sectors through legal contractual agreements. This seeks strong collaborative effort from government agencies

including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social, Women and Children's Affairs, and Labor and Skill Affairs for its effective implementation.

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