

# DRUG ADDICTION AMONG CHILD LABORERS WORKING IN HOTELS OF KARACHI

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## Abstract

*Child labor remains a pressing issue in many urban centers, where vulnerable children are often exposed to hazardous environments and exploitation. This study focuses on understanding the prevalence and underlying factors of drug addiction among child laborers employed in hotels located in a residential area of Karachi named as Gulshan-e-Iqbal, that is a bustling area known for its high economic activity and diverse social landscape. The research examines how socio-economic conditions, workplace dynamics, and the accessibility of narcotics contribute to substance abuse among this marginalized group. Employing quantitative methods such as structured surveys and statistical analysis, the study aims to gauge the extent of drug addiction and identify key influencing factors. Additionally, the research delves into the psychosocial impacts of addiction on child laborers, shedding light on their health, safety, and future prospects. By uncovering these critical intersections, the study seeks to provide actionable insights for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and local community leaders. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for designing targeted interventions and preventive measures that address both child labor and drug abuse, ensuring the protection and well-being of affected children. This work aspires to contribute to the broader discourse on child rights and sustainable urban development.*

**Keywords:** Drug Addiction, Child Labor, Hotel Workers, Vulnerable Children, Socio-economic Factors

## INTRODUCTION

Child labor remains a pressing global issue that affects millions of children worldwide. It deprives children of their fundamental rights, including education, health, and a safe environment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labor as work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling (ILO, 2021). Despite international efforts to eradicate child labor, it persists due to economic constraints, social norms, and inadequate legal enforcement. One of the primary drivers of child labor is poverty. Families struggling to meet basic needs often rely on their children to contribute to household income. According to UNICEF (2021), approximately 160 million children are engaged in child labor, with the highest prevalence in low-income countries. Many children work in agriculture, mining, and domestic services to support their families. Limited access to quality education exacerbates child labor. In many developing countries, education is either too expensive or inaccessible, forcing children into labor.

In developing countries like Pakistan, child labor is particularly widespread, fueled by socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education. These children often work in informal sectors, including hotels, workshops, and small factories, where they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Aman et al., 2024). Gulshan-e-Iqbal, a densely populated area in Karachi, Pakistan, epitomizes the challenges associated with urban child labor. Known for its vibrant economic activity and bustling streets, the area also harbors a dark reality where child laborers toil in

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harsh conditions to support their families (Gayer, 2007). Many of these children work in local hotels, performing menial tasks such as cleaning, dishwashing, and serving food. These jobs not only deprive them of their childhood but also expose them to a range of physical and psychological hazards. One of the most pressing concerns in this context is the prevalence of drug addiction among child laborers. Substance abuse among children is a growing problem in urban areas, where the availability of drugs and the lack of effective regulatory frameworks create a fertile ground for addiction. For child laborers, the combination of stress, peer pressure, and easy access to narcotics often leads to substance abuse (Banda et al., 2024). This issue is particularly acute in areas like Gulshan-e-Iqbal, where socio-economic disparities and insufficient oversight exacerbate the problem.

Research on the intersection of child labor and drug addiction is limited, particularly in the context of Pakistan. However, existing studies suggest that the socio-economic conditions of child laborers play a significant role in their susceptibility to substance abuse. Factors such as family income, parental education, and community environment are critical determinants of a child's vulnerability to addiction (Ali and Shah, 2019). Additionally, the work environment itself often contributes to the problem. Long working hours, physical and emotional abuse, and exposure to adult workers who use drugs can create a pathway to addiction for child laborers.

The impact of drug addiction on child laborers is profound, affecting their physical health, cognitive development, and future prospects. Substance abuse can lead to chronic health issues, hinder educational attainment, and perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Moreover, addicted children are more likely to engage in criminal activities, further marginalizing them from mainstream society (Khan et al., 2021). Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to drug addiction among child laborers, as well as targeted interventions to mitigate these risks.

This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on child laborers working in hotels in Gulshan-e-Iqbal. Using quantitative research methods, the study investigate the prevalence of drug addiction in this demographic and identify the socio-economic and environmental factors that contribute to it. The research explore the role of community dynamics, workplace conditions, and access to drugs in shaping the addiction patterns of these children. The findings of this study are expected to have significant implications for policy and practice. Policymakers can use the insights to strengthen child protection laws and implement targeted interventions in high-risk areas. For instance, stricter enforcement of child labor laws and increased surveillance in urban centers could help reduce the number of children working in hazardous environments. Additionally, community-based programs that provide education, counseling, and rehabilitation services for affected children can play a crucial role in addressing the issue. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community leaders also have a vital role to play. By raising awareness about the risks of drug addiction and advocating for the rights of child laborers, these organizations can help create a supportive environment for vulnerable children. Community initiatives, such as safe spaces and after-school programs, can provide alternative pathways for children to escape the cycle of labor and addiction.

Child labor is a global issue that disproportionately affects developing countries. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), child labor is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, dignity, and potential and is harmful to their physical and mental development (ILO, 2020). Factors contributing to child labor include poverty, lack of access to quality education, and socio-cultural norms that prioritize immediate income over long-term educational benefits (Edmonds, 2008). In urban settings, children are often employed in informal sectors where labor laws are poorly enforced, exposing them to exploitative and hazardous conditions (Basu and Tzannatos, 2003).

Substance abuse among children is a growing concern worldwide, particularly in urban areas where drugs are easily accessible. Studies have shown that children engaged in labor are more likely to resort to substance abuse as a coping mechanism for stress, fatigue, and social isolation (UNODC, 2018). Factors such as peer influence, family dysfunction, and exposure to drug use in the community significantly increase the likelihood of addiction among child laborers (Siddiqui et al., 2019). Research on the intersection of child labor and drug addiction is limited, but existing studies highlight a strong correlation between the two. A study conducted in Bangladesh found that child laborers working in hazardous conditions were twice as likely to engage in substance abuse compared to their non-working peers (Rahman et al., 2019). Similarly, a study in India reported that children working in urban slums were at a higher risk of addiction due to their exposure to drug use and lack of parental supervision (Gupta et al., 2020). These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions that address both child labor and substance abuse as interconnected issues.

Gulshan-e-Iqbal, located in Karachi, Pakistan, serves as a microcosm of the challenges associated with urban child labor. The area's high population density and economic activity create a fertile ground for both child labor and drug trafficking. Studies specific to Karachi have highlighted the prevalence of substance abuse among street children and child laborers, with accessibility to drugs being a significant factor (Khan et al., 2021). The normalization of drug use in low-income communities further exacerbates the issue, making it difficult for affected children to break free from the cycle of addiction and exploitation. Socio-economic factors play a pivotal role in the prevalence of both child labor and drug addiction. Families living below the poverty line often rely on their children's income to meet basic needs, forcing them into labor despite the associated risks (Ali and Shah, 2019). The lack of affordable education and healthcare further compounds the problem, leaving children with limited options for upward mobility. In such environments, drugs are often used as a means of escapism, providing temporary relief from the harsh realities of life (UNICEF, 2020). Despite the existence of child labor laws and anti-drug campaigns, enforcement remains weak in areas like Gulshan-e-Iqbal. Studies have identified several gaps in policy implementation, including insufficient monitoring, lack of rehabilitation centers, and inadequate community engagement (Iqbal et al., 2020). These gaps not only perpetuate the cycle of child labor and addiction but also hinder efforts to provide sustainable solutions.

The literature highlights the complex interplay between child labor and drug addiction, emphasizing the need for holistic approaches to address these issues. While existing research provides valuable insights, there is a significant gap in localized studies that focus on specific urban areas like Gulshan-e-Iqbal. This study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the prevalence and factors contributing to drug addiction among child laborers in this region. The findings are expected to inform targeted interventions and policy reforms that safeguard children's rights and well-being.

### ***Research Objectives***

- To determine the prevalence of drug addiction among child laborers working in hotels in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi.
- To analyze the socio-economic and environmental factors those contribute to drug addiction in the population of Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi.

### ***Research Hypothesis***

- Socio-economic factors significantly influence the prevalence of drug addiction among child laborers working in hotels in Gulshan-e-Iqbal.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

This study adopts a simple quantitative research design to investigate the prevalence of drug addiction among child laborers and identify its key determinants. A cross-sectional survey is conducted, collecting data from child laborers working in hotels within Gulshan-e-Iqbal.

### *Population and Sampling*

The target population consists of child laborers aged 10-17 years employed in hotels in Gulshan-e-Iqbal. A purposive sampling technique has been used to select participants who meet the inclusion criteria: currently employed in hotel-based labor and residing in Gulshan-e-Iqbal for at least six months. The sample size has determined using statistical formulas to ensure representativeness.

### *Data Collection Methods*

Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires designed to capture key variables, including:

- Demographic Information: Age, gender, educational background, family income.
- Work Conditions: Hours worked per day, type of tasks performed, and employer behavior.
- Substance Use Patterns: Type of drugs used, frequency of use, duration of addiction.
- Environmental Factors: Peer influence, accessibility to drugs, community norms.

The questionnaires is administered by trained field researchers to ensure clarity and consistency in data collection.

### *Data Analysis*

Quantitative data has analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, frequencies) has been used to summarize the prevalence of drug addiction. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and logistic regression, is applied to identify significant relationships between socio-economic factors, work conditions, and substance use.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Dataset Overview*

The data is based on 143 child laborers working in hotels in Gulshan-e-Iqbal. Key variables include age, work hours, drug use, peer pressure, family income, education level, and drug accessibility.

### *Analysis of Findings*

#### 1. Drug Use Prevalence

- **Observation:** A considerable percentage (29.4%) of respondents report drug use, which is not negligible and indicates a potential issue to be examined in relation to socio-economic factors.

#### 2. Average Working Hours

- **Observation:** Respondents work long hours, with a mean of 9.48 hours/day. Such extended work hours can lead to stress and susceptibility to peer pressure or unhealthy coping mechanisms, including drug use.

#### 3. Peer Pressure

- **Observation:** 80% of respondents experience moderate to high peer pressure. Peer pressure is a documented risk factor for initiating drug use, particularly among adolescents.
4. **Family Income**
    - **Observation:** The average family income (12,465 PKR) falls within the lower-income bracket, which may limit access to education, healthcare, and other resources. Economic hardship can contribute to vulnerability to drug use as a coping mechanism.
  5. **Education Level**
    - **Observation:** Only 50% of respondents have completed primary education, while 20% have no education at all. Lower education levels are correlated with a higher likelihood of drug addiction, as education often provides awareness and alternative pathways.
  6. **Drug Accessibility**
    - **Observation:** 50% of respondents report that drugs are easily accessible. Easy accessibility significantly increases the likelihood of drug use.
  7. **Summary Statistics (Age and Work Conditions)**
    - **Observation:** Most respondents are adolescents aged 10–17, a critical developmental stage where socio-economic pressures, long working hours, and environmental factors significantly influence behavior.

## **Results**

### **Hypothesis**

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between prolonged working hours and drug addiction among child laborers.*

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between prolonged working hours and drug addiction among child laborers.*

### **Implications for the Null Hypothesis**

The data suggest **significant relationships** between socio-economic factors and the prevalence of drug addiction:

- **Peer pressure** and **drug accessibility** are direct influencing factors linked to drug use prevalence.
- **Family income**, **education level**, and **working conditions** indirectly contribute by creating environments where drug use may appear as a coping mechanism.

Based on the findings, we **reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>)** as the evidence indicates a significant relationship between socio-economic factors and the prevalence of drug addiction among child laborers in Gulshan-e-Iqbal. The data highlight the interplay of environmental, economic, and social pressures driving this issue, warranting targeted interventions.

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings from the data, here are some recommendations aimed at addressing the key issues identified, especially focusing on drug use, working conditions, and socio-economic factors among child laborers:

- Targeted Education: Launch programs in hotels or nearby community centers to educate child laborers about the dangers of drug use. Focus on peer pressure, how it influences decisions, and alternatives to substances for coping with stress.
- Substance Abuse Counseling: Provide access to counselors or social workers who can offer confidential support for children struggling with substance abuse, addressing the root causes such as peer pressure and stressful work conditions.
- Legislative Advocacy: Advocate for stronger enforcement of labor laws that regulate working hours, particularly for minors. Encourage policies that cap working hours for child laborers and ensure that they are allowed adequate time for rest, school, and play.
- Scholarship and Financial Aid Programs: Partner with educational institutions to provide scholarships or financial aid for children from low-income families, making it easier for them to focus on their studies and reduce the need for full-time labor.
- Microfinance and Vocational Training: Offer programs that provide parents with opportunities to acquire new skills, start small businesses, or access microloans to improve their family's income without relying on child labor.
- Peer Support Groups: Establish peer support groups where child laborers can share their experiences and learn from others who may have successfully resisted peer pressure or overcame substance abuse.
- Community policing and Awareness: Collaborate with local law enforcement and community organizations to combat the easy accessibility of drugs. This could include more stringent controls on the sale and distribution of drugs around hotels and areas where child laborers work.

### ***Limitations***

This study is limited by its reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Additionally, the use of purposive sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Ethical approval has been sought from a recognized institutional review board. Informed consent is obtained from participants and their guardians where applicable. Confidentiality and anonymity is maintained throughout the study to protect the participants' identities.

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