



CHILD LABOUR AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ILO'S PROGRAM ENDING CHILD LABOUR BY 2025

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Abstract

Child labour, which has been observed throughout human history, continues to persist today. However, the presence of children in the workforce negatively impacts their emotional, physical, and social development. Among these negative effects, perhaps the most significant is that children, due to the necessity of working, are unable to continue their education and therefore lack the necessary skills and qualifications for the rest of their lives. Both preventing child labour and developing binding norms in this area have been the focus of significant efforts by international organizations such as the United Nations and the ILO. One of these efforts is the ILO's program aimed at Ending Child Labour by 2025. This study discusses the effectiveness of this program. In this context, the program remains a target and is concluded to be more of a dream than a reality in terms of eradicating child labour.

Keywords: *ILO, child labour, social policy.*

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ÇOCUK İŞÇİLİĞİ VE ILO'NUN 2025 YILINA KADAR ÇOCUK İŞÇİLİĞİNİN SONA ERDİRİLMESİNE YÖNELİK PROGRAMININ ETKİNLİĞİ

Öz

İnsanlık tarihinin her döneminde görülen çocuk işçiliği bugün de varlığını sürdürmeye devam etmektedir. Ancak çocukların çalışma hayatında bulunması onların ruhsal bedensel ve sosyal gelişimlerinin olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bu olumsuz etkiler içinde belki de en önemlisi çocuğun çalışmak zorunda kalması nedeniyle eğitimine devam edememesi ve yaşamın geri kalan döneminde gerekli donanımdan yoksun ve niteliksiz birey olarak geçirmesidir. Hem çocuk işçiliğinin önüne geçilmesi hem de bu alanda bağlayıcı normların geliştirilmesinde Birleşmiş Milletler, ILO ve diğer uluslararası kuruluşlar önemli çalışmalar yapmaktadır. Bu çalışmalardan birisi de ILO tarafından hayata geçirilen 2025 Yılına Kadar Çocuk İşçiliğinin Sona Erdirilmesine Yönelik Program'dır. Bu çalışmada tarafından uygulamaya konulan bu programın etkinliği tartışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda program bir hedef olarak kalmakta ve çocuk işçiliğini sona erdirme konusunda hayalden öteye geçemediği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ILO, çocuk işçiliği, sosyal politika.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the development of humanity, childhood has always held a significant place. The conditions of upbringing during this period and the education received greatly contribute to the quality of life in adulthood. Child labour, however, is a global phenomenon and has been observed in almost all countries since ancient times. The presence of children in the workforce adversely affects their mental, physical, and social development. Among these negative impacts, perhaps the most significant is the child's inability to continue their education due to having to work, leading to a lack of necessary skills and qualifications in their later life.

To protect children's rights, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, the International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the UN, adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work to address child labour. In this context, ILO has implemented a series of projects worldwide under the name ILO/IPEC.

Although national and international legal regulations aim to prevent child labour, it remains prevalent worldwide. The primary reason for children's participation in the workforce is poverty. Today, the high incidence of child labour in underdeveloped or developing countries confirms this. It must be stated clearly that unless poverty is addressed, completely eliminating child labour remains a distant dream. Therefore, organizations combating child labour find it more realistic to focus on combating the worst forms of child labour in the short term. In the long term, developing broad-scale poverty alleviation strategies becomes more crucial. This study will discuss the effectiveness of the 2025 Program and Policies for the Ending of Child Labour published by the ILO.

2. CHILD LABOUR AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of child labour, which has become widespread internationally, threatens the entire world in the context of human history and is one of the greatest problems of the 21st century, is defined differently depending on the level of development of countries, their historical and social structures, age limitations in legal regulations, and the types of work children are engaged in. The ILO designates those under the age of 15 who work to contribute to the family budget or earn a living as "working children" or "child labourers," while those aged 15-24 who are employed are referred to as "young workers." Furthermore, the ILO defines child labour as work that often deprives children of their childhood, diminishes their potential and dignity, and is harmful to their

physical and mental development . Therefore, child labour includes the following:

- Work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children,
- work that prevents them from attending school regularly and receiving an education,
- work that leads to them leaving school early,
- work that forces children to juggle excessively long and heavy labour with their schooling.

The worst forms of child labour' are defined in Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182. According to this article, the worst forms of child labour include the following :

- All forms of slavery and practices similar to slavery, including the trafficking and trade of children, their use in debt bondage or forced labour, and their forced or compulsory use in armed conflicts;
- the use of children in prostitution, the production of pornographic materials, or in pornographic performances, as well as their procurement or presentation for these purposes;
- the use of children in illegal activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs specified in relevant international agreements, as well as their procurement or presentation for these activities;

- work that is harmful to children's health, safety, or moral development due to its nature or the conditions under which it is performed.

UNICEF defines "child labourers" as follows: children aged 5-11 who work for at least 1 hour a week for monetary purposes or who work 28 hours a week at home, and children aged 12-14 who work for pay for 14 hours a week or who work 28 hours a week at home (UNICEF, 2007).

When we examine the historical process of the emergence of child labour, we can see that children working or being employed has been present at every stage of history and can even be traced back centuries. In ancient times, child labour was primarily carried out to sustain oneself by working in agriculture to provide for one's livelihood (Ertürk, 1994: 16). It is not incorrect to say that the term "child labour" primarily came to prominence with the Industrial Revolution, and indeed, the developments and changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution are significant in explaining the current state of child labour. When we examine historical records, we see that children worked in labour-intensive jobs before industrialization. With the advent of the industrial era, the shift of labour-intensive tasks to machines accelerated the employment of children in factories (Çöpçüoğlu, 1998: 54). During the Industrial Revolution, women and children working for low wages helped employers achieve significant profits and rapidly accumulate wealth. For individuals working 14-15 hours a day under harsh conditions, there were no social rights such as health, insurance, job security, or vacations mentioned in the national legal regulations of the countries during this period (Kaçmazoğlu, 2016: 50).

Although child labour has been encountered throughout history, it reached tragic proportions in England during the 18th and 19th centuries with the Industrial Revolution. During this period in England, women and children made

up two-thirds of the workers in factories, and the age at which children started working fell to as young as 6 years old. In 1802, the British Parliament made the first regulation by passing the "Act for the Preservation of the Health and Morals of Apprentices." This Act not only expressed the need to protect children but also revealed the conditions under which children had been working up to that time (Avşar ve Öğütoğulları, 2012: 12-13).

Regulations up to the 20th century were not limited to this. However, after the establishment of the ILO, efforts in this area gained momentum. These efforts can be listed as follows:

- At the International Labour Conference held in 1919, the first convention on child labour, Convention No. 5 on the Minimum Age of Employment, was adopted.
- In 1973, ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age Convention was adopted, covering children working in all economic sectors.
- In 1989, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is the most comprehensive treaty on children's rights ever adopted globally.
- To provide international support for national programs combating child labour, in 1992 the ILO launched the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).
- At the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, a declaration and action plan were adopted, calling on all countries to ban child labour.

- In 1998, the International Labour Conference adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This declaration stated that all ILO member states, whether or not they ratify the related conventions, are obligated to eliminate child labour.
- In 1999, the ILO adopted Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention of Child Labour and Recommendation No. 190.

3. CURRENT SITUATION OF CHILD LABOUR IN THE WORLD

Child labour is a global and social issue that concerns the entire world. When we compare the official statistics provided by the ILO regarding the current state of child labour worldwide with those from the past, it is clear that while the gap has decreased, it is not possible to say that the problem of child labour has been eradicated. Child labour stems from various economic, social, and cultural factors. These reasons include poverty, lack of education, social and cultural factors, poor governance, and a lack of oversight.

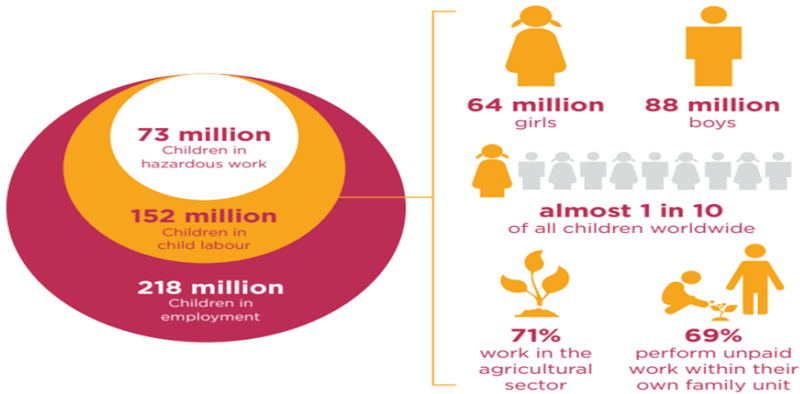


Figure 1. Statistics on Child Labour Worldwide

Reference: ILO

In the report titled "Programs and Policies to Ending Child Labour by 2025," published by the ILO in 2018, the statistics on child labour are shown in Figure 1. The figure reveals that while there are 218 million children employed worldwide, there are a total of 152 million children who fall under the ILO's definition of child labour. Of these, 64 million are girls and 88 million are boys. Therefore, 1 in 10 children worldwide falls into the definition of child labour. Among these children, 71% work in the agriculture sector, and 69% work as unpaid family workers. The figure also shows that 73 million children are engaged in the worst forms of child labour. According to the report, 4.3 million children are subjected to forced labour worldwide. Of these children, 1 million are exploited for sexual purposes. Meanwhile, 3 million children are forced to work by the private sector as a form of debt bondage, and 300,000 children are subjected to forced labour by the state.

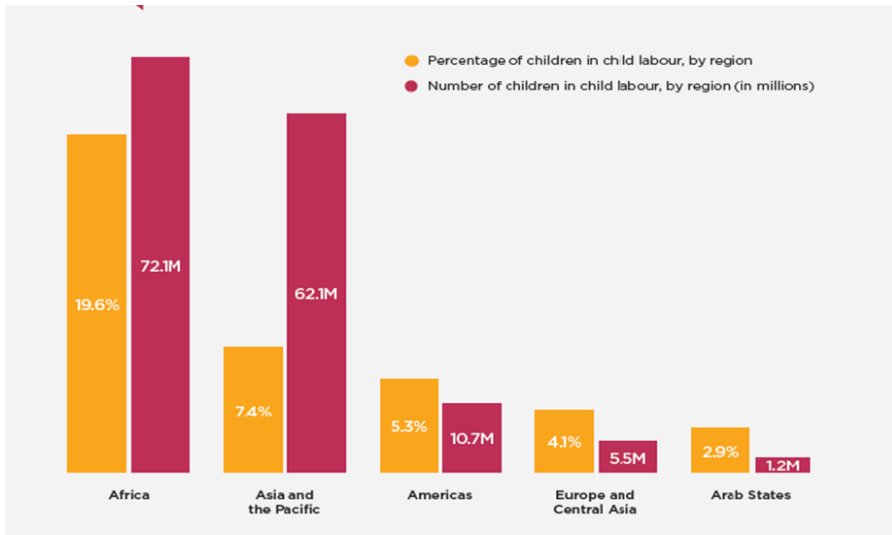


Figure 2. Distribution of Child Labour by Region

Reference: ILO

Africa leads all regions in both the percentage of children involved in child labour—one-fifth—and the total number of children engaged in child labour, which stands at 72 million. Asia and the Pacific follow as the second-highest regions in both metrics, with 7 percent of children and 62 million children involved in child labour. Together, Africa and Asia-Pacific account for nearly 90 percent of the global child labour population. The remaining child labourers are distributed among the Americas (11 million), Europe and Central Asia (6 million), and the Arab States (1 million). In terms of prevalence, 5 percent of children in the Americas are engaged in child labour, 4 percent in Europe and Central Asia, and 3 percent in the Arab States.

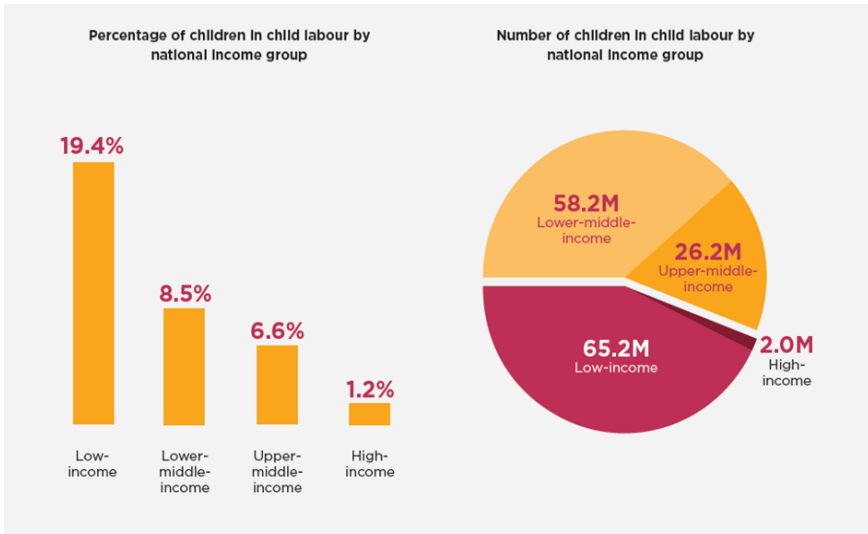


Figure 3. Child Labour and National Income

Reference: ILO

Analyzing child labour by national income levels provides further understanding of its global distribution. As shown in Figure 3, child labour is most prevalent in low-income countries, affecting 19 percent of children. However, it remains

significant in other income categories as well. In lower-middle-income countries, 9 percent of children are engaged in child labour, while in upper-middle-income countries, the figure is 7 percent. According to the data in Figure 5, a total of 84 million children in child labour—representing 56 percent of the global child labour population—reside in middle-income countries. Additionally, 2 million children in high-income countries are also involved in child labour. These figures highlight that addressing child labour effectively requires more than just focusing on the poorest nations; it must also consider issues present in middle and high-income countries. Across all income levels, family and community poverty emerges as a common factor contributing to child labour.

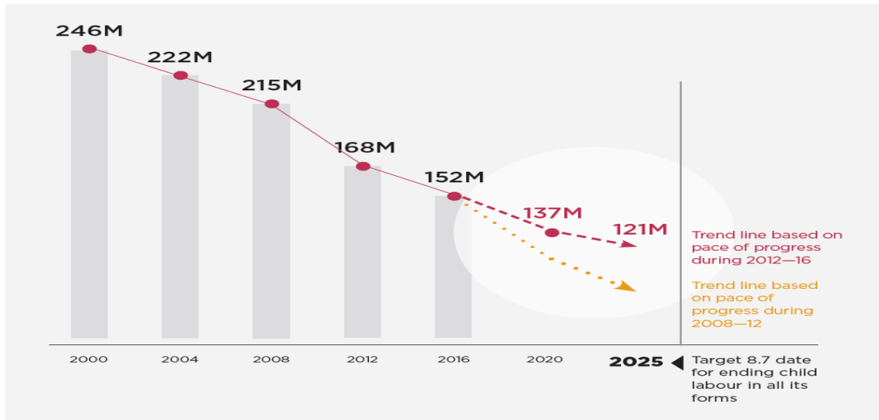


Figure 4. Millions Of Children In Child Labour, Showing Actual And Projected Trend Lines Toward Eliminating Child Labour By 2025

Reference: ILO

Figure 4 illustrates that if current progress continues, 121 million children will still be engaged in child labour by 2025, with 52 million of them involved in hazardous work. Even if the progress rate from 2008 to 2012—the fastest recorded to date—is maintained, it will be insufficient to meet the goal. Achieving zero child labour by the end of 2025 will require significantly

accelerated efforts. Although progress is being made, it needs to be much more rapid. At the country level, global trends in child labour reveal a more complex situation. While many countries have made substantial reductions in child labour, others have seen increases. Additionally, some countries are experiencing stalled progress. This variation highlights the need to analyze why certain countries have been more successful in reducing child labour than others. Understanding these differences is crucial for shaping effective strategies to eliminate child labour entirely by 2025.



Figure 5. Number Of Children In Child Labour, Aged 5-14 Years
By School Attendance Status

Reference: ILO

Figure 5 reveals that a substantial number of children involved in child labour are entirely excluded from education. Among children aged 5-14, 36 million are engaged in child labour and are not attending school, which represents 32 percent of all children in child labour within this age group. National statistics further show a notable disparity in school attendance between children who are involved in child labour and those who are not, across nearly every country. Research indicates that child labour negatively impacts the educational

achievements of those who attempt to balance work and school, often leading to premature school dropout and full-time labour.

Children globally participate in various forms of work, both paid and unpaid. However, they are identified as child labourers if they are either too young for employment or engaged in dangerous tasks that could jeopardize their physical, mental, social, or educational growth. In the least developed nations, just over 20% of children aged 5 to 17 are involved in work that poses risks to their health and development.

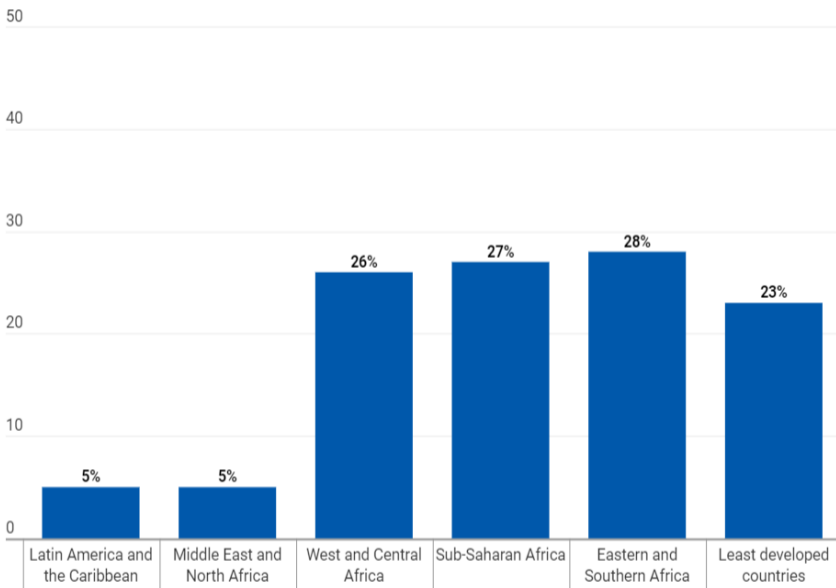


Figure 6. Percentage Of Children Aged 5 to 17 Years Engaged In Child Labour At The Moment Of The Survey, By Region

Reference: UNICEF

In a study conducted by UNICEF between 2015 and 2023, the distribution of child labor across regions was examined. The findings showed that 5% of child labor occurs in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5% in Middle East and North

Africa, 26% in West and Central Africa, 27% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 28% in Eastern and Southern Africa, and 23% in least developed countries.

| REGION | EFFORTS | CHALLENGES |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Americas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened laws and policies to protect children from labor abuse in agriculture and increased penalties for using children in sexual exploitation. Improved education access by allowing foreign children to go to school and giving more money to programs that educate at-risk children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many children, both citizens and migrants, don't have birth certificates or documents, which makes them more vulnerable to exploitation. Labor inspectors do not have enough resources or people to monitor places where child labor happens, like informal businesses and rural areas. |
| East Asia & the Pacific | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made education more accessible, especially for children with disabilities, by improving laws, schools, and funding. Created new plans to fight the growing problem of online sexual exploitation of children, such as updating court processes, making guidelines to keep children safe online, and spreading awareness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased migration led to more migrant children working. Hazardous work prohibitions do not meet international standards or include all the risky areas where children work. |
| Europe & Eurasia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gave labor inspectors the authority to conduct labor inspections and more resources to do their jobs better and reach rural areas. Increased support for social programs and services, like giving more cash benefits and helping homeless children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laws do not meet international standards for protecting young workers in informal jobs and preventing the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Lack of coordination due to insufficient resources and poor cooperation between social protection, health, and law enforcement agencies made it harder to fight child labor. |
| Middle East & North Africa | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passed new laws to better protect children from forced labor, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. Increased cash transfers and social programs to help vulnerable children go to school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak implementation and enforcement of laws due to governance issues and armed conflicts. Labor inspectors are understaffed, under-resourced, and lack authority or don't inspect all areas, like informal construction sites. |
| South & Central Asia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passed legislation to ban forced child labor and list dangerous jobs that children under age 18 cannot do. Expanded social programs and coordination efforts for children at higher risk of child labor, like programs to help street children, children from minority groups, and boys leaving juvenile detention. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor coordination between national and local authorities led to limited local implementation of enforcement guidelines and policies related to child labor. Labor inspectors do not have enough resources and could not do unannounced inspections or monitor for labor violations. |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passed laws to protect children from sexual exploitation, trafficking, forced labor, and recruitment by armed groups. Increased birth registrations to help children go to school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum age for work laws do not cover children working in informal jobs. Governments continued to exploit children, including recruiting them into armed conflict and supporting armed groups that use child soldiers. |

Figure 7: Regional Analysis of Government Efforts and Challenges

Reference: U.S. Department of Labor

Tackling child labor necessitates a comprehensive strategy that involves accurate data collection and focused social initiatives. By eliminating obstacles

to education and guaranteeing that every child has access to quality schooling, governments can make substantial progress in disrupting the cycle of poverty and child labor. For further details on government initiatives and ongoing challenges highlighted in this year's report, refer to Figure 7.

4. ELIMIATING AND PREVENTING CHILD LABOUR

In the ILO report titled "Programs and Policies to End Child Labour by 2025," policies to combat child labour are grouped under five main headings: strengthening legal protection, expanding quality and inclusive education for all, enhancing social protection, promoting decent work, and addressing child labour in supply chains (ILO, 2018).

4.1. Strengthening Legal Protection

The creation and development of legal frameworks is the first step in combating child labour. The ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work includes two of its eight core conventions—Conventions No. 138 and No. 182—which form the basis for legal regulations on child labour in countries. However, it must be clearly stated that merely establishing legal frameworks is not sufficient. It is essential to ensure the widespread implementation of these regulations and to establish an effective monitoring mechanism.

According to the report, the steps needed to strengthen legal protection are as follows:

- Promote the ratification of international legal standards related to child labour

- Identify a national list of hazardous work

- Ensure alignment between national laws regulating the minimum working age and international norms
- Set an age range for compulsory education
- Implement development, education, social protection, and other social policies and programs to eradicate child labour
- Strengthen monitoring systems for the implementation and enforcement of regulations
- Expand fundamental labour rights at the national level
- Ensure freedom of association
- Establish legal regulations to prevent discrimination

When examining the policies outlined in the report, implementing national standards along with international standards and concrete policies represents the first step. However, ensuring norm consistency and expanding these regulations through development and other social policies constitutes the fundamental starting point.

4.2. Expanding Quality and Inclusive Education for Everyone

Education helps countries grow economically and supports their prosperity and development. It is crucial for every individual to lead a fulfilling life. However, when children enter the workforce, they are unable to continue their education and end up lacking essential skills and qualifications, resulting in disadvantaged positions for the rest of their lives.

In the report published by the ILO, the second policy for combating child labour is expanding quality and inclusive education for all. The steps to be taken in this regard are as follows (ILO, 2018):

- Expand preschool programs and childcare services.
- Eliminate school fees, provide free uniforms, implement cash transfer programs for textbooks and school transportation, and establish food transfer programs for educational purposes.
- Develop a qualified teaching workforce, enhance the effectiveness of the education system, ensure guarantees for freedom of association and academic freedom, and support projects and programs that encourage girls to attend school.
- Ensure protection against violence, including sexual violence, for both girls and boys in schools.

When examining the policies, it is essential to note that the foundation of the required steps is the widespread provision of free education for all. In addition to free education, it is necessary to provide supporting services such as free uniforms, textbooks, meals, and transportation.

4.3. Strengthening Social Protection

One of the primary reasons for children being involved in the workforce is poverty. Families with low-income levels need the money their children earn. In countries that have not completed the industrialization process, with high population growth rates and a young demographic structure, families' approaches to education are often under the compelling pressure of poverty.

Social protection encompasses all income and service support provided through public means to improve living conditions and prevent declines in living standards, based on equality and rights, and through income redistribution, to ensure that individuals can lead lives of human dignity in the face of income insecurity (Kapar, 2006: 7). According to the ILO, the social protection floor consists of nationally defined basic social security guarantees aimed at overcoming and preventing social exclusion, deprivation, and poverty. Its components include basic health care, income security for children, income security for the working-age population, and income security for the elderly (Kapar, 2015).

According to the report published by the ILO, the steps needed to strengthen social protection in the fight against child labour are as follows:

- Increase unconditional cash transfers to prevent child labour caused by poverty in households.
- Establish school-based conditionality connections for cash transfers to families to ensure effective implementation.
- Initiate or expand in-kind and cash transfer programs for education to reduce child labour.
- Expand health protection to address social and economic losses to safeguard health.
- Broaden social protection for disabled individuals to address household social and economic gaps (including the provision or expansion of caregiving services).
- Ensure income security during old age.

- Place greater emphasis on active labour market policies.
- Launch microcredit and microinsurance programs to facilitate access to financial resources for families not covered by protection schemes.

Therefore, poverty constitutes a major factor leading to child labour. Additionally, considering that poor families use a significant portion of their earnings on basic foodstuffs, child labour becomes crucial for the sustainability of their livelihoods, and thus, increasing poverty leads to increased use of child labour. Hence, the flawless functioning of social protection mechanisms is crucial for effectively combating child labour.

4.4. Decent Work

"Decent work" was first articulated by ILO Director Juan Somavia at the ILO conference held in 1999, emphasizing that increasing opportunities for decent work for both women and men within the framework of freedom, equality, security, and, most importantly, human rights should be among the ILO's primary goals (Ghai, 2005, p. 2).

In the literature, the term "decent work" is defined using various terms such as "proper work," "respectful work," "human dignity work," and "suitable work." Decent work can be described as "work that respects individuals' rights to employment and working conditions, occupational health and safety, social security benefits, and the right to express themselves through unions or other representation and participation mechanisms" (Işığçok, 2009, p. 309). According to the ILO, decent work is work that provides productive and fair wages, ensures workplace safety and social protection for families, offers better opportunities for personal development and integration into society, allows individuals the freedom to express their concerns, enables them to participate

in decision-making processes that affect their lives through organization, and ensures that all women and men benefit from equal opportunities and are treated equally (ILO, 1999).

In this context, decent work is evaluated through the following dimensions; first, since it is impossible to discuss decent work without employment, job opportunities should be provided for all men and women who wish to work. This means offering productive jobs that provide wages sufficient for workers and their families to live with dignity and ensure the competitiveness of businesses and countries within a framework of sustainable development. Second, work should be based on free will. Individuals should not be forced to work or to work in specific ways. This includes prohibiting forced labour and slave labour and ensuring that child labour meets the age and working condition criteria established by international norms. Additionally, employees should have the freedom to join trade unions and similar organizations. Third, employees should be treated fairly and justly in the workplace. This involves prohibiting all forms of discrimination in the workplace, ensuring that gender and race differences do not affect access to jobs, and maintaining a balance between work and family life. Forth, security is essential. This includes protection against accidents and diseases related to the working environment, as well as financial protection that covers income and retirement rights. Lastly, respect involves treating employees with dignity and including them in decision-making processes related to their working conditions (Anker, Chernyshev, Egger, Mehran, & Ritter, 2002, p. 2).

The ILO report has outlined four strategic goals for ensuring decent work:

- Job Creation: An economy that offers investment, entrepreneurship, skills development, job creation, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

- Protection of Labour Rights: Recognition of workers' rights, implementation of legal regulations to represent and protect the interests of disadvantaged workers, especially the poor.
- Expansion of Social Protection: A framework that provides safe and adequate leisure and rest opportunities for both men and women, supports family and social values, offers compensatory opportunities in case of income loss or reduction, and ensures access to adequate healthcare services.
- Development of Social Dialogue: The presence of strong and independent worker and employer organizations is crucial for increasing productivity, resolving labour disputes, and building integrated societies.

Therefore, the ILO places great importance on the concept of decent work in addressing poverty and child labour, and it is among the ILO's primary goals. Decent work plays a key role in fair, inclusive, and sustainable development, and it is also a complementary component of efforts to reduce poverty. In this context, decent work ensures productivity and fair wages, occupational health and safety, social protection for workers and their families, and opportunities for workers to participate in and organize around issues that affect their interests.

4.5. Combating Child Labour in Supply Chains

It is an unfortunate situation that child labour is a part of global supply chains, with millions of people consuming and producing goods ranging from agriculture to mining, manufacturing, tourism, and services every day. The demand for products in global supply chains is immense. In the rapidly growing

consumption culture, companies aim to reduce labour costs to keep expenses low and profits high. As a result, employers view children as silent, low-skilled workers and therefore see them as easy targets. According to research on child labour, it is found that child labour is heavily utilized in supply chains such as cocoa and tobacco. According to a 2018 report by the U.S. Department of Labour, approximately 3.2 million child labourers are involved in cocoa production worldwide. The ILO has proposed the following policy recommendations to end child labour in global supply chains:

- Establish a regulatory system that considers the expectations of all commercial enterprises while also ensuring social balance.
- Expand monitoring services.
- Develop international framework agreements between multinational enterprises and global trade union confederations that include fundamental labour rights.
- Support programs and voluntary initiatives to combat child labour in supply chains.
- Increase the prevalence of public-private partnerships.

In its report, the ILO states that global supply chains act as a driving force in the fight against child labour. This is because global supply chains are where child labour is most intensely observed worldwide. To address this issue, one of the most important policies proposed by the ILO is international framework agreements. This is crucial because supply chains involve multinational companies, and solutions will be achieved through agreements made at the international level.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Child labour, which refers to the use of children's labour for production purposes, remains relevant even in the so-called "information age." This issue is not exclusive to underdeveloped countries; examples can also be found in Western economies where industrialization has long been completed. In this context, the International Labour Organization (ILO) plays an effective role in combating child labour and has included the goal of a world free from child labour in its urgent action plans.

In this context, the ILO aims to eliminate child labour by publishing the "Program and Policies for the Ending of Child Labour by 2025" report as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. The ILO's action plan focuses on five main policies: strengthening legal protection, expanding quality and inclusive education for all, enhancing social protection, promoting decent work, and combating child labour in supply chains.

The report published by the ILO is detached from reality. This is because the prevalence of child labour in less developed economies highlights the connection between this issue and the criteria of underdevelopment. Studies reveal a "vicious cycle" relationship between child labour and almost all criteria of underdevelopment, and this relationship plays a significant role in perpetuating underdevelopment. Considering these findings, it becomes apparent that the issue of child labour cannot be separated from the broader socio-economic problems within a country, and that measures to address it require comprehensive policies.

Child labour is a priority issue within the social dimension due to its negative effects on children's daily well-being and its serious implications for national development. Children engaged in labour markets need to be redirected to

educational opportunities as soon as possible. However, the expansion of quality education for all is constrained by time and financial limitations. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness regarding this issue in less developed countries. In these countries, efforts to prevent child labour are implemented in a top-down manner (government-nongovernmental organization-public), and an effective communication strategy to raise public awareness is not established.

In the process of globalization, increasing poverty and deteriorating income distribution have facilitated children's participation in labour markets. As a result, the ILO has argued for the expansion of social protection. However, the ILO has not differentiated between countries and has overlooked the underdeveloped-developed country criterion. According to the statistics provided, half of the world's child labourers are in Africa. Looking at the global economy, Africa is the poorest continent. In Africa, where hunger and death are rampant, countries are unable to establish a comprehensive social protection system and even struggle to meet the basic food needs of their populations. Therefore, the ILO's report remains a goal rather than a reality and fails to go beyond being a mere aspiration in ending child labour.

Çıkar Çatışması Bildirimi:

Bu makalenin araştırma aşamasında, yazımında ve yayınlanmasında herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

Destek/Finansman Bilgileri:

Bu makalenin araştırma aşamasında, yazımında ve yayınlanmasında finansal destek alınmamıştır.

Etik Kurul Kararı:

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

İnsanlığın gelişim evresinde çocukluk her zaman önemli bir yer tutmuştur. Bu dönemde hem yetişme koşulları hem de bu dönemde alınan eğitiminin yetişkinlik evresindeki yaşam kalitesi üzerinde büyük katkısı bulunmaktadır. Çocuk işçiliği ise dünya çapında bir olgudur ve tarihin ilk çağlarından beri dünya ülkelerinin neredeyse tamamında görülmektedir. Ancak çocukların çalışma hayatında bulunması onların ruhsal bedensel ve sosyal gelişimlerinin olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bu olumsuz etkiler içinde belki de en önemlisi çocuğun çalışmak zorunda kalması nedeniyle eğitimine devam edememesi ve yaşamın geri kalan döneminde gerekli donanımdan yoksun ve nitelsiz birey olarak geçirmesidir. Çocukların haklarının korunması amacıyla Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) tarafından Çocuk Hakları Sözleşmesi kabul edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte BM'nin uzmanlık kuruluşu olan Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü (ILO) tarafından Çalışma Yaşamından Temel Haklar ve İlkeler Bildirgesi kabul edilerek çocuk işçiliğinin önüne geçilmek istenmiştir. Bu kapsamda ILO dünya çapından ILO/IPEC adı verilen bir dizi proje gerçekleştirmiştir.

Çocuk işçiliği; çocukları çocukluklarını yaşamaktan alıkoyan, potansiyellerini ve saygınlıklarını eksiltten, fiziksel ve zihinsel gelişimlerine zarar veren işlerde çalıştırılmaları olarak tanımlanabilir. Her ne kadar ulusal ve uluslararası yasal düzenlemeler ile çocuk işçiliğinin önüne geçilmek istense de dünyada çocuk çalışması yoğun bir biçimde görülmektedir. Çocukların çalışma yaşamında yer almasının en önemli nedeni yoksulluktur. Bugün dünyada çocuk işçiliğinin

gelişmemiş veya gelişmekte olan ülkelerde yoğun bir biçimde görülmesi de bunu doğrulamaktadır. Açıkça söylemek gerekirse bugün dünyada yoksulluk önlemediği sürece çocuk işçiliğini tamamen yok etmek hayalden öteye gidemez. Bundan ötürü çocuk işçiliği ile mücadele eden örgütler kısa vadede çocuk işçiliğinin en kötü biçimleriyle mücadele etmeyi daha gerçekçi bulmaktadır. Uzun vadede ise geniş ölçekli olarak yoksulluk mücadele stratejileri geliştirmek daha elzem olmaktadır. Bu çalışmada çocuk işçiliğinin sona erdirilmesine yönelik olarak ILO tarafından yayınlanan “2025 Yılına Kadar Çocuk İşçiliğinin Sona Erdirilmesine Yönelik Program ve Politikalar” ın etkinliği tartışılacaktır.

Yöntem

Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda Birleşmiş Milletler, Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü gibi uluslararası kuruluş tarafından yayınlanan raporlar ve istatistikler kullanılmış ve bu alanda yapılan akademik çalışmalar incelenmiştir.

Bulgular

Çocuk emeğinin üretim amaçlı kullanımını ifade eden çocuk işçiliği “bilişim çağı” olarak adlandırılan günümüzde hâlâ güncelliğini korumaktadır. Bu sorun yalnızca az gelişmiş ülkelere özgü olmayıp, sanayileşme sürecinin çok önceden tamamlamış batı ekonomilerinde de çeşitli örneklerine rastlanmaktadır. Bu noktada ILO çocuk işçiliği ile mücadelede etkin bir rol oynamakta ve çocuk işçiliğinden arınmış bir dünyayı acil eylem planı içine almıştır. Bu kapsamda ILO Sürdürülebilir Gelişme Hedefleri kapsamında “2025 Yılına Kadar Çocuk İşçiliğinin Sona Erdirilmesine Yönelik Program ve Politikalar” raporunu yayınlamaya çocuk işçiliğini ortadan kaldırmayı hedeflemektedir. ILO’nun bu eylem planı beş ana politika üzerinde durmaktadır. Bunlar; yasal korumanın güçlendirilmesi, herkes için kaliteli ve kapsayıcı eğitimin

yaygınlaştırılması, sosyal korumanın güçlendirilmesi, insan yakışır iş ve tedarik zincirlerinde çocuk işçiliği ile mücadeledir.

ILO'nun yayınladığı bu rapor gerçeklikten uzaktır. Çünkü, çocuk işçiliğinin az gelişmiş ülke ekonomilerinde daha yaygın oluşu bu sorunun az gelişmişine, kriterleri ile olan bağlantısını gündeme getirmektedir. Yapılan çalışmalar, az gelişmişlik kriterlerinin hemen hepsi ile çocuk istihdamı arasında bir "kısır döngü" ilişkisi bulunduğunu ortaya koymakta ve bu ilişki az gelişmişliğin sürekli hale gelmesinde büyük rol oynamaktadır. Bu veriler ışığında çocuk işçiliği sorununun genel olarak ülkenin içinde bulunduğu sosyo-ekonomik problemlerden ayrı tutulamayacağı ve çözüme yönelik tedbirlerin geniş çaplı politikalar gerektirdiği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Çocuk işçiliği, bir çocuk hakları ihlalidir; ortadan kaldırılmasını sağlamak için tüm toplumlar ve sivil toplum kuruluşları için bir zorunluluktur.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Çocuklar, toplumların en savunmasız bireyleri olarak kalmıştır. İnsanlık tarihinin ilk dönemlerinden bu yana, çocuklar ailelerine, kabilelerine ya da toplumlarına çeşitli şekillerde yardımcı olmuşlardır. Sanayi Devrimi'nin üzerinden yüzyıllar geçmesine rağmen, gelişmiş ülkeler bile çocuk işçiliğinin sona erdirilmesine yönelik çabalarını tam anlamıyla sonuçlandırabilmiş değildir. Çocuk istihdamı, gerek çocukların günlük refahları üzerinde yarattığı olumsuz etkiler gerekse de ulusal kalkınma açısından taşıdığı ciddi sakıncalar dolayısıyla, sosyal boyut kapsamında yer alan sorunlar içinde öncelikli olanı teşkil etmekte ve emek piyasalarında yer alan çocukların bir an önce eğitim alanına yönlendirilmesi gerekmektedir. Fakat kaliteli ve herkes için eğitimin yaygınlaştırılması zaman ve mali kısıt altındadır. Buna ek olarak az gelişmiş ülkelerde bu konuda bu konuyla ilgili bir bilinçlenmenin olmadığı görülmektedir. Bu ülkelerde çocuk işçiliğini önleme çalışmaları yukarıdan aşağı (hükümet-sivil toplum kuruluşları-halk)

olmakta ve halkın bu konuda bilinçlenmesi için iyi bir iletişim stratejisi kurulamamaktadır.

Küreselleşme sürecinde artan yoksulluk ve bozulan gelir dağılımı çocukların emek piyasalarına katılımı kolaylaştırmaktadır. Bu durumdan ötürü ILO sosyal korumanın yaygınlaştırılması gerektiğini savunmuştur. Fakat ILO burada ülke ayrı gözetmemiş ve azgelişmiş-gelişmiş ülke kıstasını gözden kaçırmıştır. Bu çalışma verilen istatistiklerde dünyada çocuk işçilerinin yarısı Afrika kıtasındadır. Dünya ekonomisine bakıldığında Afrika, dünyanın en yoksul kıtasıdır. Açlığın ve ölümün kol gezdiği Afrika'da ülkeler, kapsamlı bir sosyal koruma sistemi kurması bir yana halkın gündelik yaşamını devam ettirmesi için gerekli olan gıda ihtiyacını bile karşılayamamaktadır. Dolayısıyla ILO'nun yayınladığı bu rapor bir hedef olarak kalmakta ve çocuk işçiliğini sona erdirmeye konusunda hayalden öteye geçememektedir.