The British University in Egypt

BSc Honours

In

Economics

Should Child Labour be Banned or Regulated?

The Case of Egypt

By

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Abstract

Child labour is a worldwide problem, but it is specifically prevalent in poor and developing countries such as Egypt. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the determinants and consequences of child labour on a sample of 85 children in both Sherouk and Badr cities and therefore, based on this, identify policies that can tackle the problem. The methodological framework was mainly quantitative; as the survey approach was used for testing the relationships. The main finding of the survey is that the laws and policy approaches adopted in Egypt are not effective in reducing the incidence of child labour. The study also presents strong and robust evidence that the known determinants of child labour (such as poverty, social norm and incidence of child labour of the father) and the consequences of it (such as physical abuse, health and the effect on technological change) do apply to the sample of study and thus can be generalised to Egypt. The originality and the value of the paper comes from it being nearly the first ever effort in studying child labour incidence in the areas of Sherouk and Badr using the survey technique.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Child labour is considered one of the most observable and growing phenomenon appearing in the societies, not just in third world countries but in industrial countries as well, although it is less severe of course. This phenomenon is a result of a combination of economic, social, political and familial factors in which the child becomes a victim and has to coexist with them. The issue of child labour has long been viewed with a mixture of indifference and scepticism, but in the last decade the situation has changed dramatically. Child labour has been attracting growing attention both within countries and at the international level and has emerged as the single most important source of child exploitation and abuse in the world today. The 1990’s have witnessed an unprecedented number of countries adopting national policies and programmes on child labour and Egypt was one of them. Studies in Egypt suggest that one of every three families living in the cities of Egypt is under the poverty line, which means that greater Cairo has around five million poor. From these five million, there are around 2 million children living under the poverty line and work, which shows how important this problem is (UNICEF, 2007). According to the national council of childhood and motherhood, children under the age of 15 represent around 7% of the total work force in Egypt. Around 65 % of child workers are still enrolled in school, 16 % dropped out of school and 19 % never attended school (Child Labour in Egypt, 2008).

Is regulating child labour effective in Egypt? In other words, are the policies adopted in Egypt in an attempt to decrease the incidence of child labour practical and yield the required outcome? Too often the problem of child labour is confronted in a piecemeal and scattered fashion, as a series of separate issues rather than a whole. It cannot be repeated enough that child labour needs to be tackled in a multi-pronged fashion on all fronts: economic, educational, social and cultural. Moreover, as financial and human resource constraints exist, it is of utmost importance to make optimal use of them. Coherent national policies and
programmes of action against the exploitation of children, clearly establishing objectives, setting priorities and providing the necessary resources to ensure implementation, are therefore a crucial starting-point of any meaningful action.

When dealing with the issue of child labour, one has to realise that it cannot be regulated as easily as one wishes it to due to its complexity and structural causes. A solution cannot be proposed without studying the determinants and the main factors behind this phenomenon. The consequences of child labour are also important to know the severity of the problem. As a result, both the determinants and the consequences of child labour will be discussed extensively within the body of the research.

The research will be structured as follows; it will be in five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction about child labour. Chapter two is the literature review which mainly discusses the theoretical foundation of child labour from previous researchers’ point of view. Chapter three shows some data and statistics about the phenomenon. Chapter four studies the main aims of the research and the methodology used, it also demonstrates the analysis of the data collected. Chapter five demonstrates the policy approaches and recommendations in Egypt. Chapter six is the conclusion; it will summarize the information discussed in the research.