



Children working in the streets and in the service sector in Turkey “A Comparative Study”

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Abstract

The purpose of this research article is to examine the situation of the working children in the streets and at the service sector. This descriptive research is conducted on working children in the streets and at the service sector in Ankara. Totally 126 children included in this study by face to face interviews. 70 of them are working on the street and 56 of them are working at the service sector. Some of the important findings of the research are as follows:

The average age of working children on the streets is 12.3 and average age of working children at the service sector is 17, majority of children born in nearest villages and districts of Ankara region. Many of the children working in the streets born in east and south east of Anatolia and their families migrated to Ankara. Parents generally have only basic education. Level of education of the working children in the streets and their families is lower than the counterpart.

The research results indicate working children cannot use their rights adequately such as access to health care services, educational facilities, leisure time activities or social security services. It is revealed that children working in streets have more disadvantage than working children at the service sector.

Keywords: Child labor, street children, Ankara.

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Introduction

Children, engaged in working for thousands of years today, continue their working lives in factories, small commercial businesses and in the streets which has once started in the agricultural fields. Despite the contemporary claims of developing human and social rights, millions of children all over the world, are living under strict conditions and are exposed to working life beginning in their very early ages. Especially, in underdeveloped and developing countries, gradually increasing inequitable distribution of income, employment problems and the inaccessibility to social services oblige people to live under social and economical hardships and children start working in order to support household income in this process. Although the traditional understanding that regards children as a means of production is one of the basic reasons of children employment, it is acknowledged that the social and economic systems and conditions are the real responsible for their employment.

In Turkey, which is identified as a ‘developing country’ by financial and political groups and has begun negotiations in October 2005 for full European Union Membership, child labor is one of the unsolved social problems. Although the number of child laborers gradually decreases, the problem keeps its seriousness.

This study aims an examination of children – working in the streets and in the service sector in Ankara – with regards to various variables such as their social lives and working conditions. The study has been conducted as a comparative field research. The research includes interviews with 70 children working in the streets and 56 apprentices working in hairdressers and barbers. The total number of children who participated in the interviews is 126.

Child Labor in Turkey

The problem of child labor is a social issue that has preoccupied the agenda of the country from time to time since the Ottoman Empire period. Although the information related to the child labor problem in Ottoman Empire is limited, it is stated in the sources that during the years of 1900’s, approximately 15.000 women and child laborers were working only in the East Carpet Company (Erişçi 1951 cited in: Makal 1997).

On the other hand, during the Republican Era, the use of the child labor has maintained its seriousness as a social problem in almost every period. If it is searched for the base of the

problem of child labor, a social embroidery in which the socio-economic and cultural aspects are interwoven together comes up.

Turkey has experienced massive socio-economic changes since 1950's. Dominant social and economic policies carried out in Turkey the problem of child labor. Poverty, immigration and the deficiencies in urban substructure emerge as the basic reasons of the child labor.

The total amount of population that has involved migration process for any reason between the years of 1935-1990 is 32.800.000 in Turkey. This means just within 50 years 95 % of the population left their place of birth. (Onat 1993:6) As a result of this mass migration movement from rural to urban areas, the percent proportion of urban population which was 18 % in the 1940's has passed 60 % today. The rapidity of annual urbanization hasn't decreased fewer than 4 % since the 1940's (Görmez 1998:489).

This movement in population which has not resulted from industrialization has affected the distribution of all sources in urban areas after awhile. New sources have not been produced or developed. As a result of all these, like every individual left without support, children have also been obliged to working. (Atauz 1990: 5)

In short, poverty, immigration, and disadaptation to urban life city come together and gave birth to the problem of child labor. The inadequacy of social services for the society makes the situation harder.

Piyal (1994:128) lists the reasons of the demand for child laborers including the points stated above as below;

"Children and teenagers are appropriate for the unqualified works, they are the source of unqualified workforce, they can be employed for quite low salaries as their employment is prohibited or limited by legal regulations, as their employment is illegal they have no legal insurances, their rights and authorities are uncertain, they are unorganized, they cannot carry legal judgment, they are unprotected, insecure, isolated therefore totally dependent and and compliant. For this reason, they cannot make trouble, resist, and revolt, even if they revolt they are immediately and easily repressed. They provide flexible workforce, easily accept to be employed or to be fired, to work daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally or flexibly, to overwork, not to be paid for this overwork and even to work only for their board, due to their physical, psychological and social improvement qualities, they are adaptable for ordinary,

monotonous and repetitive kind of works that require physical slimness and flexibility and hand skills. They can be easily fired when they grow up and lose these qualities."

Despite the fact that the economic use of child force is widespread in our country, the number of wide scaled studies related to the subject is not sufficient. There are two comprehensive studies related to the fact of child labor. These researches are Child Employment Public Surveys conducted by State Institute of Statistics (SIS) within the framework of ILO-IPEC Program -the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) - between the years of 1994-1999.

According to child employment public survey results; it is predicted that the number of the children in the age group of 6-14 in Turkey is approximately 11.9 million and this number forms 20% of civilian workforce of 59.83. In respect of the results of the research, 1.07 million of the children in the clarified group of age work and their participation in the workforce in 9 percent. Every five worker out of one hundred are children in the age group of 6-14 (Özcan & others, 1998:2).

With respect to 1994 Child Labor Force Public Survey Results, children employed in rural areas of Turkey constitute 79.4 % of the child population. 852.000 of 5.72 million children has been involved in economical activities in rural areas. This means the participation of children working in rural areas into the workforce is 14.9 %. The participation of children working in urban areas into the workforce is 3.6 % (Özcan & others 1998: 2).

While 92.6 % of the children in rural areas get active in agriculture sector, % 40.2 of the children dwelling in urban areas take part in industry sector, 22.4% of them in trade sector and 25.8% of them take part in service sector (Özcan & others 1998: 3)

Child Labor Force Public Survey has been repeated by SIS in 1999 and it is indicated that the problem of child labor keeps its seriousness.

Due to the Child Workforce Survey Results in October 1999, 10.2 % (1 million 635 thousand people) of the 16 million 88 thousand children in the age group of 6-17 take part in a economical activity in Turkey. 29.7 % of the children in the same group of age (4 million 785 thousand people) work in housework. In the whole country, while 61.7 % of the children employed in economical work are male, 38.3 % of them are female; 26.9 % of the children employed in the housework are male, 73.1 % of them are female. In urban regions, the number of children employed in economical works is 553 thousand. Related to this fact, in

urban areas while 5.8 % of the 9 million 577 thousand children in the age group of 6-17 take part in an economical activity, 32 % of them (3 million 74 thousand people) are employed in housework. In rural regions, 16.6 % of 6 million 512 thousand children (1 million 83 thousand people) in the age group of 6-17 indulge in an economical activity, 26.3 of them (1 million 712 thousand people) are employed in housework.

These two studies with a break of five years of time are the sole researches on Child Labor subject in Turkey in on national scale. The studies within the framework of ILO-IPEC Project are significant as they brought the child labor problem to the agenda of public opinion.

The use of child labor is widespread in our country. As it can be understood from the facts, child labor is intensely used in rural regions. In spite of that, it is predicted that the number of children employed in industry sector and service sector will increase due to rapidly increasing urban population.

The Objective and the Method of the Research

In this research, a comparison of children working in the streets and in the service sector with respect to variables such as their surroundings and dwellings, working lives (the age of initial employment and the reason, the period of time in work, the experience of negligence and exploitation of human rights and to be exposed to bad treatment), benefits from nourishment, health and social security services and level of education, is taken as a goal.

This study is a naturalistic, descriptive and quantitative one which consists of gathered data based on single measurement and heterogeneous exemplar groups (Reid & Smith 1981: 91-92).

The research consists of the children working in streets and in the service sector in Ankara. Purposeful sampling method has been used to data collection. In the research, different strategies have been followed to reach these two groups of children. The areas densely populated by the children working on streets in Ankara (Kızılay, Ulus, Bakanlıklar; Sıhhiye, and Opera districts) have been designated and interviews have been made with the children met in these areas. The process of data gathering from the children working in the street has been spread to 15 days of time. In the data gathering, three social workers have worked along with a researcher. To reduce the probability of interviewing with the same children to the

lowest level, each interviewer has been made responsible for a specific region. 70 children working in the streets have been interviewed face to face.

The children working in the service sector have been reached in the barber and hairdresser shops where apprentice children are highly employed. The researcher has taken the membership lists of the Barbers and Hairdressers Chamber in order to reach the apprentice children. 56 barber shops and 38 hairdresser shops have been visited and 56 apprentices have been interviewed at all.

The interview form, prepared by the researcher, has been used. The interview form consists of four sections related to the child's and his family's socio-demographic qualities, child's working life, nourishment, health, spare time activities and covers 67 questions. During the phase of data gathering, the interviews with children have lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Findings

Introductory Findings Related to the Children

In the scope of research interviews, most of the children working in streets sell materials as handkerchief, bandage, chewing gum; 20 % of the children working on streets sell plastic bags in market places. Other children become shoeshine boys or sellers of simit¹.

It is acknowledged that 46.4 % of the children working in the service sector are employed in barbers and 53.6 % of the work in the hairdressers as apprentice.

Almost all of the children interviewed (85.7 %) are male. This situation can be explained through the roles shared by the family members in a traditional family structure. Boys, as the means of production, work in order to support their families financially while girls generally help for the house works. In this way they can stay within their family and be protected from outside dangers.

It is revealed the the average age of children employed on the streets is 12.3; the other children's age employed in the service sector is 17.

Dwelling and Surrounding

It is seen that, most part of the children working in the streets dwell in Altındağ, which is a gecekondu region², the ones that are working in the service sector dwell in Mamak, which is

¹ Simit; a crisp, ring-shaped, savory roll covered with sesame seeds.

also a gecekondu region, yet has a relatively higher prosperity level. It is found out that both groups dwell in districts that have a lower socio-economic level in general. On the other hand a significant amount of children employed in the service sector (23.5 %) dwell in districts that have a middle socio-economic level.

It is conspicuous that in both groups those who dwell in gecekondu, take the first place. Almost all of the children working on the streets and participating in the interviews (92.6 %) live in gecekondu. When the children employed in the service sector is taken into account this percent decreases to 62.5 %.

Findings Related to the Families

While the average number of children is 7 in the families whose children work on the streets, this number reduces to 4 for the families whose children work in the service sector. Approximately one third of the families whose children work on the streets have 7 or more than 7 children.

It is acknowledged that due to education levels of the families, there are significant differences between the two groups. Even though a great part of mothers are primary school graduates, the proportion of literate mothers – whose children work on the streets- who have never been to school yet is quite high (53 %). On the other hand, it is fixed that a great part of the mothers (87.1 %) –whose children work in the service sector- is secondary school or high school graduates.

Most of the fathers (83.3 %) are employed. The proportion of children who stated that their fathers do not work is 16.7 %. For the children who are employed on the streets, this proportion is 20.3 %. As far as the children working in the service sector are concerned this proportion is 11.8 %. As in traditional family structure, it is the duty of fathers to pay for the expenses of the house and to provide the survival of the family, most of the fathers work. Another conspicuous point is that, a significant part of the fathers whose children work in the service sector is employed as civil servants. This situation can be explained by the fact that the education level of fathers' of children working in the service sector is higher. Consequently, it is revealed that the fathers of children working in service sector work in long-term, insured jobs. Only one of the children working on the streets stated that his/her father work as a civil servant.

² Gecekondu; house put up quickly without proper permissions.

In both of the groups, almost all of the mothers (90.8 %) do not work.

As far as the relationships between the parents and the children are concerned, 59.1 % of the children working on the streets and 20.8 % of the children working in the service sector state that their mother and/or father beat them. When the dimension of these quarrels is asked, most of the children have avoided answering but half of them have claimed that their parents beat them.

12.9 % of the children working on the streets and 7.1 % of these working in the service sector state that there is a person in their families who has committed crime.

Education

It is fixed that a serious number of the children have only primary school education and there are significant differences among the children working on the streets and those working in the service sector as far as their education level is concerned. The education level of the children working on the streets is quite lower than those working in the service sector.

A significant part of the children working on the streets (36.2 %) are still primary school students. 43.5 % of the children state that they are graduates of primary school or they have left the school before graduation. Besides, 7 (10.1 %) of the children working on streets tell that they have never enrolled in a school.

Nearly half of the children working in the service sector (48.1%) state that they are primary school graduates. 40.7% of the children inform that they are secondary school graduates. There aren't any children who claim that they have never enrolled in a school. As it is clearly seen the education level of the children working on the streets is quite lower than of those working in service sector. On the other hand, the number of the children –belonging to both groups- who continue their education after primary school is quite low.

Working Life

When the children are asked the reason for their working, it is seen that almost all of the children employed on the streets (94.4 %) work in order to support household income and to earn money. Most of the children working in the service sector (80.4 %) state that they work in order to have an occupation. Among the children working in the service sector, the proportion of those who claim that they are working in order to support their families and earn money is only 16.1%.

Children working in the streets and in the service sector show important differences as far as the age when they have started working is concerned. While nearly half of the children working on the streets (42.6%) tell that they have started working at the age of 8 or younger, it is seen that most of those working in the service sector (69.6 %) start working at the ages of 13-15.

As a result, it can be clarified that the children working in the service sector start to the work after their graduation basic education. The entrance of children –working in the streets- to the working life in their very early ages prevents them from taking even the basic education.

Process of working for children shows a great diversity. It is conspicuous that the period of working of the children employed on the streets is shorter when it is compared with of those working in service sector.

While the average working hours of children working in the streets is approximately 8 hours, it is nearly 12 hours for those working in the service sector. Being a ‘boss of their ownselfes’ give them the opportunity to organize their working times. On the other hand, children working in the service sector stated that they start working at 7.30 –8.00 am and their working hours are not stabled. Therefore, they have to work till the owner of the job tells them the daily work is enough or till there is no customer left.

When, whether children have been exposed to bad treatment or they have experienced negligence and exploitation of human rights is examined, the results are very conspicuous. Especially it is obvious that the risk of being exposed to bad treatment and exploitation of rights is higher as far as the children working on the streets are concerned.

For instance, 70 % of the children employed on the streets stated that they consider their jobs hazardous. The same proportion for the children employed in the service sector is 3.6 %.

Almost all of the children working on the streets (87 %) stated that they were bothered by zabita³, police force and drug addicted children. When they are asked how they were bothered, they stated that they were exposed to oral and physical violence. Only 7.2 % of the children working in service sector stated that they were bothered by their workmates and were afraid of the police.

³ Zabita; A municipal police force charged with seeing that various laws and ordinances are observed, especially those dealing with prices, fair marketing, building construction, and sanitation.

10.3 % of the children –13- stated that they committed a crime after they started working life. While the number of children – working in the service sector- who acknowledged that they committed a crime is 4, for the children –working on the streets- this number increases to 9. When the crime stories of children are examined, stabbing someone, burglaries, injuring someone, are the sorts of crimes encountered.

Nourishment

54.3 % of the children employed on the streets and 66.1 % of the employed in the service sector stated that they eat meal at least for 3 times in a day. 37.1 % of them working on the streets acknowledged that they eat meal less than 3 times in a day. This proportion is 32.2 % of the children employed in the service sector.

It is possible to state that, compared with the children working in the service sector, the ones employed on the streets eat meal irregularly. The children in the service sector stated that they eat meal with their boss and other servants as they stay in their working place in the whole day. Almost all of the children working on the streets stated that they eat meal when they feel hunger. As a result, they don't have a habit of eating orderly.

Benefit from Health and Social Security Services

When proportions of benefit from health and social security services are examined, it is understood that, there are significant differences between the two groups. Between the children employed on the streets, the proportion of those who stated that they could benefit from health services when they become ill is 14.3 %; in terms of the children employed in the service sector, this proportion is 21.5 %.

80.4 % of the children employed in the service sector stated that they are registered to an apprenticeship school where they learn a profession during 3 days of a week therefore they have social security with regards to Law No 3308. As known, during the apprenticeship education, the children are insured with regards to Apprenticeship Education Law No 3308 and they can benefit from all social rights. It is acknowledged that, 48.9 % of the families of children employed in the service sector, work in insured jobs.

It is found out that, most of the children employed on the streets and their families are not in the social security system. Only 31.6 % of the families of the children employed on the streets work in insured jobs.

It is acknowledged that, in terms of benefit from social security rights, there are great differences between the children employed in service sector and on the streets. While the children employed on the streets and their families do not have social security rights, most of the children employed in service sector and their families have social security rights.

Discussion & Conclusion

When the findings of the research are examined, it is understood that the children working in the streets and in the service sector have similar family structures and that they are brought up in an uneducated, poor layer of the society. Besides, it can be said that the children working in the service sector have a relatively higher prosperity level. It is acknowledged that the children working on the streets start working in the early ages of their lives and are unprotected. It is pointed out that, children employed on the streets are exposed to violence from police force and zabita and children employed in service sector are exposed to overwork for nearly 14 hours per day. It is clarified that both groups of children are not nourished properly. In spite of that, it is pointed out that, the children employed in the service sector benefit from health and social security services whereas, the children employed on the streets and their families do not benefit from these rights.

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