
Epidemiological study of the problem of working children

Mona Hussein Ibrahim El Mahdy

103SUMMARYThe problem of working children existed many years ago, but recently it becomes of national and international concern. The labour law prevent the employment of minors (a minor is a child between 12-17 years old). This work was done to throw more light on the problem of working children in Benha. A cluster sample of 1023 children were chosen. They are 10-15 years old. (15 years old is the age of completion of basic education). 231 of them are working and the others are students. 70% of them were males. Most of these working children were late child order in their families. found to have a 13.8% of them did not join school at all. 3/4 of them DROPOUT before the completion of primary level of education: Most of their fathers are illiterate and manual workers. Their mothers were illiterate and unemployed. The r.a., weight/age, height/age and mean haemoglobin level of working children are significantly lower than non working children. There is a vicious circle as these children failed in the educational process, and now their work deprives them from leisure time that is needed to upgrade their intellectual and physical functions. About 1/3 of both working and non-working children are parasitically 104 infected. So, parasitic infection seems to have no brunt on that problem. Also, the problem of broken families can not be claimed to be the cause of the problem of working children. Failure in school is the most important factor to point to regarding school DROPOUT. There is difference in the motives of both sexes to leave school. Males mainly leave school to learn a job, while females to earn money. 3/4 of working children deny the presence of troubles at work. Therefore, only 16.5% of working children do not like their work. On the other hand, 40% of them prefer to go back to school. Agricultural workers show lower 1.0. as their work does not need special mental functions, but better height/age as they live in non polluted area. The higher the age of starting work the higher is the 1.0. The less the duration of the present work, the less is the 1.0. and weight/age of working children, as work deprive children from leisure time needed for better physical and intellectual functions. Days off and limited working hours give the working child better chance for growth. The more the age of starting work, the lower is height/age as well as weight/age. AS these children are 105 derived from very low social classes. So, the existence of the problem of working children leads us to design an integrated programme for their protection. In addition, a long term policy is needed to prevent the serious malignant extension of the problem in the future.