

Cultural relativism and child labor assignment

[Sociology](#)



Child Labor The use of child labor in developing nations is not a moral issue, it is a cultural one. International corporations should not let the moral argument or current legislation such as the Child Labor Deterrence Act (CLAD) influence how and where they conduct operations. Grounded in what appears as legitimate concern for children, proposed legislation such as the CLAD hinder the potential growth and progress of developing nations by limiting the number of corporations who are willing to set up operations within developing countries.

The fallacy with CLAD and similar legislation is that they are based on a one-sided moral perspective that inhibits change in developing countries by preventing economic growth rather than promoting it. The use of child labor should be approached from a culturally relevant viewpoint so that legislation can be passed to protect child laborers in both established and developing industries in developing countries rather than preventing international corporations from setting up operations for fear of possible legal repercussions or damage to their reputation.

International corporations are in a position to promote growth, provide sustainable employment, and foster an environment where changes in cultural perspectives and thinking are possible rather than preventing commerce which in turn prolongs the development process of the country and ensures the use of child labor indefinitely. Utilization of child labor is not a new phenomenon.

All of the developed nations in the world including Britain and the United States (US) at one time relied on the use of child labor during their

Industrialization phases to develop Industries and grow their economies to a point where child labor was eventually curtailed and began to decline u to a wider distribution of wealth and leveling between the socioeconomic strata's. The cessation of child labor coincided with the opportunity for families to be able to send their children to school because they could afford it in addition to support from social programs such as taxation to fund school systems.

Less than a hundred years ago In the US It was commonplace to see children working in factories, shops, and fields. It was also common for thirteen to fifteen year old girls to be wed to men in their twenties. In order to fully understand the issue of child labor context is added to achieve perspective so that the morality of the issue Is not already established. Morality is not standard; It is different for every individual and every culture. Morality is determined by dialogue where people reach a common consensus.

What Is lacking In the child labor debate Is a culturally relevant moral dialogue to establish the best way a developing nation can reduce its dependence on child labor. Currently, the International Labor Organization (ILL) cited In Edmonds (2009) states "(t)hat there are an estimated 191 million economically active children ages 5 o 14 in the world today' (up. 174). Of those 191 million children most of them are working at toner parent's sloe knelling Walt ten Tamely Dustless.

In u, a unlace Nations Children's Fund (EUNICE) project conducted a survey of working children in 36 countries which compiled data on more than 120 million children between the ages of 5 to 14. The data revealed that approximately 70 percent of all the children include in the survey spend

some time devoted to economic activity or chores that less than 3 percent of the children work in the “ formal” wage market such as the excite industry or commercial farming outside of the family farm (Edmonds, 2009, p. 74).

Cultural relativism is an anthropological viewpoint that proposes that no culture is superior to any other when systems of law, morality, politics, et cetera are compared to those of another culture. The philosophical notion is that a single cultures cultural beliefs are valid because they are relative to that culture and cultural identity and not others (Cultural-Relativism. Com, 2011).

Some examples that are in conflict with the moral standard of most developed nations such as the US and Britain are honor lining which are Justified under Shari Law, Female Genital Mutilation (FIG) in Africa, and wife sharing in Tibet which are all common culturally specific practices that most people in developed nations would find appalling but there is not any current legislation at the domestic or international level to impose sanctions or restrictions on businesses that trade with people or countries where these practices are commonplace.

The relative viewpoint of the culture is paramount because the only way to affect change is from within. The saying, “(w)hen in Rome, do as the Romans do” should initially be applied when dealing with developing countries whose moral norms conflict with those of developed countries until real change can be imposed. When applied to the child labor debate it can be argued that the utilization of child labor is a necessary step in the evolution of culture, society, and developing country.

The most social and economically responsible thing to do is to assist developing countries by promoting foreign and domestic business development through capital investment to the point where child labor is no longer required to sustain the economy. While this is in contradiction with the common belief that child labor is exploitative or a form of indentured servitude and slavery is what paved the way for the CLAD.

The CLAD, also known as the Harkin Bill would have prohibited the import of any and all products into the US that were made by children. Even though the Bill has yet to be ratified into law the mention of such legislation had wide sweeping effects all over the world. "(T)he mere threat of such a measure panicked the garment industry of Bangladesh, 60 per cent of whose products ?? some \$900 million in value ?? were exported to the US in 1994.

Child workers, most of them girls, were summarily dismissed from the garment factories" (Bellary, 2007, p. 23). It is unsettling to know that possible legislation to limit the import of goods in an established economy can have such far reaching effects that companies will preemptively dismiss workers who rely on them for the livelihood. Coincidentally, after the Bill was proposed a study was commissioned by international organizations to see what had happened to all of the children after they were dismissed from their Jobs.

Of the workers that could be located the study found that some 10% of the workers were working in conditions more nauseous than previous jobs in the textile mills while being paid less and others were found working as prostitutes (Bellary, 2007, p. 23). The study reinforces the argument that a

stable economic environment that utilizes child labor is less detrimental to their overall health and well being and that commerce should continue unhindered until other social and cultural changes can take place.

Another recent example of economic upheaval stemming from pressure on international corporations to stop utilizing child labor is in Pakistan. The once bustling economic hub of Shalot Pakistan near the Kashmir border was a model for economic prosperity in a country that is synonymous with extremism and poverty is now facing an economic downturn due to the corporate giant Nikkei severing ties with the main regional employer Saga due to the use of child labor and other possible labor violations.

The implications of which once again bring to light the dilemma of international corporations utilizing third world labor for manufacturing purposes. Seventy percent of Sagas annual revenue was based on the contract with Nikkei which in turn contributed to the livelihood of an estimated 20, 000 families that will now be directly affected due to the loss of the Nikkei contract and subsequent reduction of plant operations (Mentor, 2006).

In an extremist country rife with poverty 20, 000 families are going to lose a stable income because an American company was pressured to cease operations due to the use of child labor. The question now is how will these families support themselves and what will happen to the children that were once productive members of their family? The fact of the matter is child labor is still occurring on almost every continent in he world. Very few if any

countries bypass the exploitative phase while segueing from pre-industrialization to a fully industrialized country.

The utilization of child labor roots can be traced to the beginning of the eighteenth century in Great Britain and it continues today well into the twenty-first century in developing countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Pakistan, Nepal, India, Chile, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Honduras. The increase in the utilization of children for employment during industrialization is based solely on supply and demand that can be traced directly to an increase in the supply of children that come from poor and working-class families and a corresponding increase in the demand for cheap labor by factory owners and agricultural sectors.

In this situation, parents who are trapped at or below the poverty line for their perspective country are faced with a choice; send their children to work so that they can contribute to the household income or face starvation which in turn is detrimental to child development (Carolyn, 2006, up. 1-2).

Carolina's argument is based on the assumption that there is a direct correlation between child labor and poverty which is supported by Edmond (2009) who states that Vietnam cut the use of child labor "nearly in half over a five-year period during its economic boom in the sass" (up. 75-176). This is further supported by Bellary (2007) who states in a United Nations (UN) report that "the vast majority of working children are found in developing countries" (p. 18). In addition to economic factors of the families there are also the cultural aspects to contend with. Most developing countries today are either still practicing or have roots in agrarian societies where children are required to help with fieldwork and tend to livestock.

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There is an ingrained cultural expectation that Tanat centre snouts participate Ana contribute to the well being of the family. Carolyn goes on to state that child workers are preferred in developing countries over adults because they “are more productive than adults” and that “(c)hildren are preferred to adults because they are cheap, submissive, uneducated and nimble” and that the economic forces in developing countries are so strong that child labor laws or legislation are not effective at all in curtailing the use of child labor by employers (2006, p. 0). The only solution to combat the use of child labor is to adopt alternative policies and legislation that allow for the use of child labor coupled with a culturally relative approach that includes incentives that stimulate economic growth. These incentives would need to include provisions that would provide additional protection and benefits to child laborers and their families until such a time it becomes less profitable for employers to use them.

For instance, legislation could be proposed that limits the size of the workforce that international corporations can employ in a developing country and limit the total percentage of child laborers. In addition to limiting the total percentage of child laborers a percentage reduction of child laborers could be mandated over an extended period of time. Legislation could also be proposed that increases the wage rates for adult workers which could be offset through tax breaks in both the host and developing country which result in a static profit.

Another option would be to mandate that all international corporations whose manufacturers or distributors utilize child labor have to redirect a profit percentage back to the developing nation to fund social programs such <https://assignbuster.com/cultural-relativism-and-child-labor-assignment/>

as education, food assistance, or tax breaks and subsidies that could be mandated to be redirected into an incentive program that pays families to send their children to school instead of to the factories or fields. All of these proposals would allow the international business to remain profitable while funneling additional revenue back to the families who are reliant upon the income produced by the child.

A change in direction and tactics is needed because it has been established that current policies are not working. An International Labor Organization (ILO) report cited by The Financial Express states that the “(n)umber of child laborers aged between 15 to 17 engaged in hazardous works has increased by 20 percent from 52 million to 62 million during 2004-08 period” and that “every minute of each day a child laborer somewhere in the world suffers a work-related accident, illness or psychological trauma” (“Number of child laborers up by APPC during 2004-08,” 2011).

It is now obvious that current legislation that imposes civil and criminal punishments for businesses both domestically and internationally for utilizing child labor as a primary or secondary source of labor are not working. Nike, Disney, and Wall-Mart have all come under fire for utilizing distributors, labor brokers, and manufacturers that utilize child labor. The end result is usually the companies relocating plants to new countries or a region which is detrimental to the families and children who are reliant on the current contracts and jobs.

Then, once the dust settles and another layer is peeled back to reveal that child labor is once again being utilized the process repeats itself. Canon

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Instead AT immediately labeling the practice as immoral or exploitative
based on the current moral outlook of the majority a culturally relativistic
approach to creating new legislation could shift the focus from immediate
cessation measures to incremental ones through economic incentives,
corporate backed educational systems, and other social programs.

The CLAD and similar legislation is not helping the problem, it is making it
worse. The culturally relativistic approach in developing policies and
legislation will need to evaluate through moral dialogue whether the work
currently being performed by he child harms child more than what the other
possible outcomes for that child would be in the absence of the work they
are currently engaged in. Arguing that education alone is the key to end
child labor is a mute because high-quality education is not readily available
or affordable in developing countries that lack the social support programs
that are present in developed countries.

So it is not surprising that all of the statistics and complied data reveal that
the poorest families in the world choose to have their children work to help
support their families. The OTTOMH line is that child labor will only be
eradicated in developing countries and the rest of the world when cultural
values begin to change and families begin to think that the returns from
sending their child to school outweigh the benefits of having them work.