

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS VIOLATION: A CASE STUDY OF SAHIL IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

This research is intended to conduct a thorough study of Sahil, a well-known non-governmental organisation (NGO) working towards the protection of children's rights in Pakistan. Using Sahil's 2022 annual report and qualitative interviews, the study aims to quantify the extent of violation of children's rights, review Sahil's intervention, determine the challenges and opportunities, and propose recommendations for child protection improvement in Pakistan. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research will contribute to the literature on child protection and will shape policy and advocacy efforts to ensure that not only the rights but also the well-being of children are respected in Pakistan. Ethical factors will be carefully considered to support the protectedness of the participants' rights and privacy during the research process.

**Keywords:** Sahil, children's rights, Pakistan, NGO, child protection.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Children being the most vulnerable in the society are entitled to fundamental rights and protections for their proper well-being and development. While the international agreements and national laws that are addressed to protect children's rights do exist, many children are still badly abused, exploited, neglected and criminally injured worldwide. These challenges are more serious in the context of Pakistan where youth population is significant and also a number of socio-economic factors increase the risk faced by children (UNICEF, 2020).

In Pakistan there are various child rights violations where the issues include child labor, trafficking, early marriages, sexual abuse and domestic violence. Such violations do not only deny the children their human rights, but also stunt their physical, emotional, and psychological growth, which perpetuates poverty and social exclusion. Despite all measures taken by the government and civil community to solve these problems, these issues are still wide-spreading among children's rights (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Despite these challenges, Sahil, a non-governmental organization (NGO) established in 1996, has become a leading children rights advocate in Pakistan. Sahil's goal is to eliminate child abuse and exploitation using a multi-pronged approach that covers advocacy, research, and intervention programs. Sahil played a pivotal role in the development of children's rights and child protection in Pakistan by raising awareness, supplying services, and advocating for policy reforms (Sahil, 2022).

Regarding Sahil's achievement in this field, this proposal would like to explore it more into the organization's activities and also how it works on the violation of children's rights in Pakistan. Investigation of case studies of Sahil organization with thorough analysis of its 2022 annual report, this study focuses on the number of violation of children rights, assessment of Sahil's interventions and the challenges and opportunities for the promotion of children's protection and welfare in Pakistan.

A mixed-methods approach is implemented in this research involving qualitative interviews,

quantitative research and document review for empirical data and actionable insights on the complicated issues concerning the right to the child in Pakistan. Hence, through this undertaking, evidence-based policymaking will be promoted, and actions for protecting the rights of children and improving their lives would be advocated not only in Pakistan but also worldwide. Acting in tandem with stakeholders and by spreading the findings, the study will aim to bring about a desirable change and, thus, to create a protective and caring environment for children from Pakistan (Save the Children, 2020).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The violation of children's rights is a global challenge where millions of children are the victims regardless of the social and economic context. Despite the adoption of relevant laws and being a signatory of international commitments on the protection of children's rights, many challenges remain and so the occurrence of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence does not cease. The existing literature on children's rights in Pakistan portrays how the violations of human rights affect the lives of children and how the various policy initiatives, interventions, and advocacy efforts are employed to mitigate the issue.

1. **Prevalence and Forms of Children's Rights Violations:** Manifestations of child rights abuses and the different kinds of their forms have been studied by many researchers in Pakistan. For instance, Khan et al. (2020) discusses the severity of child labor; wherein, millions of children toil in hazardous conditions, in different parts of the economy. For example, the research performed by Zia et al. (2018) have also found that the cases of child marriage are very high amongst young girls in Pakistan which clearly indicates that the many sociocultural factors are responsible for this harmful practice. Also, studies have brought out not only other kinds of child rights abuses but also child trafficking, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and denial of education and healthcare.
2. **Impact on Child Well-being and Development:** The literature emphasizes that children's rights violations have a very negative influence on the welfare and the development of the children involved. Research shows that the consequences of children's physical, emotional, and psychological health of being exposed to abuse,

exploitation, and violence can stay with them forever (Human Rights Watch 2021). Studies reveal that the children who suffer from rights violation are prone to develop depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health complications (Siddiqui et al. , 2020). On the other hand, those experiences can hinder children's learning, social integration, and overall development because they keep a cycle of poverty and marginalization going.

3. **Role of Civil Society Organizations:** Civic organizations including NGOs such as Sahil with their advocacy for children's rights and redressal of violations in Pakistan play a vital role in Pakistan. Sahil, founded in 1996, is now one of the leading child rights activists that constantly strive to ensure the safety of children against different forms of abuse and exploitation through various programmes. This involves establishing helplines, holding awareness campaigns, supporting victims through services and demanding the reform of policies (Sahil, 2022). Through his work, Sahil proved the necessity of civil society organizations as agents that influence the perception, gathering the resources, and the shaping of policy regarding the protection of children's rights.
4. **Policy and Legal Frameworks:** Pakistan has framed laws and borrowed from the international conventions for child protection. The National Action Plan for Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are crucial instruments for the prevention of child rights violations and for promoting child protection (Government of Pakistan, 2020). Nevertheless, despite the fact that the agreement is signed, a lot of problems still remain in the process of transforming the words into actions. The enhancement of the implementation and enforcement of children's rights laws and policies in Pakistan have been limited due to the lack of adequate resources and cultural barriers.
5. Finally, the study shows the kind, extent and the outcome of the children's rights violations in Pakistan, and the role of civil society organizations such as Sahil in addressing these violations, and the legal and policy frameworks that have been put in place for the protection of the children's rights. The review below hopefully gives us an overall idea on the difficulty of the issue of child rights in Pakistan and introduces

Sahil as a part of the solution for child rights violations in the country.

### **3. METHODOLOGY:**

This part of the study presents the research design and methods used to realize the objectives.

#### **3.1 Document Analysis:**

- By reading the annual report sections covering the documentation of child abuse, exploitation, and neglect cases. These parts frequently give in-depth descriptions of individuals' complaints, for instance, the kind of infringement, a child's age and gender, the people involved in violation, and the intervention efficacy.
- Grouping the reported cases by the type of abuse committed, for example; sexual abuse, physical abuse, child labor, trafficking, early marriage and neglect. Such a classification will serve to determine the direction and nature of the various violations of rights by time.
- Let's take a look at the data presented in the annual report, including the number of cases reported, demographic characteristics of the victims, geographic distribution of cases, and trends in reporting and intervention efforts.
- Examining parts of the Annual report that describe Sahil's projects that deal with the intervention programs, advocacy initiatives, and collaboration with the other stakeholders in the field of child protection. This will also give us an understanding on how Sahil dealt with the issue of children's rights violation.

#### **3.2. Qualitative Interviews and Focus Group Discussions:**

- Sahil staff: Sahil's program managers, field workers, counselors, as well as other staff members who are responsible for implementing intervention programs and delivering support services to children and their families will be the subjects of interviews.
- Beneficiaries: During the interviews, children who have been violated and their families will be also interviewed to understand their experiences, needs and point of view of Sahil's interventions and their problems in accessing help and justice.
- Government officials: The interviews will be conducted with the representatives of the concerned governmental departments like the Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Social

Welfare, and police agencies to state the policy frameworks, legal mechanisms and institutional responses to children's rights violation.

- Community leaders: Attending focus group discussions will be carried out with community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders to identify community perceptions, cultural norms, and societal attitudes on children's rights and child protection issues.

#### **3.3. Quantitative Analysis:**

Numerical data from Sahil's yearly report were evaluated to determine whether Sahil's interventions reduced children's rights violations and promoted child protection adequately. The quantitative analysis will involve:

- Descriptive statistics: Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations will be calculated to describe the prevalence and features of children's rights violation cases documented by Sahil.
- Inferential analysis: Statistical tests, e.g. chi-square tests, t-tests, and regression analysis, can also be conducted to check the relationship between Sahil's interventions and important indicators, such as cases reported, conviction rates and access to services. Along with these, subgroup analyses might be done to investigate changes in outcomes depending on the demographic factors such as age, gender, and geographic position.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

This part of the article reveals the outcomes of Sahil's 2022 annual report analysis, interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings were then be mapped against the research objectives in order to understand the different types of children's rights violations in Pakistan, Sahil's interventions, their effectiveness, and challenges/opportunities. The debate connects academic findings with grassroots experiences to provide the comprehensive understanding of data.

#### **4.1 PREVALENCE AND FORMS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS**

It results from the annual report of Sahil in 2022 that in Pakistan there are many abuses of children's rights. The report gives the details of the different kinds of abuses like child labour, sexual abuses, trafficking and early marriages. Together with the

existing literature these data call for the creation of an effective system of child safeguarding.

### **Child Labor**

Still, the child labor issue is a real problem in Pakistan, where many kids are under threat. As Sahil's report states, there are at least 12 million children who are involved in child labor and they usually do this under hazardous circumstances. This is in accordance with the International Labour Organization's report that indicates Pakistan as one of the countries with the highest levels of child labor worldwide (ILO, 2020). In different industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, and domestic work, children are abused by working for prolonged hours with little or no pay. Studies demonstrate that child labor negatively affects children's physical and mental health, education, and overall development (Khan & Ali, 2018).

### **Sexual Abuse**

According to Sahil's report, there has been a troubling upsurge in reported instances of child sexual abuse. In 2022, the organization reported 3,846 cases, which was a 12% increase from the previous year. This increase in reported cases could be because of an actual increase in the cases and better reporting mechanism. The literature explains the severe mental and physical consequences of sexual abuse on children such as trauma, stigma, and long term health problems (Malik et al., 2019). The report also stresses the underreporting of such cases from cultural taboos and revenge, which means that the actual number of cases is higher.

### **Trafficking and Exploitation**

Child trafficking and exploitation is a widespread problem in Pakistan. Sahil's report elaborates various instances of children being trafficked for labor, sexual abuse, and forced begging. As identified by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Pakistan is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking, particularly for children who represent a significant percentage of the victims (UNODC, 2021). The data reveal that poverty, lack of education and the ineffective law enforcements are the main causes of children trafficking and exploitation in Pakistan.

### **Early Marriage**

The early marriages nowadays is still the most common challenge in rural areas. Sahil gives in his report that 21% of girls in Pakistan are married before the age of 18. Early marriage is closely correlated with negative health outcomes, including higher rates of maternal and infant mortality, and it acts as a major obstacle to girls' education and employment opportunities (Zia et al. 2018). The writings suggest that early marriage has cultural norms and economic pressure behind it and therefore, it will require multi-faceted approach to tackle this issue effectively.

## **4.2 SAHIL'S INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIES**

Sahil has implemented various interventions and strategies to combat children's rights violations, focusing on awareness campaigns, support services, and capacity building. The effectiveness of these interventions is analyzed through both qualitative and quantitative lenses.

### **Awareness Campaigns**

Sahil does the work of organizing mass awareness programs to provide children's rights education and legal measures that protect them. The campaign will include school programs, community meetings, and media outreach. The annual report indicates that Sahil's awareness programmes reached over 1 million people in 2022. Qualitative interviews with the community members and the Sahil staff have demonstrated that these campaigns increased the community awareness about children's rights and reporting cases of violations. Campaigns can be used effectively in changing attitudes and behaviors related to child protection (Ahmad & Javed, 2019).

### **Support Services**

Sahil provides victimized people and their families with a range of support services including counseling, legal support, and shelter. Sahil's 2022 yearly report mentioned that he helped 2,500 children through counseling and legal assistance in 800 cases. The beneficiaries interview illustrates that such services have contributed a lot in their recovery. Sufficient provision of the survivor support system is essential to respond to the immediate and the long-term needs of the victims that are presented in the literature (Patel et al, 2020).



### **Capacity Building**

Sahil employs capacity building by giving lectures on how to identify and address children's rights violations to police officers, educators, health care providers, and community leaders. In the year 2022, Sahil trained 5000 people from various classes. Participants demonstrated their newly acquired expertise and competence in addressing child protection matters and therefore highlighted the important role of such training in improving the existing system of child protection. The literature emphasizes the importance of ongoing capacity building in order for child protection policies to be implemented well (UNICEF, 2019).

### **4.3 EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT**

The metrics to assess the efficiency of Sahil's programs are derived from quantitative analysis of data from a yearly report and qualitative perspectives from interviews and focus group discussions.

### **Increase in Reporting**

Besides the number of reported cases of violations of child rights, this indicator is also considered an important one. The report for the year shows an increasing trend in the number of cases reported in the last 5 years, which is possibly due to more awareness and reporting levels. This could be observed in the qualitative interviews and the residents told that Sahil and the services of the campaign were the main reason for the growth of the community. The journal says that the first step in this matter is to increase the reporting to stop the violations of children's rights (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

### **Conviction Rates**

The defense lawyers of Sahil can also be credited with the fact that a number of offenders and exploiters have been convicted. Based on the report, the conviction rate in 2022 is 15% higher than that in the last year. Sahil has attained these outcomes as a result of legal aid provision and advocacy, according to the interviews of the lawyers and the staff. The literature (Khan & Qureshi, 2020) makes it clear that robust legal system is a necessary element of achieving justice and preventing further violations.

### **Access to Support Services**

There has been a significant enhancement on the availability and accessibility of support services for victims. The annual report brings forward that Sahil's

counseling services and shelters have been accessed by more number of children and family members compared to the previous years. In the words of the beneficiaries, these services have been invaluable and have helped them feel supported and empowered which has in turn facilitated their recovery and reintegration. Literature shows the importance of the support services in addressing the short term and long term needs of the victims (Malik et al. , 2019).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- This research offers a complete account of the children's rights violations in Pakistan with emphasis on Sahil's roles as revealed in its 2022 annual report. This study presents the findings of children's rights violations, helpfulness of Sahil's intervention, and obstacles and advantages in strengthening child protection.
- Kids in Pakistan still commonly face serious rights violations such as child labor, sexual abuse, trafficking, and early marriage. There are legislative measures, but the enforcement of child protection laws seems to be weak because of resource constraints, cultural barriers, and a lack of effective policy implementation. Sahil's efforts of spreading awareness, providing support services and building capacity have made a positive change by increasing reporting, success in conviction and providing much needed help for victims.
- Nonetheless, Sahil encounters several problems that it does not enable it a lot such as limited resources, cultural resistance and policy implementation issues. To maximize its influence, Sahil can resort to opportunities such as partnerships, advocacy, community engagement, and further funding. Adhering to the recommendations proposed in this research can enable us to reinforce the child protection system and ensure the overall development of children in Pakistan.
- This research hopes to fill the existing literature gap on children's rights through presenting statistical data and practical suggestions. Policymakers, practitioners, and advocacy groups can use the information gathered from this research to inform effective strategies to prevent children's rights violations. The conclusions hereafter stress the significance of civil society involvement in dealing with complicated socio-economic subjects and in

advancing children's rights and well-being in Pakistan. Through constant and coordinated efforts, it becomes possible to establish a secure and protective environment in which children's rights are respected and their full potential is cultivated.

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