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<b>Keywords</b>	Labour, Children, Africa, Monitoring Reality, Psychological Impacts.
<b>Abstract</b> This research paper aims to highlight the phenomenon of child labour in Africa by providing an analytical reading and theoretical overview of its various dimensions. It begins by defining the conceptual framework of child labour and reviewing its manifestations and forms. It then identifies the main factors and causes that push children into the workforce and analyses the impact of child labour on children and society as a whole, focusing on the psychological effects. The paper also refers to the difficulties and obstacles involved in eradicating this phenomenon and concludes with a participatory, integrative approach to addressing the problem in Africa and mitigating its negative impacts. Despite their differences, nations and societies strive for development and progress by utilising all available means, resources and capabilities. Achieving this goal certainly requires the interaction and harmony of all these elements and resources through a fundamental activity: work. Work is an organised effort integrating the physical and mental capabilities of individuals to achieve various objectives that enhance well-being and quality of life for individuals, communities and nations.	
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## Introduction:

Given this, if the efficient use of all resources is to be prioritised, particularly human resources, then healthy individuals must be employed according to their qualifications, abilities, and the contributions they can offer within the available circumstances. This work must therefore adhere to legal, scientific, ethical, and economic regulations that ensure the well-being of all professional groups. The importance of work in all its forms should not be allowed to exceed workers' mental, physical and physiological limits, taking into account their qualifications, circumstances and age. It is crucial to avoid the negative professional consequences that arise from disregarding these aspects, especially the appropriate working age.

The phenomenon of child labour has recently come to the attention of legislators, academics and communities around the world, particularly affecting many countries, and to a greater extent, African nations.

While there are various motives and factors leading to children in Africa entering the workforce, there are also significant repercussions. Despite international and African efforts to reduce this phenomenon, it continues to proliferate in many African countries. This reality highlights the importance of studying child labour in order to understand its scope and causes, and to diagnose its multiple impacts. It is also important to present effective and sustainable proposals and solutions. This research paper focuses on child labour in Africa.

### **1. The concept of child labour**

A scholar studying child labour encounters numerous overlapping and related terms, such as labour by minors, child labour and employment of minors. The following points are made to clarify the confusion and ambiguity:

Child labour refers to any economic or productive activity performed by a child below the legal age defined in national laws or international agreements. This results in the child being deprived of an education and being exposed to physical, psychological and social dangers (Nick, 2023).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labour as work that robs children of their childhood, potential, and dignity and hinders their physical and mental development (<https://www.ilo.org/topics-and-sectors/child-labour>).

Thus, child labour in Africa refers to children below the legal working age who engage in various economic and productive activities that may deny them an education, rob them of their childhood, expose them to physical and mental dangers, and affect their psychological and social equilibrium.

### **2. Causes of child labour in Africa**

The reasons and factors driving children in Africa to enter the workforce are diverse and vary by circumstance and geographical region. This phenomenon often occurs alongside unregulated activities and, in some cases, is seasonal. The causes of child labour in Africa include the following:

Economic reasons: due to low or even non-existent income for some families, coupled with the continuous rise in the prices of various goods and products, many families across different African countries struggle to maintain their purchasing power. Consequently, many children lack livelihood opportunities, prompting them to work to meet their own and their families' needs (Khorchof, 2020).

Children are also influenced by emerging economic concepts such as investment, entrepreneurship, business and wealth. This generates a materialistic mindset characterised by a desire to earn money and can lead them to enter the workforce at an early age.

This is evident through changing values and perceptions at both individual and collective levels. For example, values such as solidarity and cooperation are declining, as is the community's appreciation for helping those in need. Society often holds wealthy individuals in high regard, regardless of how they acquired their wealth, while viewing the poor and vulnerable with disdain. Many children seek employment in the hope of overcoming the remnants of poverty and the associated societal perceptions. Additionally, the social structure and collective perceptions in certain regions of Africa promote the idea of working from a young age. Technological advancements, particularly through social networks and various media, have also impacted children's values, perceptions and attitudes towards work (Barkat, 2024).

Personal causes arise from the psychological makeup and personality traits of some children. These are characterised by a tendency towards independence and self-reliance in various areas, including financial independence and the ability to earn money (Nbomba et al., 2014). Furthermore, some children have personalities characterised by a desire for exploration, experimentation and challenge, leading them to try out different jobs and professions, and potentially continuing in them despite the associated risks and difficulties.

- Legislative causes: The existing laws and legislative texts related to child labour in Africa aim to establish general conditions for the employment of minors and ensure suitable working conditions. However, they often focus on employment within official institutions and bodies (Boukmouche, 2022). However, reports from various international organisations and observations on the ground confirm that child labour in Africa predominantly occurs in parallel, unregulated informal activities. This calls for legislative texts to be expanded to cover all aspects of child labour in Africa, and for stricter enforcement, monitoring and penalties to be applied to those employing children below the legal working age.

The causes behind the proliferation of child labour in Africa are multifaceted and include:

- Poverty, which forces families to involve their children in work.
- Weak education systems and high dropout rates.
- Social customs and traditions that view child labour as a means of supporting the family.
- Armed conflicts and political instability in some African countries.
- Poor enforcement of labour laws and government oversight.

### 3. Manifestations and Forms of Child Labour in Africa

Over the past two decades, the world has made steady progress in reducing child labour. However, conflicts, crises and the recent pandemic have pushed more families into poverty in recent years, forcing millions of additional children into labour. Economic growth has not been sufficient or inclusive enough to alleviate the pressures that many families and communities face, leading them to resort to child labour. According to reports from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in 2024, approximately 86 million children were registered as working in Africa, accounting for over 50% of working children worldwide.

The reports also reveal that, although the proportion of children engaged in child labour is highest in low-income countries, the absolute numbers are higher in middle-income countries. Specifically, 9% of all children in lower-middle-income countries and 7% in upper-middle-income countries are engaged in work. It is estimated that 84 million children (56% of all working children) live in middle-income countries, compared to just 2 million in high-income countries.

Furthermore, reports highlight that over 70% of working children in Africa are employed in agriculture, 22% in services, and 8% in industry. The manifestations of child labour in Africa vary across social and economic environments. In rural areas, child labour is primarily focused on traditional agriculture, whereas in urban areas, children work in workshops, mines, on construction sites, and as street vendors. Girls are often exploited in domestic work or unpaid household services without legal protection. There are also dangerous patterns of child labour, such as commercial and sexual exploitation (Pinidie, 2017).

We will now examine the prevalence of child labour in certain African countries. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, it is estimated that around 4.7 million children aged 5 to 14 are employed in various sectors, including copper mining. Many of these children work alongside their families in gold and diamond mines. Many of these children use hammers to extract raw minerals and handle hazardous chemicals without wearing protective equipment. They also manually transport rocks from deep or open mines. Children also work in agriculture and are recruited as child soldiers by the Congolese national army and various rebel groups. Child labour is generally highly visible in the streets of Kinshasa. According to a report by African non-governmental organisations, around 80,000 of the children working in mines are under the age of 15. This constitutes approximately 40% of all mine workers supplying raw minerals to Chinese companies in the region.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Labor estimated that there were more than 2.7 million working children in Ghana, representing around 43% of all children aged 5 to 14. The largest employers of children are agriculture, fishing and artisanal mining, along with domestic services. In urban areas, children work as porters, a role locally referred to as 'kayaye', with some starting at the age of six. In the Southern Volta region, children are involved in religious work for periods ranging from several months to three years, and are known as 'trokosi' ('wife of God'), 'fiashidi', or 'vudusi'. This practice requires young girls to work and serve the ecclesiastical system to atone for the alleged sins of family members, or to bring good luck to the family (Fesemi& Marguerite, 2020).

In Kenya, statistics indicate that there were 3 million child workers in unbearable conditions who were clearly visible. It is estimated that the actual number of working children is much higher. Children working in Kenya are involved in agriculture, industry, tourism, quarrying, mining, pastoral work, waste collection, fishing and transportation. They often move from place to place as street vendors. The Kenyan government estimates that there are 8.9 million working children aged 5 to 13, many of whom do not attend school. They also work in waste gathering, collecting and selling scrap metal, glass and other materials, as well as shepherding and begging. Reports highlight the forced sexual exploitation of children, which is prevalent in major cities such as Nairobi, Kisumu and Eldoret, as well as in coastal areas of Kenya.

Poverty and a lack of educational opportunities are the main reasons behind child labour in Kenya. The country suffers from a shortage of schools and teachers, overcrowded classrooms and complicated procedures for unregistered children. Kenyan law prohibits children from attending school unless they are registered with the Kenyan authorities as citizens. Currently, 44% of children in rural areas of Kenya remain unregistered. This means that even if schools are available, rural children are unable to prove their citizenship and risk missing out on an education (Djidenou, 2023).

In Madagascar, children are commonly found working in small-scale artisanal mines, where they participate in activities such as salt extraction, quarrying, and collecting gemstones and gold. Around 58% of children working in these mines are under 12 years old. According to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), children working in these mines often come from families in unstable economic situations. A 2010 United States report indicated that approximately 22% of children in Madagascar aged 5 to 14 – equating to over 1.2 million – are working. Another French team reported that the number of child labourers in Madagascar exceeds 2.4 million, including over 540,000 children aged 5 to 9. Around 87% of child labourers work in agriculture and fishing, and many children in Madagascar do domestic work for an average of 12 hours a day.

Reports from 2010 indicated that around 150,000 children aged 5 to 14 were working in Morocco, primarily in agriculture and domestic services. Young girls from very poor families are often sent to work as maids in households. These young domestic workers face conditions involving forced labour, including long hours without breaks, physical, verbal and sexual abuse, wage deductions and restrictions on their movement. This deprives them of an education. Other visible forms of child labour include selling cigarettes, begging, shining shoes, washing cars and working as porters in ports. The High Commission for Planning in Morocco estimated that there are between 60,000 and 100,000 young maids in the country. Studies commissioned by the Moroccan government reveal that poverty and a lack of schools are the main reasons behind the phenomenon of young maids in Morocco. Additionally, rural parents often do not believe that an education will help their daughters find employment.

In Nigeria, approximately 15 million children under the age of 14 were working in 2006, many of whom were employed in extremely dangerous conditions for long hours. Poverty is the main driving force behind child labour, as these children's income is a crucial part of their impoverished families' earnings. The vast majority of child labourers in Nigeria work in agriculture and the informal and semi-formal economy. Less visible forms of child labour include domestic work, where children are often subjected to sexual harassment. In informal economies and public spaces, street trading employs 64% of child labourers. Children are also commonly seen working as mechanics and bus ticket collectors in informal businesses and semi-public places. Currently, around 6 million children in Nigeria do not attend school. Currently, these children lack the time, energy and resources necessary to attend school.

The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 400,000 child workers in Rwanda, around 120,000 of whom are engaged in the worst forms of child labour. This includes 60,000 children working as domestic helpers. In Zambia, the government estimates that around 595,000 children are in employment, 58% of whom are aged 14 or under and many of whom are employed in informal mining operations.

A 2010 report from the U.S. Department of Labor estimated that around 33% of Zambian children aged 5 to 14 were working, primarily in agriculture. Almost 98% of Zambian children work in mining, primarily in the informal sector, where severe forms of child labour are prevalent, including work on cotton, tobacco, fish, tea, coffee and charcoal farms. Child labour is particularly prevalent in mining, especially in lead, zinc and copper ore mines. Children working in these mines are not provided with any protective equipment to safeguard their eyes, faces or bodies, resulting in frequent injuries. According to the International Labour Organization, child labour in Zambia is a coping mechanism for children and families following the loss of a breadwinner due to death, illness, or simply not earning enough to survive.

#### **4. The Impacts of Child Labour**

The effects of child labour are varied and severe, primarily affecting the child and subsequently society. In this section, we will focus on the psychological impacts.

**Physical and psychological harm:** Child labour can lead to injuries that hinder healthy development and deprive children of their fundamental rights. These injuries can result in serious disorders such as depression, lowered self-esteem and psychological trauma, often due to harsh working conditions or exposure to violence and exploitation.

**- Deprivation of education and increased illiteracy:** Child labourers tend to remain illiterate as adults, which prevents them from achieving normal social and professional growth. According to UNICEF reports, working children are three times more likely to disengage from education than their peers, and a significant proportion suffer long-term psychological effects. **Marginalisation and control:** Children are often raised in humiliating conditions that disregard fundamental human rights and principles.

**- Exposure to sexual exploitation:** Children, especially girls, may be subjected to sexual exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornography, which compromises their dignity and morals.

**- Isolation and alienation:** working children often become distanced from their families and friends, which adversely affects their relationships and social lives, leaving them vulnerable to abuse.

**- Risk of work-related accidents and occupational diseases:** Children face physical and psychological burdens associated with their work that are incompatible with their developmental stages.

**- Economic exploitation:** Children are often paid low wages and provided with inadequate working conditions and insufficient protection.

**- Contribution to school dropout:** The tendency to work affects children's educational commitments and ability to concentrate on their studies.

**- Social problems:** Earning money through work can lead children to engage in negative behaviours such as drug abuse, illegal immigration and running away from home.

**- Increase in theft and assault crimes:** The normalisation of acquiring money through work can lead children to develop specific consumer behaviours. When they are unable to obtain what they want, this can drive them to turn to crime, including theft and assault, and become involved in trafficking (Bhukutch& Ballet, 2018).

The negative impacts of child labour in Africa can be summarised as follows:

1. Physical development: a child's health can be affected by injuries and bruises, falls from heights, suffocation from toxic gases, breathing difficulties and bleeding.
2. Cognitive development is impaired for children who leave school to enter the workforce, which impacts their abilities and scientific progress. This leads to a decrease in reading, writing and arithmetic skills, as well as a reduction in creativity.
3. Emotional development: The emotional development of working children is adversely affected, as they may lose self-respect, family ties and acceptance of others. This is a result of being separated from their families, sleeping at their workplaces, and experiencing violence at the hands of employers or colleagues.
4. Social and moral development: Working children's social and moral development is impaired, including their sense of belonging to a community, their ability to cooperate with others, and their capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. They may also conceal what happens to them at work (Boukmouche, 2022).

Researchers have long emphasised that certain types of work cause serious psychological and social problems for children. This poses a significant risk, especially for girls, many of whom work as domestic servants and live away from their families. Available information suggests that they work in harsh conditions and are almost entirely prohibited from contacting their families or friends. They are also sometimes victims of physical and sexual abuse. The risk of exploitation in prostitution and contracting HIV/AIDS threatens their psychological and social well-being. According to the World Health Organization, working children in Kenya exhibit severe symptoms including withdrawal, premature ageing and depression (Arthur & Abendje, 2019).

We find that the negative impacts of child labour in Africa, due to the conditions associated with their work and their deprivation of normal growth and the ability to enjoy their childhood, have a profound effect on children, especially psychologically. This necessitates addressing this phenomenon seriously and with a sustainable vision.

## 5. How to address child labour in Africa

Dealing with child labour in Africa and mitigating its negative consequences requires the involvement of multiple parties and organisations. All practices, processes and efforts in this area must follow a participatory and integrative approach, considering coordination among the roles and tasks of bodies and sectors related to this issue.

Before outlining this approach in line with the African context, let us outline some of the institutions and international organisations concerned with combating child labour.

Save the Children is one of the world's largest international non-governmental organisations dedicated to promoting and protecting children's rights in approximately 120 countries. It focuses its work on poor and marginalised local communities, educating them about children's rights and helping them to understand that children belong in school, not in the workplace. The organisation's programme also includes protecting vulnerable children who lack care, as well as supporting community care and protection systems.

Stop Child Labour Coalition: This organisation adopts the principle of not exploiting any child, regardless of their race, gender, nationality, religion, economic status, place of residence or occupation. Operating as a national network, it shares information on child labour issues and provides a platform for those advocating an end to child labour. The coalition also influences public policies concerning child labour by raising awareness of its impact on children's health and lifestyles.

The Global March Against Child Labour is a broad network of civil society organisations, trade unions and educators. Together, they strive to eliminate all forms of child labour and trafficking, ensuring children have access to high-quality, free services, including public education. The march aims to guarantee that all children enjoy their rights and are protected from being forced into work that hinders their development.

The International Initiative to End Child Labour provides education and training, capacity building, legal accountability, programme planning and monitoring services in the public and private sectors, as well as research and development institutions. Its goal is to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, particularly in the United States and around the world. World Vision is one of the world's largest organisations focused on children. It helps children who have survived child labour to return to normal lives, while addressing the conditions that led to their labour. The organisation is committed to providing solutions that ensure children receive the care and attention they need, preventing them from resorting to work.

World Vision has had a significant impact on reducing the number of children subjected to labour worldwide.

The African Union has adopted national action plans to eliminate child labour in various African countries, which are among the most affected by this phenomenon. However, despite these efforts and the global decline in child labour, it is unfortunate that most countries experiencing the worst forms of child labour are located in Africa, one of the regions most affected by fragility and state crises. This consequently increases the risk of child labour. Therefore, on 13 February 2019, the African Union launched a technical consultation regarding its ten-year action plan to eliminate child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and slavery, as part of its efforts to achieve the goals and aspirations of the African Development

Agenda 2030 concerning the elimination of all forms of child labour on the continent. This is in line with the seventh and eighth goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The Arab Council for Childhood and Development has implemented and evaluated intervention programmes to address child labour in cooperation with the ILO's IPEC programme and the Arab Gulf Programme for Development. An Arab strategy to reduce child labour was prepared in collaboration with the Arab Labour Organisation and the Arab League. The council has also initiated projects focusing on protecting street children, providing policy protection for Arab children, and running media campaigns to promote children's rights and combat violence against children.

UNICEF supports the roadmap to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, which requires a comprehensive response. It helps local communities to change their cultural acceptance of child labour, while also supporting strategies and programmes that provide families with alternative income sources and access to quality childcare and education services. UNICEF also collaborates with employers and the private sector to assess the impact of their supply chains and business practices on children. The organisation has prepared a checklist of 'strategic options that can best serve the interests of the child'. For child labour and other forms of economic exploitation of children, the list includes:

- increasing educational opportunities by allowing time off to attend school or providing education at work
- providing support services for parents, especially mothers
- encouraging strict enforcement of laws against child traffickers and those who make 'contracts of adhesion' in child labour
- offering services for children working on the streets
- raising the legal marriage age
- changing cultural values and social norms that tolerate the economic exploitation of children

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Additionally, addressing and reducing the issue of child labour in Africa can be achieved through:

- Raising awareness: sufficient awareness of the dangers of child labour can prevent children from being sent to work and disrupting their education. This primarily involves raising awareness among parents, as their lack of understanding of this issue can lead to children being exploited by employers and traffickers. By creating communities that are aware of these issues, they will be better understood and responded to effectively. This awareness can be fostered through community events aimed at educating people about children's rights, whether organised by the government or non-governmental institutions.

Implementing stricter laws and enforcing them effectively is essential for long-term social change. This requires engagement with stakeholders at all levels, including the media, citizens, legislators and civil society members. Many issues related to legal protections for children against sexual crimes and unethical trafficking have been raised, and non-governmental organisations collaborate with the authorities to ensure the careful implementation of laws that support and protect children.

- Universal and mandatory education until adulthood: This can be achieved through initiatives that promote school enrolment for children at risk of dropping out, and by creating child-friendly learning environments in poor neighbourhoods and villages. More interactive teaching methods should be utilised alongside funding for educational institution infrastructure such as computers, sports equipment, mobile learning centres and libraries. Effective dialogue with children and families regarding school attendance should be established to help them access education.

- Providing adult labour for markets and sectors facing labour shortages: This involves strengthening the relationship between consumer power and companies to influence effective social change. Markets for goods produced without child labour should be established and distinguished by branding that prohibits child labour and rescues children from slavery. This relationship with necessary businesses provides the required impact to permanently alter behaviours and practices, making the principle of not employing children a market requirement for producers alongside considerations of design, price and other features.

Enhancing Coordination Between Schools and Families

This can be achieved by monitoring student trends, regularly checking children's attendance at school, creating incentives for change in the educational system, consulting parents and closely following up with children. Particular attention should be given to children who are underperforming, with a focus on making the educational process more enjoyable through



innovative teaching methods, addressing learning difficulties and ensuring that children's basic needs are met. Children should be educated about the dangers of street labour and how to protect themselves. It is essential to continuously communicate with parents to raise awareness of the negative impact of this phenomenon on children, and community leaders should be engaged in seeking solutions to this problem.

## 6. Challenges to Ending Child Labour in Africa

Despite significant efforts by international and regional organisations related to labour and child protection, as well as strategies established by various African countries, the continent continues to face challenges in eliminating this phenomenon. The most prominent of these challenges are:

Extreme poverty: many families in various African countries are driven to employ their children out of desperation.

- Weak education systems: The absence of free, compulsory education in many countries contributes to high dropout rates and even prevents children from enrolling in education altogether.

- Insufficient funding: Many African governments do not allocate sufficient funding towards child protection programmes.

- Widespread administrative and economic corruption: weak monitoring of law enforcement in various African countries hampers progress.

- Cultural practices and social traditions: in some families and regions, child labour is viewed as a way for children to take responsibility for supporting their families.

- Renewed armed conflicts and political instability: these conditions in some African countries lead to increased poverty, pushing children to seek work at an early age to find food.

## 7. Proposal for a Multi-Sector Participatory Approach to Reducing Child Labour in Africa

Based on a review of various international organisations involved in combatting child labour, as well as different suggestions and efforts to address this phenomenon and its repercussions, we conclude that tackling child labour in Africa requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach that integrates law and legislation, policy, education, economic development and psychological and sociological expertise. This requires a genuine commitment from governments, civil society and regional and international organisations, which we emphasise through the following components:

Legislative bodies should enact strict laws and regulations that extend beyond formal sectors and explicitly address unreported child labour in informal activities. It is crucial to impose legal penalties on those who exploit children for illegal work.

- Role of Families: Raising awareness and promoting understanding, alongside providing a proper upbringing for children across physical, psychological, and mental dimensions, ensuring they have access to necessary necessities, and accompanying them in their education until they reach adulthood.

Education sector: providing suitable educational conditions for all children across different age groups and ensuring equity between various geographical areas, including both urban and rural areas. Supporting students, particularly those with educational difficulties and those classified as having low cognitive abilities, to prevent school dropout and child labour.

The vocational training sector attracts and accommodates children who have dropped out of school and wish to enter the job market. It establishes training programmes and qualifications aligned with their capabilities, professional inclinations and the demands of the job market. This enables them to invest the period before reaching adulthood in acquiring knowledge and skills that guarantee them legal employment opportunities in conditions that protect their rights and align with their qualifications and abilities.

- Youth, sports and cultural sectors: By involving children in sports and cultural activities and associations that promote their physical, cognitive, cultural and social development. This helps them to discover and utilise their hidden talents and abilities in sports and culture, and prevents them from entering the workforce at an early age.

- Enhancing the role of civil society organisations: supporting and strengthening the efforts of organisations and civil society initiatives active in combating child labour, especially those focusing on community awareness activities. Promoting regional cooperation among African countries to exchange experiences and practices capable of reducing the phenomenon.

- Utilising the positive role of media: leveraging various forms and types of media to combat child labour, exposing its negative aspects and risks, and raising awareness among local communities of the long-term dangers of child labour.

### Conclusion:

Based on the overview of the manifestations and forms of child labour in Africa presented in this research paper, as well as the underlying causes, and after diagnosing the various impacts of this phenomenon on children – especially in psychological terms – and highlighting some of the obstacles to effective eradication, we conclude that a serious approach to addressing and eliminating child labour in Africa requires a participatory strategy. This should involve international and

regional organisations related to the issue, as well as the engagement of all African countries through their various bodies, institutions and structures. This collective and genuine commitment is essential to eliminating this problem and ensuring that children in Africa can receive an education, enjoy a normal childhood and maintain their psychological balance, while being sheltered from the dangers and negative repercussions associated with early labour.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study was conducted in accordance with internationally accepted ethical standards for research in the social and human sciences. As the research is based on theoretical analysis and secondary data (published reports, academic literature, and institutional documents), it did not involve direct interaction with children or vulnerable populations. Consequently, no personal data were collected, and no informed consent procedures were required. Particular care was taken to ensure respectful representation of children's experiences and to avoid any form of stigmatization or harm. The study adheres to principles of academic integrity, objectivity, and respect for human dignity, especially given the sensitive nature of child labour and its psychological implications.

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The author declares no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, and the views expressed are solely those of the author.

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