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Navigating Work and Schooling: Co-production of Knowledge with Working School Children in Delhi, India

A Research Paper

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List of Acronyms

BPL	Below Poverty Line
EFA	Education for All
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCLP	National Child Labour Policy
NCT	National Capital Territory
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSS	Indian National Sample Survey
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank

Abstract

In development discourse, schooling is considered a compulsory ritual of childhood and work as a solely adult activity. Despite international bans on child labour, children still participate in the workforce. Moreover, temporary support by children into the family business, household activities and sometimes apprenticeships are part of growing up process. This leads to a constant tension between the idea of children working and their childhood right to education. Literature on children's work and schooling lacks empirical research on the contextual realities of children working and going to school.

This study takes a constructivist approach to understanding why and how a group of children combine both work and schooling, bringing out the macro and micro factors influencing these decisions. Based on interactions with children living Delhi, India, using a set of innovative, child-friendly participatory methods, I found that both work and schooling are linked to children's future aspirations, hence children develop strategies to manage work and schooling, navigate their way across opportunities and challenges.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research adds a new chapter to the contemporary discourse around children's work and schooling by exploring how a combination of work and education is contributing to children's development. While international and national legislation criticise children's work and it is viewed as a symbol of impoverishment and potential roadblock for schooling, this study highlights how a group of children in Delhi is managing both work and education. Finally, a critical reflection on different macro and micro-level elements helps one to understand how children make the decision to engage in both work and schooling.

Not only the outcomes of the research, but the process of data collection: the child-centric, participatory methodology generates innovative ideas around how to conduct research with children that creates space for maximum participation and represents children's true voice through empirical research.

Keywords
Children's work, Children's schooling, Decision making, Partnership

Chapter-I

Introduction to the Study

1.1 Why children combine work and school?

Mid-July 2019, during the initial days of my fieldwork in New Delhi, on one afternoon, after school, Sagar took me out to show me his locality. Passing through a crowded lane, Sagar stopped for a while, and pointing toward an empty corner at a crossroad, he said:

> "*Bhaiya* [brother] my mom had a tea and snacks stall around the crossroad. I used to help her in setting up the stall in the morning and selling before and after my school hours. Six months back the Municipality removed the stall by saying it is illegal. Since then my mom does not have a regular income and I started working in my *Chacha's* [uncle's] motor-cycle repairing garage" (Sagar, Group Recording-7, 27 July 2019)

Sagar enjoys his current work for two reasons. Firstly, the owner pays him INR 120-150 [€1.52-1.90] every day based on the time spent on the garage, which was not the case in his mom's shop. Secondly, he gets to learn how to open and repair different types of bikes, which according to him, would help him to open his own workshop one day. At the age of six years old Sagar moved to Delhi with his mom and elder brother. He is now 14 years old and studying in class-VIII of a public school run by the Delhi government. He wants to settle in Delhi, because he loves the city life. According to Sagar, his mom believes school (education) can help them to get out of poverty, so she always encourages him to regularly attend school. However, Sagar thinks a bit differently. He believes his work helps his mom to run the family. At the same time, work meets his daily needs (like going out with friends for movies, eating outside, buying new clothes etc.).

Sagar is not the only child combining work[1] and schooling. Globally, 78.3 million children are doing the same (ILO 2018: 6). Another report of ILO says that 68.4% of working children between the ages of 5-14 years are also attending school (ILO 2017: 47). However, a dominant discourse (Singh and Khan 2016; Betcherman et al. 2004) perceives work as harmful to children's growth and development and as a barrier to education. This then leads one to question why Sagar and so many children are combining work and education, and how are they doing both? What are the different social, cultural, economic, and political factors along with individual choices that influence children's decision to combine work and schooling? In the following few subheadings I build the context of work and education before arriving at the main research question.

1.2 Understanding children's work and schooling:

A strong international political-economic lobby of ILO and other bilateral/development organizations[2] thwart children from work and restrict them in schools until the completion of compulsory schooling. A study by the Stop Child Labour Consortium[3] − running campaigns in India, Africa, and Latin America − concluded that: "All work done by children under the age of 15 and dangerous work done by children under the age of 18 is illegal" (Stop Child Labour, n.d). Even in some cases to abscond children (below the legal age) from work has been criminalized (The Indian Express 2016). Two significant schools of thought explain the main reasons behind children's work. First one, believes extreme poverty (Amin et al. 2004:891), ignorance of parents (Bhalotra and Tzannatos 2003:28), and the lack of adequate social security during emergencies (such as the death of the main family earner) force children to work. Second school believes, children's individual choice to gain a little economic freedom (Thangaraj 2019:98-99), and willingness to learn the family profession (Taye 2019) and work

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[1] In this study, I refer "children's work" instead of "child labour". Because, work provides a broader sense of activities done by children's, which includes "anything from household chores to formal sector employment" (Ennew et al. 2005:33). Whereas, child labour is a limited set of activities done by children at a specific age (Bourdillon 2017:94), that harmful for their development or contradict their best interest (Weston 2005:XV). Child labour is a sub-set of works done by children. Hence, I stick to children's work in this study.

[2] Save the children, Bureau of International Labor Affairs of the United States Department of Labor

[3] This is a consortium formed by eight European non-governmental organizations (NGOs) facilitated by Hivos (one of these NGOs) which seeks to eliminate child labor. It is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs https://stopchildlabour.org/about-child-labour/, accessed on 18 September 2019.

as a means of education (van Daalen and Mabillard 2018) as primary reasons for taking up both paid and unpaid work.

Simultaneously, formal schooling has been portrayed as a mandatory childhood activity. The World Bank development report 2019, links schooling with human capability, productivity of future labours, countries' economic growth and development (World Bank 2019:4-3), and breaking the vicious cycle of poverty (ILO 2019:40). The report further emphasises on three important skills for labour market development: "advanced cognitive skills", "social-behavioural skills", "skill combinations", and eventually the foundation for all these are rooted in quality early age schooling (World Bank 2019:4). So, anything that is directly or indirectly impairing schooling is negatively impacting countries' economic growth and development, and children's work is portrayed as one of those negative factors. A study on young life data shows conversion of work time towards educational activities will enhance child development (Keane 2018:2). Over a period, the international discourses have identified a dichotomous relationship between children's work and schooling.

However, recent empirical evidence shows that work (even labour) is not always incompatible with schooling, and sometimes forceful removal of children from the workforce may lead to incidences of school dropouts (Jonah 2017:108). In some cases, work is part of education and skill development (Bourdillon 2006; Liebel 2004). Children's school and work have generally been framed as an "either-or" option. This means that a child can either go to school or do work. Childhood has been portrayed as a time to play and to go to school and children's work is seen as incompatible with education. However, Bourdillon's (2000) study of a boarding school in a tea estate of Zimbabwe shows that work and school can be complementary, and children can manage both, given adequate protective measures and a supportive environment.

My main argument in this research is that work and schooling are not always inversely connected, and children are capable managing both. I present my argument by reflecting on everyday experiences of 14 children of 12-17 years old living in New Delhi, India, who are combining both work and schooling, and whom I call my Research Partners (see Pg-9 onwards). I further deepen our understanding of school and work by uncovering different elements that shape the work and school related decisions, and how some children are innovatively managing both. Finally, I show how obtaining a true contextual understanding of work and schooling is possible by applying an innovative children-centric and participatory methodology.

1.3 Working children's contexts in Delhi, India:

Working children are the reality of a developing economy like India. During the 1980s, working children were one of the major concerns for the government (Ramachandran, 2003:23). The government amended laws (Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986), and launched social interventions (such as the National Child Labour Project) and Right to Education Act 2009, to separate children from work and put them in school. However, India still has the world's largest population of working children, around 10.1 million between the ages of 5 and 14 years (Census 2011). Data from the NSS Round-68 (2011-12), published in a report of the Bureau of International Labor Affairs of the United States Department of Labor (2017:515) shows, 1.4% (3,253,202) of the total children in India between the ages of 5 and 14 years were working. The same report also highlights that around 0.3% (697,114) of the children (between 7 and 14 years) are combining work and schooling. In the last three years, India took two crucial steps that concern working children. First, amendment of the old Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986. The new Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 allows children below 14 years to engage in non-hazardous family business work while at the same time restricting all forms of hazardous work for children below 18 years of age. Second, after waiting for a long time, in 2017 India ratified two landmark ILO Conventions (138 and 182) concerning child labour. Both these steps will have a substantial impact on the work and education of working children in the future.

Delhi, the National capital of India, had a population of 29-million in 2018 (Sharma 2019), which is almost 12-million more than the total country population of the Netherlands. Delhi shares borders with Utter Pradesh and Haryana. Every year thousands of migrants from different parts of the country come to Delhi in the hope of a better future. Some achieve success, but the majority end up in poverty. According to the daily newspaper Times of India (2018), Delhi is a "migrant capital". In 2016, 33% of the increased population in Delhi was attributable to migrants. Delhi also recorded

Map I: Field area in Delhi, India

Source: en.wikipedia.org

slow progress in reducing the working children's population compared to the national average.
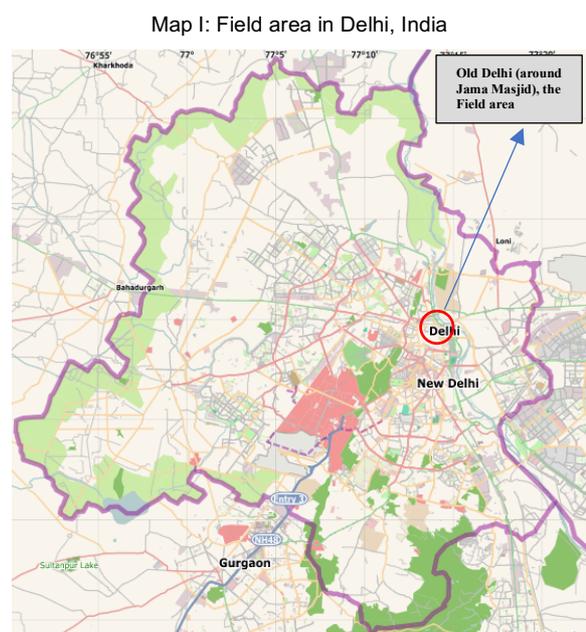
Working children are also quite prevalent in Delhi and the geographical area of study. While in 2011 around 26,473 children were working in Delhi (Census 2011), non-governmental sources indicate much higher numbers[4]. The average drop in the working children's population in India from 2001 to 2011 was 65.66%, whereas only a 36.82% drop was recorded in Delhi (Census 2011). However, in the last five years Delhi's government has made huge improvements in school infrastructure, curriculum, and teachers' capacity and development, that may have attracted families and children towards public schooling. According to the Reserve Bank of India, in 2017, Delhi's government had the highest investment in education compared to all other states and Union Territories of India, (Directorate of Education Government of NCT of Delhi 2018:2).

1.4 Objectives:

In a growing cosmopolitan city like Delhi, if work is the reality of a group of children, then the research project aims to highlight children's experiences of navigating work and school. To apply innovative methodological framework and customised ethical standards that help us to move away from the dominant views of vulnerable childhood (Lambert and Glacken 2011:782) to a partnership with children. Finally, the study intends to uncover the interactions between macro and micro elements that shape children's decision of balancing work and education.

1.5 Research questions:

I tried to achieve the research objectives through the following research question:

⇒ How do children navigate work and schooling?

The question is further broken down into two specific **sub-questions**

- What are children's experiences of work and schooling, and how are they combining both?
- What macro and micro-level elements influence children's decisions to pursue both work and schooling?

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[4] E.g. a Save the Children (2011) survey predicted the number to be much higher. They found 51,000 street children out of which 35,700 were associated with economic activities.

1.4 Interpretative lenses to reflect on children's experiences:

Finding answers to the research question and sub-questions can only be possible through a holistic understanding of children's experiences of work and schooling and reflecting on/analysing them using larger perspectives and discourses around the topic. Children's work and schooling are deeply imbedded into the socio-cultural context of the child, influenced by global and national political economic decisions of the country (Bourdillon 2006:1215-19). Abebe and Bessell (2011) describe children's work and education through three broad approaches: work-free childhood, socio-cultural and political economy perspectives of children's work and education.

The work-free childhood ideally emphasises a childhood free from work. It draws on the universal rhetoric that children belong to vulnerable categories; childhood is a phase of dependency and they (children) need love, care and protection (from abuse and violence) to grow up as confident and strong adults (UNICEF 2005:3). Children should get adequate opportunity to play and learn (formal schooling), and should not engage in full-time work (earning); however, temporary work (to earn pocket money) and support in family business are allowed (Abebe and Bessell 2011:774).

The socio-cultural discourse asserts a strong emphasis on deep contextual awareness of children's work (Abebe and Bessell 2011:770). Children's work and schooling cannot be fully understood without adequate reflection on the "...different material and cultural conditions and varying according to the age, capability and gender of the children" (Bourdillon 2006:1202).

The political economic discourse argues children's work are products of global macroeconomic policies and young people are the victim of global capitalism, privatisation and cost-cutting in public welfare services (Abebe and Bessell 2011:773-775). It is an "articulation between global processes and the localised experiences of individual children" (Robson 2004: 227), in work and school.

One approach or lens is not enough to understand the complex realities of children's work and schooling because children's expectations, decisions and experiences of work and education are shaped by individual/family choices, and socio-cultural, economic, and political influences over the period (Corsaro 2005:46-50). So, these interpretative lenses are used throughout the study to understand how perceptions are formed, decisions of work and schooling are shaped and experiences are gained by the child.

1.6 Organisation of the Paper:

This chapter has built a context of the research problem, complemented with a clear strategy outline of investigation. Chapter-II introduces an innovative child-centric, participatory methodology. It contains a deep reflection on the process of partnership building, reflection on the methods of data collection and ethical dilemmas. Chapter-III discusses qualitative findings regarding children's experience with work and schooling, and different strategies applied by children to combine work and education, whereas, in Chapter-IV, I used the findings to understand different macro and micro-level issues that influence children's decisions with respect to work and school. Finally, Chapter-V summarises the learning from all three chapters, and I conclude with some policy recommendations and directions for further empirical investigations.

Chapter-II

Partnership Building and Understanding Experiences

An effective data collection needs an appropriated methodology that takes the research close to the living realities of children and involves them (Christensen and James 2000:2). In this chapter, I am going to explain how I established a meaningful collaboration with children; and also nurtured that collaboration to mobilise maximum, voluntary and informed participation for co-production of knowledge. I further justify the relevance of my selected methods and highlight some ethical concerns to present an overview of the data collection process and limitations. Finally, I shed some light on the process of data validation with children and how their voices are represented in writing.

2.1 Conceptualisation and core beliefs:

While I was juggling different concepts, theories and practices around children and youth empowerment in the courses of the Children and Youth Development specialisation; children were leading one of the most significant movements against climate change in the 21st century. The self-determination and awareness of a 16-year-old schoolgirl, Greta Thunberg, has shown the world what young people are capable of doing not only at the local level, but also influencing global policies by uniting children and adults around the issue of climate change. Informed by classroom discourses around children's capabilities (Baraldi and Iervese 2014), drawing insight from real-life examples, and my professional experiences of working with children in education/school development projects in India, laid the foundation for this empirical enquiry to understand how children's decisions about work and schooling are shaped.

Conceptualisation of the research project, its approach and methodology are based on a core belief, that children are 'social actors' (Prout 2002; Christensen and James 2000; James et al. 1998). Children influence and at the same time are influenced by socio-cultural factors (such as relationships, social norms, gender, local institutions) and political-economic issues (poverty, neo-liberal policies, migration, modernity). However, historically, children have been considered as an object of research. Researchers studied impacts of different variables on children, but not children as active social agents influencing their everyday living (Greene and Hogan 2005). Moreover, children's participation has been marginalised because of their subordinate position in the family and society (Corsaro 2005:6).

The new paradigm of childhood studies emphasises three essential elements to understand childhood: It is socially constructed, and influenced by social categories such as class/gender/ethnicity and social relations of children (Prout and James 1997:3-5). Christensen and Prout (2000:480-81) highlight four different approaches in childhood studies. First, children are 'objects' of studies, which mostly comes out of the assumptions that children are dependent, incompetent and vulnerable beings. Second, children are 'subjects' of study, and that recognises 'child-centred' perspectives. However, this approach mainly relies on age-based participation criteria. Third, 'actor-oriented' approaches, accept children as social actors with their own experience and understanding. The fourth approach sees children as 'active participants' in their everyday social life. The methodology of this research is designed based on the last two approaches.

However, children's stakes in this research went one step ahead, which I called, a 'partnership with children' in the process of co-production of knowledge. It created a new equilibrium of power, by placing children at the same pedestal with the researcher and acknowledging their contribution to knowledge production. Children were not treated as only participants in the process, but their opinions and feedback were incorporated at every stage of the data gathering process and representing their voices in writing.

2.2 One step ahead: from participants to a partnership with children

I considered children as partners in this research. Moore-Cherry et al. (2016) emphasise six core principles of partnership building with children: shared vision of the desired outcomes, shared power and responsibilities, careful operation and relationship management, involvement of the university (in this research context it was the organisation), embracing challenges, flexibility and open-mindedness, to build an inclusive partnership with children in an academic project. In the following few paragraphs, I will reflect on the partnership building process, in light of the six principles.

2.2.1 Building a shared purpose:

I was introduced as a 'research volunteer' to a group of 24 children (both boys and girls) ranging in ages of 12 to 17 years, by the coordinating non-government organisation *Jamghat*[5].

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[5] It's a Delhi based NGO established in the year 2003. A group of committed people, motivated to make a difference in children's lives. For more detail http://jamghat.org/

I do not prefer the term (researcher) because it immediately creates an identity that I am an expert in issues pertaining to children (Hunleth 2011:89). However, children were quite familiar with meeting with volunteers (both local and international) because the organisation offers volunteer placement in the day-care center for teaching and organises co-curricular activities with children, and very rarely for research purposes.

During the first few days, children were a bit suspicious about what exactly I would be doing with them. The first week was spent on small informal conversations in groups, pairs and individually with children to explain my purpose of visiting them. A few questions arose repeatedly during the initial rounds of conversations: Why am I doing this research and how will it benefit me? Why did I select them for this project? Why should they (children) participate in this and what do they have to do? Addressing these questions were essential to lay down a foundation for the research and manage participants' expectations. At the same time create participants' buy-in for the project. I was clear from the beginning that this project is one of the academic requirements in the Netherlands. However, why I selected them was purely because of their determination to combine work and schooling, and through this project, I want to share their stories with others. I further added my personal belief about children as social actors, substantiated with stories from my professional experiences of working with children in different parts of India. In response to why they should participate, I told them my initial thoughts about the project, which majorly revolves around learning why and how children are combining work and schooling, and sharing that with others. I also emphasised that if anyone would be taking out their working (earning) time to participate in this project, then I could pay the amount they would have made from work, at that time. However, when it came to answering what children had to do, I did not say much, I emphasised on the objectives of the project and asked them to decide/share their thoughts and opinions to achieve the same. A short conversation with Ruqaiya and Naswad is worth mentioning here:

| Ruqaiya: | *Bhaiya,* you have come from Netherland for this work, don't you have children like us there? |
| Sujan: | Yes, there are working children in the Netherlands, but I do not speak their language. It would have been difficult for me to interact with them. |

Naswad: *Bhaiya*, you said that you are from West-Bengal, then why did you select Delhi?

Sujan: In my work life, I have stayed mostly outside West-Bengal, and I do not know much organisations there. Plus, when I talked about my project with Amit ji (co-founder of *Jamghat*), he talked about you guys. He also mentioned you guys are very friendly and can help me with this project. In addition, I worked in Delhi schools for two years and my brother is living in Delhi.

Ruqaiya: Where does your brother live?

Sujan: In CR Park, South Delhi.

Naswad: Yes, I know that place, I went there once during Navaratri.[6]

Sujan: That's nice, that particular area is known for Navaratri celebration.

Nawsad: So, *Bhaiya*, what do you want from us?

Sujan: I have not completely thought about that, but I hope we can think about it together.

Ruqaiya: What? You must have some questions to ask us?

Sujan: Why do you think so?

Ruqaiya: Last time a team of volunteers came for research, they asked us a lot of questions, and we had to fill two forms, which I didn't like at all.

Sujan: That is why I do not bring any questions with me. Ha ha!

(Group Recording-4, 21 July 2019)

I am not claiming that I established the shared purpose during the first couple of days; rather it was a continuous process. In the beginning, only 10 children agreed to join after consulting

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[6] A widely celebrated festival in North India https://www.amritapuri.org/3590/navaratri.aum

with their parents. Later on, seven more children joined, encouraged by their peers and gradually gaining confidence in the process through observation of different activities and interactions with their peers.

I realised there were three crucial elements to initiate the shared purpose building: first, knowing children, spending time with children at the beginning, and addressing their questions and queries. Children have their worries and inquisitiveness from their past experiences; listening to them is the first step towards creating buy-in for the project. Second, express your genuine interest; children might not be interested in the research at the beginning but want to know the researcher. So, it is imperative to establish the researcher as a genuinely interested person at the beginning. That comes from honesty and clear articulation of the project purpose, and researcher's motivation. Finally, leave space for children to contribute, create opportunities for children not to answer the researcher's questions, or participate in a pre-decided process, but also to shape what questions are asked and how they want to respond.

2.2.2 Sharing of power and responsibilities:

Sharing power/responsibilities was a crucial step in the process of partnership building. It was useful in creating more ownership by children by accommodating their special interests in the process (see the example in 2.2.5). By default, being a researcher, I was in a higher power position (Hunleth 2011:82). It was crucial to give up some of the controls (Greene and Hogan 2005:12) and allow children to make some decisions. Mayall (2000:121) highlights, according to children, adults always have 'power over' children. Balance of power was essential, and I did that by letting children decide what they wanted to share about their lives. The power issue needs to be diluted to obtain useful data (Mayall 2000: 121). So, I decided to take the learner's seat, allowing my research partners to decide how and when they wanted to share their stories. Quoting a part of an informal conversation with the group is worth mentioning here. I took the lead in that conversation.

Sujan:	Hope now we have a little idea about what we are going to do?
Roshni:	Yes, but not much
Sujan:	Anyone wants to share what they have understood so far?

Chand: You want to know what we do in our everyday lives?

Roshni: About our school, family, neighbourhood, and friends?

Sujan: Yes, that is it! But now I want to discuss how you guys will feel comfortable to share your story

Naswad: We can tell you in groups or individually

Sujan: You can write or draw or discuss on different topics in groups, and I can record or take notes?

Kulsum: Can we do it individually?

Sujan: Yes Kulsum, we can, it completely depends on you guys

Sagar: If you want to see my neighbourhood, I can take you for a walk

Chand: You can ask my family members about me.

Sujan: Yes, I can do that. But this time I am more interested to know your stories from you.

Sujan: How about taking photographs Sagar, I have seen you have a camera phone?

Sagar: I'm not that good in taking photographs, but I can try

Roshni: He (Sagar) is only good in taking selfies. ☺

Kulsum: I can try taking photos from my mom's mobile and send you on WhatsApp, but for that, you have to give your WhatsApp number?

Sujan: Yes, you all can have my number and feel free to share pictures.

(Group Recording-7, 25 July 2019)

Freedom to decide how they wanted to share their stories gave them space and opportunity to think of what made them more comfortable. Sharing responsibilities and stepping down from the role of the 'researcher' (who knows what is best for the research), is one of the key elements to ensure children's participation (Hart 1997:43-45). After discussion with children, a range of tools were selected, including group conversations, individual interactions, and taking photos to communicate their stories.

2.2.3 Relationship Management:

The friendly relationship between the children and me was one of the crucial elements that helped to win each other's trust. Giving space for familiarisation (Barley 2014:5) in the beginning was essential to understand the children's everyday routine and understand their socio-cultural background. It was essential to create a safe space where children could open up without hesitation (Barley 2014:5). Christensen and Prout (2002:482) highlight the importance of "ethical symmetry" in researcher-child relationships, which helps to understand the subjective experiences of children. The researcher should not discriminate on ethical standards while working with children; children should be treated equally like adults in the research process. However, working with children comes with some added responsibilities on behalf of the researcher (Christensen and Prout 2002:482-83). I tried to engage with the children in the role of "less adult" (Holt 2004:19) to reduce the hierarchy as much as possible. However, the adult researcher identity was still there. I tried to balance it by giving priority to their choices, being empathetic to their everyday situations. The most exciting part of the relationship was how my partners and I grew together. During the last week of my field work, I was sitting outside of the Jama Masjid Metro Station Gate No-2 with Sajid; he offered me some roasted peanuts and said,

> Bhaiya, I always hide the fact that I work from my school friends, because I thought they are going to tease me. But after spending time with you and talking about my work, I feel I'm not doing anything wrong, then why should I hide it? (Sajid 2019, Field note 25 August 2019).

At the end of fieldwork, when I looked back, I felt partnership with the children was the key to enter into their lives and understand their living realities, which finally contributed to co-production of knowledge.

2.2.4 Involvement of the organisation and dealing with challenges:

Involving the organisation and embracing challenges were internalised throughout the fieldwork. All plans and activities with children were approved by the day-care centre in-charge, weekly. It was an essential part because the initial activities mostly happened within the day-care centre, during official hours. Keeping *Jamghat* informed at every step was one of the agreements I had with the organisation (see more on this in Pg-19).

After the initial workshops, 17 children agreed to join, but three of them stopped coming to the centre after the first week, and two of them were sent to the residential home of *Jamghat*, because their relatives refused to take their day-to-day responsibilities. Both of these incidents led to a lot of overturn in the group. Chand's best friend (Rajath) was sent to the residential home; as a result, Chand did not come for a few days. Several times we sat in small groups and had individual conversations, listening to each other's worries, frustrations and concerns that helped to overcome crisis situations, and developed stronger bonding between me and the children. At one point, there was a conflict among a few children who had mobile phones (particularly Naswad and Sajid) and the centre in-charge, who had banned mobile use by children within the day-care centre. That made Naswad and Sajid irregular in the centre. As a consequence, I had to meet them at parks, Jama Masjid, and sometimes at their residences.

2.2.5 Flexibility and open-mindedness:

I will highlight a small incident to explain the flexibility aspect. This incident took place during the second participatory workshop. At the beginning of a small writing activity Chand said, "*Dada* [brother], I'm not good with writing or talking in groups, if you want to see what I do (work) and how I do that, then come with me next Sunday" (Chand, 2019; Fieldwork notes 22 July 2019). Often it is challenging to accommodate requests like that during an activity because it gives others the idea to skip the activity. I designed that activity to understand what kind of work children do, their likes and dislikes. Chand's response was sincere and upfront, he did not say no to the objective of that activity, and the important part was, Chand gave an alternative to provide that information. He was willing to share the information, but differently. Later, with the group's consent, Chand's request was accepted. According to Hart (1997:38), recognising individual differences, special considerations are required to maximise participation.

2.3 Co-production of knowledge:

"The word 'knowledge' implies something derived from experiences in the past: people reflect on these, build on them and arrive at a body of understanding" (Mayall 2000: 120). In this study, I recognised children's experiences (ways) of navigating work and schooling as their knowledge. Mayall's (2000: 120) "new conceptualisation of children" acknowledges children's knowledge, which argues that interactions with children helps us gain knowledge about what they know.

"Vygotsky viewed knowledge as something that is socially constructed through talk and collaborative activity between individuals" (Woodhead and Faulkner 2000: 27). This research provided a platform where children came together and shared their socio-culturally constructed experiences. Multiple stories narrated by children are also a form of knowledge (Etherington 2007:600). Apart from an active listener I was involved in nudging and probing children in co-constructing untold stories to solidify the existing stories or taking children to an unexplored territory.

Simultaneously, children's ideas were also preferred to decide how they wanted to represent their voices in the final writing. At the end of every interview or discussion, children were given the opportunity to exclude or include something in what they had shared during the fieldwork. During a number of incidents children incorporated new information, and requested the removal of personal facts that they had mentioned during the semi-structured interviews. Their opinions were also taken on whether they wanted their names to be mentioned in final writing, in case they wanted themselves to be represented through some other name. All my research partners gave their preferred name. I also tried to keep the English translation as close as possible to the original conversation in Hindi. In some cases, I made word-to-word translation to keep the tone and expression of children intact in writing.

2.4 Selection of suitable methodology and methods:

There has been an increasing trend of listening to children, acknowledging them as social actors, and voicing children's experiences about how they influence/negotiated their socio-cultural position or get influenced by existing order 1980 (O'Kane 2000:136). With the emergence of the new paradigm of childhood (James et al. 1997; Jenks 2013; Clark 2017;), the focus has been shifting towards understanding the subjective experiences of children rather than the object of concerns. In the following paragraphs, I will outline the selected methodology and choice of methods and how those are relevant in this study context.

2.4.1 Research Design

To answer the research questions stated above, and to foreground the voices of children, selection of appropriate methodology is crucial for the study (MacDonald 2013). It entails understanding working children as agents who shape their lives (combining work and schooling), by negotiating with opportunities and constraints that come their way. I have engaged with an exploratory case study design to know children's experiences of work and school. Reiter says,

> Exploratory research seeks to provide new explanations that have been previously overlooked and it can do so through the active involvement of the researcher in the process of amplifying his or her conceptual tools to allow him or her to raise new questions and provide new explanations of a given reality, from a new angle. (Reiter 2002: 144)

Gerring highlights, "case study enjoys a natural advantage in research of an exploratory nature" (Gerring 2007: 39). A case study is useful for intensive and thick understanding study of one (or multiple) case(s) to shed light on a larger population of cases (Gerring 2007:48-52). However, in this research the number of selected cases are too small to claim any representation of the larger population.

The cases' selection plays a crucial role in a qualitative case study. Data highlighted in the introduction indicates the existence of a distinct group of children who are trying to manage both work and schooling together. These children are far beyond a typical case, because neither are they going to school nor only working, but continuing both. So, I applied a 'deviant-case selection' technique (Gerring 2007:105-06) to the selected 12 cases, which are unique (different) from the majority of the crowd. Reflecting on deviant cases (children continuing both) deepens our understanding of children's work and schooling.

2.4.2 The data collection methods:

Data collection was completed in two phases. With the help of the children, I organised three participatory workshops with the children to find out roles of different stakeholders around these children and overall ideas about their everyday life experiences. The second phase was carried out with 12 selected children (four girls and eight boys) between the ages of 11 and 17

years. Semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, participant observations were the three main methods of data collection.

Three **participatory workshops** were organised to understand the initial feeling of children about work, schooling, family and neighbourhoods. Refer to Annexure-II for more detail about the workshop structure. The design and delivery of the workshop changed significantly after organising the first one. Based on the children's feedback and my observations, I realised that children do not like much writing or drawing exercises, instead they feel comfortable sharing their opinions over a conversation or through a group discussion on a particular topic or spontaneously responding to questions. So, I changed the design to a more oral individual/group sharing on a specific topic during the second and third workshop. These workshops were also helpful to explain the purpose of the research, and at the same time identify children who were interested in participating further. Post-workshops, 17 children agreed to continue out of 24.

In-depth semi-structured interviews helped in delving deep into my research partners' experiences related to work, education and combining them in everyday lives. One of the advantages of in-depth semi-structured interview is, it allows "to give answers that do not conform to the researcher's (known or unknown) expectations" Ackerly and True (2010:169). As Ayres (2008:813) highlights the necessity of an interview guide to ask questions in an order and cover every aspect, and I did that. However, the semi-structured nature provided the opportunity to extend the conversations as per the children's areas of interest and comfort in sharing a specific set of information. At the same time, probing and paraphrasing the questions, and providing non-guided examples as per the level of interviewees' level of understanding helped a lot in delving deep into a particular area. Simultaneously, it also gave me an opportunity to observe nonverbal cues (information) during the interviews.

Research conversations are one of the essential means of exploring children's knowledge (Mayall 2000:133). Conversations are the third most significant source of data I have used in presenting children's voices in this research. In the beginning, we (research partners and I) agreed that all conversations would be recorded, in case someone wants to say something off the record, they could ask me to switch off the recording. I realised several advantages of informal conversations. First, it helps children to control the agenda and space; second, it does not create pressure to respond; finally, children have the freedom to disengage without any explanations to anyone

Participant observations is another frequently used method to understand the relational dynamics of research partners with peers, family members and employers. According to Mayall, participant observation involves "watching, listening, reflecting and also engaging with children in conversation" (Mayall, 2000: 121). It allowed me to understand the power relations in the family and work situations, sometimes among peers. However, participant observations are more effective in case of younger children; it is not so effective with older children who have grown up and are able to share their opinion through interviews or other participatory methods (Clark 2005). Dunn (2005:88) highlights the importance of "naturalist observation" in capturing the real-life experiences of children and provides a dynamic understanding of children's reactions to those experiences. However, Dunn also points out that researcher presence makes children conscious and they "become more explicit about issues of social desirability" (Dunn 2005:89).

Finally, my research partners shared a few **pictures** taken by them through their own or borrowed mobile phones. Those pictures reveal how children see their surroundings and work, things that matter to them. Fargas-Malet et al. (2010) claim that sharing photographs also helps to develop positive bonding with children. I experienced the same during my fieldwork, when children tried to explain their work and surroundings by showing me their photographs. Children shared photos of most frequently visited places and special events that impact their lives. Photographs help in gaining rich descriptive information from participants. As Newman et al. (2006:301) say, it provides "a far deeper understanding than a simple conversation". See Annexure-III for some of the photographs taken by children.

2.5 Research ethics: navigating through 'right and wrong'

Research ethics are partially agreed on standards that are designed to respect participants' concerns and protect researchers' and institutions' reputations (Alderson and Morrow 2011:3). It reflects at every stage of the research: conceptualisation, investigations, analysis and writing findings. I followed the 'ethical-symmetry' (Christenesen and James 2000) approach, that allows me to apply equal ethical standards between children and adult. In this research it reflects in issues related to taking consent, giving equal weight to children's concerns. However, Christenesen and James (2002:482) also argued that: "each right and ethical consideration in relation to adults in the research process has its counterpart for children." So, in areas such as maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, I took extra precautions. In social science research, the researcher comes in close (direct) contact with children, which makes it

necessary to reflect on the ethical concerns (MacDonald 2003:258). The following paragraphs reflect on some of the ethical considerations encountered during the research.

2.5.1 Navigating through gatekeepers to access children:

Access to a particular group of children who are combining work and schooling was a key consideration for this study. The easiest way was to contact existing non-government organisations. However, from the beginning I was clear that I would not contact any multi-national organisation which might try to influence my research objectives. So, I reached out to a few local (Delhi-based) NGOs, but was unable to find a suitable target population. Around two weeks before starting the fieldwork one of my former colleagues connected me to *Jamghat*. I contacted them immediately and explained my initial research idea and my professional background of working with the state government, teachers and children. These factors helped me to get access to children, but with certain conditions. Since children are considered a vulnerable population, adults around children have varying degrees of control (Corsaro and Molinari 2012:182). These adults are referred to as gatekeepers (Corsaro 1985). Researcher relationships with gatekeepers can considerably influence the access to and participation of children (O'Reilly et al. 2013:141). So, without compromising my research objective, I agreed to certain conditions of the collaborating NGO. First, I had to fill out the volunteering request form; second, get approval of all activities (that I had done with the children) from the day-care centre in-charge. In addition, the founder of *Jamghat* requested that I take a short orientation session on the UNCRC for the day-care staff members, and write my experience with children in the form of a blog, that I did during the last week of my fieldwork.

2.5.2 Getting children's consent

The ability to give consent cannot be undermined; it depends on the way the core issues are explained to children (Bogolub and Thomas 2005). I realised getting informed consent is a part of partnership building. However, asking for consent started before my arrival in the field (Todd's 2012:194), particularly when a third person (in this case Jamghat NGO) was involved in finding participants. The moment I informed the coordinating NGO about my requirements, they identified a group of 24 children and asked them to attend the initial workshop. During the workshop, I observed five children were uncomfortable disclosing their working identity or the kind of work they were doing, and they did not agree to participate in the process. I realised that the issue of consent needs to be consulted before pointing out the participants. There has been a prolonged debate on children's capability of giving consent. According to

Lambert and Glacken, capability of giving consent depends on competence, information and voluntary-ness (Lambert and Glacken 2011:798). Despite my belief in children's competence to give informed consent, I approached their parents/guardians to mobilise informal verbal consent to involve the children in the research. I realised, consent/assent is not a one-time aspect; at every stage before every activity/conversation, I explained the purpose of the activity/conversation and mobilised children's consent.

2.5.3 Acknowledging dilemmas and its impact on research

During the fieldwork I have gone through several dilemmas, knowingly or unknowingly, that impacted the process of data collection. Here I reflect on some of the dilemmas. First, during the conversations with research partners many times they shared some information (off the record) that in my opinion is harmful to children. Initially, I thought I would only listen; being a researcher, I should not take the job of an adviser. However, in a few cases, I felt that I had opened a sensitive issue which I needed to address. So, after the interview or an intense conversation I had separate conversations to calm him/her down, make them feel normal again, took them for a walk and bought them some snacks or ice cream. Whereas, in case of serious issues like addiction or depression, I asked them to look for adult advice and provided them with additional information. I realised that sometimes our adult biases of keeping control of information and not sharing it with children at the right time might be more harmful to children (Williamson et al. 2005: 407). I felt, after a difficult/sensitive conversation I tried to avoid discussion on that sensitive topic with a research partner in future conversations.

Second, when the day-care centre's science coach went on leave, the children asked me to help them with science homework. I was not very confident and a bit hesitant in the beginning; I thought it would interfere with my researcher role. However, I decided to take up that role and started helping children with their doubts and homework for two hours every afternoon. Eventually, over a couple of weeks, it helped me develop closer connections with my research partners and gain more acceptance among children and instilled the belief that I genuinely cared for them, beyond the research project.

2.6 Research partner profiles:

I worked with 12 children 12-16 years of age: eight boys and four girls. All of them were attending full-time/distance school education and were simultaneously involved in different earning activities or household works. The field area was Old Delhi and surrounding areas of

Jama Masjid[7]. The main reason for choosing that area was that all my research partners are from that particular area, and *Jamghat's* day-care centre was also located in that area. Mostly everyone comes from a single parent family or growing up with foster parent/s. Almost all families or children have migrated from nearby states and living below the poverty line, which is $1.90/day (World Bank 2016). For more individualised detail please refer to Annexure-III.

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[7] A 15th century Mosque in New Delhi built by Emperor Shah Jahan.
http://delhitourism.gov.in/delhitourism/tourist_place/jama_masjid.jsp

Chapter-III

Work and education: Listening to subjective perspectives/experiences of children

Education is always a top priority for children's growth and development (Spodek and Saracho 2014:1), and "school enrollment frequently becomes a proxy indicator for education" (Bourdillon 2017:101). Whereas, children's participation in household work (sometimes in the market economy), and learning family (traditional) skills have been a part of the growing up process (Taye 2019; Bourdillon 2017:92). However, things have been changing since the industrial revolution in Britain in the 18th Century (Bourdillon 2010:41). People noticed children's economic and physical exploitation in factories, which eventually led to announcement of the first child labour prevention laws in Britain, in the late 19th Century (Bourdillon 2010:41). Finally, at the beginning of 20th Century (1919), work was formally declared as harmful for children (Bajpai 2017:288). Later, promotion of formal schooling as one of the important ways to achieve a better-quality life, work as solely an adult territory, and widened the gap between children's work and schooling. However, as I have already mentioned in the introduction, despite the contradiction between work and education, there are children pursuing that combination. So, it is important to understand why and how they are doing that. Drawing on the empirical stories, experiences of my researcher partners and my own observations from the field, I reflect on the above questions in the following sub-sections of this chapter.

3.1 Schooling: children's experiences and expectations

> I like going to school, playing with my friends, and attending Paraveen Sir's (Sanskrit teacher) class. I wish my school has singing classes, like Roshini's school. (Chand 2019; Recording-12, 2 August 2019).

Chand lives in a joint family, with his mom, two elder bothers and one sister. His family migrated from a district of western Uttar Pradesh[8]. Chand goes to a Delhi government's public school, which is walking distance from his house. Chand wants to be a singer and participate in Indian Idol[9]. He practices singing by watching online YouTube songs on a mobile phone. However, he had never performed publicly. He feels his fear of performing in front of other people is the biggest roadblock in pursuing a singing career. If his school had a singing class facility, then that would have helped him to overcome that fear.

To understand my research partner's experience and expectations from school, I have asked a set of questions (refer to Section-I of Annexure-I) to know their experiences in school, why do they go to school, what do they like most about their school, favorite teacher/s and subject/s and friends. Some of the responses that best represents the emerging themes discussed later in the section are as follows:

> My best friend, Shabina lives far away from my locality, school is the only place where I get to meet and spend time with her. I want to be like Shabina, she is good in math. I like my Social Science teacher, Tripathi Sir. He motivates me a lot, asks about my day-to-day life and family. (Kulsum 2019, Recording-9, 28 July 2019)

> School keeps me engaged, it helps me to track my day-to-day activities. I like my English teacher, if I don't understand anything she repeats topics on request. I want to learn English so that I can interact with foreigners. I have seen Shamir Bhiya (a local tourist guide) makes a lot of money only by telling stories of Jama Masjid, Lal Kila to foreigners. He speaks good English, I want to be like him. (Sajid 2019, Recording-8, 28 July 2019)

> I don't like my school, as the class teacher scolds me every day, but my mom says, if I don't go to school I will end up working in others houses, like her. The only motivation is my friends and I just need class-10 certificate to get enrolled in a makeup art course. (Ruqaiya 2019, Recording-14, 4 August 2019)

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[8] Largest state in India, with 75 administrative districts and a population of 199.8 million population (census 2011).

[9] An India singing talent show.

> My mom and elder brother always encourage me to go to school. Teachers are generally encouraging and supporting, sometimes behave hard with students to maintain discipline. I like my English teacher, because English is important for jobs. (Sagar 2019, Recording-16, 7 August 2019)

> Every day, I try to learn new things in classrooms. My teacher says education is the only medium to improve our family condition, it will help me to get a good job and earn money. However, I know, in order to get a good job, I have to continue studying for a long time, which I'm not sure about. (Sharukh, Recording 17, 10 August 2019)

Three major elements can be observed; first, there is a person either a teacher or someone among their family members who inspires or is genuinely concerned about the children's schooling (education). Parents' awareness and teachers' attention and encouragement are some of the reasons behind regular school attendance. This shows the influence adults have on children's schooling.

The second major factor which makes children regular or interested about school are their friends. Peer groups play an important role in children's growing up process (Reitz et al. 2014:279), particularly when they are in their teenage years. Regular interaction with friends and best-friend/s shapes children's personality (Reitz et al. 2014:282-85), inspires them and makes school an interesting place to go on a regular basis. It also indicates the impact peer groups have on children's school attendance.

The third and most important aspect is expectations linked with schooling. Children and their family members feel school will take them closer to a better life, getting employment and moving out of poverty. It also shows children and parental awareness of the importance of schooling. In some cases, I find, children are very focused about what they want from school and how that is going to contribute in their future building.

Two of my research partners were enrolled in distance schooling, they shared slightly different stories. Ahmed and Aftab have completed their elementary education in a government school. They wanted to continue with the same school in class-9. However, due to some family circumstances they had to discontinue formal schooling. Ahmed worked with his mom in their stationary shop full time for 15 months, after separation of his mom and dad. After 15 months his family situation returned to normal. His mom was able to manage the stall with minimal help from Ahmed, and she encouraged Ahmed to enroll once again in school. However,

according to Ahmed his mom still needs support in buying stationery from the big market, setting up the stall in the morning and packing it in the evening. Ahmed has free time in the afternoon, so, he decided to enroll at NIOS. That gave him the freedom to study whenever he has free time and at the same time he continued helping his mom. Ahmed thinks education is important, "it might not help me to get a job, but I will be able to understand what people are saying and what they mean" (Ahmed 2019, Recording-15, 5 August 2019).

Similarly, Aftab had to leave school and move to his native place for seven months with his parents, because his family got engaged in a serious fight with one of their neighbours. After seven months when Aftab came back all his friends had started class-9 session and he had to wait for five months to join in the new session. So, he decided to work and joined a second-hand cloth shop in the nearby market place and earn some money. He came to know about NIOS from one of the *Jamghat* employees and he decided to enroll there. I tried to know why he did not wait for five months to enroll in the new session. Aftab feels, there is not much difference between his school and a regular government school because the content is almost the same and the certificate is equally valuable. Aftab wants the class-10 completion certificate to enroll in a vocation training course.

School builds an expectation of a better future among parents and teachers for their children, and they are successful (to some extent) in instilling that belief among children also. However, children perceived the importance and expectations of schooling differently. Going to school is linked with future aspirations, for example Ruqaiya's and Aftab's objective of schooling is to obtain the class 10th completion certificate, so that they can enroll in vocation courses; or Sajid's expectation to learn English to become a tourist guide. However, some of the research partners mentioned that, they do not learn from all the classes in schools. It mostly depends on the teacher, the way they teach and how friendly they are with children, and the children's own interest or curiosity about a subject. There are two major factors that drive children's regularity in school. First, push factors, that is, guardians' and teachers' concerns, taking updates about children's schooling regularly. Second, pull factors, that is, expectations based on future aspirations and meeting friends/best-friends to have fun.

3.2 Work: children's experience of work

Children's work is heavily discussed in the childhood studies. Few researchers say work is harmful for children and it impairs growth and development of children (Singh and Khan 2016). At the same time others found work contributes to children's survival and development

(Bourdillon 2017:97-100). There is no concrete definition of children's work presented by researchers or international organisations. It ranges from paid/non-paid and market/household work. However, working children have been divided into two broad categories; first, child labour, children who are engaged into hazardous activities where work is harmful to children's growth and development. Second, children engaged in non-hazardous work, or for that matter any work done by children that is not harmful to their growth and development, and does not bar their schooling. However, these are adults' perspectives of children's work. So, I tried to know children's experiences of work; how they see their work and what kind of work they prefer.

> I help my uncle's son, Rakesh, in selling water bottles and cool drinks, every Sunday. My uncle has two *Rehris* (a small mobile food and drinks truck), in *Kabutar Bazar* (market) and one near the Jama Masjid. My Uncle takes care of the *Kabutar Bazar* one, and Rakesh and I handle the Jama Masjid one. Rakesh is of my age and both of us go to different schools. We take turns, sometime he handles cash and I do the supply to the customers and sometimes we reverse the role. My uncle says we manage the *Rehri* well. He comes twice in a day to collect cash and refill the stock. We enjoy selling, except when we spot our school friends around. Both of us try to hide ourselves, because if our friends see us they are going to tease us in school. (Chand 2019, Recording-12, 2 August 2019)

For the last two years he has been working in that *Rehri*. Every Sunday he gets 250-300 rupees from his uncle, depending on the sales. Sometimes during holidays and festivals he works extra hours to earn some extra money. He does not give the money at home, but he saves 150-200 rupees with his mom, the rest he uses as pocket money. A few months back he bought a second-hand smart phone with his savings to watch YouTube songs. According to Chand, the work is tiring, particularly on a hot and crowded day, when he has to stand for more than six hours. He further added that once one of his friends saw him on the *Rehri*, selling water bottles, and the next day his friends teased him a lot in school. Since then, whenever he sees any of his school friends he sits down at the back side of the *Rehri* to hide himself. Sunday work at the *Rehri* plays an important role in Chand's present life; it gives him the freedom to buy something, recharge his mobile, go out with his friends. However, it comes with a cost of spending Sunday standing in the hot and humid weather and possible humiliation by his school

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friends. As with Chand, I tried to know how my other research partners felt about their work by asking a few common questions to everyone during the semi-structured interviews (see section-III of Annexure-I)

> Sometimes I work with a catering company. My brother knows the company owner. Whenever there is a big marriage function and they need more people to serve food, they call me and my friends. The work is very tiring, but we earn good money, around 400-500 rupees/party, depends on the time they engage us in food serving. I keep the money mostly for my own use. I feel bad when the contractor abuses me or talk to me derogatorily. (Nawsad 2019, Recording-18, 10 August 2019)

> In last two weeks two of my friends and I have earned 1200 rupees selling leaves in the Eid Bakri Market[10]. This is a seasonal job and there are a lot of risks involved in this; first, we have to climb on tries and break thin branches. Second, sometimes police chase us, if they see us breaking branches. Sometimes in the Sunday market, I sell Kabutars (pigeons), or help Santu *Chacha* (uncle) in selling balloons and ice-creams. I keep some money with myself for daily expenses, the rest I give to my mom. (Sajid 2019, Recording-8, 28 July 2019)

> Once my brother got injured while he was carrying a heavy part of a motor while working in a shop of the motor market. Children should work light, where there is no danger. I work in my uncle's second-hand clothes shop and my work is good, no risk. I just shout the lowest priced product/s and attract customers, or sometimes bring clothes from other shops, bring tea for my uncle and others etc. (Sharukh 2019, Recording-17, 10 August 2019)

> Work is my necessity; I live in the Rain Basera. I manage my own food with the money that I earn from my work. Sometimes I don't feel like going to work, but it is my necessity. (Aftab 2019, Recording-10, 1 August 2019)

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[10] Eid is a widely celebrated festival among followers of Prophet Mohamad. Followers family scarifies male goat to please their god and take blessings. During the time people from surrounding areas come to Delhi for selling goats. They stay in a market place called (Bakri Market) near the Jama Masjid area. Goat owners need a lot of leaves to feed their goats, so that goats remain healthy.

I realised that every research partner has their own reasons, likes, and dislikes for working, and it is important to acknowledge the differences. However, there is a pattern in why children work, what kind of work they do and how they feel about it.

Two broad reasons for work came out prominently from the interactions. First, work helps to meet daily necessities and contributes to their family earnings. Second, work gives them the sense of freedom to spend money on things they like. The type of work they do is majorly temporary in nature, and seasonal. It is completely based on the availability and their judgement of safety. Children are also quite selective about what kind of work they should do, where they have less risk. However, I observed a feeling of shame among children regarding their work. Children are stigmatised for getting involved in earning activities. Despite the stigma attached to work, boys still manage to find work, that is majorly outside of their homes. Most of the work done by boys are recognised by the employer and they get paid in return. Even if boys are doing something independently like selling balloons or pigeons, the money that they get in return creates a sense of achievement.

However, girls are mostly involved within household activities and their work is not recognised by their family members, neither do they feel that they are doing something productive. Gender division of work (Craig and Sawrikar 2009:684) was quite visible among the research partners. The definition of productive work is still limited to economic return. It took me one week to know that girls are also working. Every time when there was a discussion related to work, girls would point towards boys. A conversation with Ruqaiya sheds some light on how girls see their work.

> Ruqaiya: I do not work, I only help my mom in cooking and cleaning the house
>
> Sujan: How often do you do it?
>
> Ruqaiya: Almost every evening, except Wednesday, because on Wednesday my mom comes home at 6.00 PM
>
> Sujan: For how many people you cook?

Ruqaiya: In the morning (breakfast) only for my mom and sister, in the evening (dinner) mom, sister, aunty and aunt's second husband.

Sujan: Generally, how much time do you spend in cooking every day?

Ruqaiya: In the morning one hour before going to school and in the evening 2-3 hours. Cooking dinner takes more time.

Sujan: Why dinner takes more time, how many items do you cook?

Ruqaiya: Not much, 2-3 items only, but *roti* (handmade bread) takes a lot of time. When I cook chicken or mutton that takes more time.

Sujan: If you are sick or not at home then who cooks?

Ruqaiya: Then mom/aunty bring food from outside, or if it is Wednesday then mom only cooks. My aunty has some problem in hands so she cannot cook.

Sujan: Do you like cooking?

Ruqaiya: Now I am use to. In the beginning I had a lot of problems, but now I know some of the tricks that makes cooking easier. I also try to involve my younger sister in washing utensils and vegetables.

Ruqaiya: My mom and aunty say that cooking is an important skill, particularly for girls it is very important.

Sujan: How it is important for girls, and not for boys?

Ruqaiya: Bhiya, you know (smile), one day I will get married and I have to live in my husband's house.

(Ruqaiya 2019, Recording-14, 4 August 2019)

Roshni emphasised on another aspect, no direct economic return, that makes girls' work (at home) less important and productive compared to boys' work outside, which brings money. Roshni said,

> "I feel bad sometimes, that I am not able to support my mother by earning money from outside, like my brothers. I only help her with household activities, because she is not keeping well since last two years. My mom says working outside not safe for me. (Roshni 2019, Recording -20, 14 August 2019)

Soni reflected on the consequence of not doing work that brings monetary return. Soni said,

> ".... because I work only at home, I do not get any money in return. I have to ask for money from my mom if I want to go out with friends or buy something" (Soni 2019, Recording-21, 17 August 2019).

Kulsum pointed out one of the reasons why girls do not work outside home. She said,

> ".....my mom stopped me working at an angle shop in my neighborhood, she says working outside is not safe for girls. I do not agree with my mom completely, but there is less opportunity for us to work outside compared to boys" (Kulsum 2019, Recording-9, 28 July 2019).

UNICEF (2009) also defines work as four hours of engagement of children in household activities. So, from that perspective all these girls are working. However, neither they nor their family members consider the household activities as work, and the reasons are quite apparent in their conversations. In the case of girls, the decision to work is shaped by two major parental expectations: girls' safety, and preparing them for future responsibilities. At the same time, girls feel parental expectations and lack of opportunities for out of household activities restrict their freedom to engage in earning works and do activities such as going out with friends for movies, eating outside and buying regular stuff.

3.3 Work and Education: children's experience of navigating both

Post the Second World War the gross number of working children has reduced drastically from 28% in 1950 to 11% in 2000 (Gunnarsson et al. 2009:24). Another report by ILO (2017) highlights there were almost 134 million less children in employment in 2016 compared to 2000 (ILO 2017:11). However, the same report also emphasises that 152 million children are still working worldwide, out of which 73 million are engaged in hazardous work (ILO 2017:5). Children's work is generally assumed as harmful for children, and at the same time a potential barrier for children's schooling (Singh and Khan 2016; Betcherman et al. 2004). Work is viewed as one of the prime obstacles for not meeting the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education (Betcherman et al. 2004:2) and at the same time it increases the probability of life-long impoverishment and creates "dynastic poverty traps" (Orazem et al. 2009:3). However, as mentioned earlier, a considerable number (78.3 million) of children in developing countries are managing work and schooling together. So, in this part I will try to present children's experience of combining both work and schooling and explore why children are combining both as opposed to leaving one and focusing on the other. How are they combining both and in what conditions (situations) are they successfully doing that?

During the semi-structured interviews, I asked a few questions (refer to Section-V of annexure-I) to understand why they are continuing both work and schooling, and how they are doing it and the responses were as follows:

> Sometimes I feel exhausted and tired, when I return home late in the evening and go to school in the morning. So, I prefer to take up work that I can do at my own pace, rather than working at a catering or with *Thakedars* (contractors). Because, when I sell balloons or leaves I can do that whenever I want, I can take rest or leave it at any time I want. But if I am working with *Thakedars*, I must complete a task within a time. (Sajid 2019, Recordin-8, 28 July 2019)

> Work is my necessity and it is important for my family too; however, I do not want to leave school at this age. I have seen when my elder cousin brother left school, he got into bad company and now he is back to the village. But I want to stay here, and attending school will help me to stay away from bad company. I try to find work

in my own locality and there are plenty of them. (Bagdad 2019, Recording-19, 12 August 2019)

I majorly finish my homework within the school hours (during the free period) or in the afternoon, after coming from school. If I have exams next day then I do not cook, I ask my mom to bring food from outside. (Roshni 2019, Recoring-20, 14 August 2019)

Generally catering work starts in the evening and continues up to late night. Sometimes when I return late, I miss school next day. In that case, I ask my friends to share notes; however, everyday there is not much happening in every class. So, if I miss one day in two weeks or a month, it is not an issue for me. (Nawsad 2019, Recording-18, 10 August 2019)

My work does not impact my schooling. Because, I work only during Sundays and holidays. The work place is also near to my home and I know the people with whom I work, I do same thing every day, and now I know all the tricks. However, I try to avoid my school friends during work, otherwise they will tease me. (Chand 2019, Recording-12, 2 August 2019)

Apart from the researcher's partners' experiences and expectations from work and schooling (that I have discussed in the previous two sections), these responses reflect few interesting ways that are crucial behind managing work and schooling together. First, selecting jobs that give more freedom. Children prefer jobs that give flexibility to join and leave whenever they want. Breaks (rest) during work and leave during exams are some of the important elements that children look for before taking up a job. Second, distance and timing are an important consideration. Children try to find jobs within their own vicinity and try not to go far from home. This strategy helps them come back to home on the same day they work and go to school the next day/morning. Children generally take up work during weekends, holidays, or post school hours, which is also the best way to manage work and school. Third, children either work in their family business or with someone who is a part of their extended family, or get

work through someone close to them, or through some relatives. In this way they ensure their safety and reduce the risk of exploitation. Finally, children put extra efforts to complete homework during school hours or take help if they miss school someday. All these shows the level of awareness and determination to continue both work and education together.

Chapter-IV

What shapes children's decision of work and school

The decision to simultaneously engage in both work and school is at the centre of all arguments in this research paper. A number of macro and micro-level issues (Corsaro 2005:46-50) influences children's decisions of work and schooling. Hence, it is crucial to understand what are those elements in children's immediate or faraway environment that shape these decisions, and how? It is essential to identify the macro and micro level issues and their interconnectedness to understand how decisions take place. In this chapter, I aimed to answer these questions by reflecting on children's experiences of work and schooling, and strategies to combine both, drawing references from the existing literature around work and schooling.

4.1 Macro level (or structural) issues influencing the decision of work and schooling:

The decision to pursue working and schooling is either taken by the family or by the child. However, in the background, it is influenced by several macro-level factors. Globalisation expanded the boundaries of nation-states beyond their borders, which has been impacting children's growing up process every day (Vandenbroeck and Bie 2006:132). In the following paragraphs, I will focus on three major macro-level issues: **economic, protection and development** (Anker 2000:258-65), that are mostly shaped far away from children's immediate environment, but have a substantial impact on the decision to work and study. These factors can be classified as political economy

4.1.1 Economic factors

Working children are accepted as an outcome of poverty and underdevelopment (Lieten 2000:2037; Nieuwenhuys 1996:237). 19.4% of children between the ages of 5-16 years from lower-income and 8.5% from lower-middle-income countries[11] engage in child labour (ILO 2017:32). The conventional studies by international organisations justify the fact that developing regions are profoundly affected by the problem of child labour. Africa (19.6%) and Asia and the Pacific (7.4%) are two of the regions having the highest proportions of child labour (ILO 2017:5). There are two categories of economic theories that explain why children

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[11] According to ILO, "The countries are grouped into four categories according to their gross national income per capita in 2015. The income ranges for each are as follows: low-income (US$1,045 or less), lower-middle-income (US$1,046–$4,125); upper-middle-income (US$4,126–$12.735) and high-income (US$12,736 or more) countries." (ILO 2017:32)

participate in paid work (Lavalette 1994). First, children are either treated as a "reserve army of labour" or "cheaper and docile workforce" (Lavalette 1994:45-46). The flexible workforce helps to adjust the labour demand and provide cheap labour whenever is necessary. Second, family economic necessities and survival (Lavalette 1994:45; Lieten 2000:262). Rise and fall in adult minimum wages (Menon and Rodgers 2018: 490-93), loss (or absence) of primary earning member/s of the family (Fabre and Pallage 2015:394) push children into work. Simultaneously, the neo-liberal policies of cutting down social welfare budgets put pressure on family income, hence triggering children's work participation.

Similar policies are correct in the case of the Indian context. The NSSO data measured Indian's working population to be 474.1 million (The Economics Times 2014). The Indian government census 2011 says, 10.13 million children between 5-14 years of age are working, which is 2.13% of the working population. India has the most significant number of working children. India ranks 102 out of 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index[12], with a score of 30.2 (Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe 2019). In 2012, one out of five Indians was living below a daily expense of $1.90/day (World bank 2016). All these data indicate a significant population of the child labour work force is involved in different organised and unorganised sectors of the economy. At the same time, the World Hunger Index and size of the total population living below the international poverty line justifies the massive engagement of children in the labour market.

All my research partners come from a low-income family background, where the family cannot afford the children's daily expenses; in some cases, they are not able to meet basic needs. Poverty was one of the primary reasons behind my research partners' work, whether it is Ahmed's support in the family business to Nawsad's and Sharukh's compulsion to manage their daily needs. Once in an informal conversation, Sharukh said,

> ...when I had typhoid during last winter, Nawsad and Sajid took me to the hospital and paid for my medicine and brought me lunch/ dinner for almost 15 days. Later on, when I got well, I paid them back. (Sharukh, Field Note, 2 August 2019).

In another conversation Nawsad mentioned, work is his necessity, and that helps him to survive in Delhi (Nawsad, Recording-18, 10 August 2019). Pointing towards the family economic condition, Chand said, "I know my family is not capable of providing me pocket

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[12] "The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at global, regional, and national levels." (European Commission 2019)

money. So, I use my earned money to buy small things like pens, notebooks and sometimes things to eat during recess" (Chand, Field Note, 28 July 2019). Nawsad and Sajid shared that they get more catering work during the marriage session. Similarly, Aftab said, "my cousin generally asks me to help to sell chicken in his shop during festival time, when the market is full and the shop gets a lot of customers" (Aftab, Field Note 16 August 2019). See the picture in Annexure-IV. Both these experiences indicate that these children are treated as optional labour. There is a seasonal demand for children's labour in the market. Hence, it is clear that there are some elements of seasonal demand for labour, in addition to family economic necessities that are directly shaping children's decision work.

4.1.2 Protecting childhood

The issues of protection go back to our normative concept of childhood. It stems from the ideas of cognitive and physical vulnerability; that is why children need to be protected. The standardised model of childhood identifies it as a stage of development and dependency (Woodhead 1997:78), in which children need adequate protection and care to grow up as a successful adult. 'Children's needs' have been used as a rhetoric to construct childhood, defining activities that are suitable for children (Woodhead 1997:77). Because of children's state of vulnerability and need for care and protection, laws have been sanctioned by the international communities and implemented by countries in their territories. Bourdillon (2010:43) highlights a growing notion of protection and control over children's lives during the 19th Century by adult members of the society. Finally, the western idea of child labour and models to eliminate it were taken up by the ILO in the year 1919 (Thangaraj 2016:200). Since then, on a regular interval, international sanctions have been playing a crucial role in setting a uniform pathway for children's protection and development. In the year 1989, the most popular and widely celebrated international agreement, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was passed by UN. However, the Convention takes children's right of survival and development to a new level by adding three different priorities: non-discrimination, participation, and best interest of the child (Save the Children 2005:27; Arts 2014: 1.28-2.18 minutes). It unites countries on certain agreed standards of norms and guidelines for children's healthy growth and development.

Irrespective of the huge amount of social and cultural diversity a mainstream notion of childhood, originally rooted in the global north, spread across the world through international policies (Boyden 1997:190-191, Abebe and Bessell 2011). The idea stems from a core ideology, as pointed by Boyden, "children are demarcated from adults by a series of biological
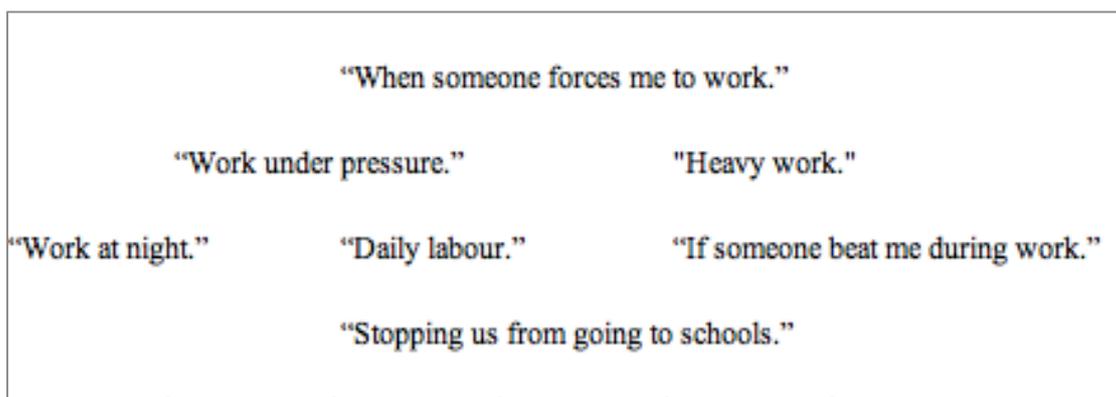
and psychological, as opposed to social, characteristics that are universally valid" (Boyden 1997:190). The notion of child labour was born in western countries during the industrial revolution and spread across the colonies (Nieuwenhuys 1996:240). The Indian Factories Act, 1881 was the first law to protect child labour and that had been a direct implementation of England's Factory and Workshop Act, 1878 (Latchoumy, 2017:172). Post-independence India continues creating legal provisions and programmes to protect children from economic exploitation (Latchoumy, 2017:127).

Whether it is Shahruk's decision of not taking heavy work or Chand trying to hide from school friends while he is working, the perception of work shapes my partners' daily decisions. Once I accompanied Aftab to his workplace when he was helping his cousin in the chicken selling shop. Aftab's job was to take out live chickens from the cage and give it to his cousin, hand over the chopped meat to the customer in black plastic bags and also keep the place clean. I was sitting at a tea stall next to Aftab's cousin's chicken shop. I was about to leave when suddenly a customer came to the chicken shop and ordered one-kilogram of chicken. While standing in front of the shop, the customer asked Aftab's cousin if he knew that making children work is illegal. Aftab's cousin replied Aftab was helping him only for a few hours on that particular day. He also mentioned to the customer that Aftab is not a permanent employee. Later on, I asked Aftab about that incident. Aftab was quite casual, and he said,

> "*Dada* that is a regular thing, everyday someone or others ask the same question and my *Bhaiya* (cousin) gives some random reason. My *Bhaiya* has told me to stand a little bit far away from the shop and don't say anything, in those situations" (Aftab, Field Note, 20 August 2019).

Most of the time false information is communicated to the customers by the employers. Aftab's story is not a standalone case. Sajid and Nawsad also faced similar situations while working with *Thakedars* (contractors). During my interaction with the children, I came to know that the regular councillor of the day-care centre gives sessions on children's rights and they are quite informed about the issue of child labour. Sagar once mentioned, "…if I'm working by my will and no-one is forcing me then it is fine" (Sagar, Field Note, 12 August 2019). During the initial workshops, I tried to understand children's understanding of child labour. I got the following responses:

Figure I

> "When someone forces me to work."
>
> "Work under pressure."   "Heavy work."
>
> "Work at night."   "Daily labour."   "If someone beat me during work."
>
> "Stopping us from going to schools."

The responses show an awareness among children regarding child labour, which then influences their job selection. Even if they are taking jobs that might fall under the categories of child labour, they have their strategies to manage the situation. In 2016 some critical revisions in the child labour prohibition and regulation Act were made that allows children to engage in the family business and at the same time restricts children below 18 years of age from being involved in hazardous activities. In 2017 India become the signatory member of two relevant conventions[13] against child labour. It is too early to judge the impact of these two recent changes in children's work. However, these changes will have far-reaching significant impact on families and children's decision of selecting a particular kind of job.

4.1.3 Developmental factors

Education is one of the prime development indicators of childhood. Hendrick says, "…in the last quarter of the 19th Century, the school played a pivotal role in the making of a new kind of childhood" (Hendrick 2015:46). Schooling provides "… an ordered temporal passage from child to adult status…" (James et al. 1998:41). The World Development Report 2019, links schooling with development of 'new skills' and 'human capital', that are necessary for countries' economic growth; however, it also raises concerns that the majority of schooling systems are not producing desirable learning (World Bank Group 2019). Children's work hinders schooling, which further reduces building human capital (Rammohan 2014:484). Though schooling is necessary and an essential part of childhood development, it also acts as a mechanism of control and uniformity. In relation to child labour, Woodhead says,

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[13] ILO 138 and 182 https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_557295/lang--en/index.htm

> "…the debate on child labour, the economic and political upheavals of the 1830s and 1840s, and the increasing popularity of the school as a means of class control" (Woodhead 2015:44).

In England, the compulsory schooling policy started in 1880, and was a successful means to reduce working children (Latchoumy 2017:151). Compulsory schooling is highlighted as one of the major indicators of countries' development. International priorities: EFA[14] MDGs[15], SDGs[16], UNCRC and bilateral aid helped (push) developing countries to make primary/elementary, or in some cases secondary, schooling free and compulsory for children. In India, the first national education policy came in the year 1968, and was periodically updated subsequently. Finally, in 2010, India declared elementary schooling free and compulsory for children between 6-14 years. It helped in increasing the total enrolment, but the quality remains in question. In rural India, only 49.7% of the children in class-V cannot read a text from the same grade and 27.8% can do divisions (ASER Rural 2019). Despite the poor learning conditions in schools, dropouts are directly linked with children's work (Malik 2013:80).

Free and compulsory schooling is not enough to enrol and retain children in schools; the family economic condition is one of the important determinants of schooling (Malik 2013:80). Malik further adds, due to economic reasons, working children are often deprived of education more than their counterparts coming from wealthier households (Malik 2013:80). In case of my research partners, the decision with respect to schooling is shaped by several external factors; first of which is the availability of free and accessible schooling facilities. All my research partners (except Ahmed and Aftab) were studying in the government school which is free until class-VIII. In a conversation with Ruqaiya, she mentioned, "data the school is very close to my home and till day school is free and I am going school regularly, my family does not have any problem" (Ruqaiya, 9 August 2019). Ruqaiya further added that for girls, it becomes more difficult to manage school expenses after class-VIII, without relying on our families.

The second important factor is scholarships. Education is not free after class-VIII; children need to pay a small amount of tuition fees and also buy their books, school uniforms and other necessary things on their own. The Delhi government has a scholarship programme

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[14] Education for All https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/education-for-all

[15] Millennium Development Goal https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

[16] Sustainable Development Goals https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300

for children belonging to minority communities or belonging to BPL families. All my research partners studying in class-IX and X were getting that scholarship. However, according to Sajida and Nawsad, the scholarship amount is not sufficient to meet all expenses throughout the year and the payment does not come regularly. So, after the free and compulsory education, scholarships are an extrinsic motivation for children and family members to continue schooling.

Finally, the non-government organisations also influence decisions of schooling. The idea of 'world's children' has been continuously called on by non-governmental groups across the globe (Abebe and Bessell 2011:767). Organisations like *Jamghat* in that area help children to stay in school by providing regular coaching facilities, offering school supplies and counselling services to increase children's awareness about schooling. Since Aftab and Ahmed took a break from the formal school education system and engaged in regular work, *Jamghat* helped both of them to get admission in the NIOS. *Jamghat* also paid the first instalment of their course fees. Children expressed that the services (coaching, workshops and counselling) and monitory/material support by *Jamghat* helped them to decide to continue schooling. However, NGO activism does not always work in favour of working children. However, studies highlighted NGO activism against child labour as an "effective commodity…in Global Humanitarian market …" (Thangaraj 2019:106).

4.2 Micro level issues (or restricted agency) shaping the decision of work and schooling

Understanding of 'the decision' to engage in work and schooling by children is incomplete without children's agency negotiated in their context. The entire approach in this research is based on a strong belief that children are a part of the larger society, capable of sharing their views and shaping their life courses. Robson et al. defines young people's agency as,

> "… an individual's own capacities, competencies, and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their lifeworlds, fulfilling many economic, social, and cultural expectations, while simultaneously charting individual/collective choices and possibilities for their daily and future lives." (Robson et al. 2007: 135)

However, individual agency is limited (or facilitated) by the opportunities, resources, physical condition, and socio-cultural orientation of the individual. (Bourdillon et al. 2010:

134). Children's agency is understood as competency (Oswell 2013), negotiation (Shah 2016), navigating through opportunities (Nikoi 2016:242), as an equaliser between children and adults (Solberg 2015:70) to share thoughts and shape decisions. As we discussed earlier, children are agents of social change. According to Vandenbroeck and Bie (2006:128), children's agency can be located in two different contexts. First, interaction within the close circle (among family members and peers). Second, interaction with other social agents in school, at work and with their community members. In the following paragraphs, I will reflect on a few examples from the field to demonstrate how the children used their agency in decision making within and outside of the family.

Whether it is Ahmed's decision to get enrolled in a distance school education programme to support his mother's business or Sagar's learning motorcycle repairing at his uncle's garage, in every decision children's agency plays an important role. Bratman (2000) provides three crucial elements that define human agency;

> We are reflective about our motivation. We form prior plans and policies that organize our activity over time. And we see ourselves as agents who persist over time and who begin, develop, and then complete temporally extended activities and projects. (Bratman 2000:35)

After deciding upon a goal, adequate planning is needed to achieve that goal and persistent efforts over time to are also needed. Sagar has a plan to open his own motorcycle repairing shop. He said,

> "Motorcycle repairing is a very lucrative business, the only thing is, you need to have some tools and technical expertise. Every day people are buying motorcycles and after a point in time they (motorcycle) need maintenance. So, from that point of view, there will be no scarcity of repairing work in the market." (Sagar, Recording-16, 7 August 2019)

At the same time, Sagar's objective behind going to school is linked with learning English. He said names of the motorbike parts are in English. So, English would help him to

learn the names of those motorcycle parts and explain the bike problems to the customers. A similar objective is also true for Sajid. He decided to continue with school because he wanted to be a tourist guide and English efficiency is vital to achieve that goal. In the cases of Ruqaiya and Aftab, the conscious decision of continuing education is to get a certificate, which will help them to enroll into vocational (employable skill development) courses, that will eventually link them with the market. In a way, the decision to pursue work and schooling is connected with some career opportunity available within their ecosystem. These decisions are based on the awareness about their realities and making best use of the available resources/opportunities. Apart from their own will and awareness, the immediate family environment also impacts their decision significantly (ILO et al. 2008).
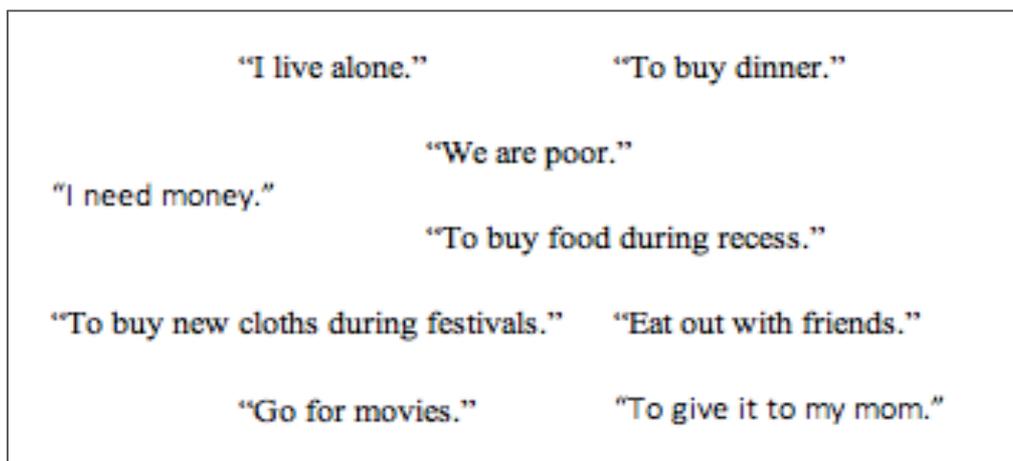
Family structure and bonding between family members play a crucial role in deciding to work and go to school. I found all my research partners are staying with single parents, mostly with their moms. In a few cases, step-parents were also there. In some cases, children expressed that they do not want to be with their families. Because of family problems, Aftab and Sharukh are now living in the *Rain Basera* (Rain Shelter). Both belong to a single-parent family; their moms come and visit them once or twice in six months. At the same time, Aftab and Sharukh go to their respective families during festivals. Aftab said, he loved to spend time with his mom, but he had only bad memories of living with his stepfather and step-brothers. In the case of Sharukh, when his father left the family, it was difficult for his mom to manage the family. So, his mom left Sharukh at his maternal uncle's place, where Sharukh did not get proper care and attention. According to Sharukh, he was about to leave school at a point in time and start working full-time. He did not like village life. So, four years prior when his cousin's brother (who had been living and studying from *Rain Basera*, in Delhi), came home in Muharam, Sharukh decided to come to Delhi and move in with him.

Peer relations also play a vital role in the day-to-day decisions of children. During the close interactions with my research partners, I observed children share and influence each other's choices. Be it going to school regularly, having food together and protecting/taking care of each other, a group of children is always there. During a conversation with Nawsad, Sajid and Aftab about the life in *Rain Basera*, Nawsad said,

Bhiya, Rain Basera is not a good place, every day new people are coming here and they fight over petty issues. If you are in groups then people do not bother you much and, in this way, we stand by/protect each other during the difficult situation. (Nawsad, Group recording-10, 11 August 2019)

As we have seen in the previous chapter, meeting friends is one of the reasons behind going to school regularly. The experience at home, relationship with parents and other family members are not so good for most of the research partners. At that situation, close friends and groups play an important role in sharing their everyday lives and providing emotional support and creating a sense of security. However, when it comes to fulfilling material needs the decision to work turns out to be one (or only) potential source. Liebel says, "… work is an opportunity to get together in group, either to help each other with their work, or to defend their interests and rights." (Liebel 2004:2-3). The mainstream belief is, children lack economic agency to participate in the formal economy; either they remain invisible (Nelson 1996), or they get exploited by their employer. So, the easiest and best possible solution is to keep children away from the market by implementing a total ban on child labour (Emerson 2009). Liebel, in his book "the will of their own", emphasizes work cannot be understood without reflecting on children's living conditions (Liebel 2004). Work helps in gaining "new self-confidence" and gives "more social weightage" (Liebel 2004:2). During the first three workshops, I tried to understand what are the significant reasons behind work and why do they need money. Some of the common responses were as follows:

Figure II

"I live alone."   "To buy dinner."

"We are poor."

"I need money."

"To buy food during recess."

"To buy new cloths during festivals."   "Eat out with friends."

"Go for movies."   "To give it to my mom."

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During the interactions, two predominant reasons behind work could be identified – first, the economic impoverishment of the family. The majority of my research partners' families are not capable of providing pocket money, or in some cases, not even taking care of the basic needs as well. The second significant reason is achieving financial independence. In some cases, it goes up to earning their livelihood. The minor, temporary work helps children to earn their pocket money, which gives them the freedom to buy things that they like, go out with friends, watch movies, and buy new clothes during festivals. Some researchers calls this child consumerism (citation). However, I think the small amount of earning helps them to lead a normal life like all other children. It reduces the feeling of inferiority among peers and friends. Sajid says, "…when I don't have money to go out with friends, I feel very sad and unfortunate." (Sajid, Field Note, 22 August 2019)

So far showing agency outside the home is evident. Children make the final call regarding the type of job they want to do, and the days and hours they want to invest in that. Whether it is negotiating with catering contractors to increase hourly wages or bargaining with goat owners in the *Bakdri Market* to get a reasonable price for leaves or asking for leaves and breaks during work, at every job, children try to make the situation in their favor. However, sometimes they have experienced issues of economic exploitation (employer paid less than they had promised, or asked for overtime), and abuse. According to my research partners those incidences were part of their work/life experience. It helps them decide which job to select in the future and which one to ignore.

Economic, protection and development concerns are linked with the dependent position of children in society. Liebel says, "Public discourse of children's work is marked by a high moral tone. Children's work is regarded as backward, barbaric, something that robs children of their childhood and in addition damages the economy." (Liebel 2004:2-3). Work has been undervalued and there is a constant force working to keep children out of the market through legal sanctions and NGO activisms. However, decisions are influenced by individual perception, choices and opportunities available in the eco-system. Bonding between family members and peer relations also helps to find suitable opportunities and manage through the difficult times. Decision making is a complex process; it evolves from the dynamic interaction between structure and agency. Decision making is arriving at a middle ground between structure (macro) and agency (micro) factors (Tomanovic 2012:2).

Chapter-V

Rethinking the work/school debate: from dichotomies to lived realities

This research started with an intention to deepen our knowledge of children's work and education, internalising why and how children are doing both. In this chapter I re-emphasise the need for a child-friendly, participatory methodology to explore the contextual knowledge of children. I further advocate for recognition of children's work highlighting some key findings from chapters-III and IV. Finally, I propose some policy concerns and raise questions for further inquiries.

5.1 A new methodological dimension of listening to children's life experiences

During the field work I realised, working with children, and working with adults are same as well as different on many conceptual and operational grounds. First, the issue of "ethical symmetry" (Christensen and Prout 2002); treating children as a "social actor" and considering their opinions and choices during the research process is extremely important in working with children. However, this approach comes with added sensitivity and responsibility towards safeguarding children's interest and avoiding any unintended harm to them. So, I took additional precautions in few areas like protecting children's identity, taking consent from parents for children's involvement in the research and taking children out for a movie at the end of the field work. However, all these steps have happened with detailed consultation, agreement, and complete awareness of the children.

Second, the partnership with children and taking the role of a "less adult" as researcher were key in creating maximum participation of the children throughout the field work process and beyond. This partnership also created a new equilibrium of power, by placing children on the same pedestal with the researcher and acknowledging their contribution in knowledge production. It took children's participation one step higher, from participant to partner in this research, that eventually created more ownership (and sense of responsibility) among partners to share as much as possible about their life experiences.

Third, the participatory methods were beneficial in two different ways. Firstly, it was instrumental in generating valuable insights about children's everyday lives. Secondly, the participatory process gave children control on what they wanted to share and how. O'Kane says, "the successful use of participatory techniques lies in the process, rather than simply the

techniques used" (O'Kane 2000:138). The informal conversations built the partnership and lessened the power hierarchy between researcher and research partners as I began to know them in their socio-cultural eco-system. Whereas, the in-depth semi-structured interviews helped to understand their in-depth beliefs, perceptions, and experiences with school, work, family, peers, and neighbourhoods. Overall, the innovative methodological approach proves that, given an opportunity with adequate awareness and ownership, children are capable of sharing their opinions and presenting their views on issues related to them.

5.2 Work and schooling: thinking beyond the contradictory relation

From the finding chapters, I found that children's expectations, decisions, and experiences are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, and majorly shaped by two broad sets of macro and micro level elements. Macro level elements like, acute poverty, free and compulsory schooling, academic scholarships, anti-child labour laws and NGO activism are mostly a product of the larger structure. Whereas, micro-level factors include individual/family perceptions of work and education, awareness of the present condition and career aspirations of children, family crisis, peer relations, individual choices to earn some pocket money, availability of suitable work and schooling opportunities in the neighbourhood.

I argue that children's simultaneous work and education are not contradictory. Decisions regarding work and schooling are contextual for each child, and are influenced and shaped by a complex interaction between structural elements and individual choices. Children strategise in their own way to manage work and education together. They try to minimise the impact of work on education by searching for appropriate work opportunities, which they can manage out of school hours and have enough flexibility to take leave during exams. In some cases, work helps children and their families to survive in Delhi and thus be able to continue education. While work does not always directly contribute to school costs—because it is free until class-8 and scholarships are available for class-9 and 10—the money earned from work gives children the freedom to enjoy leisure activities such as those mentioned in Chapter-III. Moreover, work gives children the sense of growing up and guides their future career aspirations.

Work is learning by doing (Taye 2019). My research partners show that schools surrounded by four walls are not the only place for learning and future-building, where most of the time, children's exposure to the larger society is limited to books and narrow curriculum. Schooling is not directly linked with a higher quality life or job. UNICEF predicts by 2030,

half of the school going children will graduate without the skills needed for quality employment (Soni 2019). These findings show work teaches a range of life-skills and employable skills which are linked to future job aspirations, such as in the case of Chand. So, from this angle, working children could be uniquely placed to have access to both the academic (school) and the real (work) world, provided quality education is accessible in line with these children's needs. This research argued against the either-or equation between work and education. In different socio-cultural environment children develop capabilities to manage work and schooling together. So, a contextual understanding is necessary. Finally, I criticises the low status of children's work in the society that generally leads to stigmatisation and alienation of working children in school and communities.

5.3 Understanding the local to influence the global

Moving beyond the dichotomy of work and school the study advocates for a contextual understanding and recognition of children's work. Neither a complete ban on work and putting all children in schools or recognition of all forms of work done by children is going to address the issue of children's work and help them to learn. In a world of growing inequalities, extreme poverty, lack of available opportunities, and decreasing quality of public schooling, expectations of children and family members need to be considered to understand the impact children's work has on education and their lives.

Children's work in the Global South is majorly understood and defined in line with child labour which is exploitative and harmful for children's development (Taye 2019:42). As a result, a significant portion of children's work that is non-exploitative and which sometimes contributes to children's development, remains silent (uncounted) in the mainstream discourse (Bhukuth 2008). The research echoes the fact that there are different categories of work that are non-exploitative, which are not harmful to children, and that sometimes work is a potential source of children's survival. However, it also demands the recognition of children's work in general policies for two major reasons. First, it will remove the social stigma from children's work and children will then be able to participate in non-hazardous work more freely. It will improve acceptance of children like Chand and Sajid at the work place and they would not have to hide from friends or the general public while at work. Second, work should be recognised as a part of children's development process and treated as a part of education and human capital formation (Morrow 2017:156).

International conventions, bi-lateral organisations, INGOs, National Governments and NGOs have started a worldwide movement to stop child labour and are determined to eliminate all forms of child labour. However, one of the major determinants of work and labour is extreme poverty. As Bhukuth argues,

> If poverty is taken as the benchmark, as is the case for light work, then children who are engaged in hazardous activities are still contributing to the survival of their households (Bhukuth 2008:393).

As I have shown, some work contributes to children's growth and development. At the same time, children experience exploitation and abuse in work. So, it is essential to identify and eliminate the precariousness (or harm) from children's work through adequate policy measures, as opposed to eliminating work from children's lives (Bourdillon 2006:1209).

Finally, to conclude, through this research I have presented children's knowledge of navigating work and school and highlighted the importance of child-friendly, participatory methodology to explore contextual realities of children. However, I call for more empirical studies to discover multiple/contextual realities and inter-connections between childhood, work, and schooling. This will help us to look beyond the easy solutions such as a complete child labour ban and compulsory schooling to stop children from working, but would rather identify the harm or precariousness in children's work and strategically eliminate the same.

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In-depth Semi-structured Interview Guide

Post the workshop 6 children were identified to understand their everyday experience in detail. The main objective of the semi-structured interview is –

   i.   To what extent the decision of working and schooling is shaped by structural requirements and (or) individual choice of the children?
   ii.   How do children perceive work and education?
   iii.   What are the enabling factors and barriers at the individual, family, school and community levels to continue work and education together?
   iv.   What are children's views on how to combining, work and education?

Background:

This semi-structured interview is a part of the case study. After the workshop, few children are identified for the case study who are involved in regular work and schooling. The semi-structured interview will be complemented with participant observations. The selected children are between 12-17 years of old, mostly boys and coming from the Jama Masjid area of Old Delhi. These children are very much familiar with the researcher because the researcher is in touch with the children with more than 15 days. Basic profile of these children has already been collected during the workshop.

Section-I (Warmup stage, focused on general information)

Q1. How does an average day look like?

   i.   What do you do in the morning, afternoon, evening and night

Q2. What do you like to do in your spare time?

   i.   When you are not in school nor working

Q3. Tell me about a recent incident in your life that has impacted you.

   i.   Something happened in your personal or family life

Q4. Tell me about a place you like the most and why?

   i.   It could be your school, home, community, playground, market, etc.

Section-II (School and Education)

Q1. Do you like going to school? Why?

   i.   Everyday morning, when you think about the school what comes to your mind?

Q2. Which class do you like the most?

    i.   Which subject teacher is your favorite, and why?

Q3. Things that you like to do in your school?

    i.   It could be academic and/or non-academic activities

Q4. Do you pay school fees? Where do you get the books, copies uniforms, bag, shoes, and other learning materials? How much do you spend (sum up the price of every item they buy)?

    i.   Do you buy them or school provides those? How many times in a year?

Q5. What do you do during the break (recess)?

    i.   Do you take food from home or buy during the break? How much do you spend on and average every day?

Q6. How many friends do you have?

    i.   Are they from your own class/locality?

Q8. Whom do you go for academic help?

    i.   When you are not able to understand something, or you are stuck in homework etc.

Q7. Is it important to go school every day? Why?

Q8. What's your plan after finishing schooling (completing Class-X)?

    i.   Do you want to continue schooling or work or continue both or any other plans?

Q9. How will education contribute to achieving your future plans?

Q10. What will happen if you don't go to school?

    i.   Will your family/relatives/friend/ say anything?

Q11. Some of your friends do work and some don't, have you ever felt shy sharing that you work and earn money? Why?

Section-III (Work)

Q1. Do you think children should work?

    i.   Is there a particular time when children should start working?

Q2. Is there a particular kind of work children should do?

Q3. What kind of work do you do?

    i.   What type of work you prefer to do?

    ii.   What type of work you don't like, but still you do sometimes?

    iii.   Are the works seasonal or you get it throughout the year?

Q4. Tell me an incident at work that you liked the most

Q5. Tell me an incident at work that you didn't like

Q6. Do you think you learn something from work?

    i.   What are the things you have learnt from work?

Q7. Why do children work?

    i.   Why are you working?

Q8. What will happen if you stop working?

Q9. Do you get money from work?

    i.   How much per day/hour?

Q10. What do you do with the earned money?

Q11. Do you give the money to your family?

    i.   Do you buy regular items (grocery, other food or daily consumables) for home?

Q12. Do you save some amount from the earning?

    i.   Where do you save those; bank A/C or keeping the cash

Q13. How and where do you get work?

    i.   Do you go to different places asking for work or there is a person who contacts you or is there other ways?

Q14. How do you feel when you see your friends who don't work?

    i.   Do you think yourself less fortunate compare to your friend, because you work?

Q15. How your work is going to help to achieve your future goal?

Q16. If you need urgent money whom do you ask?

Q17. If you have money, will you stop working?

Q18. What kind of work gives you more money?

Q19. What kind of work is most challenging?

Q20. Does work gives you a sense of independence?

    i.   Because you can earn and you can spend your money on what ever you want, there are no restrictions

Q21. Do you think children can do same work as adults?

    i.   Or there should be some segregation between children's work and adult's work

Section-IV (Family and Community)

Q1. Do you live with your family? If 'no' then where do u live?

    i.   Who all are there in your family?

Q2. How many members are earning in your family?

    i.   Do you have any idea about your family monthly income?

Q3. Does your family ask you to work?

Q4. Do you get some pocket money from home?

Q5. Does your family know that you work?

    i.   What is their reaction?

Q6. Do your neighbors say anything about your work?

    i.   Do they help you to get jobs or they look down upon you because you work?

Q7. Do you know other children in your locality who also work and go to school?

i. Do you guys interact and share work related information, like calling each other if there is some requirement etc.

Q8. With whom do you spend most of the time of your day?

Section-V (Work and Education)

Q1. Children either go to school or they work, there are very few children like you who do both; how do you feel about that?

i. Do you think your current situation helps you combining both or it puts pressure on you to select any one between work and education?

Q2. What made you combine both work and education?

i. Is it the availability of the work in nearby areas, supportive family or carefree family, no compulsory attendance in school, work is the necessity, and so on?

Q3. Do you think combining work and education is difficult for you?

i. Have you ever thought of quitting either school or work?

Q4. Who do you think to have a better future in terms of getting employment, earning money; children who only go to school, children who only work or children who do both like you? And why?

Q5. Do you think your work impact your academic performance? How?

Q6. If there is an exam in school tomorrow and some is offering you good work today after school; then will you go for the work or prepare for tomorrows exam?

Q7. When do you do your homework? How do you manage homework and work?

Annexure II

Workshop with Children

(combination of activities and discussion)

Maximum Participants: 8/10   **Time duration: 2.5/3 hours**

Tentative age group: 12-17 years

Objective of the Workshop:

- To understand children's everyday experience of working and going to school
- To discuss their motivation behind continuing both work and education

Workshop Proceeding: the entire process will be completed in four stages. All stages will be recorded for future reference.

Steg-1 (Consent and introduction)

- Communicate purpose of the research to every child individually or in group before starting the workshop.
- Explain the process and activities of the workshop
- Take Formal and informal consent from children to use the information and photographs (collected during the workshop.
- Since all children are below 18 years of age and access through the organization (Jamghat) a formal permission to conduct the workshop and use information (gathered during the workshop) will be mobilized.
- Set some ground rules like; speak one at a time, respect each other's opinions etc.
- Introduction: since almost everyone is known to each other, I'll use the opportunity to conduct an icebreaker (introducing each other). Participants will sit in pairs and introduce each other by using two of their best qualities.

Steg-2 (activity-1: know my world)

Objective:

  i.   To know children's world from themselves

Proceeding:

  i.   It's an individual reflection exercise
  ii.   Give one chart paper to each participant and ask them to divide it into four pieces
  iii.   Participants have to write/draw four things that they like and four things that they don't like about each area.
  iv.   Participants will present (voluntarily) what they have written
  v.   Finally giving space to share something beyond what they have written

Work	school
Family	Community/ neighborhood
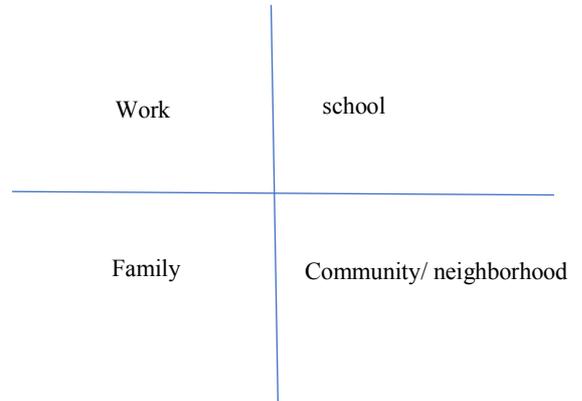
Stage-3: (My opinions)

Objective:

  i.   To understand children's perception of work and education

In this stage children will be asked five questions to discuss in group.

Q1. School is important/non-important for children?

Q2. Work is important/not-important for children?

Q3. Work is only for adult not for children?

Q4. Work can/can't help in learning?

Q5. Children can/can't manage school and work together?

Stage-4: (complete the sentences)

Objective:

  i.   To understand differ. ent options available to children

These questions will be written on different chart papers and pasted on the wall. Children will be asked to roam around the room and write their responses.

1. If I don't work then_____

2. If I don't go to school but only work_____

3. If I only go to school_____

4. One thing that I want to change in my current situation_____

5. My favorite time pass activity_____

6. If I have 1,000 rupees_____

7. When I fall sick _____

8. When I'm sad_____

9. When I'm happy_____

10. Something that I love to do everyday_____

11. I spend the earned money in_____

Annexure III

Profile of my research Partners

Sl. No	First Name/ pseudonyms	Age	Sex	Type of schooling	Type of Work	Frequency of work and earning/month	Family
1	Aftab	16	M	NIOS, Class-10	Catering, Deheri (hourly basis work), Thakedar ka kam (working for a particular contractor), selling leaves, sometimes help his cousin in the chicken sellig shop	2-3 times in a week. During holidays 3-4 times in a week. 300-500 per week, depends on the number of days he works	Stays with cousin brother at Rain Basera
2	Ahmed	17	M	NIOS, Class-10	Helps in his mom's business	Almost every day for few hours in a day Not a regular income, but his mom gives him pocket money 250 per week	Stays with mom, younger sister and one brother
3	Bagdad	17	M	Govt. aided, Class-10	Catering, Deheri (hourly basis work), Thakedar ka kam (working for a particular contractor).	1-2 times in a month. Now a days he has reduced the work because of class-10 exams. 250-400 rupees per month	He and his father stay with his aunt's family
4	Chand	13	M	Govt. Class-7	Selling water bottles and cooldrinks in a Rehri near Jama Masjid	Generally, once I a week (Sunday), 150-200 rupees per week	Stays with Mom, younger sister and two elder brothers.

5	Kulsum	14	F	Govt. Class-9	Helps her mom in cooking dinner for the family and cleaning the house, washing cloths etc.	Every day No cash given for her work. Though her mom gives her money whenever she needs it	Stays with her brother, mom and step father
6	Nawsad	14	M	Govt. Class-8	Catering, helper in hardware shop, buying and selling mobiles/electronic items	Monthly 3-5 times, mostly based on demand. Helping in the hardware shop is the last option In a month 500-700 rupees	Stay alone in Rain Basera, once in a month his cousin sister visits him
7	Roshni	15	F	Govt. Class-9	Cooking and cleaning for five members of the house	Every day No cash given for her work. Though her mom and elder brothers give her money whenever she needs it.	Stays with two elder brothers, mom and one younger brother
8	Ruqaiya	15	F	Govt. Class-8	Household works; cleaning, cooking taking care of her younger sister etc.	Every day. Sometime she goes to work in others household, when his mom is sick. No cash given for her work. Though her mom gives her money whenever she needs it.	She her mom and younger sister stay with her maternal aunt's home
9	Sagar	14	M	Govt. Class-8	Work in his Uncle's Motor-Cycle repairing shop, selling leaves, Selling Balloons	2-3 times in a week. Sometimes in holidays he works full-time 500 rupees per week, sometimes little more	Stay in the Rain Basera with his mom, elder brother and a distant relative

10	Sajid	15	M	Govt. Class-9	Catering, Deheri (hourly basis work), Thakedar ka kam (working for a particular contractor), selling leaves, Selling Balloons	Generally during weekends, sometimes during school holidays 2-3 days maximum Around 250 rupees per day	Stay with his mom, Elder Brother
12	Sharukh	13	M	Govt. Class-7	Helping in his uncle's old cloth shop, Catering, selling leaves,	Minimum once in a week, during seasons 2-3 times (based on demand). Normal week earning 200-250 rupees, during marriage season it can goes up to 800 per week	Stay in Rain Basera (shelter) with cousin brother
12	Soni	15	F	Govt. Class-9	Helps her mom in cooking dinner for the family and cleaning the house, washing cloths etc.	Every day No cash given for her work. Though her mom gives her money whenever she needs it	Stays with mom, brother and step-father, whom she calls uncle

Some of the photos taken by the Research Partners as a part of data collection process

Children involvement in different work. From left to right; selling leaves, working in chicken shop, working in old clothes shop, selling pigeons.

Children after school hours

Places depicting children's neighborhood