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# **Riding for Survival: A Worst Form of Human Trafficking\***

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## **ABSTRACT**

Trafficking of the humans is a growing concern at international level. Among all the trafficked ones, children who are misused and continuously mistreated claim the special attention. It is, further, a known fact that these poverty stricken children are trafficked from Pakistan to wealthy Gulf States for camel racing. In order to find out the socioeconomic characteristics of trafficked children this study interviewed the ex-camel jockeys and their families from district Rahim Yar Khan (RYK), Muzafargarh, Multan, D.G. Khan, Bahawalpur and Rajan Pur. Results suggested that the problem of ex-camel jockey children is certainly a social issue and it can only be addressed by taking simultaneous reinforcing actions across all economic and social sectors, including the sectors of education and health. Moreover, it was observed that effective prevention requires family empowerment, basic education, capacity building, awareness raising and social mobilization. Rehabilitation measures should seek to offer different solutions and provide a comprehensive socio-economic package of services encompassing education, health and nutrition, social protection and shelter.

**Keywords:** Human Trafficking, Camel Racing, Pakistan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Trafficking of the humans is a growing concern at international level. Millions of people including girls and children are illegally transferred and sold to the other countries for prostitution, forced labour and other immoral

\*The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of UNICEF and Punjab Social Welfare Department and its affiliated organizations.

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purposes. Pakistan is one of the leading countries from which humans are illegally exported along with India, Bangladesh, Sudan, Mauritania, Eritrea and Somalia. The international agencies, including UN, are constantly striving for the upbringing of the miserable and hapless people and suggest the other affiliated member countries to struggle for ensuring the legitimate fundamental rights of these people. Among all the trafficked ones, children who are misused and continuously mistreated claim the special attention. In many of the states, the problem of trafficking of the children still exists and according to the UN, it is the primary responsibility of the states to establish policies, formulate laws and extend services for the protection and care of these hapless children, in accordance with the UN Convention [1,2]. Among all these aggrieved ones, the camel jockey children claim a special attention. The trafficking of children is prohibited even by ILO Conventions under 29, 138 and 182 and by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all of which have been ratified by the UAE since the UAE is also a signatory of the UN. The ILO Conference Committee on the Application of Standards considered the issue repeatedly during the last five years. There are international instruments to combat this. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) explicitly prohibits exploitation of children and recognizes their inherent need for special care, protection and upbringing within the family. Articles 6, 9, 11, 19, 32, 34, 35 and 36 of the Convention make state parties responsible for protecting children from all forms of exploitation: sexual abuse, all kinds of exploitation and exploitative labour. The Pakistan Government is a party to UNCRC. It has ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child

pornography. It has also ratified ILO Convention 182 on elimination of worst forms of child labour.

It is, further, a known fact that these poverty stricken children are trafficked from Pakistan to wealthy Gulf States for camel racing. In the beginning, these children were mainly taken from the poor families from the southern part of the Punjab, Pakistan [3,4]. There have been stories of exploitation, misusing, sexually abusing of these children till the stories reached the media men. Pakistan is one of the third world countries located very near to the UAE. Being Muslim countries, the natural inclination between the countries is but natural. Moreover, Pakistan could be an ideal country to provide the jockey children as the labour is cheap and the population is in millions with an average family size of about seven, especially in the southern Punjab.

Besides, many of the sheikhs had direct access to the areas, especially in the south as they frequently visit in these areas because of natural geographical similarity between the UAE and southern Punjab, especially the Cholistan desert in Rahim Yar Khan and Bahawalpur. This is the area from where most of these children were recruited. Most of the repatriated children hail from the South-East Punjab districts of Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rahimyar Khan. These districts are the preferred hunting grounds for Gulf sheikhs, some of whom go there every year to hunt a protected bird whose meat is widely regarded as an aphrodisiac by Arabs. The three districts are also home to the Cholistan - one of Pakistan's two main deserts and one of the few areas in the country where camels are regularly used for travel and trade. It is easy to convince parents here to part with their children for a

camel jockey's wage. They may get a meager amount but it is a sum of a family would struggle for a complete month to earn.

Keeping in view the scenario, the sheikhs decided to pick some of the poor boys to work as jockey children. The poor boys were carefully chosen/purchased with the minimum possible age, as the smaller the children the better it is for the camels to carry load so that they can run faster with lesser weight. These children were delivered by the parents, some other by the relatives who brought these children.

This study aimed to identify the socioeconomic characteristics of child, trafficked for camel racing. The study interviewed the ex-camel jockeys and their families to highlight the issue of child trafficking in Pakistan.

## **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

Collection of data on ex-camel jockeys is a difficult and complex process because it was very difficult to locate ex-camel jockeys as they are living in a scattered form. However, research consulting team had the advantages of being facilitated by the Department of Social Welfare in different districts of the study area. CPOs & Supervisors of the project CICR assisted the study team in identification of localities and families of ex-camel jockey children during the data collection process, which otherwise would have been a very difficult and time consuming task.

The research was conducted through both qualitative and quantitative tools. The quantitative tools help in collection of statistical data whereas qualitative methods of focus group discussion and in-depth interviews were

a source of supplementary information to find out opinions of different stakeholders.

Most of the cases are located in the six districts namely Rahim Yar Khan (RYK), Muzafargarh, Multan, D.G. Khan, Bahawalpur and Rajan Pur.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings of this section mainly depend on household survey, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. This section contains socio economic characteristics of ex-camel jockey children's household.

In our study area, most of the families were living in joint family system and due to this reason family size is quite high as compared to average family size in Pakistan. The mean average family size was 9.1. Several studies highlight that large family size is one the reasons of poverty [5]. Due to large family size these people send their children for camel racing. In 40.7 percent cases, ex-camel jockey's father was the respondent and in 10.5 per cent cases, mother was the respondent whereas in 48.8 percent cases, the jockey himself or his close relative was respondent (Tables 1 & 2).

Mean age of ex-camel jockey children's mother was 42.56 and that of father's was 51.15 whereas the mean age of ex-camel jockey was 14.39 years. As for as education level of jockey's parents is concerned, the mean education of mother was 0.08 and that of father was 0.89 which was according to our a priori expectations (Tables 3 & 4). Education level of the parents is the main factor in labour force participation. Parents who are

uneducated or having less education converges towards child labour as compared to educated parents [6].

Educational status, according to the survey results, shows that almost 65 percent ex-camel jockey children are currently attending schools, while 23.5 percent attended school in the past and 11.4 have never attended school respectively. The jockeys who were not attending any educational institution (35 %) reported that they were either working (67 %) or showed limitations for not attending the school which was due to poverty (28 percent whereas a few still did not know about the importance of education (5 %) (Table 5 & figure 1).

In most of the cases, the adult males of the family were responsible for household income. Survey result shows that more than 52 percent households have only one person working. However, in 25.4 percent at least two family members were working due to the above mentioned reasons whereas a few women were actually contributing in the household income. Most of the household heads were working as daily wage workers (63%) followed by the heads having their own business (14%). Then, there are the heads who are working abroad (7%) and finally the heads who are private employees (6%) (Table 6 & figure 2).

The minimum wage of any household was Rs. 1000/- and maximum was Rs. 40000/-. Median income was Rs.7500/-. All the stakeholders have total consensus that the issue of camel jockey children was mainly due to extreme poverty in this area (Table 7). Again our result shows that there that poverty is most dominating factor behind the use of children as camel jockeys. The family size of family is high, mean educational status of parents is low,

household income is low; family is highly dependent on one or two family members. These are the multidimensional aspects of poverty which force the parents to send their children as camel jockey [7].

The survey reveals that almost 39 percent of the respondents have educational facility from one kilometer ahead and 25.3 percent reported that education institutions are two kilometer away from their communities whereas only 13.2 reported distance of education facility id half kilometer. Moreover, survey also digs out that there are some communities which have to cover the distance of four to six kilometers from their homes to educational institutions. The majority of respondents i.e. 96.0 percent responded that they have no transport facility available to them whereas a nominal percentage of respondents i.e. 4.0 percent have their own transport facility (Table 8 & figure 3). Studies in literature highlights that school distance creates educational choices problem for the parents and parents not prefer the institutional which are far away from community [8].

The result of the survey testifies the fact that majority of the respondents i.e. 65.2 percent are not yet satisfied with the available educational facilities whereas 34.8 percent are satisfied with it. As discussed earlier, the distance from the schools is one of the root causes of this dissatisfaction (Figure 4).

### **Conclusion and Policy Options**

It was concluded that the problem of the jockey children claims multidimensional and multi faceted steps, which the concerned quarters can take.



Although the alleviation of poverty, provision of education to the mothers, the change of value system about the child labour, the role of social workers, in mentally preparing the children as well as the parents, can't solve the social and economic problems of these jockey children over night yet by implementing a careful short term as well as long term policy, we can solve this issue to a large extent. Moreover, it was observed that effective prevention requires family empowerment, basic education, capacity building, awareness raising and social mobilization. Rehabilitation measures should seek to offer different solutions and provide a comprehensive socio-economic package of services encompassing education, health and nutrition, social protection and shelter.

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**Annexure:**

Table 1: Respondents' information

| Respondents               | Percent |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Mother of ex-camel jockey | 10.50   |
| Father of ex-camel jockey | 40.70   |
| Other                     | 48.80   |

Table 2: Family Size

| Family Size  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean |
|--------------|---------|---------|------|
| Total number | 2.00    | 22.00   | 9.11 |

Table 3: jockey's Age and his parent's age

| Age             | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  |
|-----------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Jockey          | 6.00    | 26.00   | 14.38 |
| Jockey's mother | 25.00   | 98.00   | 42.55 |
| Jockey's father | 30.00   | 98.00   | 51.14 |

Table 4: Educational level of jockey's Parents

| Education level | Minimum | Maximum | Mean |
|-----------------|---------|---------|------|
| jockey's mother | 0.00    | 10.00   | 0.08 |
| jockey's Father | 0.00    | 12.00   | 0.86 |

Table 5: Educational level of ex-camel jockey children

| Class in complete Year | Percent |
|------------------------|---------|
| Below 1st              | 16.30   |
| 1st                    | 9.20    |
| 2nd                    | 11.00   |
| 3rd                    | 13.60   |
| 4th                    | 14.10   |
| 5th                    | 16.10   |
| 6th                    | 11.20   |
| 7th                    | 4.70    |
| 8th                    | 2.90    |
| 9th                    | 0.70    |
| 10th                   | 0.20    |

Table 6: Total number of persons employed in a family

| No. of Earning persons | Percent |
|------------------------|---------|
| .00                    | 1.10    |
| 1.00                   | 52.20   |
| 2.00                   | 25.40   |
| 3.00                   | 14.20   |
| 4.00                   | 3.10    |
| 5.00                   | 2.00    |
| 6.00                   | 1.30    |

|      |      |
|------|------|
| 7.00 | 0.20 |
| 8.00 | 0.20 |
| 9.00 | 0.20 |

Table 7: Average monthly household income

| Average Income   | Minimum | Maximum  | Mean    | Median  |
|------------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
| Household Income | 1000.00 | 40000.00 | 9746.97 | 7500.00 |

Table 8: Distance of educational institution from community

| Distance (miles) | Percent |
|------------------|---------|
| .50              | 13.20   |
| 1.00             | 39.30   |
| 2.00             | 25.30   |
| 3.00             | 6.60    |
| 4.00             | 6.90    |
| 5.00             | 5.80    |
| 6.00             | 1.30    |
| 8.00             | 0.30    |
| 10.00            | 0.80    |
| 13.00            | 0.30    |
| 17.00            | 0.30    |

Figure 1: Educational Status of Ex-camel Jockey Children

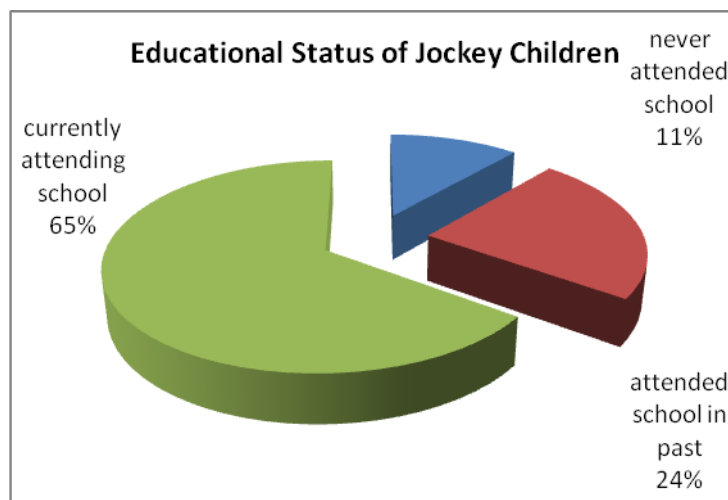


Figure 2: Occupation of Household Head

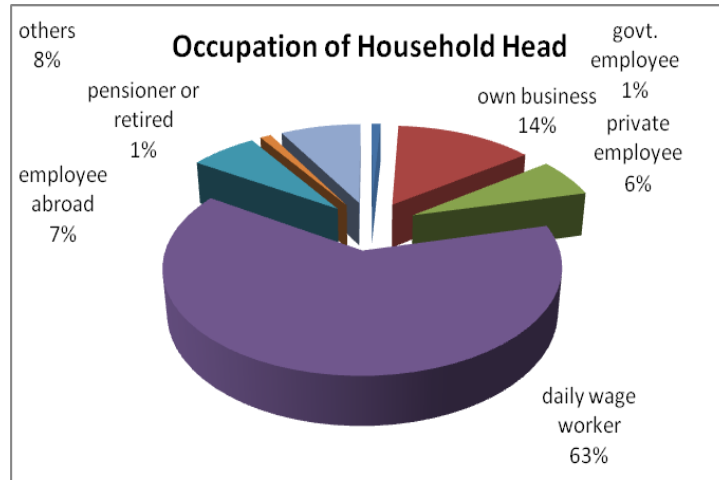


Figure 3: Availability of Transport Facility

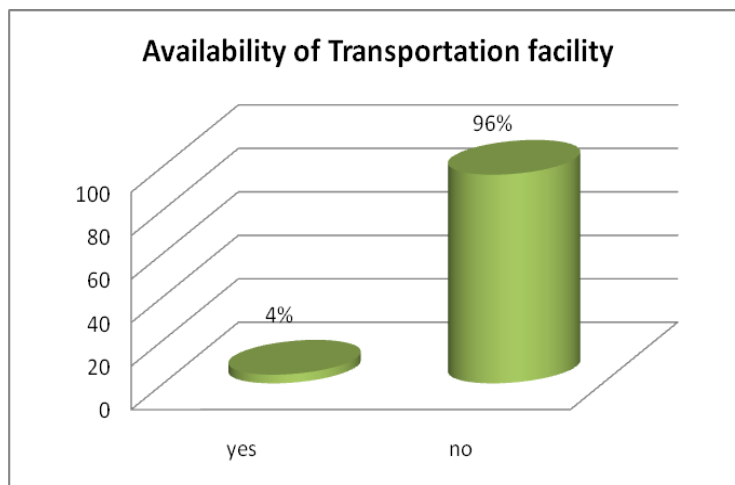


Figure 4: Satisfaction from Available Educational Facility

