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**SITUATION OF CHILDREN WORKED IN SEASONAL MOVEMENT  
AND TEMPORARY AGRICULTURE LABOUR ACCESS TO  
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS**



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**ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this study is to emphasize the difficulties that school age children (6-14 years) employed as seasonal agricultural workers have in accessing the right to education and gaining social skills competence. The data of the study was obtained by using the screening model. This study is a qualitative study. The sample of the study consists of a total of 178 students (74 girls and 104 boys) attending 2 different primary schools in Tarsus, Mersin, in the spring term of 2018-2019 academic year. In addition, many national and international studies have demonstrated that these children do not reserve the option to access to training, the privilege to quality instruction and the privilege to regard in the learning condition. Thus, children working as seasonal migratory and temporary agricultural workers should fully benefit from the right to education and development of their social skills in order to maintain their educational life in a healthy way. Children who are employed as seasonal migratory and temporary agricultural workers are denied access to education. Because of this obstacle, these children do not usually have a long education life. Children either abandon their education life or do not have the idea of continuing their education after their primary and secondary education. Document analysis was used in the data analysis. As a result of the research, it was observed that these children were shy in their classes and had difficulty in expressing themselves. In addition, it is seen that the social skills competence of children employed as seasonal agricultural workers has not developed sufficiently due to the intense guilt they feel when they stop and return to school.*

**KEYWORDS**

*Seasonal Agricultural Work, Child, Right to Education, Migration, Turkey*

## RESEARCH PAPER

### Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed and ratified by 191 countries, is an internationally accepted document. Turkey signed the Convention on September 14, 1990, and on December 9, 1994 by putting a reservation on Articles 17, 29, 30 of the Constitution and under the Treaty of Lausanne it was confirmed at T.B.M.M. (Abbreviation of Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi=The Grand National Assembly of Turkey) (Akyüz, 2001). The state is obliged to protect the child from all kinds of ill-treatment of the parents or other persons responsible for the care of the child, and as Aral and Gürsoy declare, to prevent the abuse of the child and to prepare social programs aimed at the treatment of children who are exposed to such behaviour.

### Children of Seasonal Agricultural Workers on Wheels

The unemployment problem in Turkey started in the 1950s, and with the rapid population growth and urbanization it has reached the highest level in the 1970s. Unemployed people tend to migrate to places near them for economic reasons such as finding a job and working. Thus, according to Benek and Ökten families who do not have sufficient income have started to migrate to the regions where agricultural labour is needed as migrant seasonal agricultural workers during planting and harvesting periods. Especially since the 1990s, migrant seasonal agricultural work from eastern and south eastern Turkey became a part of the lives of the families who went to work to the western and northern region of their country (Seasonal Labour Migration Network [MIGA], 2012). This migration, going to the economic crisis in 2001, began to take a more serious problem state, is a very important part of the total employment in agriculture in the climate of Turkey constitute unregistered employment. Yasan defines that the reason for the unregistered employment in the agricultural and services sector is due to the difficulties in monitoring and controlling, as well as the lack of education of the labour force. According to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, it is estimated that the number of seasonal migrant seasonal agricultural workers, deemed to be de facto informal, is around 300,000 and has a population of at least one million with their children (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2012). Working conditions in the agricultural sector are based on days rather than hourly work. The work done in mobile seasonal agricultural labour is body-based and requires strenuous labour. For this reason, unpaid family labour, which is employed at low wages, is more preferred in agricultural areas (Yasan). Migrant seasonal farm workers work between April and November of each year with

their families for things like hoe and harvest in Turkey with an average of four months in 48 provinces in the North, the South and West regions (UNFPA, 2012). Migrant seasonal agricultural work was considered as a temporary job at first, then it has become the main occupation of the sector (Özbekmezci and Sahil). Although migrant seasonal agricultural workers are in the core family structure, it is determined that the number of individuals in the family is high and some of them do not have identity cards. Furthermore, these workers do not have any social security. The living and working conditions of the workers are generally determined by ambassadors or sergeants. For more than half of the migrant seasonal agricultural workers, ambassadors find jobs, negotiate wages with the employer, regulate transport, and receive commission from workers' wages. As a result of poor transportation and living conditions, it has been determined that accidents and injuries are high. In addition, children using unhealthy drinking water, lack of bathroom and toilet equipment cause diarrheal disease in children (Şimşek and Koruk) and it is stated that it causes an increase in chronic health problems. Any insect bites, especially the lack of measures against snakes and scorpion stings, endanger their lives (Altunpıçak, Gülçubuk et al). In addition, it is stated that the rates of neglect and abuse of children are high in poor living conditions.

### **Children's Right to Education**

The development of both the individual and the society depends on the right to education for everyone in line with their ability, capacity and interest. Without education, people cannot protect themselves and their families properly and cannot lead a culturally rich life. In addition, the basic principles of international instruments and constitutions related to human rights, freedom, equality and democracy cannot be realized unless the development of the individual and society is ensured. However, more than 61 million children in the world cannot benefit from the basic human rights of education or educational opportunities (World Education Report, 2012).

The right to education is the most fundamental right that must be provided unconditionally to all individuals in order for a society to survive and transfer itself to the future. In the historical process, the state organization was needed because of the fact that human beings live in a society as an individual and that they cannot remain out of society and form social rules and must comply with these rules. Particularly, the subject of education has a feature that is discussed extensively within the modern state understanding (Güngör).

Looking at the conventions in which the right to education is established and guaranteed: UNESCO's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) states, "Education is the

right of everyone. Education is at least free in basic education. Higher education should be open to everyone according to their abilities". The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 51 points out that Children with physical, mental or social difficulties will receive treatment, education, training and care as required by the special situation". Education is the right of the child, compulsory and free of charge, at least at the basic education level.

The social task of education should be the basic functions such as the formation, research, protection, vaccination, survival of the cultures by transferring from generation to generation; however, because cultures also affect education; education and culture integration, integrated and the right to education took place in the category of cultural rights (Terzioğlu). Thus, children's right to education is the result of a social order and necessity.

Learning processes should primarily support the right to life and development, and curricula should not violate the child's right to rest, leisure and play. Learning environments should be established by taking measures to ensure the child's right to health (UNESCO Declaration of Rights in Education).

According to a study by the World Bank (2009), the introduction of girls in education has great benefits in the short and long term. In the study, it is known that an educated mother is highly likely to send their children to school and seasonal workers are directed to child labour.

#### **Accession and Attendance to Education of Children of Seasonal Agricultural Workers**

It is thought that educational experiences are negatively affected by children working in seasonal migratory and temporary agricultural labour, and therefore they will face incomplete and negative situations in many areas. In general, if necessary; economic barriers, socioeconomic barriers, having a quality life of their peers, lack of self-confidence and weakening of friendship relations, while growing up as individuals who are far from the values of asocial, inability to express themselves globally, and the lack of perspectives of parents towards education, as well as loss of time and knowledge of children causes unwillingness, and lessons are negatively affected. Thus, the right of children to access to education is restricted.

When the studies on this subject are examined; In line with the 2003 study, Sahan supports the conclusion that children employed in seasonal agricultural labour find it difficult to adapt to class, school, and classes, and therefore their success has declined. It is observed that children often spend the day in unhealthy environments due to uncontrolled and unattended education and that their education is interrupted in March, April and May and therefore negatively affects their lessons.

### **School attendance of seasonal agricultural workers**

The attendance of children of seasonal agricultural workers to school is adversely affected. It is seen that these children work in September, October, November, April, May and June and attend school in other periods. Absences are observed in April-May-June-September-October-November. From the second week of April, labour migrations begin. It is observed that they do not arrive until the middle of September, October and even November. In April and May, there are those who move from their village and go to work elsewhere. These children stay away from the school in a period of 8 months when they cannot reach the education process that started in the beginning of September in primary schools.

From the moment they start school, they have problems with school adaptation and backward education. Students who arrive late while the level of other students are more advanced have problems of adaptation with the students in the classroom. Teachers are uncertain about what to do. It is impossible in the crowded classroom environment to recount the subjects from the beginning, but the levels of the students who come later are very low and this situation causes the students who work as agricultural workers in the education environment to come to the secondary plan, to be excluded, and to get further away from the school. The problems that these children who have problems in attendance are experienced in the learning environment when they come to school with delay; Adaptation problem, backward from education, lack of self-confidence, not attending school regularly, not having regular relations with peers, fear of coming to school, behaviour problems, exclusion, disciplinary problems, reading-writing problem, shyness, worrying, fear of being mocked they are observed as we mentioned above. These children do not have the right to rest, free time and play. These children have to work in places where they migrate because their families are in poor economic conditions. Erçetin declares that as working children, they cannot meet the needs of play and entertainment from being exposed to all kinds of neglect and abuse, and their health and development are adversely affected.

### **Application of Objectives of Curriculum:**

The teacher's transfer of information to children who come and go to work before the end of school is limited during a certain period of the year. Because even though he does his best, the child's mind is somehow going to go again, so he can't get it. And when they come, they are still absent because they have a lot more responsibilities, like taking care of a brother and

helping with the housework. Children who are employed as seasonal agricultural workers are not able to complete their education in any way, as they do not attend school regularly or leave early. The teacher inevitably has to quit her job. Children who are employed as seasonal agricultural workers are also deprived of education and training, and it is impossible to talk about quality. When they start the new period with these deficiencies, the education fails because they forgot that they have learned half of the school.

### **Language Problem of Children of Seasonal Workers' Families:**

Children who have communication problems cannot express themselves and develop themselves. In the classroom environment, they are both excluded and disconnected from the course by remaining foreign. It affects every field of development as well as the language field; language development lags behind as it lacks the positive effects of education on children. When the children working as seasonal migratory and temporary agricultural workers are exposed to discrimination in terms of language problems in their learning environments, the majority of children living in Eastern Anatolia and South-eastern Anatolia cannot speak Turkish, especially when they start the first year and the children cannot develop relations with other peers at school, and there is a problem that they do not have much time for it.

In order for individuals to live independently in society, they need to have social skills. The ability of a person to do so depends on the ability to speak the common language. These children are excluded by their peers because they do not speak Turkish well. These children feel unhappy because they are absent from school and cannot adapt to their friends and this is felt as peer pressure. When their answers to the question of whether or not peer pressure is in question are examined, especially the children employed as seasonal agricultural workers are excluded because they cannot speak Turkish, and the lack of sharing with their peers will negatively affect their ability to start and maintain a relationship with a group. Therefore, children with social skills are successful in establishing relationships, sharing, following the rules, being sensitive to others and controlling negative emotions when necessary.

### **Communication and Interaction of Children of Seasonal Workers' Families in Education:**

These children who come to school cannot communicate with the class on their own, and if the problem of harmony is overcome by their teachers, they do not have any communication problems. The children who come to school are closed and have problems because they take too much break. When the answers of children to the question of how they are in interpersonal communication and interaction are examined; children employed as seasonal agricultural

workers communicate well with their peers if they get through the adaptation problem well in school.

According to the research conducted by the Development Workshop (2012), children were not wanted at school because they did not go to school continuously. In general, the ability of individuals to live independently in society and to improve their quality of life mostly depends on the interpersonal relationships they establish. The ability of all individuals with or without disabilities to live in harmony in society is closely related to their social skills. In other words, a socially advanced person knows how to live without conflict with other people around him at any age.

### **Homework Responsibilities**

The children who come to school do not fulfil their homework responsibilities because they have no sense of responsibility and have adaptation problems. First of all, they cannot take responsibility for the school because earning money is their primary goal. Therefore, the aims of the activities do not attract their attention. Making money is more attractive to children of this age and they do not feel the need to do homework, share and realize their learning.

### **Responsibilities for Participation in Social Club, Work and Taking Part in Certain Days and Weeks**

Seasonal agricultural workers tend not to participate in social club work and holidays, as they are withdrawn and think that I will go anyway. These children are reluctant to participate in club work because they are shy and have difficulty adapting. In responding to the question of willingness to participate in social club work and to take part in specific days and weeks, this seasonal agricultural worker often results in a negative expectation or willingness to take responsibility for themselves.

### **Planning and Problem Solving Skills of Children Working as Seasonal Agricultural Workers**

In the research conducted by Özlek (2003); students' social skill levels, problem solving, shyness, class level and perceived socioeconomic level variables were examined in terms of variables, and it was found out that the most important variable of social skill is problem solving. According to the findings of the research, it is seen that the higher the social skill levels of the students, the higher is their problem solving skills. In addition, shyness levels decrease as social skill levels increase. Thus, the problem-solving skills of children employed as seasonal agricultural workers are very backward and shyness levels are high.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The problem of the research is the question of children's access to the right to education who are as seasonal migratory and temporary agricultural workers.

When the opinions of children employed as seasonal agricultural workers about their access to education were examined, it was found that the educational life of these children was affected negatively. According to Erçetin the working child undertakes an adult duty with the expectation of both working and contributing to the family. Because the child acts as an adult on the one hand and as a child on the other hand, he is confused with the role. Being a working child is a compulsive situation and the child is neglected and abused by his own wishes or a sense of duty. The child's right to education is also restricted in this way.

When the views about the learning environment of children employed as seasonal agricultural workers are examined, it was found out that many violations are committed to them when considering all contexts such as the right to life, the right to rest, free time and health.

According to the opinions of the teachers, when the children's ability to initiate and maintain a relationship was examined, it was found that children employed as seasonal agricultural workers had problems in communicating and interacting with their peers, teachers and school administration. In addition, it was found out that children's planning and problem solving skills were not developed and they did not take any responsibility in planning and problem solving situations.

### **Suggestions**

- Provincial education supervisors (Education Inspectors) can provide information on access and attendance to school principals and teachers.
- In-service training can be provided to school principals and teachers on violations of the right to education. After these trainings, the works of school directorates and teachers can be followed.
- The conceptual basis of social skills training is based on social learning theory. Considering this theoretical approach in the education techniques used, it can be ensured that teachers provide social skills trainings to seasonal agricultural worker children according to the thought based on this approach in classroom practices in cooperation with school guidance teachers.
- Group works can be planned for seasonal agricultural workers to establish close relationships with their peers.
- Children's rights are human rights that are unique to children, and children's rights education aims to ensure that children are aware of their rights, recognize situations where

rights have been violated, and that all people, not just their own, are sincerely protected. For this purpose, children's rights education can be given both to school principals and teachers as practitioners and to children employed as seasonal agricultural workers in the school.

- Teachers' emphasis on activities aimed at problem solving skills in classroom practices will contribute to the children's ability to express themselves more easily in their daily lives and to improve their communication skills.
- Participation in learning processes aimed at acquiring life skills without feeling anxious and without feeling guilty due to periodic dropping out of school may increase the motivation towards school.
- The school guidance counsellor can closely follow the relationship of children employed as seasonal agricultural workers to the school and meet with the children who have adaptation problems in the school environment.
- Home visits can be made by school administrations and teachers to inform families about the attendance of children during the period when they come to school.
- Children who are not educated or abandoned due to agricultural labour may be supported in boarding schools or other educational institutions.

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