Should They Work or Should They Not? Low-Income Kurdish Migrant Mothers' Beliefs and Attitudes About Child Labor

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Abstract

Purpose As part of a larger ethnographic study, this article explored Kurdish mothers' beliefs and attitudes about child labor.

Methods Twenty-seven low-income Kurdish migrant mothers in an inner-city neighborhood of Istanbul in Turkey were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. Data were collected through demographic surveys, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and participant observations. Demographic surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Through repeated readings of transcribed interviews and field notes, themes and patterns were identified using analytic induction techniques.

Findings The findings suggested that mothers' views on child labor in the community were not homogenous. While the majority of the mothers considered child labor as a viable option, there were also mothers who opposed child labor. Mothers' main reasons for being in support of child labor included financial constraints, protection of children from inner-city dangers, and teaching children about work and life. Those mothers who were against child labor asserted that it was the parents' responsibility to take care of children and that children should not be adultified by sending them to work. Other concerns included interference with education and loss of children's control.

Conclusion and Implications These findings provide insights into the dynamics of urban child labor in low-income Kurdish migrant families in Turkey. The study concludes by discussing policy and practice implications for preventive measures against child labor.

Keywords Child labor · Turkey · Parental beliefs · Kurdish migrant mothers · Qualitative

According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK 2013), six percent of children between the ages of 6 and 17 in Turkey engaged in some form of economic activity in 2012, a percentage that has remained stable since 2006 (TUIK 2013). However, the percentage of children working in urban areas decreased from 55 % in 2006 to 45 % in 2012 (TUIK 2013). Poverty is cited as the main reason for child labor in various developing countries (e.g., Blunch and Verner 2000; Strulik 2008), including Turkey (Acar 2010; Dayıoğlu 2006; Dayıoğlu and Assaad 2003; Yılmaz 2004). A factor closely related to increasing urban poverty and, hence, to urban child labor in Turkey is the migration from rural areas to cities (e.g., Şen 2005; Yıldız 2007). Official data suggests that urban poverty has been on the rise since the 1990s, which has been tied in the literature to the flow of internal migration around that time (Şen 2005).

Kurdish families are one of the main groups that migrated in large numbers to the cities from the southeast of the country during that period, and child labor is cited as an important survival strategy for low-income Kurdish migrant families due to significant levels of poverty they experience in the city (Altuntaş 2003; Karatay 2000; Yıldız 2007; Yılmaz 2004, 2008; Yüksek 2006). A significant number of working children in urban areas are from Kurdish families who migrated from the east and southeast of Turkey within the last 15 to 20 years (Altuntaş 2003; Karatay 2000; Yıldız 2007).

While child labor facilitates the financial survival of poor households in the short run, it can hinder children's access to higher education (Demir et al. 2006; Ertürk and Dayıoğlu 2004; Karatay 2000; Müderrisoğlu 2006; Yılmaz 2008). As an essential means to acquire human capital to lift oneself from poverty, children's higher education is especially critical

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for the upward social mobility of low-income households in the long run (Blunch and Verner 2000; Emerson and Souza 2007; Yılmaz 2008). In addition to its negative impact on education, child labor also has health and developmental risks for children (e.g., Çağlayan et al. 2010; Esin et al. 2005). Given the risks associated with child labor, it is critical to understand family processes behind decisions on child labor, including how child labor is perceived by family members, in order to develop more comprehensive and effective interventions to reduce its occurrence.

Various studies have investigated the relationship between child labor and various demographic characteristics of both children and families, including gender, age, child birth order, parental education level, and household size (e.g., Acar 2010; Acaroğlu 2010; Akşit et al. 2001; Dayıoğlu 2006; Kral and Tıras 2013; Yılmaz and Dülgerler 2011). However, little is known about parental ethnotheories on child labor. In other words, there is a scarcity of research that sheds light onto the beliefs and attitudes of parents towards child labor as well as the rationale behind their perspectives. Parental beliefs of Kurdish migrant families around children's roles in the family, child education, and child work are also missing from the literature even though they are identified as an at-risk group for child labor (Karatay 2000; Yılmaz 2004, 2008).

Using an ethnographic methodology, this study explores low-income Kurdish mothers' beliefs and attitudes about child labor as well as their rationale behind their perspectives as a step towards a better understanding of the dynamics behind parental attitudes on child labor. It argues that the processes underlying child labor in the community are much more multidimensional than portrayed in the literature which presents poverty as the primary reason for child labor (Altuntaş 2003; Karatay 2000; Yıldız 2007; Yılmaz 2004, 2008; Yüksek 2006).

Societal Perceptions on Childhood and Child Labor in Turkey

Hendrickson (2009) argues that the understanding of childhood is shaped by cultural and societal norms in which it exists. This understanding has, in turn, implications for child labor practices in each society or culture (Lyons et al. 2006). For instance, from a Western perspective, childhood should be devoted to play and study, and children should be free from the responsibilities of adult life (Green 1999). According to a study by Hoffman (1988), the most common values attached to children in the USA were affection and primary ties whereas in countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Turkey, the economic utility of having children for parents was more emphasized.

On the other hand, Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca (2005) found that the Turkish society underwent significant transformations

over the last three decades and these changes have affected the values the society attaches to children. When compared to their data from 1975, Kağıtçıbaşı and Ataca noted a significant increase in the psychological value attached to the child and a corresponding decrease in its economic value. Yet, they also noted demographic differences, finding that rural and the less affluent urban groups still attached greater value to the actual contribution of children to family economy compared to better-off urban groups. Karatay (2000) and Değirmencioglu et al. (2008) argued that for families from rural areas of Turkey, childhood is not a period that is solely devoted to play and education, and children started working at an early age to contribute to family farm work. Working in the family farm is perceived as a normal part of a child's development (Bakırcı 2002). Thus, researchers argued that when families migrated to cities, parents might not find it out of the norm to have their children work in various industries to contribute to family income, especially given that they struggle to find a job themselves (Bakırcı 2002; Yılmaz 2008).

Poverty and Child Labor

In Turkey, as in other developing countries (e.g., Blunch and Verner 2000; Strulik 2008), family income is negatively correlated with child labor (e.g., Dayıoğlu and Assaad 2003; Yılmaz 2004). Goncu et al. (2009) asserted that even though different communities within Turkey shared certain cultural features, their concepts of and responses to child labor and childhood varied from one neighborhood to another based on socioeconomic status, even within the same geographical location. For instance, in a middle-class community, children were expected to spend their time after school mostly on school work whereas in lower-income communities, children were more likely to devote the extra time to household chores or family business (Goncu et al. 2009).

In her study of child labor in urban Turkey, Dayıoğlu (2006) found that children from poorer families were more likely to seek employment. The study included children between the ages of 12 and 17 who were wage earners, family workers, and self-employed. Only children who worked 14 hours or more per week were included so as to exclude light work as defined by the International Labor Organization. The data used for the study came from the Household Income Distribution Survey from 1994 which provided detailed information on household income of urban families. Household income included annual household income (excluding children's contributions), father's annual earnings and nonwage income, and household assets. Dayıoğlu stated that child labor was higher among families who were asset poor in addition to income poor, suggesting that families used their asset base as a buffer to keep their children out of the labor market.

In families where children worked, the child's income constituted 13.3 % of the household income and in about one fifth of these households, there were more than one child working, increasing the contribution up to 25 % of the household budget (Dayioğlu and Assaad 2003). Through simulation, Dayioğlu and Assaad showed that while only 14 % of households fell below poverty line when children's earnings were included, this percentage increased to 26 % when children's income was excluded from the household income. According to Dayioğlu and Assaad (2003), mothers' wages were not significant in determining child employment, possibly due to the small percentage of women in urban areas (16.6 %) joining the labor market in urban areas.

Other studies also confirmed that most mothers (90 % or higher) of working children were unemployed (Acar 2010; Karatay 2000), either because of culturally defined gender roles (Şen 2005; Yılmaz 2004) or because of their very low educational attainment. In more conservative families, in which conservative gender roles are more strictly imposed, it is not desirable for married women to work outside the house. Women are expected to stay home and take care of young children and household chores (Akşit et al. 2001; Yılmaz 2007).

Contrary to mothers' wages, fathers' wages are much more instrumental in determining children's participation in and withdrawal from the labor market (Dayioğlu and Assaad 2003). Dayioğlu and Assaad found that a 10 % increase in adult male hourly wages resulted in a decline in employment probability of 2 % among male children and 0.5 % among female children, supporting the link between child labor and household income level. Yet, fathers' wages in families where children are engaged in work are far from satisfactory since the fathers mostly engage in temporary, low-paying jobs with no social security benefits (Yılmaz 2007; Yüksek 2006).

In her ethnographic study of street-vendor children in Istanbul, Turkey, Yılmaz (2004) focused on an inner-city neighborhood of Istanbul that received a large influx of low-income migrants from the southeast of Turkey within the last decade. In this particular population, 75 % of the fathers declared that they had a job. Yet, a closer look revealed that these were mostly temporary, unskilled, and low-paying jobs such as construction work or street work. Almost none of the mothers worked, except a few who worked at home for textile industry, a very low-paying domestic activity. Families in the study acknowledged that the money their children were making was crucial to their survival. In his study of 905 working children in Istanbul, Karatay (2000) also found that the majority of fathers of children working on the street were either unemployed (38 %) or construction workers (26 %). Other studies in different urban areas also confirm that unemployed fathers constitute at least one fourth of the samples, and fathers who work usually are street vendors, construction workers, or day laborers (Akşit et al. 2001; Yıldız 2007).

Larger household sizes put extra strain on the financial sources available to low-income families. Studies consistently showed negative correlations between household size and child labor (Acar 2010; Karatay 2000). Karatay's study (2000) on street-working children in Istanbul showed that 72 % of the participants had three to seven siblings, 24 % had more than seven siblings, and only 4 % had one to two siblings. Similarly, Akşit et al. (2001) found that the average household size for children who worked on the street in three large cities in Turkey was larger (7.8) than the overall average household size (5.8) in Turkey in 1998 (Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies 1999). Acar (2010) noted that sociodemographic differences might exist among children working in different industries. Street-working children lived in larger households (seven siblings) compared to those in the service sector (four siblings).

Culturally prescribed gender roles that discourage women from working outside of the home (Şen 2005) also put additional strain on the financial situation of low-income families. Women are expected to take care of the house and produce offspring, whereas men provide their families with income and security (Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits 2008). This belief system that obliges women to stay at home significantly decreases women's employment rates (Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits 2008) and increases children's likelihood to be mobilized into the workforce in conservative low-income families.

In summary, while the literature provides a broad picture of attitudes towards child labor in Turkish society as well as the association between poverty and child labor, it offers only limited knowledge on parental views on child labor and their rationale in low-income Kurdish migrant families as an at-risk group child labor.

Research Design

Research Focus and Theoretical Framework

This data derives from a larger ethnographic study that explored Kurdish women's experiences with reconstructing their lives in an inner-city neighborhood of Istanbul after their migration from the southeast region of Turkey. More specifically, the study focused on Kurdish mothers' resiliency and agency against various struggles they face in the city, including poverty, child rearing, marginalization, child labor, as well as renegotiation of gender roles and its implications on women and their families. As part of the larger study, Kurdish mothers' beliefs and attitudes about child labor in the city were explored.

The parental ethnotheories framework (Gaskins 1996; Goodnow 1996; Harkness and Super 1996) provided the guiding theoretical framework for this study. Parental ethnotheories, also known as parental cultural belief systems,

shape parents' views on childhood, including how children become functional members of their culture (Gaskins 1996), what roles they are assigned in the family, and how and to what extent they are expected to contribute to family life. Understanding these particular theories provides the basis for understanding parents' cultural motivations that underlie the specifics of the way parents structure their children's experiences and thus influence their development (Gaskins 1996). In other words, parental ethnotheories relate in systematic ways to parental action in the form of childrearing practices and thus, influence children's development (Gaskins 1996; Tudge et al. 2000). How parents within a given culture conceptualize childhood also has ramifications for child labor (Hendrickson 2009). Without such understanding, parents' decisions about and actions toward their children are uninterpretable, misinterpreted, or superficial.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Saraybostan (pseudonym), an inner-city neighborhood of Istanbul, Turkey. Saraybostan is home to large numbers of low-income Kurdish migrants from southeastern Turkey who settled in this neighborhood for its affordable housing. Densely populated with a maze of narrow streets and crumbling houses, Saraybostan is characterized by substandard housing, poor infrastructure, overcrowding, and illegal activities.

Participants

This ethnographic study included 27 low-income Kurdish migrant mothers (pseudonyms used throughout) who were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling (see Table 1 for demographics). The university's Institutional Review Board approved all procedures and participants' informed consent was obtained. Mothers who participated in the study were fluent in Turkish. Ranging in age from 22 to 46 years old, all mothers were first-generation migrants (number of years in Istanbul ranged from five to 20) who migrated from the villages in the southeast and east regions of Turkey. All mothers in the study, except one, were married. The number of children in the households varied from one to nine (median number of children=4). There were only two households that lived with extended kin.

Only one mother was an elementary school graduate. Five mothers had some level of elementary education (one mother was a third grade dropout, two were second grade dropouts, and two were first grade dropouts). The rest of the mothers never attended school. Three mothers worked at the time of the study, all as cleaning ladies. Husbands' jobs, as reported by the mothers, were mainly in the informal industry (mostly

in textile sweatshops, some in restaurants/coffee houses, and some as cab drivers). Two husbands were unemployed. Twelve of the mothers had children who started working full-time or only in the summer before the age of 18 (some as young as 6 years old and some at 16 years of age).

Data Collection

An ethnographic methodology was adopted for this study. Ethnographic inquiry is oriented to the study of meaning and pays particular attention to the fact that meaning is structured by culture that encapsulates collectively shared and transmitted symbols, understandings, and ways of being (Miller et al. 2003). Ethnography involves taking up a rigorous research endeavor that is characterized by repeated and varied observations and data collection, detailed recordings of and reactions to such observations (also known as field notes), and a continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of the data (Miller et al. 2003).

The data collection for this ethnographic study took place in 2011. Three data collection methods were used.

Demographic Survey A brief demographic survey in Turkish was administered to participants initially. The survey helped obtain information on important demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, income, education level, and current employment of different members of the family.

In-Depth Interviews Demographic surveys were followed by semi-structured in-depth interviews. The audio-recorded interviews lasted between an hour-and-a-half and 10 hours and were conducted in Turkish. Given the length of the interviews and the daily obligations of the mothers, such as cooking, feeding children as well as fatigue, interviews were completed in multiple sessions. All interviews took place in participants' own houses, except one that took place in the key participant's house. The interview protocol included questions about women's lives before and after migration, with child labor questions discussed as part of their lives in Saraybostan. Participants received the equivalent of US\$15 in Turkish Liras (TL) upon the completion of their interviews.

Participant Observation Participant observations took place in participants' homes as they permitted and/or on the doorsteps outside their houses to observe the life on the street. Observations mainly focused on daily routines and lives of the participants as well as those of the family with an eye to constraints, pressures, and agency; interactions between women and other family members—especially children; protective strategies mothers use while children play outside on the street; and interactions between women and neighbors.

Table 1 Demographics

	Age	Number of kids	Women's education	Employed women	Employed husbands	Home owners	Number of years in Istanbul	Working children in the household (part-time and/or full-time)
Kader	37.5	6	Dropped out of first grade		X		18	X
Gurbet	42	4	Attended night school for a year				15	X
Lale	28	2	None		X		5	
Şükriye	29	2	Dropped out of second grade		X		20	
Elif	37.5	4	None		X		13	X
Seda	32	4	None		X		15	
Dilan	29	3	Dropped out of third grade		X		12	
Serap	27 but 33 on ID	4	None		X	X	17	
Nurbanu	38	3	None		X	X	20	X
Gülistan	40	6	None		X	X	14	X
Esra	30	3	None		X	X	12	
Gülcan	45	9	None			X	16	X
Ebru	32	5	None		X		20	X
Nermin	35	3	None		X	X	18.5	X
Beritan	34	5	None		X	X (currently living on rent)	16	X
Zeynep	35	4	None		X		20	X
Sakine	26	3	Dropped out of first grade		X		12	
Gamze	38	4	None	X	X		11	X
Ayşegül	30	2	None		X		16.5	
Züleyha	40	6	None		X	X	18	X
Faraşin	27	3	None		X		6	
<i>Fatma</i>	28	3	Elementary school graduate		X		8	
<i>Ash</i>	46	4	None	X	<i>No husband</i>		30	
<i>Zarife</i>	28	3	None	X	X		5.5	
<i>Özlem</i>	28	3	Dropped out of second grade		X		7	
<i>Yasemin</i>	22	1	None		X		8.5	
<i>Sevda</i>	34	7	None		X		10	

The names in italics are the mothers who were against child labor in their accounts

Extensive field notes were taken. Field notes contained: (1) physical descriptions of the site; (2) women's daily activities; (3) relevant aspects of informal conversations with participants and other community members (e.g., neighbors, kids, husbands) that were not audiotaped; (4) the atmosphere in which the interview took place; (5) my personal feelings and reactions to incidents taking place in the field; and (6) hunches, questions, and ideas that arose during data collection.

Data Analysis

Basic descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, median) were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the sample. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and all analyses were

conducted using the Turkish (original) version of the data to prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the meanings. Using analytic induction techniques (Lincoln and Guba 1985), interview transcripts and field notes were read multiple times for initial coding, through which common themes and concepts were identified. Several themes were generated based on interview questions, while other themes emerged from observations and other stories/experiences mothers shared. Codes and themes were then revisited and redefined until the definitions made sense to all cases. This process allowed for a deeper understanding of the meanings of participants' experiences and beliefs. The secondary analysis focused on similarities and differences across participants' experiences. Data displays and tables were used to facilitate comparisons between

households and to identify patterns (Miles and Huberman 1994). An unbiased peer debriefer was consulted during data analysis to test and discuss the plausibility of emergent themes and hypotheses (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Findings

Attitudes About Child Labor

The families of mothers who participated in this study were all below the poverty level (2,903 TL), about US\$1,700 for a family of four) in 2011 (Türk-Iş 2012), the year when the study was conducted, and hence were at high risk for child labor. However, mothers' narratives portrayed a much more complex picture of child labor in the community, one that cannot simply be explained by poverty. The sample included mothers with children of a wide range of ages and hence, varying levels of experience with sending their children to work. However, all mothers were familiar with child labor either because they or their siblings started working at a young age or because they watched their neighbors' and relatives' children go to work. A majority of the mothers were positive about child labor, but the sample also included mothers who were strictly against it.

"My kids will work": Insights from Mothers in Support of Child Labor Nineteen of the twenty-five mothers who answered detailed questions about child labor were in support of child labor. Two additional mothers, Nermin and Ebru, did not have time to complete the interview to answer questions about child labor. Nonetheless, they had children younger than 18 working at the time of the study. This suggests that, as the other 19 women, they were not opposed to the idea of child labor. Mothers talked about their attitudes towards and rationale for child labor. This section is organized around the two major justifications for child labor: financial reasons and alternative explanations to child labor.

"We can't get by with only one person working": Financial Reasons for Child Labor Twelve of the 25 mothers who answered questions about child labor stated that finances were the main reason they would send their children to work. Some of these mothers had working children at the time of the study and some did not. Seven mothers had at least one child who started working full-time before the age 15. For some mothers with children who had been working since a young age, financial concerns were foremost in their minds. Kader, Elif, Gülistan, and Gülcan, for instance, all underscored how critical their children's work was to their family's financial survival. Kader's daughters and Elif's son started working at the

age of 15 and 13, respectively, several years after they came to Istanbul (15 years and 7 years, respectively).

Kader: We were in a lot of debt. Only their father was working. We couldn't buy anything. They [the kids] were also struggling. She [my daughter] said her friends at school were buying this and that and she wasn't able to. It was upsetting to us too. Her father couldn't cope with it all by himself. So when they finished middle school, I said they should start working.... Vallahi¹ they work and help us out. If they didn't work, we'd still be miserable.

Elif: He [my son] was still little. He was 13 years old. He said "I will work". I said "Son, you're going to school". [He said] "I will work". Back at that time, [when] we came here, [we experienced] a lot of hardship. We didn't have money or anything else. He said "Dad, I will work". There is a börekçi,² he went there. He came back with, I don't know, something like 15 TL monthly (about US\$8). He gave it to me. I was happy that he was working...

With six children to take care of, the sporadic nature of textile industry, especially during the summer, extra income was more important than ever for Kader's family.

Kader: Like I said, he [my husband] is working two months or three, then he is jobless for five months. He came back this afternoon and said they were out of work for he didn't know how long. A week, two weeks, three weeks, I don't know that, he said. He said "İnşallah³ there'll be work soon". If there's no work for a week, we're eight people, there's electricity, water to pay. If my daughter didn't work, it'd have been worse. During the months he doesn't work, we borrow money. Then when he starts working, we pay it back slowly. We use the money carefully and we pay our debts too.

In Gülistan and Gülcan's cases, the financial needs became evident much earlier, right after they arrived in Istanbul. As a consequence, children started working at the age of seven, selling water or selpak⁴ on the streets to support their families financially.

Gülistan: My husband was the only one working. The kids were young. Everything was difficult then. Sending

¹ Vallahi means "I swear to God," but in everyday Turkish, it also means "really/seriously."

² Börekçi is a store that sells variety of flaky pastry/phyllo dough filled with thin layers of a food, usually cheese or cooked ground beef.

³ İnşallah means "God willing."

⁴ Kleenex

them [the kids] to Gezitepe⁵ to sell selpak and they go to school too. What else could we do? Very hard.. My husband was the only one working back then, and the kids were young. Paying for rent. Paying for water, electricity, taking care of children. They were obliged [to work]. The situation was different [then].

Gülcan: [When] we came here, we did not have any money. He [my son] was working. We didn't send him to school so that he would work....Vallahi, a neighbor said "you're in bad financial situation, why doesn't your daughter go sell selpak?"....I told her dad. He said okay. I was telling her "You're girl, you're young. Don't go [with people] if they call you. If you can sell in Gezitepe, do it. If not, don't go anywhere else."....It's because we didn't have the financial means.

In addition to her daughter, Gülcan's son also started working at the age of 10 in a textile sweatshop.

Gülcan: My son was 10 when we came here. We had a relative who had a textile sweatshop. He said "Gülcan you don't have the means....Let your son come work with us." I said he was still young but our relative said he could work with them, that nothing bad would happen, and that they would teach him slowly.

Beritan's two children, her eldest daughter and son, were working during the summer when I undertook the study. With a household of seven people, Beritan also underscored how difficult it was for her family to meet all the needs of their household. Beritan was still unsure about whether she would take her children out of school to work as she very much them to pursue a higher education, but she recognized the importance of their income during the summer and how it helped to satisfy more immediate needs they had.

Beritan: I guess he [my husband] wants them to work too. He says "I can't do it all by myself anymore, we can't buy [everything] with only me working."....For example, we probably haven't bought anything for my oldest daughter this year. My son, he didn't have shoes, he needed boots or sneakers or something, and we couldn't buy them. Finally, he [my husband] borrowed money from my brother. He bought him [my son] shoes and he bought my oldest daughter a coat....My husband works and can barely afford paying the rent. If my son works, he can buy himself clothes and shoes. School will start soon, he can make himself some pocket money.

Like Kader's husband, Beritan's husband was also working in the textile industry, which made their

income unpredictable. Even though Beritan's son only worked for a month and a half that summer, his weekly salary became indispensable for buying groceries for the family as her husband's work in textile industry stopped around the same time.

Beritan: I was spending my son's money because his dad wasn't working at the time. I was spending it on food, like going to the corner store to buy bread and water and all that. So his money was spent on those [things]. He worked for a month and a half only, and I spent all his money. He was making 80 TL a month (about US\$45), but if he wasn't working, I don't know what we would have done.

Züleyha was also concerned about the financial limitations of her family. For the past 2 years, Züleyha's oldest son had also been working in the summer at a clothing store. She thought her other older children could work in the summer, but she complained now that her children's young age and the fact that they were able to work only in the summer limited their work opportunities.

Züleyha: Now, we're in a difficult financial situation. It's hard to get by because we have a lot of expenses, but no one [is] working. We thought about sending [our] kids to work, but no one takes them for only three months, plus they are also young....We wanted to send the other kids to work because it was gonna be easier to make ends meet. We would want to give them ample money when they go to school.

When I asked her to confirm that she felt at peace with her decision to send her children to work, she said she was as long as they worked in a place she knew. Her willingness to send her children to work was contingent upon them not being exploited at their workplace. If she knew that was the case, she said she would not send them "even if we are starving." She mentioned that her husband had the same perspective. Though he wanted his children to work, when a clothing store whose owner his son knew to be very demanding and strict became an option, he said he did not want his children to work under those harsh conditions.

Züleyha: His dad [my husband] told him to go work at a store where they were giving 500 TL (US\$280) monthly. My son, I think he knew the owner, he said he knew people working there and they said they were on their feet all day not allowed to talk, and that they were being reprimanded if they sat down. So his dad told him not to go if it was that demanding. He said he didn't want his son to work under those conditions.

⁵ Gezitepe is a pseudonym for a neighborhood of Istanbul.

Lale, Şükriye, Dilan, Serap, Ayşegül, and Faraşın did not have children who worked at the time of the study, but they all thought they would consider sending their children to work if financial needs arose. Şükriye's two children were young (a 4 years old and an 8 months old) at the time of the interview, and thus were not working. Yet, Şükriye stated that she would also send her children to work after middle school if she and her husband were financially in need. She emphasized that she thought they could get by if they did not have to pay rent. So whether they owned a house or not at that time would be critical in making that decision.

Şükriye: Sending [my kids] to school will depend on my financial situation at that time. If my financial situation is good, if we own a house, I'll send them to school. I won't have any hardship [if I own a house]. It's easier to make the ends meet when you don't have a rent to pay. But if not, I'll have to [send them to work].

Lale, Ayşegül, and Faraşın also thought they would send their children to work if needed. Lale thought that her children could help her husband financially when they were 15 years old. According to Faraşın, there were a lot of expenses associated with children, including having money for her children's wedding expenses in the future. She thought that if she did not have the means, she would ask her children not to continue on to high school.

Faraşın: If we don't have the means, then they'll go to work after they finish middle school. If we don't have the financial means, one person can't take care of 3–4 people. For them to go to school, it's a lot of expenses, it needs a lot of money. These [kids] will grow up and get married. We'll take a daughter-in-law and give a daughter away to marriage. These are all expenses.

Ayşegül worried about expenses associated with school, including registration fees (though state schools should not have registration fees), books, and uniforms. Like her aunt's children, she thought her children could work in the summer when they were 14–15 years old so that they could cover their own expenses.

Ayşegül: I wouldn't recommend it now. When my child is 15–16 years old, maybe then. They [my kids] can make money for their own expenses. For example, my aunt's kids are going to school. One is 14 and the other one 15 years old, one boy and one girl. They both work, and make 300 TL (about US\$160). Their mother sends them to work so that they can make money for their own expenses, clothing and school expenses. Now, when you register your kid at school, you have to pay 200–300 TL, plus books and all. All kids work in the

summer. They work two to three months to pull themselves together.

Dilan and Serap also considered financial constraints as an important reason to send their children to work, but their accounts were more ambiguous. Like Beritan, they were not ready to give up their children's education for labor, but also were aware of its potential inevitability. The fact that their children were still young allowed them to go back and forth and not make a final decision. Serap had a similar dilemma. She wanted her children to not only continue their education if they had the means, but also recognized the possibility that she and her husband might need to rely on their children for financial assistance. Serap's going back and forth between the two options is evident in the account below, a dilemma, which she tried to resolve by entertaining the idea that her children could work and attend school at the same time.

Serap: Vallahi I don't know how to put it. If we have the means, we'll send them [the kids] to school. If not, they'll work....It depends on whether we have the means. If they want to go to school, we'll send them. But maybe if we don't have the means we won't. If I say now that we'll send them to school, who knows, maybe I wouldn't in the future and would have lied, right? But if we have the means in the future, we will send them to school....For example some kids work and go to school at the same time, maybe they [my kids] can do the same when they grow up. They can work and go to school at the same time, right?

Despite her husband's reassurance that he would not let anyone in the family but himself work, Serap thought she might have her children work if need be, but she would only do this as a very last resort.

Seda's account also showed that she had not quite reached the final verdict on the issue. When first asked about her thoughts on child labor, she stated that both she and her husband would not want their children to work but wanted them to continue their education. She also emphasized that her husband did not want any mention to be made of work for his children because he wanted them to have a proper education and profession.

Seda: I don't want them to work. I want them to go to school...and grow up, that's it. You know, just for them to go to school and grow up. With God's will, I won't let anyone walk over them. Whatever God grants us, we'll eat. My husband doesn't wanna send them to work either. He says "Don't talk to me about work". He says they will go to school, and only go to school. Then they will have a profession and do that.

Interestingly, towards the end of the interview, when asked where she saw her family in 10 years, Seda referred to her

older sister Elif's children and how they were helping their family out financially. She then added that when her daughters were 14 or 15 years of age, they could go to their father's workplace (a small gyro restaurant) to help him out in the summer. As I followed up her statement with the question of whether she might send them to work elsewhere, she stipulated that the workplace must be a trustworthy place.

Seda: I will send them to school, and when the school is closed they can help out their father at his gyro place when they're 15 years old....They will go to school and then bring some money back [in the summer]....[They'll] go to school and work at the same time. If it's a proper place, I'll send them....For example a textile sweatshop or a clothing store. Those kinds of place, you know, a proper place.

Seda's account suggests that only full-time jobs involving a child leaving school may be considered as "work" for some mothers, whereas summer work is not perceived as child labor even though children may work under similarly demanding conditions, such as when working in textile sweatshops. It is also possible that some mothers are more lenient towards child work when it is limited to the summer months and does not interfere with their children's education.

Among the mothers who considered sending their children to work for financial reasons, Dilan was the only one who mentioned she would try to work herself first to keep her children in school.

Dilan: He [my husband] thinks he'll work day and night but won't let us (her and her kids) work, I don't know.. İnşallah it will be like that. İnşallah we won't work and we won't take the kids out of school. If we don't have the means, then we'll have to [send them to work]. But I'll try to work first. I'll go sweep the stairs, the windows but I don't plan to take my kids out of school.

"No Vallahi, not for money...": Alternative Explanations to Child Labor Though poverty is a real life challenge for Kurdish families in Saraybostan, mothers did not just talk about finances as a barrier. While some mothers saw financial constraints as the main driving source that might keep their children from attending school, they also took other factors into account in their decision making and thinking. Protecting children from the dangers of an inner-city neighborhood was an important motivation for mothers for who considered sending their children to work in the summer or full-time if their children did not attend high school. Other explanations for sending children to work included teaching children work discipline, learning to be a hard worker in life, understanding the value of money and what it takes to take

care of a household, and appreciating school more after having seen how difficult work is.

Gurbet lived in a household with 12 other people, including her husband and four children, two single brothers-in-law, a single sister-in-law who came and went periodically for work, and a brother-in-law who was married with two children. In the past, Gurbet's husband had a textile sweatshop. He had not been working for a couple of years and refused to do any work despite pressure from his brothers. Gurbet's two single brothers-in-law were working and paying for the household needs, including rent. Her single sister-in-law was sending the money she made back to her mother who lived in their hometown in the south-east. Though much embarrassed by her husband's disinterest in working and depending on her brothers-in-law for money, Gurbet's main motivations to send her children to work in the summer were not about money. She was convinced that her two sons' going to internet cafes around the neighborhood meant trouble. She believed that sending them to work in the summer would keep them away from mingling with the wrong crowd.

Gurbet: So that they don't stay out on the street and hang out with bad friends. God forbid, this street is no good. This neighborhood is no good....That's why we sent him to work....My oldest son has been going to work for the last two weeks so that he doesn't go to internet cafes or hang out with bad friends. Now, I want my other son to work too so that he doesn't go to internet cafes or hang out with bad friends...

Züleyha was also worried about children going off the rails. Her older sister encouraged her to send her children to work somewhere she could trust as early as possible so that they would stay out of trouble. According to Züleyha, her older sister tells her: "If they [kids] don't work, they'll go off the rails. Don't have pity on them, send them to work. Send them somewhere you trust. No one dies from working. Don't worry, nothing bad will happen." Züleyha thought her sister was right because when children were "idle" and had money, they could develop bad habits. She did not want that to happen to her children because if it did "It's the mothers who cry at the end of the day, they're the ones who suffer." Züleyha was particularly worried that her children would hang out with the wrong people if they did not continue on to high school. As much as she was concerned about financial needs, this was another motivation for her to send her children to school in case they did not want to go to high school.

Züleyha: If my kid didn't go to school, I'd send him to work so that he'd learn [to work]. He can start when he is 15–16 years old. If he stays home, either he'll hang out on the street or go somewhere with the wrong friend, he'll go astray. Even though he is the best child, he'll get bored if he stays home.

Especially for children who did not want to continue high school, the worry about hanging out with the wrong crowd was a major concern. For example, although Elif's primary reason behind child work was financial like Narin, she did not want her eldest son to go to work because he was a good student. On the other hand, she put up a fight with her second eldest son who dropped out of ninth grade, because she was concerned that he would start hanging out on the street and get in trouble if he spent his days at home.

Elif: If you're not going to school, go to work, right? You'll stay home doing nothing....I tell [told] him to work....For instance, right now I don't want my eldest son to work but the other one should work. If not, he'll go out to the street and hang out with the wrong crowd, right?

Similarly, Nurbanu gave up when her sons refused to continue high school despite her desire and attempts to keep them in school. Nurbanu thought her sons would become thieves if they did not work.

Nurbanu: He'll work, he didn't go to school, so he'll work. If he stays out, he'll become a thief. If he makes money, he won't have his eyes on other people's money. No Vallahi, I don't want him to work for money, I want him not to develop bad habits..

Since their sons did not go to high school, both Nurbanu and Zeynep thought that sending them to work would be the only way they could learn a profession.

Nurbanu: So that he has a profession. If he has work/profession, he won't envy other people.

Zeynep:....Since you're not going to school, you'll find a vocation, like a makinacı⁶ or whatever your friends do. You do whatever you wanna do.

Gurbet and Elif all thought boys would be the too lazy/loose if they did not experience work at a younger age.

Gurbet: I want them to start working now, so that they get used to working and not become loose.⁷

Elif: My other [son] should work, for instance, since he's gonna go out and hang out with bad people, right? I'm saying he should learn a vocation when he's young. If he works like in a börekçi or gyro place, it's better. If he works when young, he learns better. I say he should work.

Zeynep also noted that if her sons started working when they were younger, they would not be lazy now.

Zeynep: Kids in this neighborhood didn't go to school. They were going to Gezitepe to sell water and selpak, but our kids, we kept them with us. We didn't let them [work]. If we had sent them to work when they were young, maybe they would be working now. If they had experienced work then, they'd be working now.

Gurbet was clear that she would only send her two eldest children to work in the summer because she wanted them to concentrate on their school during the academic year, especially because their grades were not that good. By going to work in the summer, she believed her children would appreciate school more.

Gurbet: We want them to go to school and do well in school....Their dad said if they work, they'll come to their senses. I tell them to do well in school, do their homework. If they work, they will be tired [at work] and come to their senses. They will regret [not doing well in school] and go to their school.

Beritan had the same reason for why she wanted her children to work in the summer. Beritan's oldest daughter had been working in the summer mainly because of financial concerns. However, Beritan wanted her son to work not only for the extra income but also so that he would appreciate school more.

Beritan: I say maybe if they work, going to school will feel sweeter [better] to them. For instance, because work will be too hard, school will be [easier].

Esra did not have any children working at the time of the study, and she expressed that under no circumstances did she and her husband want their daughter to work. On the other hand, she sometimes thought that if her children worked in the summer, they would see how hard work was and be more likely to value school.

Esra: If they go to work, they will see how hard it is to work, then they will value school more, that's what I want. I swear to God, I'm not after their money....They don't work and they don't care about school. I'm saying if they work, maybe they will understand the value of school and go to school. That's what I want.

In Beritan's son's case, this strategy seemed to have led to the desired effect. After a long tiring work day, her son was more appreciative/enthusiastic about school.

⁶ Makinacı is a person who works the sewing machine in textile.

⁷ Used in the sense of "lazy, undisciplined"

Beritan: Then I said “I have a question for you, which one is better school or work?” He said “Look at what mom is asking! Of course school, school is far better. Life in school is better”. Then I said “Okay if you go to school, you’ll be home like this. If not, you’ll be working all the time. Because it can’t be any other way.” He says “Vallahi this year, once the school starts, I will [work very hard in school]”.

Another reason for parents to send their children to work was to help children to understand the value of money and how hard it is to earn money. All mothers who had children who worked in the summer expressed this view.

Gamze: She’s working two months in the summer...so that she gets used to it, understands what working is like, what taking care of a household is like, what money making means, that’s why I sent her to work.

Beritan: I say they [my kids] will understand life better. Where the money is coming from and where it goes, they’ll understand better. For instance, you give them money, they’re like “you don’t even give 5 TL, what’s this! What kind of family are you? I want 5-10 TL and you don’t give it to me”....When there isn’t money, there isn’t money even if it’s 10 TL. When you don’t have it, where will you bring it from? But if they work, maybe they’ll understand [these things] better.

“I only want them to go to school, nothing else”: Insights from Mothers Who Are Against Child Labor

Six mothers said they would not send their children to work under any circumstance. Their demographic characteristics were not much different than mothers who were not against child labor. Mothers against child labor were only slightly younger (mean=31) than those who supported child labor (mean=34). The mean number of children in each group was also close (3.2 in “against child labor” group compared to 3.5 in “positive on child labor” group). Moreover, only one mother in this group owned her house compared to seven mothers in the group who supported child labor. Thus, the financial burden on mothers who were against child labor also included rent.

Despite similar demographic characteristics, Aslı and Zarife had a strong reaction to those who sent their children to work at a young age, especially on the street. Giving an example of her neighbor, Zarife blamed those parents of taking advantage of their children and emphasized that it was the parents’ responsibility to take care of their children properly.

Zarife: I’m against them working [on the street]. [When] they send kids at that age, anything can happen to them.

They’re vulnerable to all the dangers....They absolutely exploit their children. If one really loves her kids, she won’t send them to the middle of danger. The wife of this supermarket owner is sending her kids to sell selpak and clean car windshields all the time. Her 12 year-old [son], they probably went to the police station to pick him up maybe 1000 times. If you give birth to a child just because you want to, then we have to take care of them properly.

Aslı also thought that sending children to work on the street at 10 or 12 years of age would ruin their childhood and impact the rest of their lives. She also thought that her children would rightfully blame her forever if she were to ever send her children to work at such a young age. She figured they would sacrifice on some things as a family now so that her children could have a better life in the future.

Aslı: What good would a 10–12 year-old working do? Won’t he say to me in the future “Shame on you! You sent me to work at that age to wash windshields and this and that”. Won’t he say to me “What kind of childhood did you make me live? We couldn’t live our childhood because of you. You woke us up in the morning to sell selpak, sell water, clean cars”....Why would I raise my kids like that?! We’d eat little and not enjoy some things but at least their future would be better.

While five of the mothers very clearly stated that they would not send any of their children to work, Sevda had a more ambiguous explanation. Though she first said she would not want her daughters to work so that they could continue their higher education, and that she would be fine if her sons worked, later in the interview she adamantly stated she did not want any of her children to work. Considering that Sevda had one of the largest number of children in the sample (seven children), her dedication to keeping them in school was noteworthy.

Sevda: Vallahi kids work but I won’t send my daughter to work. Boys can work but not my daughter...Girls shouldn’t work but go to school [instead]. If she becomes something [has a profession], she can work in an office. I don’t want her to work in textile. Same with boys. I won’t send them [under any circumstances]. I’m adamant about this, I won’t send them [to work] ever.

Fatma’s main reason for not wanting to send her children to work was that she could not tolerate to see her daughters working under difficult circumstances. Though she was not as determined as Sevda in her response, she did not think they could not send them even after they were 14 years old.

Fatma:Here, when kids are 14 years old, people send them to work in textile. Even younger ones go. Some

people send their kids. I don't think I can have the heart to send them. Their dad too says he won't send them to work.

The motivation behind many mothers' opposition for child labor was their aspiration for their children to continue to high school and beyond. They thought that by pursuing their education, children would be able to have a proper profession like a doctor, teacher, or lawyer.

Yasemin: If they're younger than 18, they shouldn't work....Even if we don't have the means, I want them to get their high school diploma.

Özlem: He should go only to school until he grows up. If he passes the exam for college, then good. If not, then he'll go to work with his dad. I think the same [thing] for both my daughters and my son. But of course if you send your kids to work when they are young, then you make a mistake. For instance, if you send them to work when they're 16, what do you do? You ruin your child's life.

Moreover, contrary to mothers including Gurbet and Züleyha, Özlem thought that sending children to work would not keep them out of trouble but cause more problems. According to Özlem, once children started making money, they would be less obedient to their parents and more likely to get in trouble.

Özlem: They sell heroin and cocaine around here. Many kids go to them and they smoke with them and all. They don't respect their parents anymore, they don't come home, they become no good. Like I said, their parents send them to work when they turn 15 or even younger when they're 12. And what do the kids do? Once they start making money, they'll go buy cigarettes and things [drugs], they'll buy everything. Once they start making money, they stop listening to their parents.

Discussion

This study sought to portray low-income Kurdish mothers' beliefs and attitudes about child labor with the aim of better understanding the rationale behind decisions about sending children to work. Mothers' parental ethnotheories on child labor were affected by contextual factors (e.g., poverty, neighborhood) as well as their beliefs on how to raise a hardworking and well-disciplined child. The findings suggest that mothers' views on child labor and their rationale behind their views were not homogeneous. Two opposing views emerged: one group was against child labor and the second was positive

about it. However, mothers who were positive about child labor were not homogeneous in the reasons they provided for why they considered child labor as a viable option. While poverty presented as the main reason for child labor, the findings from this study suggested a more complex picture for why children started working at an early age (see Fig. 1). Twelve of the 18 mothers who had a positive take on child labor stated their financial situation was or would be the main reason why they did or would send their children to work. As suggested in other studies (Blunch and Verner 2000; Dayioğlu and Assaad 2003; Goncu et al. 2009; Yılmaz 2004), poverty made these families vulnerable to child labor. Especially, in larger households where the budget available to the family was further strained, child labor became a survival strategy for the family (Altuntaş 2003, 2006; Karatay 2000; Yüksek 2006).

Mothers' accounts did not reflect any tone of abuse or lack of affection towards their children, but rather a dire tone of necessity. Given this context, child labor should not be tied to parental abuse or weak family ties, but potentially to family cohesion (Altuntaş 2006; Yılmaz 2004). By sending some of their children to work, families seek to ensure the family's overall financial well-being and to make sure that the needs of all family members are satisfied.

However, it is important to acknowledge that mothers gave precedence to child labor over the notion of themselves looking for a job. This was largely due to the fact that gender roles where women were expected to stay home and raise children were still largely accepted in the community. While mothers did not make this connection explicitly, it is plausible that the fact that their experiences working to support their families prior to their marriage (in the city or when they were back in their hometown) and the fact that children back in their hometown also helped their parents with shepherding or other agricultural chores may have made them more tolerant of the idea of their children working to support the family.

While the literature points to poverty as the main reason for child labor (e.g., Dayioğlu 2006; Dayioğlu and Assaad, 2003; Yılmaz 2004), not all mothers who considered child labor as plausible did so because of family financial concerns. Two other main reasons emerged for why children were or would be sent to work, which have not been discussed in the literature to date. Given the dangers of the inner-city neighborhood they lived in, some mothers' main motivation to send their children to work was to keep them out of trouble. Mothers wanted to keep their children from mingling with the wrong crowd in their spare time. The spare time included summers, and for some mothers even after school hours. Considering that illegal activities (drug dealers, purse snatching gangs) were abundant in the neighborhood, mothers' worries were well warranted. Especially in cases where children "chose" not to continue to school, these worries were stronger. For children not attending school, these worries were

Fig. 1 Mothers' beliefs and attitudes about child labor

accompanied by the motivation for children to learn some type of vocation, especially since they lost a chance to have a profession by choosing not to go to school. Thus, the relationship between child labor and education was complex. It was not always work that led to children's dropping out of school. In some cases, children's reluctance or lack of interest in pursuing high school education resulted in child labor. In those cases, child labor seemed like the second best alternative for securing a "better" future for children.

Another important rationale mentioned by some mothers was that child labor could constitute a learning experience for children. This was mostly mentioned by mothers whose children worked in the summer. They thought that by sending their children to work, children would get to know how hard making money is and would think twice before spending their money. They would also start learning how to take care of a household financially. In other words, labor was seen as an investment for children's future for when they had their own family. Mothers also thought that children would learn work discipline and not to be lazy, which were also, according to them, important building blocks in becoming a successful adult in the labor force in the future.

A few mothers also articulated the idea of having children better understand the importance of education by showing them what the alternative would be if they did not continue school. Mothers like Beritan and Esra thought that if their children saw how difficult working was, they would be more motivated to continue with school and find a job where work conditions would not be as physically demanding and the pay as low. This tactic seems to have worked for Beritan's son who stated that he was even more enthusiastic about school after he

worked for the summer. While using labor as a strategy to motivate children for further education may work in some cases, it is one that needs caution. As addressed by Nurbanu, it is also possible that once children start making their "own" money, they may become less interested in what opportunities education can provide them. In other words, immediate financial gratification may jeopardize their interest in better opportunities that education may bring them in the long run.

The findings also suggest that some mothers' opinions about where they stood on the issue of child labor regarding their children were not quite settled. These mothers provided conflicting accounts on whether they would send their children to work or not. A similar explanation can be offered for these mothers. Some of the mothers are not in immediate financial need to send their children to work. They still are in the process of negotiating where they stand on the issue of child labor, and thus their thought process is still fluid.

Finally, there is a nonnegligible number of mothers who opposed the idea of child labor in the community. While fewer in number, the fact that there are mothers who resist child labor and are aware of the potential consequences of child labor for children's futures is promising. There were two main reasons for why mothers opposed the idea of child labor: Because parents should take care of children and not vice versa, and because child labor interferes with children's education that will provide them with a better future. Mothers thought that sending children to work did not fit into a concept of parenthood that entailed parents' taking care of their children's needs and providing them with a better future. Some mothers thought that, in particular, sending children to work on the street was a way of taking advantage of them. Mothers

also talked about how sending children to work would hurt their chances to get an education that could offer them a better future.

Both in terms of mean age and mean number of children, mothers that opposed child labor were similar to mothers who were positive about child labor. Moreover, proportion-wise, more mothers in this group rented their homes compared to mothers in the other group. The fact that they had to worry about paying the monthly rent did not affect their negative attitude towards child labor. Having said that, children of the mothers in this group were much younger (mean age=6.3) than children in the group of mothers who were positive about child labor (mean age=11.3). Although both groups had mothers with really young children, there were more young children in the group that opposed child labor. It may be possible that children of mothers opposing child labor were still too young to consider the possibility of child labor. In other words, while mothers' ethnotheories were negative regarding child labor, it is possible that as children grow up, contextual factors such as financial constraints or neighborhood dangers might make child labor a feasible option for these mothers as well.

The findings from this study also elaborate on parental ethnotheories by underscoring the importance of contextual factors in shaping children's experiences. Parental ethnotheories on child labor were not only affected by cultural norms and mothers' beliefs on what children should learn growing up (e.g., learning adult responsibilities, work discipline) but also by contextual factors (e.g., poverty and inner-city dangers). The findings also pointed to the heterogeneity of beliefs and attitudes about child labor within the same cultural group with similar demographic characteristics, which challenges the assumption that members of the same cultural group would have the same belief systems. The parental ethnotheories framework suggests a direct link between how parents perceive issues around children and how they structure their children's experiences. However, the findings from this study suggest a more indirect relationship. Parental beliefs about child labor among low-income Kurdish migrant mothers may not always predict how parents shape children's pathways especially as parents adapt their actions and decisions according to their circumstances. In this case, contextual barriers made mothers more tolerant of child labor and influenced their decisions about sending children to school or work. Some mothers stated that if their circumstances were different, they would not send their children to work. Other mothers whose children were still too young and who currently opposed child labor may also eventually have to send their children to work. Moreover, one may assume that parental ethnotheories are not in favor of higher education in this community by looking at the number of children who start to work around high school age. Yet, many mothers explicitly emphasized the importance of higher education for a better

future for both their daughters and sons, further illustrating the nonlinear pathway between parental ethnotheories and children's developmental pathways.

Implications

Mothers' accounts show that interventions and policies should be closely informed by research and target multiple levels. The findings from this study show that poverty is still a major reason for why families consider child labor as an option. Hence, government efforts to eradicate poverty should continue. As a means to increase household income, vocational training can be offered to parents who migrate from rural areas to cities and do not have the necessary skills to hold jobs in an urban environment. Microcredit programs can also be considered as potential resources though some researchers caution against microcredit programs with this population because family businesses may increase the risk of child labor (Dayioğlu 2006). Therefore, official agreements prohibiting the use of child labor should be established between microcredit providers and users. Social workers can also lobby to create developmentally appropriate paid summer internships for older children where they can learn skills (e.g., computer skills, basic accounting) that can be of use in their future jobs in the formal sector. Local governments can partner with middle and high schools in low-income communities to create paid internship opportunities for children with regular school attendance. These internships will not only help boost the family budget, but will also teach children some of the adult responsibilities mothers valued, such as hard work, discipline, and the value of money, while acquiring critical skills. The availability of such internships may also strengthen families' motivation to send their children to school.

The findings of this study also point to the necessity of more contextually grounded interventions. Mothers mentioned that they worried their children would hang out with the wrong crowd in the neighborhood if they stayed home. The existence of criminal activities concerned women both in terms of the safety of their families and children and the street lifestyle that might lure their children into crime. Considering the role of these inner-city characteristics in mothers' approach to child labor, existing community and youth centers should be supported. Their services, along with their outreach efforts, should be expanded. These centers play a critical role in facilitating the positive development of children in the neighborhood. Not only can they provide academic support to children, they also can become oases in the inner-city neighborhood where children can be exposed to positive role models and be safe. Moreover, the police force should take the necessary precautions or steps to eliminate criminal activities. Existing community centers can also attempt to help the community organize and communicate their wish to eliminate criminal activities in the neighborhood to relevant authorities.

This study also has implications for preparing social workers and other practitioners/policy makers who (will) work in this community or other communities with similar characteristics. The findings underpin the necessity for emphasis on diversity and cultural competence/sensitivity as well as a focus on ecosystems theory for the analysis of child labor in educational and work settings. Educating practitioners on diversity and cultural competence will encourage sensitivity to cultural norms. Adopting an ecosystems framework in working with communities at risk of child labor will allow for a person-in-the-environment approach to understanding and effectively addressing child labor. This approach will attune practitioners/policy makers to contextual factors that lead to child labor and may differ from one community to another.

Limitations and Future Research

Parental ethnotheories on child labor were solely explored from women's perspectives. Even though some mothers talked about their husbands' opinions on child education and labor, future qualitative research should have larger samples that include fathers' views as well, considering that fathers may have more power in making decisions in these families with conservative gender roles. Including fathers in future qualitative studies can provide important and more comprehensive insights into parental ethnotheories on child labor in Kurdish families as well as their decision-making process. Moreover, studies should be conducted with low-income Kurdish migrant families in other inner-city and low-income neighborhoods in other cities to have a more complete understanding of the rationale behind urban child labor. Future research should also include other low-income populations that are at risk of child labor in order to understand the commonalities and differences of parental ethnotheories across various groups and tailor interventions accordingly when necessary.

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