



Children and Work Research Series: Session 9

Reflections on the Generational Aspects of Children's Work and Education in Gaza, Palestine

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Presentation Abstract

There is growing attention in the childhood studies literature to the generational and international aspect of children's work. Building on his ethnography in Gaza- Palestine, Al-Rozzi investigates work and education in the context of political activism, state-building and foreign aid, and highlights the importance of attending its generational aspect. Al-Rozzi will present some of the key findings of his research in Palestine and will explore the implication of this on our understanding of children's work and education, in Palestine and elsewhere.

Speaker Bio

Mohammed Al-Rozzi is a Research Associate at the University of Bath in the UK. He holds a PhD in Social Anthropology (University of Fribourg, Switzerland) and an MA in Childhood Studies (University of Edinburgh, UK). He has worked as a researcher and consultant with many international non-governmental organisations and UN agencies, including Mercy Corps, Terre des Hommes, the Norwegian Refugee Council, World Vision and UNICEF, in the Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Switzerland. His research interests include child work, juvenile justice and education policy.

Breakout Rooms

Breakout Room 1

Several group members have also seen examples of children's status in family changing based on work. Those who work may be given more food at the family table, listened to a little bit more. A status upgrade in the family for children who work, especially for those that are working in a non-family business, bringing new cash income into the family. Instances regarding girls would be given a higher rank in terms of family decision-making when they were bringing in extra income, could jump older brothers even in status.



Interesting point that this is perhaps in contrast to the norms and laws that think it as good if work is inside the family, worse if it is outside the family, but what you all are saying is that the status is higher if you bring in outside \$, more valued, so has better consequences for kids in their families. Of course, this does not mean that they are working conditions are better outside the family, just that outside work can have greater impact on status in the family.

Cash is increasingly required for poor family as less comes off the land or is available within the village, so the need for \$ changes the dynamic in families, so if someone is going out and bringing in cash, there is some amount of power available to that person. But that doesn't translate into major power, it can be transitory power.

How ideas about childhood, work, and education have changed rapidly over the period Mohammad is looking at in Palestine.

Breakout Room 2

We talked about work as a way to overcome the power difference between generations. How women use their gender to get access to food and aid and have more say in the micro and macro issues in society, leveraging their perceived vulnerability.

When asking why children wanted to work it is about: establishing themselves, assert themselves, including against the subordination that is imposed on them. The relation between generations, how they interact between each other, and how work allows to have more say in the family. It gives children new attributes: being responsible, grown up, doing things adults could do which transcends their position in the hierarchy. It doesn't challenge the matriarchal system, based on gender and age, but get a better position in this system. Work would make them visible: people would say hello, they would recognize them.

Did the divide paid/unpaid work played a role in how much say the children would have? (then reflected in the fact that girls make most of the unpaid work).

The difference between childhood and adulthood is not about age but about social attributes (responsibility, independence, etc). This is why some children leave school because school is an attribute of childhood – so leaving school is way to get the attribute of an adult. It is not the case for the majority, as there is a lot of value in education (the only commodity you can take with you as you are displaced over time)

What is the level of control over resources that children have? Many children work within family business so they don't get a retribution from their work, but this still leverages the power dynamic.



Most children interviewed are pleased to share their income with the family – giving back is a way to demonstrate that they can contribute and be considered, that they are worthy of respect. They use work as a mean to be seen and heard.

Parents don't want to celebrate work – sometime children are hiding to work. There is a high value on education in Palestinian society. There are different forms of combining work and school and there are only few cases in his research where children were forced to work and drop out of school by their caregivers.

Did Mohammed have the chance to interview those who were children at the time and now are adults to see how much they feel those representations have impacted their childhood and how much it impacts their own relationships with children today?

There is a big shift on how children are represented every five years. The research interviewed former children coming from those different periods – the relevance of these representations came through their response. Also reflected in the job market with more skilled work.