

**The Reflection of Child Laborers' (Working Children's)  
Lived Experiences in Their Autobiographical Works in  
*Aroosak-e-Sokhangoo (Talking Doll) Magazine***

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**Introduction**

In every society, children undergo various experiences in different social environments and in interacting with different people. These are referred to as lived experiences which are effective in the formation of their mental capacities, their judgments and their overall attitude, and also form the content of their narratives. Dewey believes that human mind does not take shape in a vacuum, away from the influence of these lived experiences, but is definitely affected by and shaped according to them. The effect is so prevalent that large parts of artistic works can be considered as mirrors that reflect the lived experiences of their creators. Therefore, according to their different roles as students, working children, etc., and based on their mental treasures which are full of different lived experiences, children reflect their lived experiences in various ways, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, when they

start to write their narratives. Since *Aroosak-e-Sokhangoo (Talking Doll)* magazine provides an opportunity for children to produce literature of their own as writers, this study will try to analyze the contextual relationship between the writings of child laborers (working children) in this magazine and their lived experiences. Making use of John Dewey's theory about the relationship between people's lived experiences and their creative works, this essay analyzes three autobiographical works by three child laborers (working children) published in this magazine.

### **Methodology and Purpose of the Study**

Making use of Dewey's theory about the relationship between artistic works and the lived experiences of their creators, the researchers have studied three autobiographical works by child laborers (working children) published in *Aroosak-e-Sokhangoo (Talking Doll)* magazine in 2021-2022. Since the works are gateways for gaining an understanding of the formative factors for different mentalities and lived experiences in child laborers (working children) and to see if these works really reflect their lived experiences, we conducted interviews in a written format with each child after selecting the texts. We designed different questions for each of them because each had created different works. Our goal was to reach answers to these main questions:

1. To what extent are the content of the child laborers' (working children's) autobiographical narratives influenced by the culture of their families and their social class?

2. How can we discover and explain the relationship between the lived experiences of the child laborers (working children) by focusing on the nature of their autobiographical works?

Since this is an analytical-deductive study based on John Dewey's ideas, the autobiographical works of children were considered as works of art, reflecting their creators' lived experiences, and by making logical connections between the works and the authors' responses to the questions of the interview, each of the works were analyzed separately and the relationship between the creators' lived experiences with their autobiographical narratives were analyzed and explained. One of the aims of the present study is the expansion of specialized knowledge about children's and adolescents' autobiographical literature which has usually been overlooked.

### **Discussion**

It can be deduced from the works of the three authors of the selected texts, Hasani, Zabihi and Ataei, and their answers to the questions of the interview, that a great part of their worldview is influenced or shaped by their social status and their lived experiences which have found expression in different forms in each of the texts. For example, Hasani who has undergone certain lived experiences and is not optimistic about his condition believes that his freedom from his problems is not necessarily related to his own efforts but expects that praying and rain make his dreams come true. Zabihi also creates a kind of utopia in his work which is a faithful reflection of his special condition as a child laborer (working child) and his lived experiences. It seems that he and his family have experienced discriminatory

behaviors because they are not originally from Iran; therefore, he emphasizes helping people on a large scale and believes that all human beings are his sisters and brothers. Ataei is also always looking for the lost elements of love and kindness in her life, due to her especial social condition. Reflections of this loss and unconscious desire can be detected in some of her responses, too. in addition, her constant use of the term teacher in her writing and her references to a respectful relationship attest to the presence of some people who have a different kind of behavior toward her outside of school.

All three children have been influenced by their own family members and the culture of their families generally; consequently, they have undergone different lived experiences. For example, one can assume that Hasani's beliefs about rain are rooted in his family's beliefs and his lived experiences in this environment. as another example, one can assume that Ataei is looking for love and kindness in her social relationships partially because of the way she is treated by her family, since the topic of gender is deemed important in her family and creates expectations from her and her six sisters in the absence of a brother.

Another noticeable point is that various signs of belonging to a lower social class is evident in the writings of these three children as well as in their responses to the questions. For example, due to this sense of belonging to a lower class and the environment that she lives in, Ataei's world is completely limited and one-dimensional. In both her narrative and her responses, her lack of vocabulary is apparent, to an extent that even when she is given some clues in the questions, she does not use them in her responses. Zabihi also refers to some jobs in his narrative which are disharmonious and unfitting, and attest to his mental crisis

since he does not even think about whether there is a chance for him to attain these jobs or not. Although the writings of Hasani is concise, this sense of belonging makes the spiritual dimension of his work more prominent than its worldly dimension; therefore, he unconsciously uses the word prayer next to the word wish and distinguishes them from each other and emphasizes on the rain as the agent for making wishes come true.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the research show that these three child laborers (working children) are under the influence of their families and the dominant culture in it; consequently, they have undergone different lived experiences. Although the extent of this influence is not the same in all three of them, in some of them this influence can be deduced from their words, reactions, type of expression in their narrative as well as their responses to the questions of the interview. Another point is the role of their social class in the formation of their mentalities and the construction of their lived experiences deduced from the content of their narratives, the condition of the writers and their report about the condition created for them by their families, and also based on the three determining factors: the parents' education level, their jobs and the economic condition of the family. In each of the three narratives by Hasani, Zabihi and Ataei, the main content is constructed based on the social class of the writer since their worldview is formed according to it.

One cannot discover and explain with certainty the relationship between the lived experiences of the child laborers (working children)

with their autobiographical works solely or by relying on their responses to the questions of the interview. It seems that many children shy away from telling the whole truth for various reasons such as protecting the family, maintaining respect, not wishing to tell the truth, and fearing the disclosure of their mental processes.

**Keywords:** autobiographical works, lived experiences, *John Dewey*, *Aroosak-e-Sokhangoo (Talking Doll)*, child laborers (working children).

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