



Child Labour: A Sociological Study of Haryana, India

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Abstract

The present study "Child Labour" conducted on the sample of 120 respondents from district Rohtak under objectives: (i) To study the socio-economic background and working conditions of respondents; (ii) To find out the factors responsible for child labour and consequences there after; and (iii) To suggest remedial strategy based on the information gathered. The primary as well as secondary data was used to get the data. A questionnaire was used to collect the primary data from the respondents. Analysis revealed that an overwhelming majority of respondents having insufficient parental income was most important factor which forcing them for labor work, followed by the respondents having labour as their family occupation, while a significant number of them were encouraged by parents and near-dears, about half of the respondents were not interested in acquiring education. On the other hand, for near about half of the respondents main factor was large family size. So, it can also easily be inferred that evil of child labour is born of poverty and other economic reasons.

Keywords: Child Labour, socio-economic, remedial strategy, questionnaire, education, family size, poverty, economic reasons.

Introduction

There seems to be an absence of clear definition of child labour. However, it usually means work done by children of 14 years of age or below it, that become hindrance in their physical, social and psychological development. According to the Census of India definition, a child worker is one who works for the major part of the day and is under the age of 14 years. There is no agreement about the definition of the 'child'. The 1989 UN Convention on the 'Rights of the Child', sets the upper age at 18. The International Labour Organisation refers to children as those who are under 15 years. In India, children above the age of 14 years are old enough to be employed¹.

Child Labour in India and Worldwide: It is hard to get an exact count because child labour is concealed or hidden by those who are benefited by it, estimate would be more than 250 million globally. Out of that 120 million work full time risking their education, health and social development. The rest are said to be combining their employment with other commitments. Most of these labourers are from India².

Till date, there are around 12 million child workers under the age of 14 in India. India is one of the worst offenders when it comes to exploiting children. A UNICEF report 'World's Children 2006' states that in India 17 percent working children are under the age of 15 and girls in the 12-15 age bracket are the preferred choice of 90% households to work as domestic help³.

However, there are official figures. According to an ILO Survey, nearly 15 percent of the children are child labourers in India. International Labour Organization (ILO) has reported that number of children involved in child labour has been falling.

However, global financial crisis has threatened the process. Though progress has been made worldwide, the process has been delayed. There have been cut in social sector budgets in almost all the nations. Remittances from labourers outside their residence have also declined, which has to some extent led to child labour⁴.

Historically, the working force of child workers is more in rural areas as compared to urban settings. Nine out of ten village children are employed in agriculture or household industries and craftwork. The paucity of organized banking in the rural areas creates a void in credit facilities, forcing poor families to borrow from moneylender, bag down in debt trap and push their children in harsh labour traps the growing child in a hostage like condition for years⁵.

Extent of Child Labour in the Work: Child labour accounts for 22 percent of the workforce in Asia, 32 percent in Africa, 17 per cent in Latin America, 1 per cent in US, Canada, Europe and then wealthy nations.

The problem of child labour has constantly agitated the minds of social thinkers and it is so acute, particularly in under developed and developing countries that there is no each and shot cut solution in sight. Karl Marx had observed that the result of buying children and young persons by capitalists was physical deterioration and moral degradation. India now has over one third of Asia's child labour despite the constitution unequivocally prohibits the employment of children in a factory, mine or any other hazardous place of work⁶.

Classification of Child Labour: Broadly speaking, child labour can be classified into two categories:

Full time child labour: Full time child labour includes those who work for wages i.e. for more than half the year (183 days or more) in economic activity.

Marginal child labour: Marginal child labour includes children who are engaged in economic activities but whose main activity is not economic and have been engaged into economic activity for less than 183 days in a year⁷.

The Demand: Why Employers Want Children: Most of the time it is others interest who pushes children into work sometimes it is family, sometimes peers, relatives and other influence's. In the agrarian society children's are responsible to perform Pity jobs like rearing animals, taking care of small household activities and up-to helping in harvesting etc. These activities lead to utilize maximum time of children play and leisure time as well as time for education.

In case of household business the parents often say that children will learn more practical skill in business while in school, as in future they have to take care of their family work⁸.

Employees prefer to have children in compare of adults for work because in many reasons they are proved better to them such as: i. Cheap (less wages in compare) and obedient, ii. Nimble fingers, iii. Inadequate laws

Laws and their Flaws⁹: i. 1948: The Factories Act, 1948, ii. Employment of Children (Amendment) Act, 1949, iii. 1951: Employment of Children (Amendment) Act, 1951, iv. 1951: The Plantation Labour Act, 1951, v. 1952: The Mines Act, 1952, vi. 1954 : The Factories Act, 1954, vii. 1958: The Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, viii. 1961: The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961, ix. 1966 : The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966., x. 1978: Employment of Children Act, 1978, xi. 1986 : The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, xii. National Policy on Child Labour, 1987, xiii. State Shops and Commercial Establishment Act

Objectives of the Study: In the present study, the emphasis is given to study the problems of child labourers. To understand this social phenomena, the investigator has formulated the following objectives: i. To study the socio-economic background and working conditions of respondents. ii . To find out the factors responsible for child labour and consequences there after. iii. To suggest remedial strategy based on the information gathered.

Methodology

Field of Study: The district Rohtak is taken as field of study because it has abundant agricultural resources but scarcity of skilled labourers, Rohtak has good infrastructure facilities in terms Education ,Health etc and Government is implementing various developmental schemes. Rohtak is located in National

capital region at near to Delhi has given good opportunities to the new industries to establish in the area. A special industrial area is established in the district providing wider opportunity for the growth of Industries.

Sampling: To study the nature, extent and factors of child labour, we selected the area for the present study. For the present study purposive sampling method was used. 120 respondents were analysed in the present study. The study was carried out in Rohtak city.

Method of Data Collection: The primary and secondary data was used in the present study. Primary data was collected by Interview schedule. Scheduled was divided into three parts. First part of schedule elementary information collected. In the second and third part of schedule structured and open called questions were included. In the present study main attention was given to study the nature and extent of child labour. Secondary data was collected from Statistical Abstract and Census Reports.

Socio-Economic Background of Respondents: To understand the socio-economic people of respondents we would analysis the caste, age, education, family type, family size, family income, land holding of the respondents.

Results and Discussion

The table 1 shows the socio-economic background of the respondents, it shows that regarding age, majority of our respondents fall in the age group between 13-14 years. Regarding literacy, majority of our respondents were illiterate, while significant number of them were educated upto primary level. When we analyse the caste of the respondents, it shows that majority of them were from schedule caste followed by backward class respondents. A large majority of our respondents belonged to nuclear family. It is pertinent from the table that a large majority of our respondents having their parents alive. Regarding main occupation of the family, majority of our respondents were engaged as labourer in auto market followed by engagement in tea stalls. It is further evident from the table that a vast majority of our respondents belonged to the income group between Rs. 25000/- per annum. An overwhelming large majority of them were unmarried. When we analyse the age of respondents when they start working, majority of them started their work as child labour in the age group between 13-14 years.

Analysis revealed that (table-2) for an overwhelming majority of respondents 91.67 per cent insufficient parental income was most important factor for labor work, followed by 72.5 per cent respondents having labour as their family occupation 57.5 per cent respondents were encouraged by parents and 50 per cent respondents were not interested in acquiring education. On the other hand, for 50 per cent respondents main factor was large family size. So, it can also easily be inferred that evil of child labour is born of poverty and other economic reasons.

Table-1
Socio-economic background of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency
Age	6-9 yrs	32 (26.67)
	10-12yrs.	41 (34.16)
	13-14 yrs.	47 (39.17)
Education	Illiterate & below Primary	67 (55.83)
	Primary	53 (44.17)
Caste	Scheduled caste	65 (54.17)
	Backward Class	37 (30.83)
	Upper caste	18 (15.00)
Family Type	Nuclear	90 (75.00)
	Joint	30 (25.00)
Parents alive	Alive	115 (95.80)
	Not Alive	5 (4.20)
Family main occupation	Labour in auto market	55 (45.83)
	Labour in Tea Stall	44 (36.67)
	Labour in Dhaba/Restaurent	21 (17.50)
Family Income annual	Upto Rs. 25000/-	97 (75.83)
	25001 – 60000/-	23 (24.17)
Marital Status	Married	3 (2.50)
	Unmarried	117 (97.50)
Age of start working	6-9 yrs.	32(26.67)
	10-12 yrs	41(34.16)
	13-14 yrs.	47(39.17)
Socio-economic status of the family	Low	87 (72.50)
	Medium	33 (27.50)

N = 120

Table-2
Reasons for Child Labour

Reasons for child labour	Frequency
Insufficient family income	110(91.67)
Family occupation	87(72.50)
Encouragement from parents	69(57.50)
Lack of interest in studies	64(53.30)
Large family size	60(50.00)

N=120, * Figure in the bracket represent percentage. * Frequency of multiple response.

Conclusion

Children are backbone of the nation. The progress and the future of the country depend upon how the child of today develops and taken care. Despite of all this, the children have been subjected to many hardships to ear their livelihood. In India, millions of children are working in different occupations are over the country. The reasons is being they can be hired for less money. A study has been undertaken with the following objectives. i. To study the socio-economic background and working conditions of respondents. ii. To find out the factors responsible for child labour and consequences there after. iii. To suggest remedial strategy based on the information gathered.

The study have been conducted in Rohtak district of Haryana. As per that the child labourer working in automarket, tea stalls

and dhabas have been selected as respondents. Most of the are illiterate and belonged to the age group of 10-14 years. When we analyse the caste of the respondents, it shows that majority of them were from schedule caste followed by backward class respondents. A large majority of our respondents belonged to nuclear family. It is pertinent from the table that a large majority of our respondents having their parents alive. Regarding main occupation of the family, majority of our respondents were engaged as labourer in auto market followed by engagement in tea stalls. It is further evident from the table that a vast majority of our respondents belonged to the income group between Rs. 25000/- per annum. An overwhelming large majority of them were unmarried. When we analyse the age of respondents when they start working, majority of them started their work as child labour in the age group between 13-14 years.

It has been officially stated that child labour is no longer a medium of economic exploitation but necessitated by the parents and in many cases that of the child itself. Analysis also revealed that an overwhelming majority of respondents having insufficient parental income was most important factor for labor work, followed by respondents having labour as their family occupation, while a significant number of them were encouraged by parents and near about half of the respondents were not interested in acquiring education. On the other hand, for near about half of the respondents main factor was large family size. So, it can also easily be inferred that evil of child labour is born of poverty and other economic reasons.

Suggestions: Although there is complex agreement regarding the need to abolish child labour as soon as possible but there are several policy issues as to how this should be done? Here are some remedial suggestions for that. i. The income disparity can be removed by providing better employment opportunities to the lower stratum of the society through creation of more jobs. ii. Families must be provided some incentives so that they can meet their necessities without forcing their children to work. iii. Evening schools should be started to avoid heavy dropout and the children can get education after their working hours. iv. Free books and other stationary items must be provided. Some vocational training centres must be started so that these children can be taught some skills. v. Like adult wages, the minimum wages of children should be increased and free nutrition mean may be provided at their workplace to overcome malnutrition problems.

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