

Child Labour: Poverty Forces Children to Become Labourer

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Abstract

This paper traces the root cause behind the increasing number of child labourers in India i.e. poverty. The child labour is not a recent concept but a concept with which country has since long been familiar. Child labour is widely used in India as elsewhere in many countries. In India the problem of child labor is linked to certain basic social problems that we have been struggling with over the past five decades of the freedom: illiteracy, unemployment and poverty. Child labour in India is to be found in almost every sector of the economy, it has the largest number of working children in the world. It has been found that

poverty is the root cause behind the emergence of child labour not only in India but anywhere in the world .Poverty gives birth to some other reasons which forces children by themselves and their parents to push their small children towards any kind of work from where they get money. Families need money to survive and children become the easiest source of additional income. They can adjust in any atmosphere without any complaint and argument ,so where their parents get a chance to fit their children to earn money they do it without any enquiry regarding work ,number of working hours, suitable for children health or not etc. related factors

because the poor parents just want money for the survival of their family. This attitude of parents is critically contributing in increasing the number of child labourers which is an obstacle in the development of the nation as well as of future generation.

Keywords: Child labour, Poverty, Source of income, Need, Development.

Introduction

In a developing country like India, the new generation should be efficient enough and capable of doing work with more competitive and high degree of productivity through which country can compete with the most of the developed countries of the world. In order to achieve such kind of development level, Government of India has taken so many steps to make the country literate, more skilled in the technical field, etc. But the country is still facing a number of social and economic problems such as use of

child labour to a large extent which are creating hurdles in the development of the country. The term 'child labour' is used as synonym for employed child or working child. Child labour can be defined as that segment of the child population which participates in work either paid or unpaid. Child labour can be defined as that proportion of children of the country for whom how to earn money becomes more important than how to get education, how to play is replaced by how to work, etc. in the age group of 5-14 years due to poverty and the unemployment of parents whereas other children of the same age group are enjoying their childhood. According to ILO, the term 'child labour' is defined as work that deprives the children of their childhood, potential and dignity and which is harmful for their physical and mental development. Children are exposed to accidental and other injuries at work.

Millions of children from the poorer section of the society everyday wake

up with nothing to look forward except hours of back-breaking labour working everywhere from stone quarries to carpet factories to rice mills. Children as young as 5 years-old are kept away from school, forced to work 7 days a week for upto 18 hours a day and end up with injuries, respiratory disorders and chronic pain. Ultimately these children are left illiterate, plagued with health problems, etc. They hardly find them fit to find employment as and when they reach adulthood. This continued process of slavery of children is resulting in a vicious cycle of slavery, illiteracy and poverty in the developing countries like India.

The majority of researchers considered child labour as *an evil* whereas these children are *economic assets* for parents of poor families. Employment of children has continued to be a problem since the early days of industrialization. Child labour is any work by children that interferes with their full physical and mental development. Children

working for a small amount of money under pressure are deprived of love and care and remain under mental stress. Child labour is economically unsound, psychologically terrible and physically as well as morally dangerous and harmful. It involves the use of labour at its point of lowest productivity and is therefore an inefficient utilization of labour power. Laborious work at such soft age destroys the potentialities of the children.

In other words, the International Labour Organization and UNICEF defines, “Child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood and their dignity which hampers their access to education and the acquisition of skills and which is performed under deplorable conditions harmful to their health and their development” (ILO/UNICEF, 1997).

Types of Child Labour

The child labour has been categorized as follows:

1. **Hazardous Child Labour:** The worst form of child labour is that where children perform heavy work in extreme unhygienic, unsafe working conditions. Such work includes working in mines; crackers making industry, heavy metal industry, glass industry etc. This form also involves children being enslaved, forcibly engages, prostituted, trafficked, and forced into illegal activities.
 2. **Non-Hazardous Child Labour:** This form of child labor comprises of light natured work which does not affect the child. Actually, all forms of child labour are no longer seen as bad for children. But still they are supposed to do work at the cost of education, physical and mental development.
 3. **Debt Bondage:** The most abusive form of child labor, called forced and bonded labor. In this form of debt bondage, children become a commodity. Parents have absolute power over their children, making it possible for children to be pledged to pay off debts. Thus; these children are usually forced to work beyond their physical capacity and under conditions that seriously threaten their health, safety and development.
 4. **Child Trafficking:** It is the extended form of bonded labour. The victims of trafficking are forced to work in various illegal activities such as beggary, robbery, prostitution etc. Although, it is illegal but is carried out in huge numbers in developing and underdeveloped economies. In 2012, the International Labour Organization released a report stating that 168 million children around the world are engaged in different kinds of work. Children are forced to indulge in commercial sex acts, forced into a system of domestic servitude and employed in occupations that are mentally, physically, socially and morally harmful.
- According to the census of 2011, Uttar Pradesh is the state having highest children population i.e.19.27% of the total children population followed by Bihar (10.55%), Maharashtra

(8.15%), West Bengal (6.81%) and Madhya Pradesh (6.46%). These states constitute 52% of the total children population in the country. As per census of 2011, the states with highest children population were also having highest number of child labourers as compared to other states of the country. Uttar Pradesh is the state with highest number of children population and child labourers which constitutes 8,96,301 out of total child labourers i.e. 43,62,248 (20.54%) followed by Maharashtra with 4,96,916 (11.39%), Bihar 4,51,590 (10.35%), Madhya Pradesh 2,86,310 (6.56%) and West Bengal 2,34,274 (5.37%) constitute approximately 55% of the total child labourers. This shows that more population is the main reason behind the presence of child labourers because more children means more expenses which parents from the poor section fail to meet then they are left with one option to send their children in any laborious activity so that these children can meet their own expenses

and supplement income to the family also.

Reasons for existence of Child Labour

The main reasons behind the emergence of child labour are:

1. Poverty

Poverty can be termed as one of the main reason for child labour. Due to poor economic conditions, the children from the poor labour families have to find some work to supplement income.

2. Narrow minded poor parents

Most of the people belonging to the lowest section of society in India have a narrow and submissive attitude towards life. They do not believe that their children can get education and can be capable to absorb themselves in the growing economy by having a good job in any sector as they reach adulthood. So, it is better to start work at an early age to supplement income to the family rather than to waste time in getting education which is considered as

necessary for successful life in general.

3. Large Family Sizes:

Another factor that provokes the children towards work is the large family size. With an increase in family size the investment capacity of parents shrinks and they are forced by circumstances to push their children in laborious work to earn money.

4. Debtness of the family:

Debtness of the family pushes the children into laborious work to reduce the burden of borrowed money.

5. Less credit Facilities:

There are less credit facilities available for the poorer section of the society. Due to less credit facilities, poor parents are forced to push their children towards any economic activity to supplement income in the family.

6. Illiteracy :

Parental illiteracy is one of the most important factors in pushing small children into economic activities for the sake of money.

7. Rural-urban migration and urbanization:

It is considered an important cause for increasing rate of child labour in urban areas .Due to frequent migration of the parents, the children often remain absent in the schools and initially occasional, then prolonged absence from the schools finally lead to their dropout which pushes them to labour market.

8. Militancy:

In Jammu and Kashmir one of the reasons behind the children starting work at age when they should be schools is militancy. Most of the working children are victims of the disturbance prevailed in the state which left them without parents, so they had opted work to meet basic necessities of their families.

Detailed discussion as above helps us to understand the reasons behind the existence of child labour in our country. It can be evaluated that the basic reason is poverty which leads to the occurrence of some other related reasons and finally the youngest generation from the poorest section indulge into different kinds of work at the cost of their childhood and health just for the sake of small amount of money.

According to Van P.H (1998), Child labour occurs due to selfishness of parents and for the household's survival. The people from the poorer section of the society voluntarily push their small children into work world just to increase the amount of money in the form of income for the survival of the whole family.

Rao (2000), analyses the dimensions of child labour in India and the broad trends and multidimensional approaches to the problem of child labour. It presents the position of child labour

engaged in different industries in different parts of the country. It also reveals and analyses the socio-economic characteristics of child labour, their levels of earning, levels of living and impact on household income.

According to Beegle et al. (2006), without access to credit, households are forced to rely on child labour during income shocks. Credit access and insurance programs can help to reduce the magnitude of child labour by providing families with income stability in times of crisis.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to assess the nature and magnitude of the child labour in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, four districts have been selected to evaluate the proportion of child labour in the state.

Following are the specific objectives of the present study:

- To analyze the magnitude of child labour in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- To examine the causes responsible for the emergence of child labour.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are incorporated in the study:

- Increase in poverty leads to increase in child labour.
- Children are doing work not by choice but by their family's choice and necessity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data but secondary sources are also used to get the information about the previous pattern of child labour regarding total numbers, different laws prohibiting child labour, policies to reduce the magnitude of child labour, etc. To collect primary

data, proportionate sampling method has been used. The scholar has selected four districts of J&K viz; Jammu, Kathua, Srinagar and Baramulla as these districts are having higher proportion of child labour than other districts. On an average 12 to 15 child labourers were selected from areas where they are working. The sample was taken from urban areas of the selected districts because these children migrated from rural to urban areas to get work. The selected districts are comparatively more developed than other districts and therefore, the probability is higher in urban areas for collecting information about child labourers as the children gets more opportunities of getting work.

The secondary data has been collected from the office of labour commissioner and some

NGOs .The primary data was collected through personal interview with the respondent in a well designed schedule. Personal meetings, observations and discussions with the rural and urban residents, relatives of the child labourers and child labourers were also conducted to get more information about the problem of child labour. The collected data was tabulated and analyzed by using appropriate statistical techniques.

Findings of the study

On the basis of the field work and primary information which was collected during the survey regarding child labour in the selected districts of Jammu and Kashmir ,the researcher has concluded that child labour is continuing to plague the whole nation as well as the state of Jammu and Kashmir at a rapid rate, despite of various laws, rules and policies framed

by the government to stop the practice of child labour in the country. The researcher had taken a saChildren are forced to serve in different sectors due to acute poverty. Inadequate income, large family sizes, illiteracy of the parents, cost of schooling etc. are some of the other factors responsible for pushing children towards laborious work at the age when they should be in schools to shape and develop themselves properly. So far as the case of Jammu and Kashmir state is concerned ,child labour is prominent here but the majority of child labourers belongs to different states and from rural areas of the country, these can be categorized into two groups i.e. locals and non-locals. Non -locals have migrated from their native states to earn money for their survival. The local child labour mostly are hailing from poor families ,far flung hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir and are indirectly allured by the Sarkari babus on the pretext of the bright future in the urban areas or getting then employment and

so become child labour. Other kind of local children are engaged in tea stalls, factories, industries and transportation sector.

Further it can be said on the basis of the analysis that parental illiteracy and their poverty pushes the childr

en into hazardous and some other economic activities .Child labourers are preferred by the high income groups that is why major portion of child labourers specially female child labourers are engaged in industry, this results into partial prohibition of child labour. The most educated and high income people want to hire child labour than to have an adult worker it can be considered as one of the major cause of increasing child labourers in the country as well as in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been observed during field work that these children are doing work with fake age and health certificates also exploited by their employers in the forms of low wages, long working hours. It was quite

shocking that high officials, politicians etc. are the main offenders of the laws by hiring these children without any verification, just to save themselves employers has taken physical fitness certificates from the parents of these children as a formality only. It had been found that parents are forced by some economic circumstances to push their children into labour market for any kind of work and children had no option at that time rather to put themselves into work industry to earn money and for them age was not a matter of concern for them when they joined work. Therefore, there is no doubt that illiteracy,unemployment,large family sizes,etc. are also equally responsible for the emergence of child labour but the root cause is poverty for the occurrence of related reasons and of course child labour too.

Hence, it has been concluded that children are still serving in various sectors at an early age whatever be the reason behind their working, it

means our measures are lacking somewhere only implementation cannot work we all have to contribute to follow various laws framed for the protection of children .

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