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Causes and Consequences of Child Labour: Government Initiatives

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Abstract

Child labour is the practice of having children engage in economic activity on part or full time basis. Child labour in India is a socio-economic phenomenon. Child labour jeopardizes children's rights and prevents children from getting an education, learning skills. The number of working children in India is 248 million and in Andhra Pradesh there are 13.6 lakh child laborers which stand second in India. The present study sought to examine the socio-economic profile of child labour in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. Data was collected from child labour in ten villages of G.D Nellore Mandal of Chittoor district. Small Land holdings in agricultural areas and caste system in rural areas is the main reason for child labour. Poverty, Illiteracy, unemployment, lack of good schools and growth of informal economy are major causes of child labour in India. The results revealed that majority (58%) of the respondents were engaged in Agriculture. Nearly (73%) of the respondents were wage-paid workers and semi-skilled. Almost all the respondents were engaged in work at an early age to supplement family income. The data concluded that Poverty is the main cause of sending their children to work. Illiteracy, unemployment, lack of good schools, awareness on the education of the girl child and growth of informal economy are considered as the other major causes and consequences of increasing the number of child labourers. The Policy initiatives taken by Government of India through various programmes, NGO's and major National Legislations had a great impact on the situation of child labour and for the protection of child rights and elimination of child labour in India.

Keywords: Child labour, Poverty, Programmes, Initiatives, Causes.

Introduction

Child Labour is usually defined as participation of children between 5-14 years in gainful activity. India has the largest population of child labour which constitutes nearly seven percent of the work force. Child labour restricts the right of children to access and benefit from education and denies the fundamental opportunity to attend school. Child labour prejudices children's education and adversely affects their health. In spite of Globalization of Indian Economy, the poor households could not find better alternative sources of income except to work. Child labour has become a part of developmental process at National and International level. Still in modern world, it is becoming an abuse of child and human rights in third world countries including India. Child labour has direct relation to poverty, education, adult employment, human development and overall development of the society.

Global Scenario

Child labour is a pervasive problem throughout the world, especially in developing countries. Africa and Asia together account for over 90% of total child employment. Child labour is a crime committed against one out of every seven children in the world. According to ILO report 250 millions child workers aged 5-14 were involved out of which 171 million were involved in hazardous work. The report of ILO says that largest number of child labour was seen in south Asia. The most rapidly and widely ratified International human rights treaty in the history has been signed by 193 countries worldwide by UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

India has a dubious distinction of having largest number of Child laborers (2nd largest number) in the world. Over 85% of child labour in India works in rural areas in agriculture, livestock, forestry, mining, fisheries etc. The planning commission report on child labour says that according to 2011 census there are 2.26 crore economically active children in the age group of 5-14 years. Among the states, Uttar Pradesh has almost one-fourth of child labour in India followed by Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh stands third in India in the

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concentration of child laborers in multiple economic activities such as agriculture, sheep rearing, chili processing, brick kiln, beedi rolling, scrap collection etc.

The M. V. Foundation in Andhra Pradesh found nearly 400,000 children, mostly girls between 7-14 years of age toiling for 14-16 hours a day in cotton seed production across in country of which 90% are employed in Andhra Pradesh.

- 17 million children in India work as per official estimates
- Children were put in an average of 21 hours of labour per week when working outside the family.
- 19% of children employed work as domestic help.
- 60 – 70 % of child laborers were engaged in agriculture.
- 90% working children are in Rural India.
- 85% of working children are in unorganized sectors.
- There are approximately 2 million child commercial sex workers between the age of 5 - 15 years and about 3.3 million between 15 and 18 years. They form 40% of total population of commercial sex workers in India.

Constitutional Provisions

Article 24: No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or work which is hazardous.

Article (39-E): The state shall direct its policy towards securing the health and strength of workers, men and women and the tender age of children are not abused.

Article (39-F): Children shall be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

Article 45: The state shall endeavor to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the constitution for free and compulsory education for children until they complete the age of 14 years.

The Implementation of Right to Education Act of 2010 ensures free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6-14 years.

Causes of Child Labour

- **Poverty:** Poverty is undoubtedly a dominant factor for child labour as Below Poverty Line families force their children to work to supplement their family Income. Poverty has direct impact on education and health of schooling children.
- **Illiteracy and unemployment:** Is another major cause of child labour in India.
- **Wherever literacy levels are low,** the size of family is large and the child is compelled to work.
- **Urbanization and adult unemployment.**
- **Lack of proper educational facilities** lead to more number of school dropouts.
- **Overpopulation.**
- **Increasing education and living costs.**
- **Family disintegration and inadequate measures of social security.**
- **Informal economy and ineffective law enforcement.**
- **Low level of parental education.**

Consequences of Child Labour

Children who work instead of going to school remain illiterate who limits their ability to contribute to their own wellbeing as well as to community. Small landholdings in agricultural areas

and caste system in rural areas is the main consequence of child labour. Immature and inexperienced child labour are unaware of short and long term risks involved in their work. Working long hour's child labour is often denied of basic school education, normal social interaction, personal development and social support from their family.

The major consequences of child labour are

Physical injuries and mutilations are caused growth deficiency is prevalent among working children long term health risks especially in girls pesticide poisoning is one of the biggest killers of child labour(40,000 globally every year).

- Exhaustion, growthlessness and malnutrition are a result of underdeveloped children performing heavy manual labour.
- HIV/AIDS and other STD's are more among child labour. One million children are forced to prostitution every year. Pregnancy, drug addiction and mental illness are common consequences of child prostitutes.

Girl Child Labourers in India

Over 80 percent of child laborers are found in rural sector and 20 percent are found in urban sector. The degree of urbanization in India is 27:57%.The rural girl child laborer is generally engaged in household activities as compared to a female urban child laborer, who also work in the informal and unorganized sector, which includes small scale cottage industries and factories. The girl child laborer is also found in the domestic work and prostitution, in urban and rural areas. Generally girl child laborers work in hazardous industries, domestic service, agriculture and cultivation, fetching firewood, cutting grass, milking, cooking as bonded labour, working as rag-pickers, vendors and sex workers.

Objectives

- The general objective of the study is to know about the magnitude, problems and causes of child Labour in various dimensions. The specific objectives of the study are:
- To study the socio-economic status of child labour
- To examine the type and nature of work of child labour.
- To assess the causes/reasons and contributing factors to become child labour.

2. Methodology

The present study was conducted in ten villages in Gangadhara Nellore Mandal of Chittoor district. Agricultural laborers were plenty in number in this area. The total sample consisted of 100 girl child laborers in the age group of 6-14 years. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in the selection of respondents.

- Interview schedule was used was used to collect data.
- Household schedule and individual schedule were used to study the socio-economic status and causes and reasons of child labour.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Major Source of Income

Sl. no	Source of Income	Percentage
1	Cultivation	14%
2	Agriculture labour	58%
3	Others	28%
	Total	100%

The data in the above table shows that the major source of income of respondents (58%) was through agricultural labour. The other sources of income constitute house hold workers and workers in match factories.

Table 2: Distribution of Child labour by Type of Work

Sl. no	Type of Work	Percentage
1.	Self employed	10%
2.	Unpaid family workers	17%
3.	Wage paid workers	73%
	Total	100%

The data in the above table shows that the majority of child labour was wage paid workers (73%). This data gives us evidence that poverty is the main cause of sending their children to work at an early age.

Table 3: Distribution of Child labour by Nature of Work

Sl. no	Nature of Work	Percentage
1.	Unskilled	11%
2.	Semi-skilled	50%
3.	Skilled	39%
	Total	100%

The data in the above table reveals that majority of child labour were semi-skilled (50%). Nearly 40% were skilled workers. Many children were semi-skilled which suggests that their skill and productivity is affected due to their engagement in labour at early age stunting their physical growth and hampering their intellectual development.

Table 4: Distribution of Child labour by their Place of Work

Sl. no	Place of Work	Percentage
1.	Within the Village/Town	94%
2.	Outside the Village/Town	06%
	Total	100%

The data in the above table shows that majority of child labour work within the village which reveals that all the child labour is from local areas.

Table 5: Distribution of Child labour by causes for taking up work

Sl. no	Causes	Total	Percentage
1.	Self-dependence	5	06.84%
2.	Poverty	64	87.67%
3.	Others	4	05.47%
	Total	73	100%

The data from the above table indicates the causes for taking up work. Majority of respondents (87%) took up work for supplementing family income as all the respondents were below poverty line.

4. Summary

Nearly three-fourths of child labour in the study area is wage paid workers. Half of the child labour is semi-skilled. Majority (94%) of child labour worked within the village. Majority of sample commuted to their work by walk. Nearly half of child labors were engaged in agriculture. More than half of child labour entered into work at an age of 10-12 years. More than half of them obtained wages of 10-20 rupees per day. This data clearly indicates that poverty is the main cause of the widespread prevalence of child labour Majority of respondents

was satisfied with their job and they took up work to supplement family income. All the respondents were giving their earnings to their parents. Almost all the parents of child labour were illiterate and agricultural labour. Thus the problem of child labour is a social evil that requires awareness and change in all sections of the society.

5. Government Initiatives

A number of Policy Initiatives and programmes have been undertaken by Government of India with the objective of dealing with the problem of rapidly increasing number of child workers. The Government has been taking proactive steps to tackle this problem through strict enforcement of legislative provisions. State Governments which are the appropriate implementing authorities have been conducting regular inspections to detect the cases of violation. Since poverty is the root cause for the increase of child labour, government is laying lot of emphasis on the rehabilitation of these children and on improving economic conditions of their families.

Major National Legislations Are

- The Children (Pledging of Labour) Act 1933 was the first law against bonded labour.
- Employment of Children act.
- The Factories Act of 1948.
- The Plantations Labor Act 1951.
- The Mines Act of 1952.
- The Motor Transport Workers Act 1961.
- The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act).
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act of 2000.
- The Right to Children for Free and Compulsory Education.
- The Formulation of a new National Child Labour Policy.
- The Enactment of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act.
- The setting up of Taskforce on Child Labour.
- The Adoption of Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Initiation of National child labour project (NCLP) in 1988 to rehabilitate working child labour in the endemic districts of the country.

6. Conclusions

The problem of child labour poses a challenge before Nation. The practice deprives them of their livelihood and is harmful to their physical and mental development. Poverty, unemployment, lack of good Schools and growth of informal economy are considered as the important causes of child labour. UNICEF and BCC reports suggest that poverty is the big cause of child labour in India. The girl child laborer is particularly alarming due to gender discrimination in large part of the society. Over 80% of child laborers are found in rural sector mostly engaged in agriculture and household activities. So the government of India as well as State Government is taking necessary steps to remove girl child labour in Indian society. However, Globalization and rapid industrial growth in the last few years has resulted in long term health risks, physical injuries, growth deficiencies, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS etc. The measures such as creation of advanced research facilities, Human resource development, creation of environmental and occupational health cells and development of database and information system should be maintained to monitor and overcome the problem of child labour.

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