
SOME ANALYTICAL ASPECTS OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Childhood is the most cherished period of one's life. A child is unaware of all the sorrows, tensions and constraints of life. A child's innocence is its most precious asset. A child is characterized by its unrestricted flow of imagination, naive interpretation of the world and the innocent urge to achieve the impossible and reach the infinity. But what if a child is forced to think instead of imagining? What if a child is forced to give up its innocence and develop a manipulating view point? What if a child is forced to take up responsibility of earning for his family when he should be playing with toys and friends? What if a child is forced to fight for survival when he is supposed to enjoy his carefree life?

KEY WORDS-Childhood, Poverty, Illiteracy

INTRODUCTION

Population is an ultimate resource, as human knowledge allows us to produce more finished products out of fewer raw materials natural resource are becoming more available, the air and water in rich countries are becoming cleaner and human beings are living much longer than ever before. But this is a shining picture only of a very few fortunate people who live in highly developed countries. But in less developed countries the stark realities about majority of people are very unpleasant. Poverty, illiteracy, absence of sanitary and health facilities, irresponsible state machinery, resigned fatalist people, large family size, prevalence of hunger etc. may be several characteristics which have made the life of the people below poverty line (BPL) miserable. There are several out comes of such living; Child labour is one of them.

Sakurai Riho (2006) states that child labour is not a recent phenomenon. It has existed over the century not only in the impoverished areas of developing countries but also in developed countries until the beginning of the 20th century (Cunningham and Viazso, 1996; Wiener, 1991). Wahba, (2001) remarks Child labour is both a cause and a consequence of poverty.

Scholten, Werner (2005) very rightly remarks, "India is a wonderful country, however, India does not only have nice faces but in spite of all progress very ugly ones too. One of these is the shocking degree of work done by children." He maintains that "Work done by children robbing them of their child and dignity, denying them access to education and the acquisition of professional skills and taking place under conditions which are damaging their health and development."

According to the Child Labour (Prohibition and regulation) Act, (1986) "Child means a person who has not completed his fourteen years of age.

International labour organization (ILO) puts two conditions for designating are a child labour:-

- (a) Labour that is performed by a child who is under the minimum age specified for that kind of work (as defined by national legislation, in accordance with accepted international standards), and that is thus likely to impede the child's education and full development.
- (b) Labour that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of the unconditional worst forms of child labour, which are internationally defined as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and

illicit activities. child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out, known as hazardous work.

Fitzsimons, Emla (2003) Among adults the term "Child Labour" conjures up a particular image children chained to looms in dark, mills and sweet shops as if in a long nightmarish line running from Lancashire in the 1830's right through the South Asia of today.

Edmonds V. Eric (2007): The Phrase "Child Labour" Conjures Images of children chained to factories sold as slaves or forced in to prostitution (ILO 2006). Some countries' officials define child labour as wage work (Pakistan) or market work that is harmful to the future well being of children (Vietnam) this later standard is based on the precedent of the ILO Article 1, 136(c).. Which is, the minimum age for admission to employment was passed in 1973 and has been signed by 135 countries date to. Signatories agree to pursue a national policy to abolish child labour and to increase the minimum age of employment to "Level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons Article 1, 138(c)".

Child Rights and You, (CRY) (2006) Child labour is making children do extremely hazardous work in harmful conditions, putting their health, education, personal and social development, and even their life into risk sometimes. Child labour is also any work within or outside the family that involves a time and energy commitment which affects the ability of the child to participate in leisure, play and educational activities.

International Labour Organization (ILO), (1986) : has defined child labour as that which includes "children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful life".

The ILO's Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labor (SIMPOC) is the international body charged with tracking child labor around the world. Their definition of what exactly is "child labor" varies over time, in part because of controversy over what can be considered harmful. At the time of writing, a child laborer is defined by SIMPOC as an economically active child under 12 that works 1 or more hours per week, an economically active child '14 and under' that works at least 14 hours per week or 1 or more hours per week in activities that are "hazardous by nature or circumstance," and a child '17 and under' that works in an "unconditional worst form of child labor" (trafficked children, children in bondage or forced labor, armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, illicit activities, ILO 2002). The ILO (2006a) estimates that there were 218 million child laborers in the world in 2004 under this definition.

The companion recommendation document for C182, R190 Worst Forms of Child Labor Recommendation, suggests that these hazardous forms of child labor include: "(a) work which exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; (b) work underground, under water, at dangerous heights, or in confined spaces; (c) work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the handling or transport of heavy loads; (d) work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperature, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health; (e) work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises or the employer."

PATTERN OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

Researchers conducted so far have given several estimates of the incidence of child labour in India ranging from 14 million to about 100 million i.e. every fourth child in the age group of 5-15 is employed. the figures released by the non-governmental agencies are much higher than those of the State. It is estimated that over 20% of the country's GNP is contributed by child labour. UNICEF cites figures from various resources that put child labour in India at between 75-90 million. For some observers, the exact number of child labourer in India could be as high as 150 million. India is the largest producer of child labour and illiteracy on this earth. A quarter of the world's total number of child labourer are in India and every third household in our country has a child at work.

Children in India are employed in almost all the activities of the non formal sector. However, most of them are employed in the agricultural sector or in jobs closely related to agriculture, as is the pattern in many developing countries. A unique factor in India is that a significant number of these children are bonded labourers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Badiwala, Mitesh (1996) : The issue of child labour is a developmental issue worth studying. The idea that children are being forced into labour concerns many people. India is a good example of a nation which suffers from the labour.

UNICEF Report (2006) : "It is difficult to find much that is praiseworthy, from the stand point of a child centered approach to child work, in a unilateral import ban".

Fraser Elizabeth (2005) : Australia has high rate of employment for children and young people compared to other developed countries for instance 45.6% of the 15 to 19 year old age group is in paid employment (Compared to a mean of 26.2% for organization for Economic Co-operation and development countries) much of this employment is in casual and part time work in the retail and services industries.

Balhotra, Sonia (2000) : children work is necessary because of their income contribution for the household to meet subsistence expenditures. The fact that a testable implication of this hypothesis is that the wage elasticity of child labour supply is negative. Previous work has tended to infer from a negative income that poverty drives children into work. It is argued here that a negative income elasticity only tells us that child leisure (or education) is a normal good. Using a large household survey for rural Pakistan, labour supply models for boys and girls in wage work are estimated.

Donnel, O and Rosati, (2000) : The ILO definition of the worst forms of child labour includes work that is likely to jeopardise health and safety. Effective targeting of those child work activities most damaging to health requires both conceptual understanding and empirical evidence of the interactions between child labour and health.

Bhalotra Sonia (2003) : The incidence Child labour is higher in Sub-Saharan Africa than any other region in the world (ILO, 1998). It is estimated that 41% children aged 5 to 14 years in Sub-Saharan Africa work which is about 80 million children, participation rates are highest in East Africa, followed by West Africa and then Middle Africa. The Incidence of Child labour in the same age-range and for the same definition of work is estimated to be 21% in Asia and 17% in Latin America (Ashagrie, 1998). The Number of working children is however greater in Asia on account of its greater population density. Of the 250 million children estimated to be at work, 61% are in Asia, 32% in Africa and 7% in Latin America. 120 million of these 250 million children are in full time work (ILO, 1996a).

Schultz T 1961 and Backer Garry (1964) : Developed a Human Capital Theory, encourages investment in education and other relevant work training because such investment will entail increase in income in the future. The argument that by such investment, people accumulate appropriate knowledge, skills or abilities and thus become a more productive labour force than those without these asset, accordingly, individual with better skills, longer education and experience of relevant work are consider more productive and thus may expect higher income.

Enly, Gtusfsson, Wright (2002) : Throughout the world, the reality of child labor and children in the streets precedes recorded history. Child labor has generally shown a decline as technology has improved, education has become more accessible, and a legal framework protecting the rights of children has been established.

Lori Schmidt, Maratha friendly, Jane Beach (1993) : The risk factor for young workers identified were their relative in experience, lack of training, maturity levels and their physical and psychological developmental capacity specific risk to their educational commitments were also noted.

India has the largest number of child labour in the world. Even after 55 years of Independence with various legislations and policies coming into existence, the problem of poverty still continues to hold alarming proportions in India. Large numbers of children continue to work in cottage industries and small

scale units producing a wide range of products such as bidis, carpets, firecrackers, matches, bangles, etc. However, in the estimation of the number of child workers in India, different research bodies have arrived at different figures. This is mainly because of the difference in the methodology that is used to estimate child labour and also because of the differences relating to the definition of 'child labour', and 'work' itself. For example, child labour may not be recognized when children work as part of the family unit.. This is particularly common in agriculture and allied industries where an entire family may works together and earn their livelihood

Unfortunately child is a factor of production for a large segment of society. Child labour is a source of income for poor families a study conducted by the ILO Bureau of Statistics' "children's work was considered essential ..(Mehra kerpelman, 1996) in some cases, the study child's income was between 34% and 37% of the total house hold income which reveals the Importance of a poor family."

General Annan Kofi (2007) : Child labour has serious consequences that stay with the individual and with society for far longer than the years of childhood. Young workers not only face dangerous working conditions, they face long-term physical, intellectual and emotional stress. They face an adult hood of unemployment and illiteracy.

It is difficult to monitor the current number of children engaged in child labour. This is because of the Government does not collect or analyses current data regarding child labour collecting information in people know child labour is against the law and they do not want to get into trouble (Devi, 1985, 37). Figures continue to be based on information gathered in 1981 (HRW 1996, 122). UNICEF estimates "from 75 to 90 million child labour under the age of 14". (HRW-1996, 122).

In the year 2001 the national census of the Indian Government conducted 84 million child labours, the ministry of labour speaks about 17 million which would be twice as much. The United Nations (UN) assumes that there are even hundred million child labours.

According to the statistical data of the NSSO which delivers detailed report every five year since 1972 the number is at 84 millions another estimates is based on the number of children of school age not attending any school it assumes that these children work and therefore count 62 million child labours. (India Child Labour, NSSO, 2006).

There is no dearth of researches conducted on child labour in India. But most of the studies are related to already identified industries viz., Lock Industry of Aligarh, Carpet Industry of Mirzapur-Bhadoi region, Bidi Industry, Crackers Industry of Shiva Kashi, Bangle making units of Firozabad etc. Only those areas were taken up for studies for which a hue and cry took place because of the issue raised by some organizations. The rampant child labour at small tea stalls, with a petty shop keeper or with a road side Dhaba has not attracted the attention of scholars. The Media that shouts against child labour is served tea etc. by a child labour in road side Dhabas Therefore this area of study has been taken for in-depth study. The present work propose to make a census survey of Meerut City for road-side Dhabas, the child employment in them and thereafter to make a study of the causes of such a state of society as well as its impact.

OBJECTIVES

1. To measure the magnitude of child labour in the society.
2. To understood the composition of child labour—(A) Social Composition : religion wise, case wise, region wise, and age wise. (B) Economic Composition : Occupation and Income composition of the parents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is census survey (primary data) based study for which information will be collected by the researcher himself. A schedule will be designed to collect the data from the child labour after making a survey of the Dhabas Secondary data will be taken from various libraries and institutions e.g. library of planning commission, NSSO, Institute of Child Labour Noida, as well as Lucknow, Ratan Tata Library, Delhi,

International Labour Organization Reports, HRW publication of Government of India, May be helpful to provide theoretical framework.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF CHILD LABOUR IN THE DHABAS

The present study is conducted in five different key locations of District Meerut . For understanding the nature and extent of child labour, the study is subdivided into five parts. The first part presents the demographic variables; the second part presents the level of education of the working children and their reasons for dropping out of school and lastly, remuneration and reasons for their involvement in child labour are presented in part three.

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF WORKING CHILDREN

In order to address the problem of child labour it is of great importance to understand the demographic variables of children involved in the labour process. Information on age, gender and district of origin was extremely important in order to establish the age group of children involved in child labour in the Dhabas and eateries sector, their gender distribution and their place of domicile. It was also important in order to understand migration patterns as related to involvement in child labour. For the purpose of interventions this information is expected to be very useful and was thus collected during the interviews with the working children.

GENDER AND AGE

The largest group of child labour were those 10– 13 years of age (46% of the total number of children interviewed.) Table 1.1 (a) shows that there were very few girls (4%) who were involved in child labour in the Dhabas and eateries as compared to boys. (96%). Several factors were associated to this particular phenomenon. In Meerut, this was because working in the Dhabas and eateries is considered as an activity for men, as they did not need much care and attention to be given. Also they could be made to do more work for prolonged hours.

(a): Gender and age distribution of children working in Five (N=350)

Age	Male %	Female %	Total
6<=	4	0	4
8' - 10	18	0	18
10' - 12	46	4	46
12' - 14	28	0	32
Total	96	4	100

Source: Interviews with the working children in the Dhabas and eateries of C.C.S. University, Hapur Adda, Jail Chungi, Medical College, December 2009

One reason that explains the high involvement of children aged between 10–13 years is the fact that at this particular age children are expected to have completed their primary education. With limited chances of joining secondary schools and due to family pressure, working at the Dhabas and eateries can be considered as one of the options available for them.

EDUCATION LEVEL OF WORKING CHILDREN

In the survey that was administered, information on the level of education was collected for every working child interviewed. The purpose was to understand the education level of the working children. Table 3.2 presents the findings.

Table 1.2: Percentage distribution of working children in the Dhabas and eateries by education status and age (N=350)

Education Status	Age Group				
	6 <=8	8' - 10	10' - 12	12' - 14	Total
Not enrolled in Primary education	0	0	6	0	6
Dropped out of Primary Education	4	14	25	24	67
Attending Primary Education	0	4	1	8	13
Completed Primary Education	0	0	0	14	14
Total	4	18	32	46	100

Source: Interviews with the working children in the Dhabas and eateries of C.C.S. University, Hapur Adda, Jail Chungi, Medical College, December 2016

The education profile of the working children as shown in the above table indicates that 67% of the working children had dropped out of primary education and 6% of the interviewed children had not enrolled in primary education at all. During interviewing the children, it was learnt that their family had to fight for two meals a day, leaving them no option but to work.

After discussing with the different children, adult workers and owners and managers of the Dhabas and eateries, the following conclusions were made by the researcher:

- In the canteens and Stalls, since it was easy to get a job, the children joined these places for washing plates, cleaning tables, sweeping the floor and similar activities. Since the pay of these activities is very low, (as low as Rs. 1300 p.m), on gaining some experience and confidence, they easily get chance to learn cooking various food items, cutting vegetables, etc. before cooking and related skills. This helps them to increase their salary. More specifically, this is a general phenomenon in the stalls. The average salary in the stalls is Rs. 1250/-.
- In the Dhabas, the children with less experience get paid very less. (as low as Rs.800/-). Here, as unlike the stalls, children do not get chance to learn new skills so easily. This is because the Dhaba owners would not like to compromise the quality of food made by a new comer as this may lead to a loss of customer for them, incase the quality of food is not up to the mark. Hence, scope of learning and growth in the Dhabas, as compared to the Stalls, is low, resulting in low pay. However, it is important to note that if the child possesses good cooking and related skills in some specific area, then he gets, comparatively, well paid. (As much as 1800/-). The number of such children in the Dhabas is very few. Hence, average pay for the children in the Dhabas is, comparatively, very low.(Average salary Rs. 1250/-
- The Bars of Meerut do not prefer to recruit children of lesser age. They prefer to recruit experienced hands who are experts in their specific areas. Since, the pay for the experts in any area of the Dhabas and eateries is comparatively high and less number of children are working in the bars, the average salary of the child worker in the Bars is high.

The quest for money was explained by a good number of children interviewed to be the main driving force for working in the Dhabas and eateries. Children in the sample conceded that their earnings, though meager, were essential as they were expected by their parents and guardians to support the family. Children narrated that it was important for them to support their families due to the fact that their families could not raise sufficient money to provide the basic needs. Working children earned between Rs.1200/- to Rs 2500/- per

month; the variations depended on a variety of factors including the age of the child and the nature of the specific tasks involved and performed. Children used their incomes to meet their daily basic needs and needs of their family. Due to the small amounts of money they received, they were unable to send money to their families frequently. They did not have a specific pay time; depending upon owner's business policy, availability of funds with the owner and, sometimes, depending upon owner's mood, payment was made.

LIMITATIONS:

The problems encountered in the field can be mentioned as under:

1. Given the small size of the samples drawn from various locations, it was difficult to make a generalisation from the research findings. Because of this, the findings remain specific to the study areas. This means that in order to have a generalised picture of child labour in the Dhabas. lots of scope for research in this area is there.
2. Observation was a useful method, but could not always be carried out. For example, quiet a number of times, work atmosphere inside the kitchen could not be observed and hence, the researcher had to depend on the children's interviews to reveal these experiences.
3. Language was a problem in some of the cases. Some children did not understand any other language except their mother tongue. In those cases, help of their friends had to be taken who could interpret the researcher, their views.

The nature of this study was observational and interpretive. While this approach allows us to illuminate and more clearly understand the concept of child labour, the nature of the design precludes causal claims. Although the researcher feels that the approach has generated deep, rich and interesting insights into these phenomena, it limits the extent to which researcher is able to comment on the full range of issues related to stress and related aspects amongst children working in Dhabas and eateries. The limitations and contributions of the study lead to number of potentially fertile opportunities for further research.

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