



A STUDY ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF CHILD LABOR WORKING IN TINSUKIA TOWN OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the implications of child labor working in different unorganized sectors and self-employed to know their working conditions at the work place, working hours, earnings and particularly to examine whether they do the work willingly or compelled by any other person. The study is a descriptive study conducted in 'Tinsukia Town' during the period 1st July to 30th July 2019. The total 150 child workers selected randomly as respondents for the study who had not attained the age of 14 years. The necessary information from the respondents pertaining to their working conditions, perceptions towards these working conditions and level of awareness regarding the legality of the practice of the child labor has been collected through a schedule prepared for the purpose. The collected data is represented in the tabular form for getting the inferences based on the objectives of the study. Arithmetic percentage is adopted as the statistical tool for analysis and better presentation of the data for better understanding about the litigation behind the fact as well as to offer suggestions to the stakeholders in reducing the evil of child labor from our country.

KEYWORDS : Child Labor, Organized Sector Child Labor, Unorganized Sector Child Labor, Self-employed Child Labor, Measures Combating Child Labor Etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Children are more an asset than a liability to the nation or society. A child being an adult of tomorrow is expected to play an important role in the nation-building process. But this depends on the manner in which the child is allowed to grow into youth and subsequently to adulthood. Any nation which neglects its children and let them to be exploited does at its own peril because children of today are the citizens of tomorrow. Children occasionally are being forced by the socio-economic compulsions to work for their survival. They work either for wages or without wages at home or outside. They work against their legitimate rights to have education, freedom, opportunity for play and recreation, social security, protection and affection and thus turn to be physically weak and mentally backward.

CHILD LABOR – CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION –

The concept of child labor consists of two terms – 'Child' and 'Labor'. In simple terms a child is a person under 14 years and this is the universal standards. In India also full time participation of a person below the age of 14 years in economic activities is regarded violation of the constitution. As regards the term 'Labor' it means any extortion of mind or body undergone partially and wholly with a view to some good other than the pleasure derived directly from the work. Thus 'child labor' denotes the work done by children which overtakes their strength and stunts their physical or mental growth.

POSITION OF CHILDREN IN PRESENT DAY –

In despite of the various attempts at international level to provide children the basic rights and to protect them from exploitations to which India has been one of the signatories as well as the constitutional provisions, Planning Commission efforts, number of legislative measures, recommendations and suggestions given by various committees and commissions, the evil of child labor is not only persisting but increasing day-by-day in India and Assam state is no exception to it.

TYPES OF CHILD LABOR

Child labor can be divided into the following three categories depending upon the nature of work performing by them –

1. **Organized Sector Child Labor:** Child Labor who are working in a sector where their employment terms are fixed and regular and they get assured work.
2. **Unorganized Sector Child Labor:** Child Labor who are

working in such a sector where their employment terms are not fixed and regular, as well as the enterprises, are not registered with the government.

3. **Self-employed Child Labor:** Self employed child labors are the children who generally find their own work rather than being provided with work by an employer, earning income by engaging in a particular work operating themselves.

MEASURES COMBATING CHILD LABOR –

Child labor has always been a subject of serious concern for the government, academicians, social activists and non-governmental organizations. Various remedial steps have been taken at the national and international levels to protect the interests of the working child. The Government of India has also adopted measures combating the evil of child labor. In independent India, legal protection to working children came into being with the adoption of the constitution. Article 24 of the Constitution provides that no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or any other hazardous employment. Similarly, Article 39 protected the children against 'exploitation' and 'moral and material abandonment' arising due to their forced entry into vocations unsuited to their age and strength. Further, Article 45 directed the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years. Besides it, the Supreme Court of India has given a historic judgment in December, 1996 to ban child labor from the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study is done by keeping the following objectives in mind-

1. To understand the working conditions of the child workers at their working places.
2. To investigate their working hours in a day.
3. To know their earnings in a month.
4. To examine whether they do the work willingly or compelled by any other person.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY-

The present study is a descriptive study conducted in 'Tinsukia Town' during the period 1st July to 30th July 2019. The total 150 child workers selected randomly as respondents for the study who had not attained the age of 14 years. The necessary information from the respondents pertaining to their working conditions, perceptions towards these working conditions and level of awareness regarding the legality of the practice of the

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child labor has been collected through a schedule prepared for the purpose. The collected data is represented in the tabular form for getting the inferences based on the objectives of the study. Arithmetic percentage is adopted as the statistical tool for analysis and better presentation of the data.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA-

The collected primary data represented in the tabular form for the getting the inferences as per the objectives set for the study. The number of child labors working in Tinsukia Town is shown in the table below-

Table – 1. Number of respondent Child Labors working in Tinsukia Town

Types of Child Labor	Number of Child Labor	Percentage of Child Labor
Organized Sector	0	0
Unorganized Sector	78	52
Self-employed	72	48
Total	150	100

Source – Primary data compiled from field survey

Table -1 shows 52 percent of the total respondent child labors are working in unorganized sector, 48 percent working as self-employed and no any child finds to work in organized sector.

Table-2. Child Labors In Working In Unorganized Sector Tinsukia Town

Sl. No.	Working Place	No. of Child Workers	Percentage of Children
1	Dhaba/Tea Shops	30	38.47
2	Domestic Servants	32	41.02
4	Book-binders	16	20.51
	Total	78	100

Source – Primary data compiled from field survey

Table -2 indicates 41.02 percent of the total respondent child labors are found working as domestic servants who is comparatively higher than the percentage of the child labor working in dhaba/tea shops and as book binders.

Table – 3.Child Labors Working as Self-employed in Tinsukia Town

Sl. No.	Nature of Work	No. of Child Workers	Percentage of Children
1	Hawkers/Vendors	39	54.17
2	Rag-pickers	15	20.83
3	Shoes-Shine Boys	18	25
	Total	72	100

Source – Primary data compiled from field survey

Table -3 reveals the nature of work performing by the respondent child labor. From the table it is also clearly indicating that 39 (54.17) percent of the total respondent child labor self-employed as hawkers/vendors for selling the household articles at the residential areas, which is comparatively much higher than the percentage of rag-pickers and shoes-shine boys.

FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS:

The main findings of the study are as under –

1. During the study it is found that 52 percent of the total respondent child labors are working in unorganized sector, 48 percent working as self-employed and no any child finds to work in organized sector.
2. 41.02 percent of the child labors working in unorganized sector are found as domestic servants, which is comparatively higher than the percentage of the child labor working in dhaba/tea shops and as book binders.

3. 54.17 percent of the self-employed child labors are found as hawkers/vendors for selling the house-hold articles at the residential areas, which is comparatively much higher than the percentage of rag-pickers and shoes-shine boys.
4. Majority of the respondents have to work 8-12 hours in a day which is over and above the normal working hours. A sizable number of respondents, mostly working as dhaba/tea shops servants, book-binders and domestic servants have to work for even more than 12 hours in a day.
5. The study reveals that none of the respondents working in any occupation earn more than Rs. 1200/- per month. Majority of the respondents earn less than Rs. 800/- per month.
6. The study makes it clear that majority of the working children is not treated properly by their master/employer and they even received physical punishment time by time from their master/employer for a small mistake.
7. The study brings to the focus an important finding that almost all the respondents have been compelled by their parents or guardians to undertake work.
8. The study highlights the fact that child workers are exploited economically to a great extent. Further, as regards their perceptions about adequacy of earnings is concerned nearly three-fourth of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction due to meager earnings and also due to improper and irregular mode of payment.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS –

The following suggestions are put forward to the parents/guardians, master/employer, NGO'S, governments and society at large to remove this evil from the country and safeguard the interest of the children and nurture properly this great asset for building the nation-

1. Voluntary organizations are suggested to play a vital role in adopting and educating the orphans who are more prone to become child workers. These organizations can also generate healthy public opinion against this social evil.
2. Programmes highlighting the inhuman working and living conditions of child workers on Radio and Television could help in changing the attitude of the people in this regard.
3. Schools can also play an important role in providing part-time or week-end facilities and vocational training to the working children.
4. Besides a wider publicity to the legislative measures and adopted by the government on child labor and the punishment given to the defaulter employer would not only make people aware of the problem but would also help in changing the attitude of those who tend to exploit children.
5. The issues relating to eliminating undesirable aspects of child labor should also be included in the election manifestoes of the political parties.

CONCLUSION –

The Supreme Court of India has given a historic judgment in December, 1996 to ban child labor from the country. Besides it, this social evil has been persisting in our country. For the removal of child labor from the country it needs to bring a closer co-ordination between the department and agencies implementing the laws. It is hoped that the suggestions as mentioned in the study will be helpful to a great extent in reducing the evil of child labor from our country.

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