



## Knowledge of Child Rights among the Child Labourers in Tirupattur, Vellore (Dist): A Human Rights perspective

## KEYWORDS

Children, Child labour, Knowledge

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**ABSTRACT** *Objective: To determine the level of knowledge of child labourers on their rights. Subjects and methods: A Qualitative and Quantitative, descriptive study was conducted with 13 children going for work (11 male and 2 female) aged 7 to 18 in and around Tirupattur. Snow ball sampling was adopted to select the respondents. Respondents consent was taken and confidentiality was promised, the respondents were bit hesitant as they had awareness that child labour is hidden and masked in the society and it is illegal. A structured pre designed and pre tested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data and in-depth interviews were conducted to collect the qualitative data. The data was analyzed using SPSS 20. Results: All of the respondents have above average level of knowledge regarding their rights, yet not willing to make use of their rights due to their poor economic condition. Most of them are below the poverty line. In the in-depth interview it was revealed that most of the respondents were undergoing physical and verbal harassment. The working conditions were poor. Conclusion: Most of the children go for work because of poor economic condition. Unless Government takes steps to raise socio – economic Condition of poor people, India has to live with child labour.*

**Introduction**

In India, there are several temples of 'Bal Gopal', Bal Krishna' Bal Hanuman', that is, Childhood of God. According to Hindu philosophy, a child is considered to be 'form of' God. But today the poor child is the most neglected, most exploited and the most abused. No child is born to work. Child labour is a business term which means to employ children at work below the age that has been demarcated by the government.

Child Labour is work performed by a child that is likely to interfere with his or her right to education, or to be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. All work done by children under the age of 15 and dangerous work done by children under the age of 18 is illegal. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 32)

In India more than 4.35 million children are working as child labour. These children are working as domestic help, in workshops, in factories, bakeries and farmlands etc. Child labour is not only exploitative but also endangers children's physical, cognitive, social, and economic development. Children are right holders with the potential to make valuable contributions to their own present and future wellbeing as well as to the social and economic development of the society and thus they should under no circumstances be perceived as passive and vulnerable.

It is hard to get an exact statistics of child labour as 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 India. India is one of the worst offenders when it comes to exploiting children. A UNICEF report states that in India 17 percent working children are under the age of 15. This study attempts to explore into the knowledge of child labourers on their rights.

**Results and Discussion****Age of the Respondent**

Table 1 shows that 2 (15.4 %) belonged to the age group of 11 -12 years, 4 (30.8 %) belonged to 13 – 14 years and 7 (53.8 %) belonged to 14 – 18 years.

**Table – 1 Distribution of Age in years**

n=13		
Age in Years	f	%
11 - 12 years	2	15.4%
13 - 14 years	4	30.8%
14 -18 years	7	53.8%

**Educational Qualification of the respondent**

Table – 2 shows 3 ( 23.1% ) have finished up to 6<sup>th</sup>std, 6 ( 46.2% ) have finished up to 8<sup>th</sup>std, 4 (30.85 ) have finished up to 10<sup>th</sup> std. Regarding literacy majority of our respondents have gone only up to 8<sup>th</sup>std even though Government grantees free education and now most of them are not willing to continue their education.

**Table – 2 Educational Status of the Respondents  
n=13**

Educational Qualification	f	%
4 - 6 std	3	23.1 %
7 - 8 std	6	46.2 %
9 - 10 std	4	30.8 %

**Caste of the Respondent**

Table – 3 Shows 8 (61.5%) belonged to SC caste, 2 (15.4%) belonged to BC caste, 2 (15.4%) belonged to MBC and 1 (7.7%) belonged to OC. The table projects that majority of the respondents in this study belonged to schedule caste. Being a low caste may be they are economically very poor and therefore they are forced to send their children for work.

**Table – 3 Caste of the Respondent n=13**

Caste	f	%
SC	8	61.5%
BC	2	15.4%
MBC	2	15.4%
OC	1	7.7%

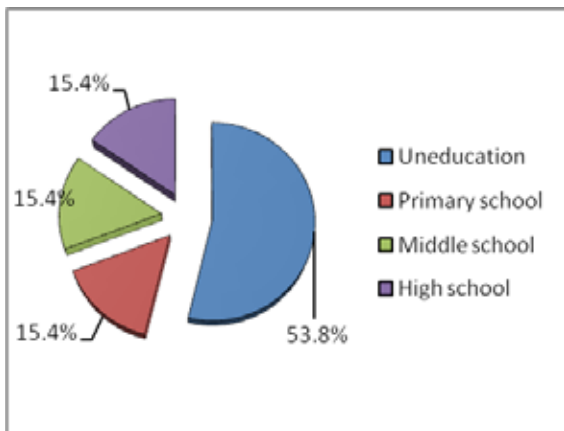
**Annual Income of the family**

Table 4 shows 5(38.5%) get less than Rs.20, 000, 4(30.8%) get up to Rs.30, 000 and 4 (30.8%) get up to Rs. 40,000 per year. It shows that a vast majority of the respondents belonged to the income group between Rs. 30,000/- per annum. All of them are below the poverty line which forces them to go for work at this innocent age.

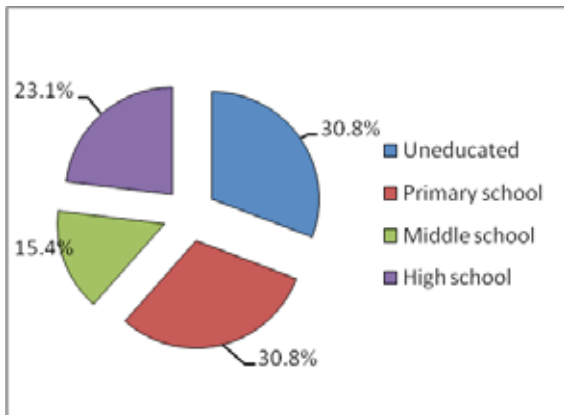
**Table – 4 Distribution of Annual Income of the Family n=13**

Annual income of family	f	%
Less than 20,000	5	38.5%
20,001 - 30,000	4	30.8%
30,001 -40,000	4	30.8%

**Education of the Parents**  
**Education of Mother**



**Education of Father**



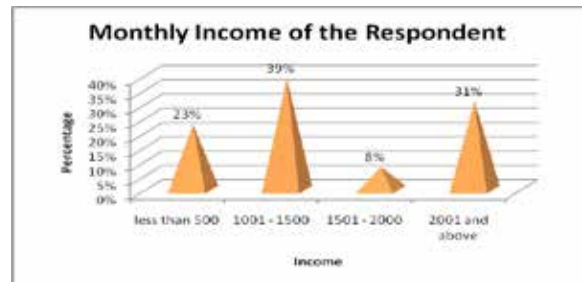
**Figure – 1 Education of Parents**

Figure – 1 Shows majority (53.8%) of mothers and (30.8%) of the fathers of the respondents are uneducated. (23.1%)

of the fathers have completed high school whereas on few (15.4%) mothers have high school education. It is very clear compared to the male counterpart females are less educated. Literacy plays major role in upbringing the child in the society and Illiteracy of the parents may be the causes of low socioeconomic condition of the respondents and indirect it may be the cause for sending their children for work.

**Monthly Income of the Respond**

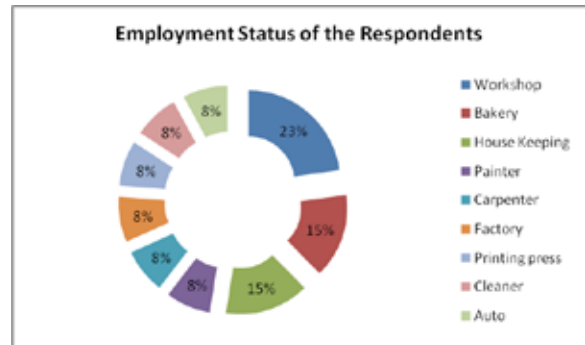
Figure 2- Shows 3(23.1%) get less than 500, 5(38.5%) get below Rs.1500, 1(7.7%) gets below Rs. 2000 and 4 (30.8%) get below Rs. 3000.



**Figure 2 – Distribution of Monthly Income of the Respondents**

**Employment Status of the Respondents**

Figure 3 - Disclose that 3(23.1%) respondents are working in workshops, 2(15.4%) are working in bakeries, 2(15.4%) are working in housekeeping and 6 (46.2%) are working in other places, where they undergo lot of physical pains, mental stress and live in unhygienic conditions due to their poverty ( Proved in the case study below)



**Figure 3 – Employment status of the Respondents**

**Knowledge of Respondents on Child Rights and child Labour**

Table 5 shows the level of knowledge the respondents have on their rights and child labour act. **“Children below the age of 14 years is a child labour”** is understood by only (53.8%) respondents. Respondents had good knowledge of the Act present in the constitution as (84.69%) of the respondents had knowledge that **“Education is a fundamental Right”** , **Government guarantees free and compulsory primary education for all children in India of free education** (76.95%) and (92.3%) had **Knowledge of education Act**. it means more than 90% of the children are aware of their rights. Questions 3,4,5 disclose that children are very well aware of their free and compulsory education and their fundamental rights yet they want to remain same and most of the children don’t want to continue their education even if they are helped to continue

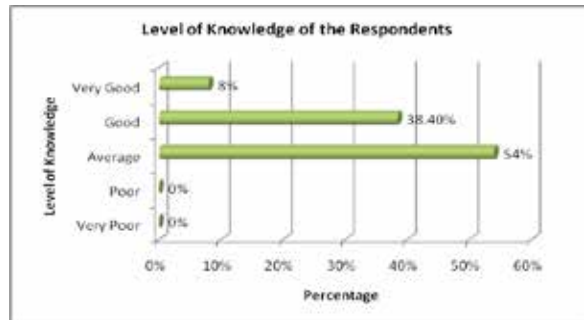
because they are not interested in going to school.

More than 60 % of the respondent doesn't know that a person should be made to work only 8 hours per day. Employers make use of innocence to manipulate the child labourers and make work out of them more than 8 hours per day. When asked about **"Child has no right to live with dignity"** only a few (38.5%) of the respondents disagreed to the negative statement, majority of the respondents feel that child has no right to live with dignity. Except one all other respondents (92.3%), including female respondent, agreed that **"Male child should be given more food than a girl child"**, and (30.8%) only disagreed to the statement that **"Girl child's health care is not much important"**, which represents the male dominant society and even children are affected with this negative thoughts.

**Table 5 - Knowledge of Respondents on Child Rights and Child Labour**

S. No.	Parameters Regarding Knowledge	Correct Response	f	%
1	Children below the age of 14 years is a child labour	True	7	53.8%
2	There are some Acts to protect child labourers in the constitution of India.	True	8	61.5%
3	Government guarantees free and compulsory primary education for all children in India	True	10	76.9%
4	Educational is a fundamental right of every child who is between 6 to 14 years old	True	11	84.6%
5	There is education to right Act in India for child labour.	True	12	92.3%
6	Indian constitution prohibits child labour under the age of 14 years	True	3	23.1%
7	Children below the age of 18 years can be made to work in hazardous occupations.	False	5	38.5%
8	Government has provision of special health care programmes for children living on the streets.	True	8	61.5%
9	Employers can hire child labourers by paying them less money.	False	5	38.5%
10	Employers can make children to work for more than 8 hours per day if paid.	False	6	46.2%
11	Male child should be given more food than a girl child.	False	12	92.3%
12	Girl child's health care is not much important.	False	4	30.8%
13	Child has no right to live with dignity.	False	5	38.5%
14	Child has the right to minimum standards of food	True	10	76.9%
15	Child has the right to minimum standards of shelter	True	10	76.9%
16	Child has no right to minimum standards of clothing	False	3	23.1%
17	Children have a right to be protected from all sorts of violence.	True	12	92.3%
18	Children have the right to freedom of expression.	True	12	92.3%

Figure 4 Shows the fact that the study respondents are all above the average level ( 54%)with regard to their knowledge on rights and child labour and some of them are good (38.4%) in their knowledge level.



**Figure 4 – Respondents Level of Knowledge on Child Rights**

**Human Rights Violation of "Right to Protection"**

All the respondents are hailing from rural area. It was very difficult to find the respondents because no one wants to reveal him/ her as child labour. Through in- depth interview the below information's were collected. These cases indicate human rights violation among the child labourers.

A boy aged 14 who works as a helper said "I am working in a bakery, where they abuse me verbally and physically, they use very ugly words which I could not hear with my ears in the beginning but now I am accustomed with it. Sometimes they beat me and kick me, even step on my chest. I wanted to react but I can't so I scold them in my hearts".

A boy aged 15 who works in workshop said, "In my work place they ill-treat me verbally. My owner scolds me with bad words (pointing our private parts and mother and sister). I wanted to leave but there is no other way so I bear it. He gives me dirty water to drink and if I get injury he does not bother and I have to spend my money for the treatment".

A boy aged 17 who works in printing press said, "They provide me hygienic water and good environment. If I don't do my work properly they will scold me by using bad words and beat me as they want and I can't do anything so I just keep mum. There is no toilet facility so I will go out somewhere to urinate".

A boy aged 17 who works as a carpenter said, "I go for work because of my family's poor condition. In the work I undergo lot of struggles yet I accept it because of poverty. They scold me with bad words and beat me and I can't react because I am a small boy. There is no toilet facility and there is no safety in my work place. I wanted to study but due to poor economic condition I could not accomplish my wish. I feel that I should have been born in a rich family. My parents are good, what to do I was born in the poor family. I was happy when I give my salary to my mother because I can help my family through my work".

**Discussion:**

Case study report clearly pictures that there is harassment in the work place where children undergo lot of mental agony too. In most of the places they don't get hygienic water and environment for their better health and well being. Almost everybody is abused verbally which so ugly to hear. Most of them do not want to continue for long time but their poor economic condition compels them to remain in the same place. Children accept the pain and ill-treatment because they are too young and no other options to go.

### Conclusion

India, an IT giant and the world's second-fastest growing major economy, has millions of child labourers. Child labour is, no doubt, an evil that should be done away with at the earliest. Though the Indian Government is committed to the task of ensuring that no child remains illiterate and hungry, the fact remains that in the given socio-economic scenario that is prevalent in our country, it is virtually impossible to do away with child labour. And the government body in charge of children's rights admits they are helpless. It is the duty of the Government to take steps to improve the socio – economic condition of the poor families. Therefore unless the socio – economic status of the poor families improves, and each individual takes responsibility, India has to live with Child Labour.

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