



Profile of Child labour: A study in the Industrial Area of Chittoor Town

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ABSTRACT

Children's are the blooming flowers of the garden of society and valuable asset of a nation. Childhood has been considered as a most important period of life. It is unfortunate that the joy of childhood is eluding scores of poor children who are working as child labour and domestic hands. Child labour is a pervasive problem throughout the world especially in developing countries. The present focuses on child labour, their parents and the working environments this place of work. For the present study the industrial estate of Chittoor town was taken for the study of child labour.

Keywords : Child labour, Socio – economic condition, working environment

Introduction

Child labour is a pervasive problem throughout the world especially in developing countries. The complex issue of child labour is a developmental issue worth investigating. The notion that children are being exploited and forced in to labour, while not receiving education, which is crucial to development, concerns many people. Children are the blooming flowers of the garden of society and valuable asset of a nation. They constitute a hidden treasure of potential development of a growing nation. Childhood has been considered as a most important period of life. It is unfortunate that the joy of childhood is eluding scores of poor children who are working as child labour and domestic hands. Abject poverty, illiteracy of parents, drought, lack of social security network, inadequate schools or lack of social security network, inadequate schools or lack of schools, expense of schooling, large family size and neglect of parents, have deprived children of education, playing time and transformed them into child labourers.

Child labour in India is quite alarming. There are several constitutional and other statutory provisions aimed at tackling child labour. Even then, it is believed that roughly one out of five children under age 15 is child labourers. The 55th round of the National Sample survey in 1999/2000 indicates that there are about 10.4 million working children in India (Ministry of Labour and Employment, Working children Group Report). According to 1991 Census, there were 11.28 million child labourers in India. Further, the magnitude of the child labour is far higher in Andhra Pradesh than in any other states of

India. According to the 1991 census, the level of child labour verified from 0.6 percent

in Kerala to 12.5 percent in Andhra Pradesh. Out of 1.66 million child labourers in Andhra Pradesh, nearly 40 percent were involved in manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairing sectors. Child labour can have a lifelong impact on children. They are working beyond their physical and mental capabilities, working long hours in physically demanding jobs, quite often in dangerous and hazardous conditions affecting their health and future development (Nangia, 19887). Poverty has an obvious relationship with child labour and studies have revealed, "a positive correlation, in some instances a strong one between child labour and poverty" (Mehra - Kerpelman, 1996). Families need money to survive, and children are a source of additional income. Poverty itself has

underlying determinants, one such determinant being caste. Nangia (1987) observed, "Scheduled caste children tend to be pushed into child labour because of their family's poverty" A study conducted by ILO (1995) found that "Children's work was considered essential to maintaining the economic level of households, either in the form of work for wages, or help in the household enterprises / household chores in order to free adult household members for economic activity elsewhere". In some cases, the study found that a child's income accounted for 34-37 percent of the total household income. This study concludes that income from child labour is important to the livelihood of a poor family.

What is apparent is the fact that child labourers are being exploited, which is evident from the pay they receive. Studies show that for the same type of work children are paid less than their adult counterparts (Nangia, 1987). Other studies have also concluded "children's earnings are consistently lower than those of adults, even where these two groups are engaged in the same tasks (Grootaer and Kanbur, 1995). Even though poverty is cited as the major cause of child labour, it is not the only determinant. Inadequate schools, lack of schools or high cost of schooling leaves some children with little else to do but work. The attitudes of parents also contribute to child labour, some parents feel that children should work in order to develop skills useful in the job market, instead of taking advantage of formal education (Mitesh Badiwala, 1998).

Existing research shows that child labour has been in existence for ages and its major causes have been poverty, famines, illiteracy, big families, cheap child labour, absence of family allowance schemes and other cultural factors. In the light of the above, the present study seeks to examine socio economic and working conditions of child labour, their parents and contributing factors that drive the children to child labour.

Objectives

- To study the socio – economic conditions of child labour and their families.
- The examiner the different contributing factors that drive children to work.
- The understand the working conditions of child labour in the manufacturing processing, servicing and repairing divisions.

Methodology

The industrial estate of Chittoor town, which is a head quarter of Chittoor District, is considered as the study area. It includes manufacturing / processing units along with automobile servicing and allied repairing units. Every day, 300 to 400 children from the surrounding areas are coming to these units. There are 500 plots allotted in the industrial area for the manufacturing and servicing units. Among these, 50 units are selected on random for this study. A total of 110 children are working regularly in this units and all of them are considered as sample for the present study. The study focuses on child labour, their parents and the working environment in their place of work. For collecting necessary information, interviews were held with the child labourers, their employers and parents, and observation technique was followed to study the working environment.

Results

Socio-economic and demographic background of child labour and their families

The study of socio-economic background of families of the child labour throws light on the factors motivating the parents to send their children to work rather than to school. More than three-fourths of the fathers of the child labourers were either illiterate or educated up to primary level only. This situation is still worse regarding the education status of their mothers, as around 90 percent of them were illiterate / less educated. Further, majority (56.4%). Similarly, majorities (45.4%) of the mothers were also labourers and nearly 40 percent were housewives.

The social background of the child labour clearly indicates their backwardness. Majority (62.7%) of the child labourers were of the age group 13-14. About one-third (31.8%) of the child labourers belonged to the age group 10-12. It is interesting to notice that some of the children were going to work in their quite early childhood of 6-9 years. More than 90 percent of them were either illiterate or stopped with primary education. Those studied sixth class and above constituted less than one – tenth (8.0%) of the child labourers. Majority (44.5%) of them were from SC/ST followed by backward castes (40.0%). When they were asked about the opinion on education, majority (47.0%) of them stated that they would join school, if they get a chance.

However, a considerable percentage (32.0%) of them felt that the present day education is not useful to get any job, and hence they are not interested. Only few of them feel that it is good to be educated. Three-fifths (61.0%) of the child labourers were from households with a family size of 3 children. Another 15 percent of them were from the households having ≥ 4 children. A quarter (24.5%) of the child labourers were from household having a small family size of ≤ 2 children.

From the above findings, it is very clear that three - fourths of the child labourers were from households with 3 children and more, whose parents were mostly illiterate, poor, and belonged to the weaker sections. To understand the scenario of child labour, it is necessary to study the perceptions of their parents (Father) and employers about child labour.

Perceptions of the parents

Majority (38.0%) of the parents were under the impression that the children will get self – employment, if they go for work from younger ages. Another one-third (35.0%) of them felt that the child laborers will get skill development and as they grow, it will be useful for them to become self-employed. Only one-fifth (20.0%) of the parents felt that it is not good to stop children from going to school. Two – thirds (66.4%) of the parents were not aware of the child Labour Act. Further every second (52.7%) parent opined that there is no point in implementing the Act without improving the living conditions of the people below the poverty line. It is also interesting to note that over four –fifths (8306%) of the households were getting their incomes supplanted by earnings through child labour in meeting household budget. More than 60 percent

felt that the wages for the child labour are meager and the employers are exploiting them. Thus, getting self-employed is the strong motivation for the parents to send their children for child labour.

Perceptions of employer

More than three-fourths (76.0%) of the employers were fully aware of Child Labour Act. Expect 7 percent of the employers, 43 percent of them were approving the Act and another 50 percent to some extent. When they were asked for the reasons, over one-third (35.0%) of them reported pressure from the parents of child labourers. Another one-third (32.7%) of the employers stated that they were helping the child labourers in development of skills. Over one-fifth (21.8%) of them were frank in expressing that they engage the child labourers because of cheap wages. Nearly four – fifths (77.3%) of the employers expressed satisfaction with regard to the performance of the child labourers. Thus, poverty of the parents and the availability of the children for work at cheaper wages are the motivating factors for the employers to favor child labour.

Working Environment

It is very important to study the working environment of the child labourers in order to understand their practical difficulties. When the children were enquired about their working environment, majority (69.1%) of them stated that their working premises were not clean and facing problems with sound and dust. However, majority (60.0%) of them stated that the working environment was not hazardous to their health. Nevertheless, it is really pitiable when their working hours are examined. Nearly three-fourths (74.5%) of them were working from 8 a.m. i.e., they were working 11 hours per day for petty wages. The situation is still worse in respect of one-fifth (19.1%) of the child labourers as they had to work from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Most (80.0%) of these children reported that their employers were not providing even snacks / tea during the working hours. Three – fifths (60.9%) of them were carrying lunch from home and another one-fifth (19.1%) of the child labourers were getting lunch meeting from their earnings. Regarding their daily wages, majority (63.0%) of them were getting Rs.51/- to Rs.75/- per day. One –sixth (16.4%) of them were working for just Rs.50/- per day. The rest of the child labourers (20.0%) were paid Rs.76/- to Rs.100/-per day.

Regarding the harassment in the work spot, majority (69.0%) of the children stated that they were scolded / beaten by their senior workers. One – fifth (24.5%) of them reported harassment from senior workers and employers. More than 37 percent of the child labourers expressed that they were not getting co-operation from the senior workers. However, it is good to notice that majority of these children expressed satisfaction on skill development.

Conclusions

Based on the observations in the preceding sections, the strong motivational factors for the parents to send their children for child labour are a) poverty, unemployment / under employment and illiteracy, b) supplementing household income c) skill development and thereby, become self-employment in future, d) rise in cost of educating children besides increasing unemployment among the educated youth.

To overcome these factors, it is appropriate to think of providing alternative income generating activities to improve the economic situation of the poor people. It is necessary to create an enabling environment where children will be motivated to enroll in schools, induced to refrain from working, and provision for poor households with income generation alternatives which will deter in sending children to work. It is also important to start comprehensive occasional / skills training programmes to create an impression among the parents that their children can get skill development, which can provide self – employment along with general education. This will eradicate the wrong notion among the parents that their children will get skill development when they go for child labour only but not to schools.

Further it is also necessary to improve and strengthen the quality in public educations a measure to prevent child labour by way of a) recruitment of more teachers b) provision for various types of equipment to train the children in skill development and c) provision for audio-visual aids, which are very effective among children. It is important to launch awareness programmes emphasizing the significance of prevention of child labour to sensitize key government departments, employers, workers organizations and parents. Also, improvement of the enforcement laws and policies through specialized training and preparation of labour inspectors is necessary to tackle the child labour. The government should take stringent measures against the erring employers.

Table- Socio – economic background of parents and child labours

Education of Father	Number	Percentage
a) Illiterate	46	41.8
b) Primary	38	34.5
c) Secondary	22	20.0
c) College	4	3.7
Total	110	100.0
Education of Mother		
a) Illiterate	67	60.9
b) Primary	31	28.2
c) Secondary	11	10.0
c) College	1	0.9
Total	110	100.0
Occupation of Father		
a) Labourer	62	53.4
b) Petty trader	29	26.4
c) Govt. employee	4	3.6
d) Private employee	15	13.6
Total	110	100.0
Occupation of Mother		
a) House wife	42	38.2
b) Labourer	50	45.5
c) Petty trader	13	11.8
d) Employee	5	4.5
Total	110	100.0
Child labour		
Age (Years)		
a) 6-9	6	5.5
b) 10-12	35	31.8
c) 13-14	69	62.7
Total	110	100.0

Education of Child Labour	Number	percentage
a) Illiterate	24	21.8
b) Up to 3 rd class	18	16.4
c) 4 th to 5 th class	59	53.6
d) 6 th class & above	9	8.2
Total	110	100.0
Caste		
a) SC/ST	49	44.5
b) B.C	44	40.0
c) F.C	17	15.5
Total	110	100.0

Opinion on Education		
a) Not useful for getting job	36	32.7
b) Good to be educated	15	13.6
c) Interested to join school if given chance	52	47.3
d) Don't know	7	6.4
Total	110	100.0
Family size in the house holds of child labour		
a) ≤ 2 children	27	24.5
b) 3 children	67	60.9
c) ≥ 4 children	16	14.6
Total	110	100.0

Table-2: Perceptions of parents about child labour

Opinion about child labour	Number	Percentage
a) Good for skill development from childhood	38	34.5
b) Useful for self employment	42	38.1
c) Not to stop going to school	21	19.1
d) Don't know	9	8.3
Total	110	100.0
Opinion Labour Child Labour Act		
a) Good and strictly implemented	23	20.9
b) Act not necessary	21	19.1
c) Govt. should provide basic needs and then implement the Act	58	52.7
d) uncertain	8	7.3
Awareness of Child Labour Act		
a) Aware	37	33.6
b) Not Aware	73	66.4
Total	110	100.0
Dependence on children for livelihood		
a) Not all	18	16.4
b) Some what	55	50.0
c) completely	37	33.6
Total	110	100.0
Satisfaction of wages of child		
a) labour satisfied	12	10.9
b) To some extent satisfied	28	25.5
c) Wages are meager	70	63.6
Total	110	100.0

Table – 3: Perceptions of employer about child labour

Awareness about child labour Act	Number	Percentage
a) Fully aware	84	76.4
b) To some extent aware	15	13.6
c) Not aware	11	10.0
Total	110	100.0
Approval of child labour		
a) Approve	47	42.7
b) To some extent approve	55	50.0
c) Don't approve	8	7.3
Total	110	100.0
Reasons for employing child labour		
a) Pressure from the parents of the children	39	35.5
b) To help the children to get some skills	36	32.7
c) Cheap wages	24	21.8
d) Uncertain	11	10.0
Total	110	100.0
Performance of child labour		
a) Satisfactory	13	11.8
b) To some extent satisfactory	72	65.5
c) Not satisfactory	25	22.7
Total	110	100.0

Table – 4: opinion of Children about Working Environment

Cleanliness in the work spot	Number	Percentage
a) Good	10	9.1
b) Not good	72	65.5
c) To some extent	28	25.4
Total	110	100.0
Sound Pollution		
a) Problematic	8	7.3
b) To some extent problematic	68	61.8
c) No problem	34	30.9
Total	110	100.0
Hazardous element		
a) Problematic	13	11.8
b) To some extent problematic	31	28.2
c) No problem	66	60.0
Total	110	100.0
Working hours		
a) 8 A.M to 5 P.M	7	6.4
b) 9- 10 A.M to 7 P.M	82	74.5
c) 8 A.M to 9 P.M	21	19.1
Total	110	100.0
Daily wages		
a) Rs 50	18	16.4
b) Rs 51-75	69	62.7
c) Rs 76-100	23	20.9
Total	110	100.0
Provision of uniform		
a) By parents	51	46.4
b) By the employer	22	20.0
c) No uniform	37	33.6
Total	110	100.0
Co – operation of senior workers		
a) Good	7	6.4
b) To some extent good	62	56.4
c) Poor	41	37.2
Total	110	100.0
Type of harassment		
a) Scolding / beating senior workers	76	69.1
b) Scolding / beating by employers	12	10.9
c) Both	15	13.6
d) Scolding / beating by customers	7	6.4
Total	110	100.0
Working lunch / snacks		
a) Carrier from home	67	60.9
b) By the employer	22	20.0
c) From own earnings	21	19.1
Total	110	100.0
Satisfaction on skills development		
a) Satisfied	56	50.9
b) Satisfied to some extent	39	35.5
c) Not satisfied	15	13.6
Total	110	100.0

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