



SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS CHILD LABOURERS IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The child labour is an age old problem in India. The roots of this problem are quite deep rooted. Despite various measures taken up by the government and other agencies, there are still more than 55 million child labourers in India. In the study area, majority of the respondents (78.50%) are males and majority of them (55.5 %) are in the age group of 11-12 years. Around 61 per cent of the respondents have primary school education and about 54 per cent of the respondents are living in rented house. Debt is the main reason for around 56 per cent of the respondents for working and majority of the respondents have the monthly income of up to Rs.2000.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Children are copiously considered as an incarnation of god. They are budding and blossoming flowers and precious gifts/assets to human life for filling the world with smile, mirth and aspiration. The children are the future citizens and their childhood determines their future and their worthy contributions to the world. Hence it is highly imperative for everyone and every government to protect, nourish and work for the overall welfare of children of a particular nation and the children of the world as whole. A child is a person who has not completed his/her fourteenth year of age and he/she had a right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education or to be harmful to their health, physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. When child labour is discussed, it is retribution on the gifted little ones on the earth and these gifts/assets are being misused for personal gains as child labour. They are brave but profoundly vulnerable survivors. The backgrounds and experiences of child labour are colourful and hence they can be called as rainbow children. Domestic entanglements such as drunken and violent fathers, cruel step parents and pecuniary difficulties of parents such as debts, interests and starvation are the reasons that coerced the children to become child labour. The other reasons of worth mentioning are death of parents and debt of parents at landlords. Children are compelled to work owing to one reason or the other in the early stages of their childhood which is pernicious to the health of an individual and the society because age plays a pivotal role in moulding the personality, values, responsibility and participation in different walks of life. Child labour in general means the employment of children in any work with or without payment. Every child out of school in the age group of 5 to 14 years, who are paid in work, children who work outside the homes or children who in hazardous industries can be said to be child labourers. Child employment was considered an essential to maintain the economic level of households. Mehra-Kerpelman(1996) in their study concluded that a child labourers' eking out is immensely important of a poor family.

Child labour is a global phenomenon and a stark truth and it is both an economic and a social evil by becoming a rampantly pervasive problem. To assess the nature and extent of the social event, it is immensely imperative to consider the characteristics of the works in which the children are involved and engaged, the dangers to

which they are exposed and the opportunities of development which they are denied. This child labour is recognized by the sociologists, educationists, development workers and medical professionals as hazardous and to the child both physically and mentally. In the developed countries like U.S.A, U.K. child labour could be checked through effective enforcement of 'Prohibition of child labour' laws, and compulsory primary education. In developing countries millions of children still work in factories, workshops, agriculture, mines, tarries and service enterprises. However, ILO (2007) statistics provide a more serious picture. It states that over 40 percent of the children of Africa are working. They are mainly working as slaves in private households, apart from other industries. Although India has only 14.4 percent of total child population working as child labourers but the actual numbers are quite high.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the spatial dimensions and elicit reasons for child labour
2. To consider the characteristics of the works in which the children are involved and engaged
3. To study the socio-economic conditions of the respondents

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 200 respondents in Anantapur district has been selected. In the study area child labour is spread over many categories. Among them, the investigator has selected from brick industry, hotel industry, automobile and slab industry have been considered and selected for the present study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Prasad (2000) stated that the problem of child labour was multi-faceted. According to him, universal primary education, poverty alleviation strategies and rural development programmes could progressively eliminate the child labour. Grimsurd (2003) studied that education and child labour are inversely related. All the developed countries made primary education compulsory up to the age of 15 and hence they had very low incidence of child labour. But the developing and underdeveloped countries do not have stringent policies regarding primary education and hence they suffered a very high incidence of child labour. The empirical evidence suggested that making primary education compulsory was helpful in removing child labour. Allen et al (2005)

emphasizes on using technology for bridging educational gaps in our society. The prime focus is to bring down the incidence of child labour in the world. It has been assumed that parents send their children to school because they are poor and they cannot afford formal education system. Most of these parents were unaware of the hazards of the impact of child labour. Some of the measures in combating child labour were educating parents and communities about various ills and after effects of child labour.

Moreover, parents should be given vocational training that will enable them for better employment prospects and help them in improving their economic conditions. In addition, this study suggested that education will help in reducing child labour and also removes the misconception on the child labour market i.e., children as a source of capital. Many children had looked for work or were forced to drop out from school due to economic reasons, including the cost of schooling (Matsuno and Blagbrough, 2005).

A study conducted in Tamil Nadu state's brick kiln industry demonstrates that child labour is extremely common in this sector. In the interlinked credit-labour market, employers do not directly employ children, but they have implemented a system that compels parents to use their children in order to improve productivity. In such an environment, parents use child labour to improve their own bargaining power (Bhukuth Augendra, 2005).

Child labour deprives a child of a proper childhood. He suffers physical and mental torture. He becomes mentally and emotionally mature too fast which is a dangerous sign. Child labour creates and perpetuates poverty. It condemns the child to a life of unskilled, badly paid work. Ultimately this leads to child labour with each generation of poor children undercutting wages (Syed Zuhair Medhi, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents have been discussed below.

Gender

The gender of the respondents has been shown in the Table 1.

**Table 1
Gender of the Respondents**

		Work sector				Total
		Bricks	Hotel	Automobiles	Slab industry	
Sex	Male	41	25	48	43	157
		82.0%	54.3%	88.9%	86.0%	78.5%
Sex	Female	9	21	6	7	43
		18.0%	45.7%	11.1%	14.0%	21.5%
Total		50	46	54	50	200
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 1 shows the sex-wise distribution of respondents. It is found that majority of the respondents (78.50%) are males and only 21.5 per cent are females. The sector wise analysis shows that there are more respondents (54%) from automobile sector followed by bricks and slab industry. It is observed that there is more number of respondents is in automobile sector.

Age

The age of the respondents has been shown in the Table 2

**Table 2
Age of the Respondents**

		Work sector				Total
		Bricks	Hotel	Automobiles	Slab industry	
Age of the child	9 and 10 years	3	6	25	11	45
		6.0%	13.0%	46.3%	22.0%	22.5%
	11 and 12 years	23	33	29	26	111
		46.0%	71.7%	53.7%	52.0%	55.5%
Age of the child	13 and 14 years	24	7	0	13	44
		48.0%	15.2%	0.0%	26.0%	22.0%
Total		50	46	54	50	200
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The table 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents. They range from 9 years to 14 years. There is more number (55.5%) of respondents in the age group of 11-12 years followed by 22.5 per cent in 9-10 years age group and 22 per cent in the age group of 13-14 years. It is concluded that majority of the respondents(55.5 %) are in the age group of 11-12 years.

Caste

The caste of the respondents has been presented in the Table 3

**Table 3
Caste of the Respondents**

		Work sector				Total
		Bricks	Hotel	Automobiles	Slab industry	
Caste	SC	17	18	5	19	59
		34.0%	39.1%	9.3%	38.0%	29.5%
	ST	0	0	0	20	20
		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	10.0%
	Muslim	0	1	33	7	41
		0.0%	2.2%	61.1%	14.0%	20.5%
	Other Minorities	1	0	0	1	2
	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	1.0%	
BC		32	26	16	3	77
		64.0%	56.5%	29.6%	6.0%	38.5%
Others		0	1	0	0	1
		0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	.5%
Total		50	46	54	50	200
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table presents the caste composition among the respondents. There are 39 per cent of respondents belonging to backward community followed by 30 per cent belonging to SC community and 21 per cent belonging to Minorities and mere 10 per cent belong to scheduled tribe. Above all it is concluded that majority of the respondents belong to backward community. The data shows that backward caste people are more prone to bondage than the other caste people.

Literacy level

The literacy level of the respondents has been shown in the Table 4

**Table 4
Education of the Respondents**

		Work sector				Total
		Bricks	Hotel	Automobiles	Slab industry	
Education of the child	Illiterate	0	0	0	12	12
		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	24.0%	6.0%
	No formal education but can read and write	0	1	2	13	16
		0.0%	2.2%	3.7%	26.0%	8.0%
	Pre-School	25	17	5	0	47
		50.0%	37.0%	9.3%	0.0%	23.5%
Primary school		23	27	47	24	121
		46.0%	58.7%	87.0%	48.0%	60.5%
Upper primary		2	1	0	1	4
		4.0%	2.2%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Total		50	46	54	50	200
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The table shows that among the respondents around 61 per cent are educated up to primary level, followed by 24 per cent up to pre-school level. There are least per cent of respondents studied at higher levels. By and large, it is concluded that around 61 per cent

of the respondents have primary school education.

Type of House

The housing type of the respondents has been elicited and presented in the Table 5.

**Table 5
Housing status**

		Work sector				Total
		Bricks	Hotel	Automobiles	Slab industry	
Housing status	Own House	31	26	5	30	92
		62.0%	56.5%	9.3%	60.0%	46.0%
Rented		19	20	49	20	108
		38.0%	43.5%	90.7%	40.0%	54.0%
Total		50	46	54	50	200
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The table presents that 54 per cent of the respondents are living in rented house while 46 per cent are living in own house.

Reasons for Working

The reasons for working as child labourer have been elicited and presented in the Table 6.

**Table 6
Reason for working**

		Work sector				Total
		Bricks	Hotel	Automobiles	Slab industry	
Reason for working	Parents have debt	10	23	54	24	111
		20.0%	50.0%	100.0%	48.0%	55.5%
	Parents sick/cannot work	3	1	0	16	20
		6.0%	2.2%	0.0%	32.0%	10.0%
	Family needed more income	37	22	0	2	61
		74.0%	47.8%	0.0%	4.0%	30.5%
	Acquiring skill	0	0	0	5	5
		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	2.5%
	Run away	0	0	0	2	2
		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	1.0%
sold	0	0	0	1	1	
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.5%	
Total		50	46	54	50	200
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is observed from the table that around 56 per cent of the respondents expressed that due to debts of the parents they had to work while around 31 per cent opined that they had to work for add income to family need and 10 per cent due to sickness of the parents. It is concluded that debt is the main reason for around 56 per cent of the respondents for working.

Income levels

The income levels of the respondents are furnished in the Table 7

**Table 7
Monthly Income of the Respondents**

		Work sector				Total
		Bricks	Hotel	Automobiles	Slab industry	
Earning during last month	Not provided	0	0	0	31	31
		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	62.0%	15.5%
	Up to Rs.2000	43	30	12	0	85
		86.0%	65.2%	22.2%	0.0%	42.5%
	Rs.2000 - 4000	6	16	42	5	69
12.0%		34.8%	77.8%	10.0%	34.5%	
Rs.4000 - 6000	1	0	0	14	15	
	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.0%	7.5%	
Total		50	46	54	50	200
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The table indicates that there are 43 per cent of respondents have the income level up to Rs.2000 per month, followed by 36 per cent between Rs.2000 and Rs.4000 per month. However there are less per cent of respondents have higher levels of income. It is also noticed from the table that majority of the respondents working in automobile industry are getting the monthly income of Rs.2000-4000. It is concluded that majority of the respondents have the monthly income of up to Rs.2000.

CONCLUSION

Child labour is a global phenomenon and a start truth and it is both an economic and a social evil by becoming a rampantly pervasive problem. Majority of the respondents (78.50%) are males and only 21.5 per cent are females. Majority of the respondents(55.5 %) are in the age group of 11-12 years and around 61 per cent of the respondents have primary school education. Above all backward caste people are more prone to bondage than the other caste people. About 54 per cent of the respondents are living in rented house. Debt is the main reason for around 56 per cent of the respondents for working and majority of the respondents have the monthly income of up to Rs.2000.

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