



Journal Homepage: -www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/13268
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/13268>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

DIVERSITY OF CHILD LABOUR AND ITS CAUSES IN DOWNTRODDEN FAMILIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES - EVIDENCE FROM ODISHA, INDIA

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 10 June 2021
Final Accepted: 14 July 2021
Published: August 2021

Key words: -

Child Labour, Socio-Economic,
Education, Working Status

Abstract

Child Labour, the global phenomenon is still existing in India due to lack of proper execution of programme and policies. Poverty, lack of parental guidance, lack of awareness about programs and influence of peer groups were the key countless reasons, which create a barrier to an individual as well as societal development. Global information shows that boys were more indulged in the labour market, however, trends have been changed now compared to earlier decades. Hence, the paper tried to comprehend the issue of child labour, its causes, reasons of drop out of school, and the effect of parents working status and family's condition on child labour. Primary cross-sectional research was conducted with an explorative research design, and information was sought from 300 samples randomly, across the Sambalpur district. The information was collected through a pre-tested and semi-structured questionnaire in the year 2019-20. Bivariate analysis was conducted in SPSS to understand the cause of child labour with different parameters and depict that parent's economic and their working status do not influence much on the decision whether the child goes to the labour market or not. Besides, large family size and family type, majority parents incurred the income on alcohol consumption and maintenance of the family, which restrict them to think about their children education. The study recommends understanding the local need of the downtrodden family before executing the child labour policy as peer influence and self-interest to become child labour has been identified as a prime reason in the study.

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Introduction:-

With a population of 1.38 billion, India is accountable to approximately 40 percent of the children population. The children are the future of a nation and need to be protected by providing necessities in terms of security, education, balanced food, and growth. But, even in the modern and developed era, when different policies and programs are run by the central and state governments, Child labour is considered to be one of the controversial issue in every developed and underdeveloped society. According to literature, 22 percent of child labour accounts for Asia, followed by 32 percent, 17 percent and 1 percent in Africa, Latin America, and United States (US) respectively (Khakshour et al., 2015). However, for many decades the problem is not declining properly in the absence of a proper sustainable model, continuity of funds and lack of acceptance of these children to our society. The United

Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defined child rights are choices and independence which must be used by a community below 18 years of age, irrespective of their ethnicity, family, race, religion, caste etc. To ensure their safety of Article 19 of UNCRC states that children must be supervised and protected from violence, abuses, and negligence by the parents or caretakers. A similar kind of provision has been made by our constitution which mandated under Article 39(f), that the policies must be directed by the states to provide security to children from misuse, and ethical & material relinquishment (The Constitution of India, 1950). Contrary to the above provision, children in our country are living the life in vulnerable situation by engaging them in the category of child labour. In other words, "child labour refers to work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and dignity, it also affects their physical and mental development and also interferes with their ability to attend the school regularly" (ILO, 2012).

Child labour is as problematic as it is impeding the development and growth of the individual as well as society. Data shows that more than ten million children were recognized as child labourers who support their family's bread and butter by indulging them in dangerous situations and environments. The poor economic status of the family is one of the key factors behind and depriving their education too. In one of the articles, the researcher shared that number of factors are accountable for increasing the child labour phenomenon i.e., large families with low income, illiteracy, and ignorance about the importance of teaching, the effect of labour on the wellbeing of their children etc. In this connection, children are treated as a supplementary income source to their families (Naidu and Ramaiah, 2017). Further, it was also revealed that "the children struggle for their survival by doing some activities on the street which also push them to certain criminal activities, which also impact their physical and mental growth" (Behera, 1996). This indirectly means parent counts child labour as an economic contribution towards their family and children working with family were introduced to work in a way that is stepped tradition and less likely to be exploited (Dandekar, 1979).

Types and Causes of Child Labour in India

Child labour is one of the important socio-economic issues of the society that influence various dimension of society. Several factors are responsible for this, which push the children to engage in different sectors in different forms. Depending upon the prevalence of child labour, it could be grouped as Street Children, Bonded Child labour, Working Children, Prostitute, Migrant Children, Domestic Children, Trafficking Children, Runaway children etc. However, a researcher in his article has stated that child labour can be divided into 4 categories i.e., *domestic non-monetary work*, *non-monetary & non-domestic*, *non-agrarian work* and *bonded labour* (Chandra, 1998). As poverty is one of the major issues, which push the parents of the improvised families to send their children into the labour market. In that case, children were engaged in diversified categories of work in every organized and unorganized sector (Kumar, 1992). They struggle for their survival through doing some activities in the street, which is fit into the representations, acceptable to the society as they can find a place for themselves in services which was considered illicit (Behera, 1996). As economic growth leads to an increase in child labour rather than decrease the dabbling low family income, ignorance, unemployment, dependency load etc. are the major variable responsible for the increase in child labour.

To more or less, children in every community have their own role and have always taking part in the economic activities which are necessary for the group survival. Further, bargaining of the labour force in the society is a greater cause of engagement of child labour in the establishment of the low wage market. The study reported that most of the children were working for at least 9-12 hours per day and the majority (70.0 percent) of the children were influenced by their parents and were regularly going to work (Rana, 1985). This means not only poverty, but many other social and traditional factors were also responsible for escalating child labour, such as unemployment among the adult, population growth, low family income, and parents' ignorance. This has been also revealed that 61 percent of children are involved in it due to the low living standard of the family (Subhadarsani, 2014). Similarly, due to poor family income and lack of vocational education in the education system among the SC and STs, most of the children were dropout of school and indulged in labour work (Peter, Roman and Ravilochana, 2007). It occurs for several reasons like the low economic structure of the family, lack of awareness, lack of proper education, illiteracy, ignorance of the parents, push and pull factor, parent's ignorance towards child superstition, the influence of the peer groups, low range of parent's income, poor environment, poverty, ignorance of the social group, migration of the parents etc.

Child labour is a major multi-faceted global issue that affects the educational, cultural, and environmental structure of children. Despite several initiatives taken by the Government toward its eradication, child labour is still existing

in our society and to bridge the gaps, hence factors should be identified from time to time with different lenses. The current paper tried to understand, why the children indulged them in child labour in context to Sambalpur district of Odisha. More comprehensively, it highlights the role of socio-economic condition, working options of parents, expenditure patterns, in pushing them into child labour, and identifies the barriers of education among the child labourers.

Methodology: -

A cross-sectional and explorative study design was enacted to answer the objective and was conducted in selected blocks of Sambalpur district of Odisha, India in August 2019-20. A semi-structured and pre-tested questionnaire was administered with 300 numbers of child labour aged 7 to 18 years, who were selected with purposive random sampling, spreading-up across the blocks of Sambalpur district. The list of the children were collected from Office of the Commissioner, Labour Department, Sambalpur, India. Bi-variate analysis was conducted in SPSS 22.0 version and findings were supported with tables and graphs. In analysis, a cross tabulation was administered to understand the relationship of HH income, working parents and the relationship between child labour.

Key Findings:-

Child labour is a burning issue and many policies and schemes have been implementing in our country to bridge the gaps. To ensure proper implementation of the policies, central and national governments have ensured proper infrastructure and institutional arrangements at the centre and state level, however, due to lack of implementation, these programs are unreached to the target groups, and the scene remains derisive. In the present paper, the author tried to understand the factors and conducted the bivariate analysis to answer few research questions i.e., (i) what was the current socio-economic conditions of the studied children family, (ii) what were the barriers seen in the sample to get the education of the working children, and (iii) does the working status of parents influence the issue of child labour or not?

Socio-economic profile of the studied Children

In response to the above research questions, it is necessary to realize the socio-economic background of studied respondents. Most commonly, it was observed that children under the age of 14 and from 14 to 18 were engaged in different sectors i.e., bagging, vendors, shops, garage, working in the household, which is very harmful to their health. Table 1.1 shows the age and caste, family type and size-wise child labour identified in the district of Sambalpur. It depicts that the majority of child labour falls in the age group 11 to 14 years (75.3 percent); however, it seems to start at the age of seven years. The percentage of child labour in the higher age group was less compared to other groups. Further analysis shows that majority of the child labour belonged to ST (29.6 percent) and SC (24.6 percent). Only 6 percent comprises of those children who were immigrants from a nearby state and 1.3 percent don't know about their caste or religion as they are trafficked, runaway or orphan children. The analysis also envisaged that 72.3 percent of the children belonged to the nuclear family, whereas 46.3 percent of the family were having a large family size.

Table 1.1:- Distribution of sampled respondents by age, caste, and size of the family of the family.

Indicators	n (%)
Age group	
7-8 Years	19 (6.3)
9-10 Years	37 (12.3)
11-12 Years	92 (30.7)
13-14 Years	134 (44.7)
15 years and above	18 (6.0)
Caste	
General	71 (23.6)
Other Back ward Class	44 (14.65)
Schedule Caste	74 (24.65)
Schedule Tribe	89 (29.66)
Other Caste	18 (6.0)
Not Known	4 (1.3)
Type of family	
Joint	79 (26.3)

Nuclear	217 (72.3)
Not Known / Extended	4 (1.4)
Family Size	
Small	40 (13.3)
Medium	117 (39.0)
Large	139 (46.3)
Not Known	4 (1.4)
Total	300 (100.0)

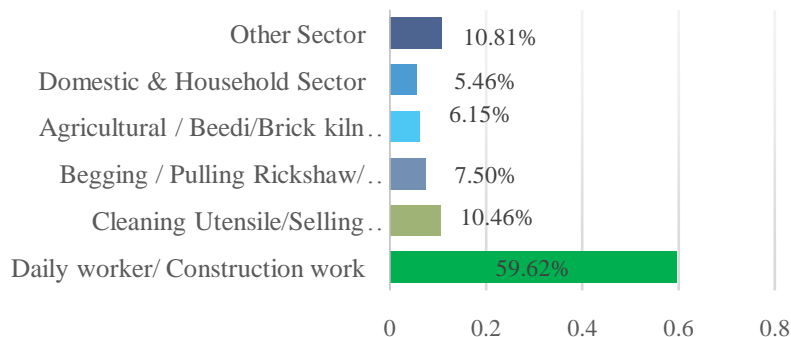
Role of Parent's education, working status, Income, and expenditures of the Households on Child labour

Working for the family at any age is not harmful, however, a longer period of illegal process of working is harmful to the cognitive development of a child. Parent's education always plays a clear role in reducing this working behaviour of the child, however, for the weaker section of the society it is not feasible always as nurturing the family is an important issue for its residents. The current paper tried to understand parents' education level as it plays a crucial role in child nourishment and proper caring. The study concludes that one third i.e., 32.0 percent were literate i.e., at least any one of the parents of the child had gone to the school ever, and 57.6 percent of children's single parents are working. It further depicts that those parents who were working, among them 52.5 percent were having an income range of Rs. 4000 to 8000 per month, and only 2.2 percent of the child's parents were having an income of more than Rs. 12000 per month. This clearly shows that due to the large size of the family, the bread earner of the family forced their children to go to the labour market. However, this is not true in every case. Further, the size of the family also seems to influence child labour. Nearly half of the child labour come from the family where family size was more than 6 members followed by 4-5 members, which means Children with both the nuclear family and large numbers of family members are more vulnerable for the labour market. The analysis shows that 90.6 percent of parents were reported to be working, of which 57.6 percent were single-parent and 33 percent were both parents. Only 9.3 percent of parents were not working in any sector because they were old, sick, addicted, out of work and not interested to work etc.

Table 1.2:- Distribution of respondent's opinions by parent's education, working status, monthly income, and expenditure pattern of the households.

Indicators	n (%)
Parent's education	
Literate (Single parent)	74 (24.7)
Literate (Double parent)	22 (7.3)
Illiterate (Single parent or both parent)	201 (67.0)
Do not know	3 (1.0)
Working Status of parents	
Single parents working	173 (57.7)
Both parents working	99 (33.0)
None of the parents working	28 (9.3)
Total	300 (100.0)

Figure 1: Occupational engagements of parents of child labour in different sectors as per the sampled respondents



Analyzing the data of parents working in different establishments indicates that the majority of the children's parents i.e., 59.6 percent were engaged in menial work such as daily or construction worker, followed by 10.5 percent in cleaning utensils, selling vegetables, roadside small vendors, collection and selling of wood and leaves. Probably, the income pattern would have been much low to maintain the family in all these cases. It is also important to note that out of 300 studied children, parents of only 272 children were engaged in some work.

Further, understanding the expenditure pattern by family's income revealed that 58.8 percent of the parents incurred the amount on maintenance of the family and alcohol consumption followed by 18 percent on the maintenance of the family. 6.2 percent of families have incurred the money on alcohol consumption and 5.8 percent on the education of the children (Table 1.3). Interestingly, it was found that the parents were not focusing much more on children education which helps to bring the family out of the vicious cycle of poverty. This gap needs to be bridged by different government intervention programs and need must be designed as per the local demand.

Table 1.3:- Distribution of respondent's opinion by monthly income, and expenditure pattern of the households.

Indicators	n (%)
Monthly Income of the HHs(in INR)	
≤ 1000	3 (1.1)
1000-4000	99 (36.39)
4000-8000	143 (52.6)
8000-12000	18 (6.6)
12000-20000	6 (2.2)
Not Specified/ Depended on work	3 (1.1)
Expenditure Status of the Parents	
Only Maintenance of the family	49 (18.0)
Alcohol addicted	17 (6.2)
Maintenance of the family & Alcohol addiction	160(58.8)
Education of the children	16(5.9)
Investment in other small businesses or Gambling	8 (3.0)
Maintenance of family & education of the children	22 (8.0)
Total	272(100.0)

To understand the issue more systematically, the expenditure pattern was again analysed by single and both working parents. It depicts that no major proportion of the difference is seen in expenditure pattern when both or single parents were working. It means, working condition of the parents did not have any kind of association with the child labour as education of the children was not preferred by both categories of parents. Investigation on the spending trend of the household reveals that most of the family with single were making more expenditure on alcohol on daily basis. However, investment in other business or gambling has been reported by 8 percent. This was more in the family where both parents were working. It is also noted that the worthy education of the children was neglected by the parents i.e., 3.0 percent only (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4:- Distribution of expenditure pattern of the working parents of the studied child labour.

Expenditure status of the parents	Single Working Parentsn (%)	Both Working Parentsn (%)	Total n (%)
Only Maintenance of the family	23 (8.4)	26 (9.5)	49 (18.0)
Expenditure on Alcohol (Addicted)	10 (3.6)	7 (2.5)	17 (6.1)
Maintenance of the family & on alcohol	121 (44.4)	39 (14.4)	160 (58.8)
Education of the children	8 (3.0)	8(3.0)	16(6.0)
Investment in other small business or Gambling	3 (1.1)	5(2.0)	8(3.0)
Maintenance of family & education of the children	8 (3.0)	14(5.1)	22(8.0)
Total	173(63.6)	99(36.6)	272(100.0)

More specifically, on one side when parents incurred money on family, alcohol, gambling, and other issues etc., most children were engaging themselves in child labour. The key reasons were the death of one or both parents (36.8 percent), parents forced for work (8.5 percent), influenced peer group (10.3 percent) etc. However, the self-interest of the children to work was reported more for the family where both parents were working.

Table 1.5:- Reasons of children employment by working status of the parents.

Reasons for children engagement	Both working Parents, n (%)	Single working Parents, n (%)	Total n (%)
Child Associated with parent's work/ Parent's send to work	9 (3.3)	14(5.1)	23 (8.5)
Family Problem/ Separation of Parents/ Death of the one/both parents	89(32.7)	11(4.0)	100 (36.8)
Influence by Peer Group	16(5.8)	12(4.4)	28 (10.3)
Migration of Parents	25(9.1)	22(8.0)	47 (17.3)
Family Financial Problem	15(9.0)	12(4.4)	27 (9.9)
Self-Interest of respondent	19(6.9)	28(10.3)	47 (17.3)
Total	173 (100.0)	99 (100.0)	272(100.0)

Education status and reasons for not continuing to School of Child Labour

Education of parents as well as children plays an important role in the awareness and proper education of the children and facilitate the elimination of child labour. However, the educational interventions run by the governments need to be affiliated with the local and agreed strategy of the local child labourers and parents (Daly, 2020). Table 1.6 revealed that 40 percent of the children were dropping out of school followed by one-fourth of the respondents who never enrolled themselves in the school. The reason was that 69 percent of both parents were illiterately followed by 23.0 percent single parents and 8.0 percent of both parents were literate. Among the drop out children's key reasons were "engagement of the children with their parents for work" and "they need pocket money", however, the reasons of the children who were never enrolled were needed to work at home (44.5 percent) followed by low family income (25.3 percent), lack of interest in the study (14.4 percent). Only 11.0 percent were enrolled in the school but not attending the school due to a lack of interest in the study.

Table 1.6:- Distribution of educational status of the studied children and reasons for not going to school.

Educational Status of the Child Labour		Reasons for not going to School	n (%)
Never Enrolled	83(27.6)	Need to Work at Home	37(44.5)
		Parents Migration	5(6.0)
		Low family income	21(25.3)
		Family Dispute	1(1.2)
		Parents are not aware	3 (3.61)
		Physically Challenged	3(3.61)
		Lack of Interest in Study	12(14.4)
		Death of The Parents	1(1.2)
		Total	83(100.0)
Enrolled but not attending the school	33(11.0)	Lack of Interest in Study	26(78.8)
		Parents Separation/ Death	7(21.2)
		Total	33(100.0)
School Dropout	147 (49.0)	Lack Interest in Study	31 (21.0)
		Parents Migration	21(14.2)
		NCLP School Was Closed	50(34.0)
		Take Care of The Sibling and Sick's	7(4.76.0)
		Parents Never Deposit the School Fees	8(5.44.0)
		Parents Death or Parents Send to Work	19(13.0)
		School Is So Far Away	3(2.0)
		School Environment is not favourable to the child	5(3.4)
		Run away from home	3(2.0)
		Total	147(100.0)
Working and studying	37(12.3)	Associate with parents in their work	28(75.7)
		Need of Pocket Money	9(24.3)
		Total	37(100.0)

Discussion and Conclusion: -

Child labour can be defined as the exploitation of children by engaging themselves in work that is harmful to their development and acts as a barrier to attending school. It is a big issue of the present fashionable society and estimates say that 152 million children were working i.e., one in every 10 children, globally. In our country, 39 percent of the population belongs to children and child labour is predominated and many social determinants play an important role in justifying child labour including poverty (Sahoo, 2021, Bhaskaran, 2013, ILO, 2002, Kaur and Byard, 2021). However, the present study revealed, majority of children work because of some problems like death or separation of parents, and family's low-income problem. It was also depicting that ILO minimum age criteria is being not followed, and children were forced to work. Hence, the identification process requires to be authenticated with a strong policy for the industries as well as for domestic work (ILO, no 138). The working status of the parents seems to have little influence on children. because it was found that most of the children were engaged in the labour market by self-interest and the highest proportion was reported in the case of those children whose both parents were engaged in work. Besides, the influence of peer groups, migration, and financial problems too push the children into the labour market and make themselves "economically active".

Child labour is not a new issue, and still exists in society. Irrespective of laws and policies, governments failed to meet the goal due to flaws in the execution of the policies and programmes. The trend in child labour has been changing compared to the 1980s, where girls proportion was reported to be more. The reasons were also changing now-a-days, and children were mainly peer-driven. Along with this, poor income of the family, lack of awareness regarding the education and other government facilities, parent's ignorance and separation etc. were the factors that multiply the issue of child labour. The constitution of India, 1950 under article 2(A) talks about free and compulsory education to the children of age group 6-14 years, whereas article 24 speaks about proscriptions of child labour less than 14 years of age (Weiner, 1991). But, in current study district, disobey of the articles were reported, which may be due to the shutdown of the government supported schools or programme. Besides, execution of the right children to free and compulsory education act, 2009 must be ensured where one fourth of the seats are available in private schools for free of cost. Further, to eliminate the children from this evil practice, it is necessary to spread awareness among all the poor families regarding education, and the facilities given by the Government to the child and his family. However, the context of these policies needs to be researched once again. Second, the government should design and provide income-generating activities for the marginalized rural community, so that they can think of the education of their children. The community's role is very important and significant on this issue, and law enforcement agency must thing to work in collaboration where they can bring change in the labour market as well as bring behaviour change among the sufferers.

Acknowledgement:-

Nil.

Source of Funding

Self

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest has been reported till the paper is submitted to the Journal.

Ethical Clearance

Informed consent was sought from every respondent of their voluntary participation during the study and information about their right to discontinue the interview at any point of time along with privacy, and seclusion was informed to them prior to start the interview.

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