

A STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS AND
WORKING CONDITIONS OF CHILD
LABOURERS OF UTTAR PRADESH

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Abstract

Introduction: - India has the dubious distinction of hosting the largest number of child labourers in the world. The 2011 census puts the number at 4.35 million working children in the 5-14 age brackets. Today the problem of child labour is considered as a growing issue in Indian society. This problem is one of the biggest challenges being faced by the developing and under developed countries in the world. In this paper, we have identified various causative factors related with the persistence of child labour in Uttar Pradesh, India. **Objective:** - To study the working profile and main causes of child labour in different parts of Uttar Pradesh. **Material & Methods-** Total 250 children who are currently working were randomly selected by two stage sampling method from five districts of Uttar Pradesh (Raibareilly, Varanasi, Mau, Muzaffarpur, Bhadohi) as study subject. A Pre-structured Interview Schedule was used to collect data from the respondents. **Statistical Analysis:** Data was analyzed with the help of statistical software SPSS 16.0 trial version. **Results and conclusion:-** Result shows that most of the child labourers are from the rural area and the proportion of male child labour is high in comparison to female child labours. Results also shows that majority of the children are literate up to primary. Most of the child labours are working as vendors and the children said that they are bound to work in this age due to poverty.

Keywords: - Child Labour, Poverty, Working Children, India.

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INTRODUCTION

India is one of the largest democratic countries in the world. It has declared the right to education as a fundamental right in the constitution, but nonetheless the country faces a huge problem of Child labor^[1]. According to International labour Organization (ILO), the term 'child labour' is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. Child labour is the practices of having children engage in economic activity, on part or full-time basis. Poverty, lack of good schools and growth of informal economy are considered as the important causes of child labour in India^[2,3]. The ILO's Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labor recently estimated that 211 million children, or 18 % of children aged 5-14, are economically active worldwide. 60% of these working children live in Asia, and 23% live in sub-Saharan Africa. Most economically active children are employed in agriculture^[4]. The International Labour Organization (ILO,2013) estimated there are around 215 million children between the ages of 5-14 years who works worldwide. They are often mistreated and work for prolonged hours, in very bad conditions. This can affect their health physically, mentally and emotionally. Even these children do not have the basic rights like access to school or health care.

Objective: - To study the demographic profile of child labourers working in different parts of Uttar Pradesh and to find out the main causes (most prevalent) of child labour.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was a cross-sectional study conducted in randomly selected Five districts of Uttar Pradesh at first stage, with the help of the map of Uttar Pradesh (Raibareilly, Varanasi, Mau, Muzaffarpur, Bhadohi). At the second stage we contacted 50 study subjects from each district with the help of snow ball technique during the study period of three months (July- Sept 2014). Hence we interviewed total 250 Children presently engaged in any kind of labour for livelihood.

Child workers were interviewed in their work places using a pre-tested and semi-structured interview schedule. It was developed with a view to assess their socio-demographic status, their working conditions, working hours, causes of child labour, type of work etc. along with this direct observation technique was also applied to know the working environment. Data was analyzed with the help of statistical software SPSS 16.0 trial version.

RESULTS

Table-1: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Socio-demographic Variables (N=250)		Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	5-9 Year	23	9.2
	10-14 Year	227	90.8
Sex	Male	211	84.4
	Female	39	15.6
Education	Illiterate	79	31.6
	Primary	116	46.4
	Middle	50	20.0
	High School	5	2.0
Type of Family	Joint	81	32.4
	Nuclear	169	67.6
Family Income (Monthly)	Less 5000	52	20.8
	5000-10000	151	60.4
	More than 10000	47	18.8
Residential Area	Urban	86	34.4
	Rural	133	53.2
	Slum	31	12.4

Table-1 shows that majority of the respondents (90.8 percent) are falling under the age group of 10-14 year, and only 9.2 percent of the respondents are of 5-9 years age group. Majority of the child workers are Male which is 84.4 percent and only 15.6 percent of the respondents are female

and the highest proportion of child labour (46.4%) were educated upto primary level and one-third (31.6 %) are completely illiterate. Only 2.0 percent of the respondent got education up to High School. Data reveals that 67.6 percent of the child workers had originated from nuclear families and less than half of the child workers which is 32.4 percent are from Joint family. More than half of the respondents (60.4 percent) have family income between 5000 - 10000. It is also visible from the data that approximately half of the respondents (53.2 percent) are from rural area and 34.4 percent of the respondents belong from urban area.

Table-2: Percentage of child Labors engaged in various Occupations

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Seller/Vendors	58	23.2
Domestic work	44	17.6
Weaver	38	15.2
Working in Hotel/Dhaba	33	13.2
Construction work	31	12.4
Rag picker	27	10.8
Beggar	19	7.6
Total	250	100.0

Table-2 indicates that children were engaged in seven categories of work. Out of these seven categories, girls were engaged only in two types of work. These are domestic work and rag picking. But so far as boys are concerned, they are engaged in all types of work including these two. The table shows that most of the child labourers, 23.2 percent were engaged in selling/vending followed by domestic workers 17.6 percent, in weaving 15.2 per cent were involved as in one of the sampled district(bhadohi) carpet weaving is a predominant work and 13.2 percent were working at dhaba. However 12.4 percent children's are involved in construction work, 10.8 percent worked as rag pickers and remaining 7.6 percent engaged in begging. Thus we see that children are engaged in all types of work irrespective of their age.

Table-3: Daily Working Hours of Child Labour

Working Hours	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-6	93	37.2
7-12	149	59.6
13-18	8	3.2
Total	250	100.0

Table-3 shows that in present study 62.8% of the child workers had to work for more than 6 hours a day. The present study observed that majority of the children (59.6 percent) was working for 7 to 12 hours, and only one-third (37.2 %).

Table-4: Causes of child labour in U.P.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poverty	163	65.2
Family Problem	144	57.6
Low interest in study	81	32.4
Self interest	57	22.8
Parents pressure	31	12.4
Influenced by friends	27	10.8
Total	250	100.0

Table-4 In the present study when we asked about the reasons for working as child labour in this age, than nearly two-third (65.2 percent) of the child workers stated that poverty is the main reason, Family problem was found to be another important cause behind child labour (57.6 percent) but parental pressure was not found as much important(12.4 percent) in the present study. Besides these, 32.4 percent respondent said that they are working because of less interest in study and 22.8 are involved in child labour due to self interest and only 10.8 percent are doing this under peer pressure.

Thus, it is seen that a number of reasons are there to prove that work to earn is more important than education. It is clear from the table that majority of the child workers preferred to work, because of poor economic condition of the family and so they want to earn money.

DISCUSSION

Child labour is defined as any type of economic task, paid, unpaid, or exploitative, engaged in by a child less than 14 years of age, which places the interests of the beneficiary well above those of the child and is detrimental to the physical, mental, social, educational and moral development of the child^[5]. According to the World Health Report (1995), 15% of children aged 10-14 years were working in Asia and India had the largest percentage of child labourers in the world. Child labour contributes to about 20% of India's GNP and mostly operates in the unorganized, informal, and unregulated sectors of the economy and is not being adequately reported. The major determinant of child labour is poverty.

Present study of 250 child labourers revealed that most of them belonged to the age group of 10-14 years. Similar findings were observed by Banerjee SR^[6] and IPER^[7] at Kolkata. Average age of child labourers in our study was found to be 12.2, compared to 12.9 found by Nath and Majumder^[8] in Kolkata and 12 by D.K. Lal Das^[9] in Visakhapattanam. The present study observed the poor educational status among the child workers. This finding was also corresponding with IPER^[7] in Kolkata. But in our study 31.6% of the children had never attended school, which was quite less than as found by Nath and Majumder^[8] (44.8%) and Banerjee^[6] (56%). In the present study, 67.6% of the child workers had originated from nuclear families. Similar findings were shown by D.K. Lal Das^[9] et al and Kanungo^[10]. The study revealed that 90.8% of children involved in child labour belonged to the age group of 10-14 years. In this study we assess the education level of child labours which shows only 2% of child labours studied at high school level and even though they are working as child labourers for one or the other reasons, but in another study the prevalence of child labour increased with decreasing parental education and socio-economic class^[11]. Educated parents are more likely to understand the need for a growing child to concentrate on activities capable of enhancing realization of their full potential and the need to avoid potentially 'harmful' activities. Also, better socio-economic standing removes the pressure on parents to put their children to work.

Indian Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 has recommended that the child workers would work for maximum 6 hours a day with 1 hour rest after 3 hours of work and they would get one weekly holiday. Working environment is very important determinant to understand the child labourers in order to understand their practical difficulties. The present study shows that child labourers are engaged in various types of poor and unsafe occupation and 59.6% child labourers working for 7-12 hours in a day. Poor and unsafe working conditions adversely affect these children and they may suffer from poor physical, mental, and social development. Child labourers were working as per the guidelines of child Labour Act i.e. for 1 to 6 hours in a day. The working hours for child labourers are critically important for their physical as well as mental well-being. Mostly they have to work for more than 10 hours in a day. It was observed that, many times these children get injured while working. In the present study, 62.8% of the child workers had to work for more than 6 hours a day, which is remarkably less than, 97% and 90% in the studies of Pati and Swain^[12] and Mahtab S Banji^[13] respectively. Nath and Majumder^[8] observed the average duration of work as 6.8 days a week, whereas, the present study found it as 6.53 days per week.

Child labour is a socio-economic phenomenon. The socio-economic backwardness followed by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, demographic expansion, deep social prejudices and above all the Government apathy are commonly considered as the most prominent causative factors for large-scale employment of children^[14]. Manavi, an NGO in 1995, showed that due to lack of awareness in parents and the prevailing illiteracy among the children were the most important factors that compel the poor families to send their children to work. It is generally believed that the economic compulsion forces children to seek employment and earn for the family. This has been proved by different studies such as those of Musafar Singh (1980), Ghosh (1984), Sinha (1991), Singh (1992), Kanbargi (1991), and Rao (1999). These studies give multiple reasons for children being in labour market^[15]. The reasons are similar to the ones highlighted by our study. Various studies indicate that 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-employed in future, d) rise in cost of educating children besides increasing unemployment among the educated youth.

CONCLUSION

Child labour is a serious social problem. It is clear that the problem of child labour cannot be solved easily unless collective efforts are made by the government agencies, NGO's, social welfare societies, media and civil society workers to eradicate it. The government is committed to eliminate child labour in all its forms and is moving in this direction in a targeted manner. It was unanimously recognized therein that the problem of child labour, being inextricably linked with poverty and illiteracy, cannot be solved by legislation alone, and that a holistic, multipronged and concerted effort to tackle this problem will bring in the desired results.

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