

Petals under hammer- the child labour

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Abstract

Child labour is the practice of having children engaged in economic activity, on part or full time basis to support or earn live hood. In India the estimated total number of child labourers, aged between 5-14 years is found to be at 43,53,247, out of which 2,86,310 are in Madhya Pradesh. The present study is an observational study on 200 randomly selected Child Labourers who were engaged in various economic activity, conducted in Bhopal city from 1st Nov. 2014 to 31st Jan 2015 to determine the factors responsible for child labour in Bhopal city, the education status of children engaged in economic activity, the family status of children engaged in economic activity, and the socio-demographic profile of children engaged in economic activity. Out of total 200 children, 134 were Hindus (111 males and 23 females) and 66 were Muslims (62 males and 4 females). Most preponderance of child labourers is in the age group 10 to 14 years. Maximum child labourers earn between 50 – 150 rupees per day. Among 200 child labourers, 63 were homeless, spending their night hours on foot path, bus stand, and 137 were residing in slums or small houses. Among 200 child labourers 89 were addicted to tobacco in the form of Gutkha (A Form of Tobacco Preparation); out of them 74 were males and 15 were females

Keywords: Child Labour, Economic Activity, ILO, Indian Penal Code, Article 24, Gutkha.

Introduction

Child labour is recognized as a serious and enormously complex social problem in India. Children, under age 14 are often forced to work for as many as 18 hours a day. They are subject to malnutrition, impaired vision, deformities from sitting long hours in cramped over crowded work places; they become easy preys to deadly diseases like serious respiratory diseases, T.B., and Cancer. They are often forced to lead solitary lives away from their families, deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could prepare them for a better future. Child labour not only lead to a perpetual cycles of poverty for a family, it depresses the economy also. The immense benefits of abolition of child labour cannot be measured in economic terms alone, its enormous long term beneficial impact on the Society as a whole far outweighs the nominal economic hardship that some families would suffer only for a short span of time.¹ For many years, child labour has been one of the biggest obstacles to social development. It is a challenge and long-term goal in many countries to abolish all forms of child labour. Especially in developing countries, it is considered as a serious issue these days. Child labour refers to children who miss their childhood and are not able to have the basic amenities which a child should have. Recently the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013) estimated there are around 215 million children between the ages five to fourteen who work worldwide. They are often mistreated and work for prolonged hours, in very bad conditions. This can affect their health physically, mentally and emotionally. These children do not have the basic rights like access to school or health care.² Of an estimated 215 child laborers around the globe: approximately 114 million (53%) are in Asia and the Pacific; 14 million (7%) live in Latin America; and 65 million (30%) live in sub-Saharan Africa. Global number of children in child labour has

declined by one third since 2000, from 246 million to 168 million children. More than half of them, 85 million, are in hazardous work (down from 171 million in 2000). Asia and the Pacific still has the largest numbers (almost 78 million or 9.3% of child population), but Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the highest incidence of child labour (59 million, over 21%). There are 13 million (8.8%) of children in child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Middle East and North Africa there are 9.2 million (8.4%). Agriculture remains by far the most important sector where child labourers can be found (98 million, or 59%), but the problems are not negligible in services (54 million) and industry (12 million) – mostly in the informal economy. Child labour among girls fell by 40% since 2000, compared to 25% for boys.³

Child labour is the practice of having children engaged in economic activity, on part or full time basis to support or earn live hood. According to International Labour Organization (ILO), the term child labour is best 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, or work whose schedule interferes with their ability to attend regular school, or work that affects in any manner their ability to focus during school or experience a healthy childhood.

In India the estimated total number of child labourers, aged between 5-14 years is found to be at 43,53,247, out of which 2,86,310 are in Madhya Pradesh.⁴ These are government figure, however in a recently published article in print media this figures on ground level are estimated to be at staggering 7,00,239 child labourers in Madhya Pradesh, out of which 19,030 are in Bhopal district only.⁵ This underlines the magnanimity of the current issue. Lack

of good schools, and growth of informal economy are considered as the important causes of child labour in India.⁶

Various laws pertaining to child labour

Almost every country in the world has laws relating to and aimed at preventing child labour. International Labour Organization (ILO) has helped set international law, which most countries have signed on and ratified. According to ILO, minimum age convention (C138) of 1973, child labour refers to any work performed by children under the age of 12, non-light work done by children aged 12-14 and hazardous work done by children aged 15-17. Light work was defined, under this convention, as any work that does not harm a child's health and development, and that does not interfere with his or her attendance at school. This convention has been ratified by 135 countries.

The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, which was subsequently ratified by 193 countries. Article 32 of the convention addressed child labour, as follows: Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development⁷.

Results and Observations

Table 1: Period of economic activity

Duration	Hindu		Muslim		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<6 Months	18	3	4	0	25 (12.5%)
6 Months-1 Year	23	11	9	1	44 (22%)
1-3 Years	43	7	17	3	70 (35%)
>3 Years	27	2	32	0	61 (30.5%)
Total	111	23	62	4	200

Table 2: Type of Work in which Children were engaged-

Type of Work	Hindu		Muslim		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Tea Stall/Hotel/Dhaba	23	0	9	0	32 (16%)
Tyre Puncture Shop	17	0	19	0	36 (18%)
Automobile Repair Shop	19	0	25	0	44 (22%)
Car Washing in Colonies	11	0	2	0	13 (6.5%)
Vegetable Shop	12	9	6	4	31 (15.5%)
News Paper/Toys etc.	8	5	1	0	14 (7%)
Road Side Cleaning	7	3	0	0	10 (5%)
Load Carrying	14	6	0	0	20 (10%)
Total	111	23	62	4	200

Article 24 of Indian constitution prohibits child labour. Additionally, various laws and the Indian Penal Code such as Juvenile Justice (care and protection) of Children Act-2000, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Abolition) Act-1986 provide a basis in law to identify, prosecute and stop child labour in India.

Aims and Objectives of the study

1. To determine the factors responsible for child labour in Bhopal city.
2. To determine the education status of children engaged in economic activity.
3. To determine the family status of children engaged in economic activity.
4. To determine the socio-demographic profile of children engaged in economic activity.

Materials and Methods

It is an observational study on 200 randomly selected Child Labourers who were engaged in various economic activity, conducted in Bhopal city from 1st Nov. 2014 to 31st Jan 2015.

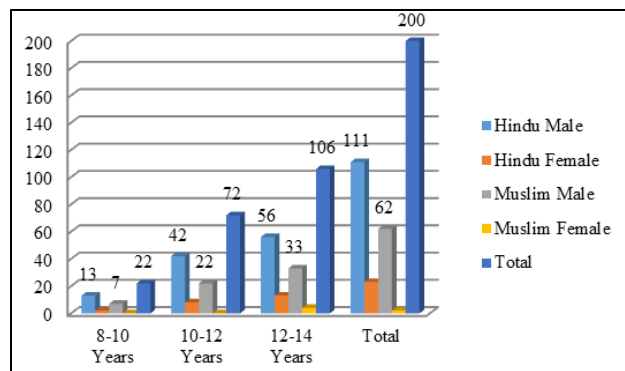


Fig. 1: Age/Sex/Religion

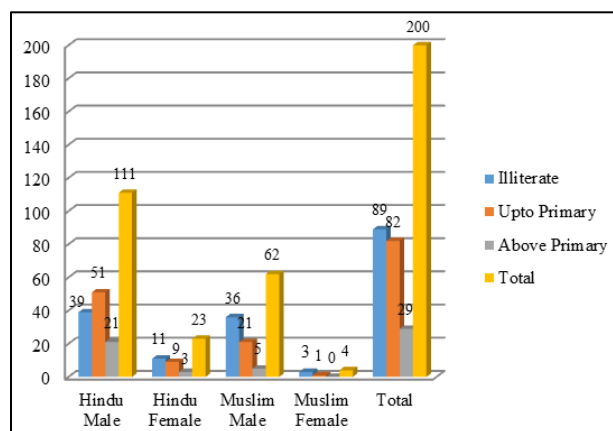


Fig. 2: Level of Education

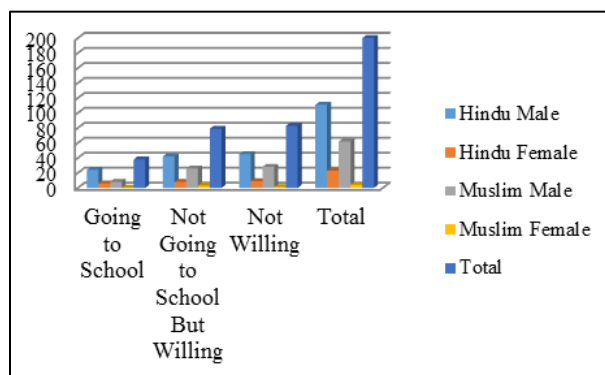


Fig. 3: Willingness to Study

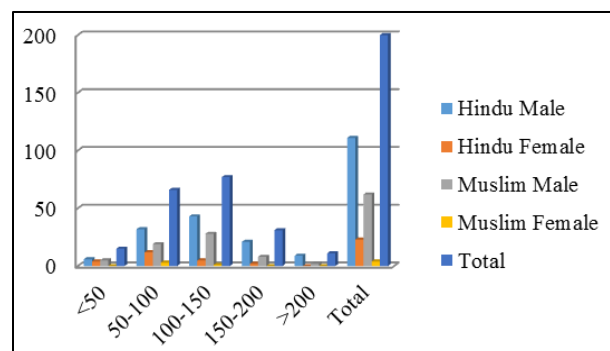


Fig. 4: Daily Income

Discussion

After 67 years of independence of India, even after many national and international laws, child labour in India still exists. Though its magnitude has been reduced in organized sectors, but in unorganized sectors of economy, the prevalence of child labour in India is still visible due to poverty.

There is abundance of children engaged in various economic activities all over Bhopal. In the present study we have randomly identified and interviewed 200 child labourers from various pockets of Bhopal city covering all areas of the city.

1. Chart No. 1 shows that out of total 200 children, 134 were Hindus (111 males and 23 females) and 66 were Muslims (62 males and 4 females). Most preponderance of child labourers is in the age group 10 to 14 years indicates parental neglect of children, easy way of fulfilling financial requirements of family, high school drop outs or non existing academic infrastructure.
2. Chart No. 2 shows the level of education of child labourers, indicating the lack of academic infrastructure like lack of good schools, lack of teachers at the ground level which fail to attract the young kids and sustain their continuous attendance from primary to secondary education. Additional cost of living, cost of schooling and financial burden of family further compounds the problem.
3. Chart No.3 just highlights the willingness for education is there but academic infrastructure is lacking.
4. Chart No. 4 reflects that maximum child labourers earn between 50 – 150 rupees per day. This is such a meagre amount earned against the important years of their personal, academic growth and individual development as future Indian citizens.
5. Table No. 1. shows that maximum children who continue to work for more than 3 years were muslims which indicate the apathy of government agencies and poor overall development with regards to muslim community. Lack of education among parents further augments the problem.
6. Table No. 2. just indicates small petty businesses the children are involved with.

Residence

Among 200 child labourers, 63 were homeless, spending their night hours on foot path, bus stand, and 137 were residing in slums or small houses suggesting lack of family support, the issue of orphanage and lack of government and NGO'S attention In spite of crores being invested.

Parents

The father of 38 children were working as watchman, peon, sweeper, father of 56 children were engaged in selling vegetables and household articles, father of 65 children were doing labour work, father of 19 children were jobless and chronic alcoholic, while father of 22 children have died due to different reasons.

Among 200 child labourers, the mother of 112 children were working as house maid, and labourers, mother of 41 children also engaged in same type of activity as their children, mother of 29 children were house wife, while mother of 18 children have died due to different reasons. Reflecting very truthfully that the prime cause of child labour lies with poor socio economic plight of families and typically low social economic group

Addiction

Among 200 child labourers 89 were addicted to tobacco in the form of Gutkha; out of them 74 were males and 15 were females probably due to exposure to unhealthy adult habits at work place.

Conclusion

Children are the greatest gift to humanity and Childhood is an important and impressionable stage of human development as it holds the potential to the future development of any society. Children who are brought up in an environment, which is conducive to their intellectual, physical and social health, grow up to be responsible and productive members of society. Every nation links its future with the present status of its children. By performing work when they are too young for the task, children unduly reduce their present welfare or their future income earning capabilities, either by shrinking their future external choice sets or by reducing their own future individual productive capabilities.

The Supreme Court of India in its judgment dated 10th December 1996 in Writ Petition (Civil) Number 465/1986, has given certain directions regarding the manner in which children working in the hazardous occupations are to be withdrawn from work and rehabilitated, and the manner in

which the working conditions of children working in non-hazardous occupations are to be regulated and improved⁸.

Ethical clearance

Prior approval for study has been obtained from Institutional Ethical Committee of P.C.M.S. & R.C. Bhopal

Source of funding

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Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in the present study

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