

## Causes to be a Child Labourer

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### Abstract

The problem of child labour is a global problem. Large numbers of children are involved in agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining, and domestic works. Some of them are involved in very hazardous work as well as in illicit activities like the child trafficking, drug trade and serving as soldiers. These works keep them far from the school as well as block their physical and mental development. In India there is a large number of child labourers. According to ILO, India has the largest number of children labourers than any other country in the world. No doubt, our second largest population in the world is a major factor of this problem but this is not only the factor of this problem. This paper discusses about the factors which are root cause for child labour.

**KEYWORDS:** Child labour, child labourer

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic right of every child as it is the prime factor responsible for the overall development of a child. Education not only intends to develop basic learning skills, reading, writing, arithmetic and life skills, but it is necessary for the children to survive and to improve the quality of life also.

The development of any nation depends on its educational system (Kothari, 1964-66) and it is proved that education is the key to human progress and social change.

Child Labour is a global problem. Child labour is basically exploiting the underage children in any form forcing them to illegally undertake work which harms or abuses them. This abuse may be physical, mental or sexual depriving the children of their rights of basic education.

There is no universal definition of child labourers but in a common sense child labourers are; “those children who are doing paid or unpaid work in factories, workshops, establishments, mines and in the service sector such as domestic labour” (NCPCR, n.d.). But here the Ministry of Labour, Government of India has employed the term ‘child labour’ only in the context of children involved in ‘hazardous’ work.

The International Labour Organization, or the ILO, defines child labour as “some types of work” done by children under the age of 18. The ILO also says that child labour includes full-time work done by children under 15 years of age that prevents them from going to school (getting an education), or that is dangerous to their health. Child labour is work that harms children as well as keeps them from attending school. Around the world growing gaps between rich and poor in recent decades have forced millions of young children out of school and into work. The International Labour Organization estimates that 246 million children between the

ages of 5 to 17 currently work under conditions that are considered illegal, hazardous, or extremely exploitative.

Large numbers of children work in commercial agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining, and domestic service. Some children work in illicit activities like the drug trade and prostitution or other traumatic activities such as serving as soldiers.

India has the largest number of children employed than any other country in the world. A UNESCO study has indicated that an estimated 72 million Indian children, constituting 30% of children in the 5–14 age groups, were not attending educational institutions in 2000. This is also corroborated by the NSSO 55th round, 1999–2000, which indicates that 32.3% of children from rural areas and 17.6% from urban areas aged 5–14 were not attending educational institutions. Similarly, 28.9% of rural and 15.2% of urban children aged 10–14 years were not attending educational institutions in 1999–2000.

According to the statistics provided by The Government of India around 90 million out of 179 million children in the 6 to 14 years age group do not go to school and are engaged in some occupation or other. This means that close to 50 per cent of children are deprived of their rights to a free and happy childhood. Many small industries in India depend heavily on child labour (Rao, 1996).

Working in these industries is not the only cause of children for not attending schools. There are so many problems which are magnitude for child labour. Poverty is a major factor for child labour. On the basis of different sets of data it can be said that child labour is positively related, with poverty (Cigno et al., 2001, Kannan 2001, Ramachandran and Massün 2002, Giri National Labour Institute 2000; Basu and Van (1998). Nangia (1987), (Ilon and Moock 1991). (Barker and Knaul 1991, Kulshrestha, 1978, Prayas, 2007, Iqbal 2009, Varandani ). Low income of family forces children to enter in labour market (Patil, 1988). Poverty, as defined traditionally, usually combines with many children per households, with low literacy and with a horizon of lowly-paid and unskilled jobs, opens to child labour (Lieten, n.d.). Nangia (1987) states in his study that 63.74% of child labourers said that poverty was the reason they worked.

Population of India, large number of family members and birth rate of child labourers are other major factors for the problem child labour (Peek's, (1978); Dyson, (1991); ILO, (1996); Lloyd, (1994); Cochrane et al., (1990). Kulashrestha, (1978); Cochrane et al. (1990) empirically observed magnitude of the effect of household size on child labour. Dyson (1991) has been stated about it: 'children work because people have children, rather than people have children because children work.' In research, it has been also suggested by the ILO (1996). The evidences also suggest that children with more siblings are likely to work longer hours on average, especially when they are older (Kanbargi, & Kulkarni, (1984); Lloyd, (1993); Jomo, (1992). According to Shreeniwas (1993) the extent to which the state can influence household's child labour behaviour, in particular the effect of fertility and large household size. Evidence has been found between the relationship of large family size and labour supply. It has been seen in the developing countries that larger household size reduces children's educational participation and progress in school, and reduces parents' investment in schooling of children (Kanbargi, & Kulkarni, (1984); Lloyd, (1994). Studies proves that the determination of fertility and time allocation of household members,

especially labour supply, as a joint decision (Nakamura and Nakamura, (1992); Hotz and Miller, (1988); and Rivera-Batiz, (1985), Lieten, (2000), Lieten (2002). Undoubtedly, the number of children in the household determines the potential supply of child labour, and hence fertility behaviour is an important determinant of the supply of child labourers (Grootaert & Kanbur, 1994).). It is also found that the number of siblings have a significant effect on child labour (Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1993).

Not only by the number of siblings but involvement of children in labour is also signified by the birth order of child. A detailed econometric study for the Philippines found that the relationship between household size and child work is not the same for market and domestic work, and depends on the sex and the birth order of the child (DeGraff et al., 1993). The effect of high fertility on child labour is experienced by first born children more likely (DeGraff et al., 1993, Lloyd, 1993).

Gender is also a determinant of child labour. So many times it depends on that the child is a male child or a female child. Involvement in different type of works also depends on it. Shreeniwas (1993) found in his study that in the larger households' girls appear disadvantaged but their brothers are not. In India, families from urban slums in Tamil Nadu discriminate in order to provide education. A few children, mainly boys, got "quality" private education; and girls have must stay at home whose mothers enter the labour force. (Basu, 1993). Same as in rural Maharashtra, if there are fewer younger siblings, boys benefit with more schooling and less work, and girls must assume those tasks which are traditionally assigned to boys (Jejeebhoy, 1993). Also in Pakistan, the presence of children under five in the household significantly reduces the educational participation of girls, but not boys (Cochrane et al., 1990). Especially girls have to work longer hours on average if they have more siblings and the responsibility increased when they are older too (Lloyd, 1993; Jomo, 1992). Cultural practices restrict the education of females and promote child employment (Weiner, 1991). In many settings boys are more likely to be engaged in market work and girls are more likely to be engaged in domestic or farm work (Lloyd, 1993). A detailed econometric study found that the relationship between household size and child work is not the same for market and domestic work, and it dominantly depends on the sex of the child (DeGraff et al., 1993).

Illiteracy is a big problem for our country. After so many efforts, there are approx 25 persons are illiterate on per hundred. Illiteracy is also a main cause for forced work of children. According to the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (2000), literacy is a correlate of child labour. There is the suggestion of an inverse relationship between labour and literacy. Furthermore, empirically there is a negative correlation between child labour and hours dedicated to schooling (Rivera-Batiz, 1985). Overall condition of our education system is a powerful factor on the supply of child labour. In the absence of provisions for compulsory education, illiteracy is main cause of child labour (Kulshreshtha 1978; Weiner, 1991; Bhatta (1998).

Schooling is the most important agent of drawing children away from the labour market. The study gives evidence from various findings, e.g. Mehrotra (1995), Sinha & Sinha (1995), Tilak (1995), Panchmukhi (1990), Bhatta (1998) that the direct cost of schooling like expenditure on books, stationery, uniforms are unaffordable for many families. Studies have correlated low enrolment with increased rates of child employment (Kanbargi, & Kulkarni, 1984; ILO 1992). Another study found that only

20 percent of children who dropped out engaged in paid employment (Seetharamu and Devi 1985). It means other children are engaged in unpaid labour. It also shows that either they may be involved in domestic work, their agriculture work, look after of younger siblings or they are dropouts only. School related problems also make a platform in involving children in labour in their early ages. The non availability of educational facilities forced the children for dropout and non-enrolment as well as involvement in work (Iqbal, 2009). A major reason India has the largest juvenile workforce is because 82 million children are not in school (Weiner 1991). Many times children seek employment simply because there is no access to schools (either schools are far away from the home or there is not any school at all). When there is access for education, the low quality of the education often makes attendance a waste of time for the students so parents and children deny to importance of schooling. Schools in many developing areas suffer from problems such as overcrowding, inadequate sanitation and apathetic teachers. As a result, parents find don't want to send their children to school when they could be at home (household works for girls and agricultural works for boys) and learning a skill and supplementing the family income (Siddiqi, n.d.). Bonnet (1993) explained in his study that the failure of educational system is direct cause of child labour.

A low level of parental education is also contributed in determining child labour (ILO, 1992). Because parents have so much control over their children and it does be more effective in Indian context. Their perception of the value of school is a main determinant of child attendance. Parents who are educated understand the importance of schooling. As such, education of parents plays a very significant role in determining child schooling and employment (Tienda 1979, Devi, 1979, Kanbargi, & Kulkarni, 1984). According to the independent study by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, an estimated 3.7 per cent of children in the age-group 6-10 and 5.2 per cent in the age-group 11-13 were out of school in 2008. In terms of numbers, about eight million children in the age-group 6-13 are out of school, about 6.7 million in rural and 1.3 million in urban areas (ASER, 2009).

Children are often forced to work by their parents (Siddiqi, n.d.). According to Syed et al., parents represent 62 percent of the source of induction into employment. Only 8 percent children make their own decisions to work of the time (Syed et al. 1991). Parents in developing countries make use of children's ability to work. Evidences suggest that parents have children based on a cost-benefit perspective (Singh and Schuh 1986). Children can significantly contribute to family income. In developing countries; like India in poor families children are often a mean to earn more.

Involvement of parents in any specific work also encourages the child to involvement in the same work. Often too the parents work in the same occupation as the children (Bequele and Boyden, 1988, and Jomo, 1992). The nature of parents' employment also matters - if the parents have irregular employment, it creates the need for additional or more stable income sources and it can be provided by children. Unemployment of adult bread earners of the family, were the main causes employment of little family members (Kulshrestha, 1978, Patil, 1988). Unemployment of male members also forces children to involve in the work in their early years. Unemployment among men, together with increased migration or desertion and alcoholism among men, has led to an increasing number of women and children joining the labour force (World Bank, 1991). The opposite is true for men's

wage rates which have a cross-wage elasticity of about with respect to boys' labour supply, but close to zero for girls' labour supply (Levy, 1985, Rosenzweig, 1981). It has been seen that any day if housemaids are not able to work they send their girls to do household work of their employers.

Caste also plays a role of a determinant of child labour. The supply of child labour is also determined by the characteristics of the community in which the household lives, especially the social infrastructure available (DeGraff et al., 1993; Goonesekere, 1993). According to report of ILO (1992), in India about 80 percent of child labourers are employed in agriculture and allied occupations. Studies also reveal that about 86 percent of bonded labour is found in India's agricultural sector. They are also mostly the children of parents who belong to scheduled castes and tribes. According to UNICEF, there are about 10 million bonded child labourers working as house servants in Indian families (UNICEF, 1999). Nangia (1987) observes that, "if these figures are compared with the caste structure of the country, it would be realised that a comparatively higher proportion of scheduled caste children work at a younger age for their own and their families' economic support". Scheduled caste (lower caste) children tend to be pushed into child labour because of their family's poverty. In India where caste is one of the most prominent factors of social stratification and socio-economic status of the family, it also determines the involvement in different type of occupation and also involvement of children in work (Peek's 1978, Devi, 1979, Patil, 1988). The nature of work may be paid or unpaid.

Conclusions of studies often suggest that indebtedness is an important factor. Indebtedness is correlate factor of poverty and in most of studies poverty is found as most prominent factor of child labour (Varandani, 1994), (Listen, 2002). A robust positive correlation was found between labour and indebtedness. (Dev & Ravi, 2002). So many times poverty forces people for debt and it children of those family works as bonded child labourer to pay that debt (Shirur & Shirur, 2008).

To augment the income of household parents/guardians send their children to work. Because more earning members gives security in monetary term for future. In poor families child labour is part of a strategy to minimize the risk of interruption of the income stream, and hence to reduce the potential impact of job loss, failed harvest, etc. (Cain & Mozumder, 1980). Evidence from rural India confirms that child labour plays a significant role in the self-insurance strategy of poor households. It was observed that when the variability of household income increased, children's school attendance declined (Grootaert & Kanbur, 1994).

No doubt a change in technology is also responsible for it. In India, after green revolution number of child labourer reduced and number of enrolled children in schools and their attendance increased (Rosenzweig, 1981). The growing use of tractors and irrigation pumps reduced the demand for child labour in agricultural (Levy, 1985). Same as in growing use of machines in homes decreased the number of child labourers in domestic works. Such as so many studies have found that the changes in technology in different fields and works reduces the child labour (DeGraff et al. 1993, Salazar, 1988, Galbi, 1994).

The economic value of children and to the structure of the labour market of any country also plays the role of determinant of child labour (Peek's, 1978, Cain and Mozumder, 1980, Bobbet, 1993). The later determines the level of wages, which in

turn determines the contribution of children to increase household income (Grootaert & Kanbur, 1994). Differences in wages (according to gender and age) encourage the participation of woman and children in labour market (Kulshrestha, 1978). It has been seen that children's earnings are consistently lower than those of adults, even where the two groups are engaged in the same tasks (Bequele & Boyden, 1988). Studies show that children's work is paid by the piece; but there is no evidence of wage discrimination relative to what adults receive for the same work (Cain & Mozumder, 1980). Different payment for same work forces employer to recruits children for benefits. If wage discrimination against children is indeed the norm, the child labour supply becomes quite low (Jomo, 1992). Because in such type of cases employers prefer adult one. Thus, the flexibility of wages is a key factor. Various forms of market segmentation, ironically, may reduce child labour (Grootaert & Kanbur, 1994).

Governmental policies have a profound impact on the incidence of child labour. This brings us to the role of the state. Several of the factors listed so far as influencing household's behaviour with respect to child labour are affected by government policies, especially the level of social expenditure, the social infrastructure, social stratification even the overall level of economic development. Where economic development is low and society is characterized by poverty and inequity, the incidence of child labour is increased (UNICEF, 1986) as well as gender wise discrimination forcefully.

Many parents don't send their wards to the schools, without any major reason. However, Banerji (2000), in his study of a school serving an informal settlement in peri-urban areas of Delhi and Mumbai, showed that children who do not complete primary school, are not necessarily working either. Although Banerji (2000) states that most respondents in his survey reported that their children were not engaged in regular paid employment, he does not indicate the fact that many parents do not view unpaid work within the home as 'work' or the role that children may play in informal labour activities. Other main causes of child labour which are found by different studies are; ignorance of parents for any reason, lack of awareness, expensive schooling, absence of scheme for family allowance, agriculture, unemployment of parents, unemployment of male members of family, high dependency ratio, work participation ratio, nutritional poverty and the size of the cattle herd (Kulashrestha, 1978, Levy, 1985, Rosenzweig, 1981; World Bank, 1991; UNESCO, 2001, Lieten (n.d.), Cigno et al., 2001, Kannan 2001, Ramachandran and Massün 2002,).

### **Conclusion**

In India for educational and social growth of country and citizens child labour considered as a very big problem. After so many acts, laws, rules, plan and policies we can see about 8 million children are out of school and involved in such type of works which are not for their age. This paper has outlined a range of those factors which are key factors for involvement of children in different types of work as a labourer. On the basis of previous findings this paper discussed that there is not only one factor is main cause of being a child as a labour but several factors are responsible for it. But poverty is the most dominant factor which is the root cause for it. Other factors are correlates of poverty and generally result of poverty.

The opinion that in the initial stages, every country has to make education compulsory to end child labour because child labour is the main cause of non-

schooling of children and high rate of drop-outs in India (Weiner, 1991). After 19 years of giving suggestion by Weiner (1991), and partially failure of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (in which the target was to enrol each and every child in year 2002, provide lower primary education upto year 2007 and complete their elementary education till 2010) in year 2002 December, Right to Education (RTE) was introduced by the 86th Amendment and passed by the Parliament in August, 2009. The provisions of the Act came into force from 1st April, 2010. In this amendment it is articulated as State has to ensure that every child is in school as well as it is also the duty of parents/guardians and not only for parents/guardians it is a duty; it is duty of every Indian to ensure the right of education for every child.

No doubt, insurance of being enrolled will be helpful in eradication of child labour. But along with this government should try to wipe out the problem of poverty from the country and assure job for every adult citizen.

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