

A Study on Child Labour in Urban Slum Areas of Mysore City

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Abstract

India has the largest number of child labourers in the world. According to Government of India, nearly 17.5 million children in the work force are contributing considerable amount to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Children in all over the world are being exploited as labourers by family or society for various reasons like poverty, parental illiteracy, ignorance of the parents about the adverse consequences, etc. Another major reason for hiring children to work seems to be that non economic children are easier to manage because they are less aware of their rights, laws and no problems of unions of labours. In the present study an attempt has been made to know types and living conditions of Child Labourers in urban slum areas of Mysore city. The sample consisted of 50 boys who were working as child labourers. The findings of the study revealed that majority (22%) of the child labourers were working as rag pickers followed by 18% working in cycle repair shop and 12% working in garage/vehicle repair shops. Majority (52%) of the child labourers expressed that they became labourers due to lack of interest to pursue their studies while 48% of them said that due to poverty they became labourers. Forty four percent (44%) of them were earning the salary between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 per month and seventy percent of them spent their salary on clothing, watching movies, eating out side foods and smoking. Forty eight percent of the child labourers were satisfied with their present salary. Twenty two percent of the child labourers expressed their undesirability to continue their work. With regard to awareness, only twelve percent of child labourers were aware about the existence of Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, but they were not acquainted with any details of the provisions and punishments imposed under that Act on employer and parents who compelled the child to work. This study highlights the need of educational awareness on laws in schools and interventional programme to alleviate poverty at community level to bring about change in the mindset of children and parents.

Key Words: *Child labour, Children, Attitude, Awareness, Urban slums, Child Labour Acts and Provisions*

Introduction

Children are the blooming flowers in the garden of society and valuable asset of a nation. They constitute a hidden treasure of potential development of a growing nation and childhood has been considered as a most important period of life. During this period shaping of the life take place and the attitudes, behaviors are developed. Paradoxically, it is unfortunate to say that tragically most of the child's life is lost due to poverty, destitution, malnutrition, poor and unhygienic conditions.

Today, child labour has become a global phenomenon and harsh reality. Any child out of school is a child labour. The definition of child labour therefore encompasses every non; school going child irrespective of whether the child is engaged in wage or non-wage work, employed in hazardous or non hazardous occupation (Naidu and Ramaiah, 2006). There is no universally accepted definition of child labour. Varying definitions of the term are used by International organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, Trade Unions and other interest groups. According to Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 any physical labour undertaken by a child below 14 years of age, either under compulsion or voluntarily, in an organized or un-organized sector qualifies to be called as child labour (Sekhar, 2007). India has the largest number of child labourers in the world. The Government of India acknowledges that at least 17.5 million working children, i.e. nearly 7% of the work force and they are contributing considerable amount of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (International Labour Organization, 2007). The magnitude of child labour in India has been witnessing enormous decline in the last decade, both in terms of magnitude and workforce participation. According 2011 census, out of 259.4 million children are in the age group of 5–14 years, 4.35 million children are child labourers as main workers in India (Census of India, 2011). In Karnataka state the total population of the children in the age of 5 – 14 years is 1,09,78,155. Of the total, 2,49,432 are child workers. Mysore district has the total child population (5-14 years) of 4,92,920. Of the total, 17,199 are working as child labourers (Census of India, 2011).

Children in all over the world are being exploited by family or society for various reasons. The harsh reality of the child labour arise out the fact that many parents on account of poverty have to

send their children to work in order to supplement their income and the income derived from the child labour however meager is essential to sustain the family. The other reasons which give rise to child labour are widespread of unemployment and underemployment among adult workers, larger families, lack of educational facilities, illiteracy and ignorance of parents about the importance of education as well as about the impact of labour on the health of their children. Further there are some factors due to which employers also favour child labour. A major reason for hiring children to work seem to be that non economic children are easier to manage because they are less aware of their rights, less troublesome, less prone to complaint, more trustworthy, less likely to absent themselves from work and no problems of unions (Naidu and Ramaiah, 2006). Research studies examined the various dimensions of child labour in India. Some of the microeconomic studies empirically analyzed the determinants of child labour, incidence of child labour (Edmonds, et.al. 2005; Aggarwal, 2004; Basu Kaushik and Zafiris Tzannao 2003; Deb and Rosati, 2002) and socio-economic back ground (Sharma, 1982; Singh, 1980). Few studies also focused on occupational health hazards on child labourers (Tiwari, 2005).

Methodology

A cross sectional study was conducted to know types of child labour and attitudes of child labourers living in urban slum areas of Mysore city. Fifty child labourers (boys) in the age group of 10 – 14 years were selected randomly as sample. Interview and survey methods were predominately used to collect the data. The self developed questionnaire was administered to seek socio-demographic information, living conditions, nature of work of child labourers and their attitude towards child labour and awareness towards the Acts related to child labour. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 16.0. The frequency and percentage were calculated and chi-square test was applied to see the significant association between the attributes.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reveals that majority of the sample were from the area of Madhuvana (32%) followed by Gomala (24%), Ekalavyanagar (20%), Kuderemala (18%), Ashokapurm (4%), and Nanjarajahundi (2%). Majority of child labourers were in the age group of 13 years (32%), followed by 14 years (28%), 12 years (22%), 11 years (12%) and 10 years (6%).

Table 2 depicts the distribution of child labourers based on type of work. It was observed that majority (22%) of the children were working as rag pickers followed by cycle repair shop workers (18%), labourers in building construction (16%), Garbage collection and garage workers (each 12%), daily wagers, gujari work, mess workers (each 6%) and domestic workers (2%).

Table 3 shows the preponderance (44%) of the child labourers were earning the monthly salary between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000, and each 28 percent of them were earning Rs. <1500 and >2000 per month. Almost all the child labourers (96%) were spending their salary for livelihood of their family members. Out of them, 50 percent of child labourers gave Rs. <1000 to their parents followed by 46 percent of them gave Rs. 1000 to Rs. 2000 to their parents, 4 percent of them gave more than Rs. 2000 per month to their parents for family livelihood. Majority of child labourers (70%) spent their salary on their personal needs such as clothing, watching movies, eating food outside and smoking etc.

Greater part (84%) of the child labourers said they like their current job where as 16 % of them said they do not like their current job (Table 4). Forty six percent of them expressed that their current job was good and 46 percent were stated that, due to poverty they were working in that job. Remaining 6 percent of them expressed that they do not have an interest to continue in their current job and 4 percent felt it was torture to work in their respective jobs. Majority (78%) of them opined that they had desire to continue in the same job and remaining of them had no desire to continue in their job. Forty eight percent of the child labourers were satisfied with their present salary while remaining fifty two percent were not satisfied with their present salary.

From the table 5 it is evident that, only 34 percent of the child labourers knew the meaning of child labour, none of them were aware about the constitutional provisions for prohibition of child labour. Twelve percent of the child labourers were aware about the implementation of Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, but they were not aware of the provisions and punishment imposed on employer and parents who forced the child to work.

Conclusion

From the study it may be concluded that child labourers of urban slum areas were from poor socio-economic strata. Children become child labourers due to lack of interest to pursue their studies and due to poverty. Even though child is working to supplement the family livelihood,

but child is giving only partial salary for maintenance of family. They spend half of their salary for their own personal needs, on recreation and vice habits. Child labourers neither have positive nor negative attitude towards their work. They are ignorant about the laws related to child labour. From the findings, it may be recommended to study on larger population to see the incidence of child labour especially in slum areas and the Government should strictly enforce the laws related to child labour. Awareness about the child labour Acts and consequences of child labour should be conducted at school and community in order to bring about the change in the mindset of children. Media especially television should sensitize the viewers especially children and their parents regarding the child labour and its consequences on overall health status of the child and the laws related to prohibition of child labour.

Table 1: Area-wise and age-wise distribution of the sample

Name of study areas		Frequency	Percentage
Area of living	Ashokapurm	02	04.0
	Gomala	12	24.0
	Kuderamala	09	18.0
	Madhuvana	16	32.0
	Nanjaraja hundi	01	02.0
	Ekalavayanagar	10	20.0
Child's Age in Years	10	03	06.0
	11	06	12.0
	12	11	22.0
	13	16	32.0
	14	14	28.0

Table 2: Distribution of child labourers based on type of work

Type of work	Frequency	Percentage
Cooli / Daily wages	3	06.0
Cycle Repair Shop work	9	18.0
Garage work	6	12.0
Gujari work	3	06.0
Garbage Collection work	6	12.0
Domestic work	1	02.0
Helper/cleaner in Hotels	3	06.0
Labourers in Building Construction work	8	16.0
Rag Pickers	11	22.0

Table 3: Distribution of child labourers based on disbursement of salary

Information about disbursement of salary		Frequency	Percentage
Amount of salary child getting from his job (in Rs)	< 1500	14	28.0
	1500 - 2000	22	44.0
	>2000	14	28.0
Spending money for livelihood of the family	No	02	04.0
	Yes	48	96.0
Amount of salary the child gives for livelihood of the family (in Rs)	< 1000	25	50.0
	1000 - 2000	23	46.0
	>2500	02	04.0
Expenditure of salary on personal needs	Clothing, eating	02	04.0
	Clothing, movies, eating	13	26.0
	Clothing, movies, eating, smoking	35	70.0

Table4 –Attitude of child labourers towards theirs works

Child's attitude towards his work		Frequency	Percentage
Liking towards job	No	8	16.0
	Yes	42	84.0
Child's opinion about his job	Good	23	46.0
	No Interest	2	04.0
	Poverty	24	48.0
	Torture	1	02.0
Desire to continue in the same job	No	11	22.0
	Yes	39	78.0
Satisfaction with present salary	No	26	52.0
	Yes	24	48.0

Table 5 –Awareness of child labourers towards their work and Laws

Awareness among Child Labourers		Frequency	Percentage
Meaning of child labour	No	33	66.0
	Yes	17	34.0
Constitutional Provisions Related To Prohibition of Employment of Children	No	50	100.0
Child labour Prohibition and Regulation Act	No	44	88.0
	Yes	6	12.0
The Factories Act	No	50	100.0
The Mines Acts	No	50	100.0
The Plantation Labor Act	No	50	100.0
The Motor Transport Act	No	50	100.0
The Beedi and Cigar Worker Act	No	50	100.0
The Apprentices Act	No	50	100.0
The Indian Ports Act	No	50	100.0

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