

Life Style of Child Labourers Working in Jammu City

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Abstract—Child labour can broadly be defined as the segment of child population doing either paid or unpaid work. Child labour is a global phenomenon and a harsh reality. The present research was designed to study the life style of child labourers from Jammu city with the objective of assessing the working and living conditions, the factors responsible for child labour and the problems faced by them. Sample consisted of 60 children who were working as full time and part time. Purposive and Snow ball sampling technique was used for sample selection. Interview schedule and observation method were used for data collection. The results of the study revealed that majority of the respondents were in the age group of 9-11 years and most of them were Hindus. Majority of the respondents belonged to nuclear families, had attended school, but most of them were dropouts due to poverty. Most of the respondents were working between 6-8 hours and used to clean the floors, wash dishes and clothes. Some respondents were doing all domestic work and baby-sitting. Most of the respondents were working to supplement their family income, and the rest were working due to poverty and/or death of father. Most of the respondents get punishment when they do not work properly because their employers were strict in terms of work and production. Some were spared from punishment but their wages were deducted. Majority of the respondents went to Government hospitals for their medical treatment. Majority of the respondents had financial problems, while a few had health problems. Children were very hopeless for their future life and they had lack of confidence in them.

Keywords: Child labour, Jammu.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children in every society have always been taken as the greatest gift to humanity. Childhood is an important stage of human development as it holds the potential to the future development of any society. Children should be brought up in an environment, which is helpful to their intellectual, physical and social development, so that they go on to be a responsible and productive part of the Society [1]. Children are the hope and future of a nation. Yet, there are millions of deprived children in our country who have never known a normal, carefree childhood. Child labour refers to the employment of children in any work that denies them of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and that is

mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful. Child labour is found in every part of the world particularly in developing countries [2]. 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. Nowadays, it is considered as a serious issue. 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 [3]. Child labour is a global concern because it damages, spoils and destroys the future of children. It is a great economic and social problem. Child labour is raising its ugly head day by day. With the growing trend of rural-urban migration and rapid industrial development the urban centers in developing societies now have become the centres of working children. Child labour has been practiced in India over a long period under economic compulsion and the prevailing culture of poverty among the lower strata. Besides these factors, there is a plethora of other factors like adult unemployment, low income, lack of scope of education for different segments of population, broken home conditions, failure of welfare schemes of the government and lack of clarity in laws and their implementation which contribute to the genesis, growth and persistence of child labour in India [4].

Child labour is a form of child abuse and child exploitation. It is a violation of the child's right to human dignity and the right to freedom of association. These rights are preserved in many international human rights conventions as well as in state constitutions all over the world, including that of South Africa. Child labour had a negative effect on the well-being of vulnerable children in most developing countries. For instance, it affects the development of a child both physically and socially, and it compromises educational opportunities. Keeping these facts in mind an attempt has been made to study the problem of child labour in view of the fact that in most of the unorganised sector, the children are employed in large number. The results of this study will help in bringing forth the plight of these children and this study will provide the base line data for further research and help policy makers,

government and non-governmental organizations working for the welfare of children to frame policies for their betterment.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research was designed to study the life style of child labourers working in different areas of Jammu City. The objective of the study was to assess the working and living conditions of child labour working in different sectors. Sample of the study consisted of 60 children who were working as full time or part time workers in the age group of 6- 14years. Both boys and girls formed part of the sample group. 'Snow ball' and ' Purposive Sampling technique' were used for sample collection. Interview schedule and observation method were used for data collection. A well structured interview schedule was developed with a view to collect the information from the child labourers. The interview schedule covered personal information, family background, causes of working as a child labourer, nature of work, working condition, and problems at work place.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the personal information of the respondents. It was found that 50% of the respondents were in the age group of (9-11) years, 37% respondents were in the age group of (12-14) years, and 13% respondents were in the age group of (6-8) years. 80% of the respondents were males and the rest of the respondents were females. All the respondents were born in urban areas. 58% of the respondents were Hindu, 38% of the respondents were Muslim and 3% respondents were sikh.38% of respondents belonged to Schedule Tribe category, 37% respondents were Schedule Caste and 25% respondents belonged to the OBC category. Most 93% of the respondents belonged to Nuclear families and 7% of the respondents belonged to joint families.

Table 1: Background Information of Respondents

Age (year)	N= 60	%
6-8 years	8	13
9-11 years	30	50
12-14 years	22	37
Total	60	100
Sex	N=60	%
Male	48	80
Female	12	20
Total	60	100
Place of birth	N=60	%
Urban	60	100
Total	60	100
Religion	N=60	%
Hindu	35	58
Muslim	23	38
Sikh	2	3
Total	60	100
Caste	N=60	%
Schedule Caste (SC)	22	37
Schedule Tribe (ST)	23	38

Other backward caste (OBC)	15	25
Total	60	100
Status of family	N=60	%
Joint	4	7
Nuclear	56	93
Total	60	100

Table 2 depicts that 45% mothers of respondents were educated up to middle, 27% mothers of respondents were educated up to primary, 18% mothers of respondents were illiterate and 10% mothers of respondent studied up to secondary level.38% of fathers of respondents had studied up to primary, 35% of fathers of respondents had studied up to middle, 12% of fathers of respondents were illiterate and 5% fathers of respondent were educated up to secondary school.28% of fathers of respondents were working as labourer, 23% fathers of the respondents were farmers, 25% fathers of the respondents were working in shops for example they were working in Tea-stalls, small-scale restaurants, Garages etc.13% fathers of respondents were vendors and 10% father's of respondents had expired. 57% mothers of respondents were working as domestic servants, 32% mothers of the respondents were housewives and 12% mothers of the respondents were daily wage labourers. Results of the study are consistent with the research conducted by M. K. Shanta[4]which reveals that parents of child labourers had low educational and occupational status.

Table 2: Family backgrounds of respondents

Educational status	Mother		Father	
	N=60	%	N=60	%
illiterate	11	18	7	12
Up to primary	16	27	23	38
Up to middle	27	45	21	35
Up to secondary	6	10	3	5
Total	60	100	54	90
Occupation	Mother		Father	
	N=60	%	N=60	%
Wage labourer	7	12	17	28
Working in shops	-	-	15	25
Domestic servant	34	57	-	-
Housewife	19	32	-	-
Agriculture	-	-	14	23
Vendor	-	-	8	13
Total	60	100	54	90

Table 3 depicts that a majority (80%) of respondents had attended school at one time or other but (20%) had never attended the school, because their parents were ignorant regarding the benefits of education. Hence, they did not allow their children to go to school.33% of respondents had attended school for more than 6 years, 22% respondents had attended school for 1-3 years, 25% respondents had attended school for 3-6 years, and 20% of respondents were illiterate and had never been to school. During the interview, it was learnt that due to the poor economic conditions of families, children had no option but to work. These findings are similar with those of

the study conducted by Agrawal and Chandra[5], which reveals that children had to leave education due to poverty, inability to pay school fees, and unemployment. Some were not interested in study at all.

Table 3: Educational Statuses of the Respondents

Attended the school	N=60	%
Yes	48	80
No	12	20
Total	60	100
No. of year attended	N=60	%
1-3 years	13	22
3-6 years	15	25
above 6 years	20	33
Never gone to school	12	20
Total	60	100

Table 4 reveals that 57% of respondents were working to supplement their family income because their parents income was not sufficient to meet all their family needs, and therefore the respondents had to work to get additional income for the family, 28% of respondents were working due to poverty, 10% of respondents were working because they were not interested in studies. 48% of respondents started working when they were above 9 years, because their parent's income was not sufficient to meet all the family needs, 45% of respondents started working at the age of 7- 9 years whereas 7% of the respondents started working when they were less than 7 years, because of broken families or death of their father. Hence, it is concluded that children started working at a very early age. Similar results were found in the study conducted by Qamar and Shoaib[6] where in majority of respondents were doing labours due to poverty and to support the family income.

Table 4: Reasons for child labour

Reasons	N=60	%
Poverty	17	28
To supplement family income	34	57
Dejected and broken families	6	10
Not interested in studies	3	10
Total	60	100

4. WORKING STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

75% of respondents were staying with their parents, 25% of respondents were staying without parents, i.e., they were staying with their employers.

Majority (70%) of the respondents were working between 6-8 hours, they all were full time workers, 12% of respondents were working between 4 - 6 hours as they were part time workers, 10% of respondents were working between 2-4 hours since, they were also part time workers and the rest were working above 8 hours as they were full time workers. 27% of respondents used to clean floors and wash dishes and clothes, 23% of respondents were doing all domestic work, 22% of respondents were working as helpers like serving, dusting,

waiter at shops, car washing etc and 7% of respondents were working as baby sitters. 15% of respondents were working as part time domestic helpers and 9% of respondents were cleaning floors and washing dishes at shops, Dhaba etc. All the children work for long hours with little time to play and rest. This caused great amount of strain on them. Some of the children say that when they see other children playing in the streets and parks they also want to join them but their long working hours do not allow them to do so. Majority (82%) of the respondents were getting leave on special occasions/festivals like Diwali, Eid, Lohri, Baisakhi and Gurupurav, etc. Some respondents who were working in households got new clothes from their employers on special occasions. 18% of respondents were getting leave twice in a month, because their employers were not willing to give them more than two holidays in a month.

All the respondents received payment in cash every month. About 65% of the respondents earned a sum of Rs(1600 - 2400) per month, because some were baby sitters, helpers and part time workers, another 22% of the respondents earned an amount of Rs (2400- 3000) per month, because all of them were domestic workers and 13% of the respondents had monthly incomes of Rs (800 - 1600), they all being part time workers.

It was concluded that all of the workers had their salaries dependent on the kind of work they did. Some of them were not satisfied with their salaries. 55% of the respondents used to get punishment when they did not work properly because their employers were strict in terms of work and production. Whereas 45% of the respondents did not get any kind of punishment as their employer had a cordial relationship with them. 28% of the respondents were spared from punishment but their wages were deducted, 15% of the respondents were scolded and 12% of respondents were left with warnings and they were directed to work properly and efficiently.

To sum up we can say that the living and working condition of the respondents was very pathetic. Among the various factors poverty is the major determinant which forced children to join labour market at an early age. Since the poor families do not have the resources to send their children to school so they send them to work in order to augment the family income and also to acquire some work skills. Children work under poor conditions, work beyond normal working hours, perform heavy tasks and get very less in return. Even though the respondents are paid less, but whatever income they earn is of benefit to poor families. It was observed that the children were not healthy and they showed signs of physical growth retardation and unhealthy skin. Mostly respondents felt that the long working hours caused strain on them. They were very hopeless for their future life, and they had lack of confidence in them. The respondents felt that due to long working hours they could not play with their friends, they could not go to meet their relatives.

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