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CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA : AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Introduction

Children are the future of any nation, and large numbers of children in the workforce at present implies fewer educated or skilled workers in the future. A high percentage of child labour also implies loss of welfare to society, as more young children have to enter the labour market.

The child labour problem is an intense socio-economic issue in India that requires a long term multi-pronged strategy to be carried out on a continuous basis. The child labour problem is an evil that requires awareness and change of approach in all sections of the society. Child labour denies a large number of children the right to childhood education, and health. The present research paper analyzes and focuses on the child labour situation in India.

Objectives of the Research :

1. To study the magnitude and hazardous occupations child labour in India.
2. To analyze the social group and religious group child labour in India.
3. To study the cause of child labour in India.
4. To find out the why child labour necessary to families in India.
5. To find out the main factor of elimination of child labour in India.

Research Methodology :

The study is mainly based on the secondary data the required has been collected from the V.V. Giri, National Labour Institute Reports, NSSO Report, IHD Report, Reference Book, Government Report, Internet etc.

What is mean by Child Labour :

A Child is classified as a labourer if the child is in the age group 5-14 years and is 'Economically Active' as per the ILO and Census of India (2001), a person is treated as economically active or gainfully employed if he/she does work on a regular basis for which he or she receives remuneration or it such labour results in output for the market.

Magnitude Child Labour:

According to the latest available estimates from NSSO (2007-08), around "five million children are economically active in the labour market", and account for more than two percent of the total child population of India in the age group 5-14 years. This proportion was more than three percent in 2004-05 and more than six percent in 1993-94, which was equal to nine million children in 2004-05. According to the census of India, there were 5.4 percent (11.28 million) and five percent (12.6 million) child worker in India in 1991 and 2001 respectively.

Child Labour and Four States :

There are large variations across the states in their share of child labour in absolute terms; Uttar Pradesh has the highest child labour population followed by Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. In 2004-05, "these four states accounted for 54 percent of the child labour population in India". Uttar Pradesh alone contributes close to one-fourth of the child workforce, while Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra contribute 13 percent, 9 percent and 9 percent respectively.

Gender Disparity:

In India, boys are economically more active in the labour market than girls. The gender gap for working children was apparent in 1993-94 (with 6.2 percent male and 6.0 percent female), which came down in 2004-05 (with 3.3 percent male and 3.3 percent female child workers). However, the latest estimates of the NSSO (2007-08) show that the gender gap is increasing again (with 2.7 percent male and 2.0 percent female).

The gender gap in the child workforce participation turned against the girl child for rural India in 2004-05, with the percentage of working girls being higher than boys. However, the recent estimates of the NSSO (2007-08) present a different picture, where the proportion of female child labour has fallen more rapidly than male child labour between 2004-05 and 2007-08. As a result, the incidence of child labour among girls was lower than for boys in 2007-08. This decline was more pronounced in rural India.

Child Labour and Social Groups :

The incidence of working children among SCs and STs was higher than the average for all social groups which is again a reflection of the government school system is absorbing them. According to NSSO (2004-05 and 2007-08), children from STs are twice as likely to work as child labour than the children from the upper castes (STs Child labour percent is 3.8% and 3.8 percent, SCs percent is 2.8, 2.8, OBCs percent 2.9, 2.3, others percent 2.0, 1.7). However, it is important to note that fall in child labour was foster among SCs and STs compared to OBCs and other castes for the first half of the decade.

Child Labour and Religious Groups :

Among the major religious groups, Muslim had the highest child workforce participation rate. Among Muslim, the child workforce participation rate (3 percent) was higher than the national average (2.4 percent) in 2007-08. Child labour among the Hindus declined from 4.2 percent in 1999-2000 to 2.3 percent in 2007-08, whereas child labour among Muslims declined from four percent to only three percent during the same period. This is a reflection of the slower improvement in the literacy rate and net attendance rate in schools among Muslims for the same time period.

Child Labour and Sectoral Distribution :

A majority of the child labour in India is engaged in agriculture, which accounts for more than half of the total child labour. The manufacturing sector is the next biggest employer of child labour in India, followed by trade and hotels, community and social services, and construction.

The analysis of the state wise sectoral distribution of child labour reveals that the agriculture sector employed the majority of child labour across the states in 2004-05. However, there are few states, where the sectoral distribution for child labour is different. For instance, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh have a large share of child labour in the manufacturing sector (ranging from 25 percent to 45 percent compared to the all India figure of 17 percent), while Delhi and Kerala employ the majority of their child labour in the trade and hotel sector (58 percent and 32 percent, respectively compared to the all India (Figure of 9 percent) and community and social services sector (31 percent and 16 percent, respectively as compared to the all India figure of 3 percent).

Child Labour and Hazardous Occupations :

Despite stringent legislation to stop child labour, especially in hazardous industries, children are still working in significant numbers in these industries. The registrar general of census has published data on the occupation wise distribution of children in the age group 5-14 years working in the non-agricultural sector. The working group on child labour for the 11th Five Year Plan has done a tentative segregation of data into hazardous and non-hazardous occupations. However, the classification of occupations in the census data does not exactly match the occupations listed as hazardous under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act. About 3.64 million children in the age group 5-14 years are working in the non-agricultural sector in the country, of which 1.22 million (33.47 percent) are working in hazardous occupations. The distribution of children in different hazardous occupations is give in about 53 percent of the total number of children working in hazardous occupation is employed in the Pan, Bidi and Cigarette, industry, and in construction and as domestic help.

Why Child Labour?

A single phenomenon does not cause child labour. It is the result of multitude of factors like,

- 1) Absence of universal primary education, 2) Unawareness among parents about educating their child and consequences of child labour, 3) Ineffective enforcement of the laws, 4) Irrelevant curriculum, boring school atmosphere, uninteresting teaching learning, 5) Preference of employers for child working force as they are cheap labourers, 6) Tradition of making the children learn family skills, 7) Economic disparity, 8) Stratified social system and belief about roles and work of some social sectors, 9) Tolerance and acceptance of child labourers by society, 10) Cultural expectations of children as an integral part of the socio-economic survival of the family in community, 11) The environmental degradation of the countryside, causing mass flight to the cities and the slow death of rural economics, 12) On arrival in overcrowded cities, the disintegration of family units through alcoholism, unemployment, etc. setting the stage for the emergence of armies of street children, child labourers and child prostitutes, 13) Lack of effective enforcement of the right to free and compulsory elementary education.

Child Labour Necessary to Families in India?

Child labour is a source of income for poor families. A study conducted by the ILO Bureau of Statistics found that, "Children's work was considered essential to maintaining the economic level of households, either in the form of work for wages, of help in household enterprises or of household chores in order to free, adult household members for accounted for between 34 and 37 percent of the total household income. This study concludes that a child labourers income important to the livelihood of a poor family. There is a questionable aspect of this study. It was conducted in

the form of a survey, and the responses were given parents of the child labourers. Parents would be biased into being compelled to support their decision to send their children to work, by saying that it is essential. They are probably right, for most poor families in India; alternative sources of income are close to non-existent. There are no social welfare systems such as those in the west, nor is there easy access to loans, which will be discussed.

What needs to be done for Elimination of Child Labour?

1. Design and implement a multi-pronged effort to end child labour, composed of both persuasive and mandatory means. At a minimum, this effort should include stepped up enforcement efforts, free, compulsory, and quality public education, and financial support for children to go to school.
2. Implement measures designed to bring current practice into compliance with article 21 A of the constitution which mandates free and compulsory education for all children up to fourteen years of age.
3. Government should make necessary provisions as per the laws e.g. appoint Special Labour Officer, Special Police Officer for children.
4. Pressure, districts to constitute and oversee bonded labour vigilance committees, as required by the Bonded Labour (system) Abolition Act 1976. Ensure that a sufficient number of investigators can be included in the committee to guarantee implementation of the act. Given the massive numbers of children involved non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives lawyers, social workers, teachers, civil servants, and others with ties to Bonded Labourers and their families should be enlisted as investigators
5. Amend the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 so that household enterprises and government schools and training centers are no longer exempted for prohibitions on employing children; rules formulated by the central government will apply until replaced by rules, formulated by the states themselves; and coverage under the act should be expanded to include agriculture and informal sector.

Suggestions :

The problem is complex and widespread. It needs social awakening, policy interventions and implementation of schemes. There are some important opinion makers in society and if we sensitize them, the impact will manifold. They need to find ways and means for elimination of child labour and sensitize different social group and make policies concerning child labour. The policy makers should find. Some creative solutions, which will influence and create impact on elimination of child labour issue, facilitated by administrative heads of the department. Wide publicity through use of various media by creating social pressure to counter act social sanctions may be built, along with raising finances and thinking of newer ways for combating the problem.

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