

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF CHILD LABOUR - A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ALAPPUZHA DISTRICT

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“Children should have pens in their hands not tools” – Iqbal Masih

INTRODUCTION

The most innocent phase in human life is the childhood. It is that stage of life when the human foundations are laid for a successful adult life. Child labour is a practice usually followed in developing and underdeveloped countries. India, unfortunately, is one of them. Childlabour is work that harms children or keeps them from attending school. The socio-economic conditions play a significant role in giving rise to the problem of child labour. While governments and civil society commemorate the World Day Against Child Labour on June 12, over 20 crore children are still engaged as child laborers. More than half of them face the worst forms of child labour. As per the census report, the number of children in the age group of 5-14 years engaged in work (including main and marginal workers) was 45,400 in 2011, registering an increase of 74% over 2001. The number of children in this age group engaged in child labour in 2001 was 26,200. The present study was conducted in Alappuzha district.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: The present study can be stated as Socio-economic aspects of child labour in Kerala: A study with special reference to Alappuzha district.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Child Labour

Child Labour, consisting of children below 14 years of age, is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as the type of work performed by children that deprives them of their childhood and their dignity, which hampers their access to education and acquisition of skills and which is performed under conditions harmful to their health and their development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY : ‘Kerala Model of Development’ has received wide attention among the economists due to the socio-cultural development and high literacy rate in Kerala with low economic growth. Yet, Kerala has a large magnitude of child labour. So an attempt is made in this study to analyze,

- The factors responsible for child labour
- The socio-economic impact of child labour
- The loss of health and education of child due to child labour.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Even though child labour is an unpardonable crime, it exists even today.

SOURCES OF DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study is basically descriptive in nature. Both primary and secondary data were collected for the present study. A sample survey was conducted among the working children for collecting primary data and current information regarding the nature of child labour in Alappuzha district. A total number of 30 working children were selected at random for this purpose and were interviewed

with the help of a structured questionnaire. Additional data have been obtained from the materials collected from the media and various text books and journals.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has to be completed within a short span of time and the scope of coverage of the survey work is not satisfactory. It is difficult to get correct data regarding hours of work, their wages, monthly income of parents etc., as they are not keeping correct data. Many of the employers may not allow the investigator to collect data. Incomplete, inconsistent and unrealistic responses are eliminated. Even though there are certain limitations in the different aspects of the study, much care has been taken to reduce the error by avoiding guess work and manipulation of data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE 4.1 :OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD WORKERS

SI.No	Occupation	No of working children	percentage
1	Hotel workers	6	20
2	Household and service	3	10
3	Trade and Commerce	4	13.3
4	Agriculture	3	10
5	Automobile workers	2	6.7
6	Coolie	3	10
7	Factory Workers(including coir)	5	16.7
8	Tailoring	2	6.7
9	Others	2	6.7
	Total	30	100

Source: sample survey

TABLE 4.2:NATURE OF CHILD LABOUR

Type	No. Of children	Percentage
Full Timer	25	83.3
Part Timer	5	16.7
Total	30	100

Source: sample survey

TABLE 4.3: EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF CHILD WORKERS

SI. No	Level of education	No. of workers	Percentage
1	Primary	16	53.3
2	Upper Primary	10	33.3
3	High school	4	13.3
	Total	30	100

Source: Primary data

TABLE 4.4: AGE COMPOSITION OF CHILD WORKERS

SI. No	Age Group	No of children	Percentage
1	Below 5	0	0
2	5-7	3	10
3	8-9	4	13.3
4	10-11	7	23.3
5	12-13	7	23.3
6	14-15	9	30
Total		30	100

Source: Sample Survey

TABLE 4.5: GENDER OF CHILD WORKERS

Gender	NO. of children	Percentage
Male	24	80
Female	6	20
Total	30	100

Source: sample survey

TABLE 4.6: FAMILY SIZE AND CHILD LABOUR

SI No	No of members	Frequency of child	Percentage
1	Below 4	4	13.3
2	4-6	6	20
3	7-9	12	40
4	Above 9	8	26.7
Total		30	100

Source: sample survey

TABLE 4.7: CHILD LABOUR AND HEALTH HAZARDS

Health hazards	No of children	Percentage
Asthma	2	6.6
Lung disease	7	23.3
Bone pain	10	33.3
Skin diseases	7	23.3
Absolute health	4	13.3
Total	30	100

Source: primary data

TABLE 4.8: WAGE LEVELS OF CHILD WORKERS

SI No	Wage per work in Rs	No of child workers	Percentage
1	20-25	2	6.6
2	26-30	4	13.3
3	31-35	10	33.3
4	36-40	6	20
5	41-45	5	16.6
6	46-50	3	10
	Total	30	100

Source: sample survey

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

It is worthy of mentioning the following findings from the study.

- a. All most all children who engaged in hazardous jobs are infected by one disease or another.
- b. Most of the children are working for long hours, i.e., 11 to 15 hours a day.
- c. Though these children are employed in hazardous jobs, they are denied of any social security or safety measures.
- d. Child workers are given only very low wages which ranges between 20 to 50 rupees per day.
- e. Organized labour unions have a very limited role in improving the living or working conditions of child workers.
- f. Though the meagre income supplements the family income, the denial of education and child hood to these working children is to be regarded as a social crime.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREVENTING CHILD LABOUR

1. Abolition of poverty.
2. Provide employment to at least one person in a family.
3. Start employment generation programme to the adults and try to reduce educational unemployment.
4. Effective implementation of Integrated Child Development Schemes.
5. Provide more amount as widow pension.
6. Provide more assistance to economically and socially weaker sections.
7. Introduce strong law in order to abolish child labour.
8. Create awareness among the public against this social evil.
9. Provide re-settlement to the existing child labour.
10. Provide free and compulsory education to all the children in our nation.
11. Try to give better education through public schools.
12. Education must be job-oriented in nature.
13. Essential commodities must be supplied to the poor at cheaper rates.
14. The secondary schools should give technical education to the children.

CONCLUSION

Child labour and slavery are among the worst forms of human rights violation. The prevalence of child labour points to utter disrespect towards international declarations, treaties and conventions, and national institutions and legislations. Child labour denies freedom, justice, dignity, equal opportunities and a fulfilled childhood. It also endangers children's present and future. It is a slap in the face of civilizations, cultures and religions. The employment of every child labour represents a loss of the employment of adult labour. The child workers have no opportunity to develop themselves physically, emotionally and intellectually, their productive life span also shortened. If we can educate a child in his earlier stage, he will get higher education and will become an asset of our nation. We can train him as a doctor or an engineer or a lawyer or any other technically skilled person. But these are losing to the child worker. This is the real cost of child labour.

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