

# Child Labour: A Curse to India: A Review

*Usha Kiran Barla, Assistant Professor*

*Department of Humanities, Arka Jain University, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India*

**ABSTRACT:** *Child labor is one of the most serious issues facing the globe at large, particularly in developing nations like India. Child labor is often required by the parents' financial constraints. The primary cause of child labor is widespread unemployment and underemployment among the adult low strata of the population, which is exacerbated by population increase. Large families with little income and frequently a lack of educational facilities, illiteracy, and parental misunderstanding about the significance of education as well as the effect of labor on their children's health are some of the factors that encourage child labor. However, throughout time, there has been a rise in worldwide awareness of the problem's gravity. In addition, India's constitution commits to the preservation and promotion of welfare concerns above economic reasons. As a result, the Indian government has established a number of committees and commissions, some of which are particularly focused on the issue of child labor and are tasked with providing insights into the problem as well as recommendations for solutions. Government policies on child labor and development must be realistic and comprehensive in today's world.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Illiteracy, Labour Legislation, Organized Sector, Poverty, Unorganized Sector, Unemployment.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Any kid who is not in school is considered child labor. Every non-schooling kid, regardless of whether he or she is involved in wage or non-wage employment, working for the family of others, employed in hazardous or non-hazardous professions, employed on a day wage or on a contract basis, is a child labor. "A person under the age of 14 years is to be considered a child," according to the Factories Act of 1948. As a result, any physical labor performed by a kid under the age of 14 in an organized or unorganized sector, whether forced or voluntary, counts as "child labor."

Child labor has evolved into a worldwide problem that is now a "hard reality." The 'brutal reality' of child labor comes from the fact that, given the country's current level of development, many parents are forced to put their children to work to augment their income, and the money gained from child labor, however small, is necessary to keep the family afloat. This is the child labor's "poor" argument [1]. The issue occurs in virtually every nation on the planet, yet the scope of the problem differs from one country to the next. Despite the lack of accurate statistics, child labor continues to be prevalent in many Third World nations. India boasts the world's biggest number of child workers, accounting for approximately 7% of the workforce and generating a significant portion of the country's GDP. The phrase "child labor" is often used interchangeably with "employed kid." It is co-extensive with any job done by the kid for a profit in this sense. However, the phrase "child labor" is often used in a derogatory manner [2]. It conjures up images of hatred and exploitation. Child labor, as described by Homer Floks, Chairman of the United States Child Labour Committee, is "work by children that interferes with their complete physical development, their chances for an acceptable minimum of education, or their required recreation".

Child labor is more or less prevalent throughout history; nevertheless, the form and scope of child labor changes depending on the socioeconomic structure of society. Children are the blossoming flowers of society's garden and a nation's most precious asset. Childhood has long been regarded as the most crucial stage of life, since it contains a hidden wealth of potential growth of a developing country [3]. During this time, one's life is molded and shaped, and one's behavior, conduct, and emotions are formed [4]. Surprisingly, the majority of children's lives are sadly lost owing to poverty, misery, hunger, and inadequate and unsanitary circumstances, mostly in the rural sector compared to the urban equivalent.

In many instances, child labor is required by economic compulsions on the part of the parents [5]. The primary causes of child labor include widespread absolute poverty, unemployment and underemployment among adult workers, big families, a lack of educational facilities, illiteracy, and parental misunderstanding about the significance of education and the effect of labor on their children's health. Distracting the kid from employment results in a loss of revenue for the parents as well as an extra educational expense, however little. The economic advantages of kid labor are usually substantial since it produces an income that is more than what the family consumes. This is most likely one of the reasons why parents do not believe it is beneficial to

send their children to school. Additionally, there are certain reasons why companies favor kid labor. In light of the above, it seems that one of the main reasons for employing children is because non-economic youngsters are simpler to handle since they are less conscious of their rights, less bothersome, less prone to complaint, more trustworthy, less likely to miss work, and there are no union issue.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Committee on Child Labor, established by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, conducted a research in 1979 that looked at various aspects of child labor in various professions. Child labor was found to be most prevalent in Andhra Pradesh, accounting for approximately 9% of the entire labor force, 9.2% of the total child population, and 3.7 percent of the state's total population in 1971, according to the research. In rural regions, child labor was more common than in metropolitan ones. Males had a much higher rate of involvement in the labor force (28.9%) than females in the age range of ten to fourteen years (20 percent).

Another research on working children in Bombay by Singh, M. (1980) showed that the majority of working children in the age range of 6 to 15 years belonged to low-income families living in slums and depressed regions in metropolitan districts. A total of 203 boys (67.7%) and 97 girls participated in this research (32.3). 211 (70.3%) of the 300 working children worked for an employer, while 89 (29.7%) worked for themselves. According to the research, male children bear a greater share of the family's financial burden than female offspring.

The execution of numerous regulations for the working conditions and welfare of child labor is concerned, according to a research by Singh, R. (1980). Employees had enormous ignorance about the current rules. Only 20 people voted in favor of measures to regulate children's employment. Similarly, Sharma (1982) reported that 565 of the respondents had to work for 15 to 18 hours per day to make a living, while 44 percent had to labor for 10 to 15 hours per day. In terms of wage payments, 815 of the respondents got less than Rs. 50 per month, while just 35 received more than Rs. 100 per month.

Weiner (1990) found that child labor has traditionally been seen as an economic issue in our nation. According to his research, the level of economic growth or the country's production system dictates the connection between children and employment to a large degree. According to a study performed by Vemuri and Anand (1998), child labor accounts for more than 20% of India's GDP.

Child labor is still prevalent in virtually every region of the globe. Although the total number of youngsters working worldwide is unclear. It is enormous, unquestionably in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The issue of child labor and its consequences has gotten more attention in recent years. This increasing focus is undoubtedly related to the fact that child labor has significant social, moral, economic, and demographic consequences for children, families, communities, societies, and the globe. As a result, many sectors in various areas of the globe have worked to eliminate or reduce child labor.

However, as worldwide awareness of the severity of the issue has grown over time, many non-governmental groups dedicated to the care of these children have emerged. The Indian constitution is likewise dedicated to the preservation and promotion of welfare concerns above economic reasons. As a result, it's not unexpected that the Indian government has set up a number of committees and commissions, either to look into the issue of child labor explicitly or to look into labor conditions in general, to provide us with insights into the problem and solutions. These include (i) The Royal Commission on Labour (1929); (ii) The Labour Investigation Committee (1944); (iii) The National Commission on Labour (1966); (iv) The Gurupadaswamy Committee on Child Labour (1966); and (v) The Sanat Mehta Committee (1986). [6], [7]

The Indian constitution has explicit clauses prohibiting the use of child labor and calls for its total abolition. The nature and scope of the issue of child labor in India is vast and complicated. Across the nation, millions of youngsters are employed in a variety of businesses and professions. India now has the world's highest population of working children. A significant percentage of them operate in dangerous sectors like mining and pyrotechnics production.

According to the United Nations Youngsters' Education Fund (UNICEF), the World Children Report 1997 shows that even highly developed nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States employ a significant number of children. In developing nations, 250 million children aged 5 to 14 work, with 120 million working full-time and 130 million working part-time. Asia accounts for almost 61 percent of the total

(nearly 153 million), Africa for 32 percent (80 million), and Latin America for 7% (17.5 million). These figures are based on a new, more precise approach that the International Labour Organization's Bureau of Statistics recently tested in Ghana, India, Pakistan, Senegal, and Turkey.

In terms of child labor, India is at the top of the list among surrounding nations in the South Asian area. According to the 1991 Census of India, there were 11.29 million children working. Child labor accounts for 11 to 20% of the workforce in Third World nations, according to a survey performed by the International Labour Organization. The research also showed that, despite efforts over the last two decades to eliminate child labor, at least one hundred million youngsters are being exploited by the labor market. Poverty and unemployment, according to the research, are twin evils that promote child labor. According to it, children's wages may account for up to 30% or even more of total family incomes in certain cases. As a result, poverty is not only a source of child labor, but also one of its consequences.

There is a lot of diversity in child labor, both in terms of states and sectors. Agriculture and allied activities employ more than 80% of all working children, with half working as agricultural laborers and the other half working as cultivators and plantation workers, livestock, forestry, fishing, and hunting, among other jobs, and the remaining 20% working in manufacturing, processing, servicing, and communications. As of the 1991 Census, the table displays the state-by-state breakdown of laborers (0-14). Andhra Pradesh came in first, followed by Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, according to Census state-by-state data.

### 3. DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Child Labour Causes:

Child labor is a social and economic issue. The most frequent causal reasons for large-scale child work are socioeconomic backwardness, followed by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, population growth, entrenched societal biases, and, above all, government indifference. "Kid labor is no longer a means of economic exploitation, but is required by economic necessity of the parents, and in many instances that of the child himself," according to the official statement. Child labor, according to Gangrade (1978), is a result of variables such as traditions, traditional attitudes, a lack of education or parents' unwillingness to send their children to school, urbanization, industrialization, migration, and so on [8].

In addition to the reasons listed above, there are a number of additional factors that contribute to child labor. To begin with, protective labor law is unbalanced in that it excludes farmers and small-scale businesses. Second, the enforcement machinery supplied by state governments is nearly always insufficient and fails to detect child labor.

Children are usually quiet listeners or non-listeners to policies/programs intended for them, as a result of which their issues are not adequately recognized, no one pays serious attention to their plights, and the protections provided to avoid child labor are not efficiently applied.

#### 3.2 Policies On Child Labor:

The National Authority on the Elimination of Child Labour (NAECL), established by the Government of India in September 1994 with the Secretary, Ministry of Labour working as the Member-Secretary and the Minister of State for Labour as Chairman, was a major initiative of the Government of India to orchestrate its policies dealing with the exploitation of children. In light of its top priority for the removal of child labor from hazardous industries and activities, which culminated in then-Indian Prime Minister Sri P.V [9]. Narasimha Rao pledging to remove this component within a highly unrealistic five-year timeframe. The NAECL's emphasis has been narrowed to a specific subset of child labor in India. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has again limited itself to the so-called hazardous and intolerable types of child labor in its 1996 Targeting the Intolerable report and proposed convention to be ratified in 1990.

UNICEF's views on child development and child labor, as shown by UNICEF (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997), are wider than the Government of India's narrowly focused child labor laws [10]. Its goal is to address child labor as part of a larger discussion on child development, with a focus on primary and secondary school education

and poverty reduction. Over the past decade, India has launched a number of projects and programs [11]. The passage of the Child Labour Act, as well as the development of a new national child labor policy.

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Over the past decade, India has launched a number of projects and programs. The formulation of a New National Child Labour Policy, the enactment of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, the establishment of a Task Force on Child Labour, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other initiatives have all played a role in this process, as have corresponding initiatives in the related area of Education, where a New Education Policy was formulated, and the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among others.

## 1. CONCLUSION

A child labour policy, which defines the target group in the true spirit of Article 32. All non- school going children are child laborers in one form or the other. Agricultural child labour constitutes the core of the problem. Without tackling this issue, the more emotive issue of child labour in hazardous occupations cannot be handled. Compulsory education has historically been one of the most effective instruments for eliminating child labour in practice. It is evident that children in school are less likely to be in full- time or close to full-time employment or work. Child labour policies and education policies have to be formulated and be operated in tandem and not independent of each other. The relation between education and child work is complex, however, and seemingly obvious solutions may not always work. Shortcomings in the public education system can and do actually encourage the flow of children into work place. At the very least, schools must be available, accessible and affordable and as far as possible free.

In the context of child labour it is important to emphasize that policies relating to population, education (primary and middle school education) investment, trade and labour productivity influence every aspect of economic growth as well as child labour. Therefore, adopts a more positive attitude towards child labour, parents do want their children to be educated and poverty as a limiting factor is highly over-rated. Recognize the fact that even today there are 'poor' parents sending their children to school instead of work. Realized the NFE cannot be a solution to either the problem of illiteracy of child labour. It is at best a temporary solution, which has no relevance unless simultaneously backed by adequate strengthening of the formal education structure.

Efforts of the Government of India in establishing a National Authority for the Elimination of Child Labour created machinery for coordination among nine major ministries of the federal government are important steps in the right direction. However, the fragmentary nature of our approach to different facets of child welfare, rural education, rural development and child labour policies at the local level needs to be recognized and machinery for a coordinated effort at the village level has to be put in place. Without such a coordinated effort, we cannot success fully deal with the issue of child development of which labour is a part.

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