

Nature of Exploitation of Child Labourers in Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted at Mahabubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh regarding the nature of exploitation of child labourers. Majority of both girls and boys expressed frequently that their remuneration was not in correspondence with work, pay was not provided for overtime or extra work drawn while the adults are obtaining more pay for similar work. But pay was not provided for holidays and irregularity in payment by the employer was rarely expressed by both girls and boys. Regarding exploitation in terms of work, both the girls and boys expressed that frequently the work was highly tiresome and laborious, work was unsuitable for children and they had heavy work load and most frequently require tiresome working posture. Most of the child labourers frequently had long working hours, but lack of leisure during work was rarely observed. The work hazards faced by the girls and boys frequently include cuts and injuries and exposure to extreme weather conditions such as to sun, rain and cold. Majority of the girls were sometimes exposed to chemicals but boys were rarely exposed.

CHILDREN of a nation are the hopes of tomorrow. The future prosperity of the society is hidden within the vast potentialities of the children. Ensuring physical, mental, moral and social development of children is therefore the duty of the state to make the country strong. However, when a sizable percentage of children population gets diverted to manual labour, it becomes naturally a source of concern. The use of child labour is wide spread in most of the developing countries of the world and one among them is India, where the concentration of child labour is the highest in the world. A more comprehensive definition, taking into account the consequences of labour on children has been provided by the International Labour Organization, according to which "Child labour includes children prematurely leading adult lives working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful educational and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future". Child labor is simply the single most important source of child exploitation and child abuse in the world today. Among the numerous explanations of the rise and growth of child labour, the socio-economic backwardness is considered as one of the most crucial factors. Countries like India, with

massive and abysmal poverty are said to be fertile grounds for the large scale employment of children.

METHODOLOGY

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, a Descriptive Research Design was used for conducting the study. Mahabubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh was purposively selected for the study. Out of the 64 mandals, five mandals were selected from the district through simple random sampling method. From the five selected mandals, three villages from each mandal, thus making a total of 15 villages were selected randomly. In each village ten child labourers comprising of five girl child labourers and five boy child labourers were selected randomly and therefore, a total of 150 child labourers were selected as a sample for the study. A pre-tested interview schedule was used for collecting the required data through personal interview method.

The nature of exploitation of child labourers by the employers refer to the employment of children in tasks or under conditions that jeopardize their physical and mental well being, the extraction of profits from child labour by paying low wages, and the denial to children of their right to play, to learn to enjoy a normal childhood.

The nature of exploitation of child labourers by the employer in the areas of remuneration, work, working hours and work hazards were studied separately.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exploitation in terms of remuneration given to the child labourers: The Table I depicts that a great majority of girls (74.66%) and boys (64.00%) together making 69.33 per cent of the total child labourers felt that frequently their earnings were not commensurate with work done. A sizeable number of girls (69.33%) and 40.00 per cent of boys figuring to 54.66 per cent of the total child labourers expressed that frequently pay was not provided for overtime or extra work. These results are in confirmation with those of Rajawat (2004). The child labourers were rarely exploited in terms of providing pay for holidays in most of the cases (55.33%), out of which girls and boys form 52.00 per cent and 58.66 per cent, respectively. The child labourers frequently observed that adults were obtaining more pay for similar work, in huge majority of the cases (80.00%) comprising of 84.00 per cent of girls and 76.00 per cent of boys,

whereas majority of the total child labourers (62.00%) expressed that they rarely faced irregularity in payment from which girls were 70.66 per cent while 53.33 per cent were boys. Their wages are generally lower than those given to their adult counterparts who because of their maturity have greater capacity to bargain and also to claim what becomes due to them. Child workers, from the standpoint of payment that they receive in lieu of work done by them, get very low wages which, in most cases, are insufficient for their own subsistence, nevertheless their family members send them to work with a view to get rid of at least the burden of their maintenance. It is a reality that wages of children are generally fixed at much lower level than those of adults, despite the fact that child workers, in many situations, give a greater output in terms of the total work done by them by working more quickly and uninterruptedly for longer hours at one stretch under strict discipline without any grouse or complaint. However, most of the parents secured advances from the employers and had surrendered and used their children as security. The loans are returned by the children in terms of their wages

TABLE I

Distribution of child labourers in terms of exploitation in remuneration given

(Girls : n=75; Boys : n=75; Total : N = 150)

Remuneration	Frequently			Sometimes			Rarely		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Earnings are not commensurate with work	56 (74.66)	48 (64.00)	104 (69.33)	14 (18.66)	20 (26.66)	34 (22.66)	5 (6.66)	7 (9.36)	12 (8.00)
Pay is not provided for overtime or extra work	52 (69.33)	30 (40.00)	82 (54.66)	11 (14.66)	22 (29.33)	33 (22.00)	12 (16.00)	23 (30.66)	35 (23.33)
Pay is not provided for holidays	29 (38.66)	15 (20.00)	44 (29.33)	7 (9.33)	16 (21.33)	16 (10.66)	39 (52.00)	44 (58.66)	83 (55.33)
Adults obtaining more pay for similar work	63 (84.00)	57 (76.00)	120 (80.00)	9 (12.00)	17 (22.66)	26 (17.33)	3 (4.00)	1 (1.33)	4 (2.66)
Irregularity in payment	17 (22.66)	25 (33.33)	42 (6.66)	5 (6.66)	10 (18.33)	15 (70.66)	53 (70.66)	40 (53.33)	93 (62.00)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

making them to some kind of 'bonded labour' to their landlords and cannot claim for more money.

Exploitation in terms of work: It is evident from Table II that a large majority of the total child labourers (78.00%) were frequently involved in highly tiresome and laborious work of which 72.00 per cent were girls and 84.00 per cent were boys. Out of the total child labourers, a sizeable majority (58.00%) were involved in 'unsuitable work' very frequently which include 44.00 per cent of girls and boys accounting for 72.00 per cent. The child labourers had heavy work load 'frequently' in 64.00 per cent of girls and 73.33 per cent of boys together figuring to 68.66 per cent of the total child labourers. A considerable number of child labourers (49.33%) with girls forming, 61.33 per cent and boys forming 37.33 per cent frequently had tiresome working posture.

These children were being exploited in work because of the obvious reasons that the employers know that the children could be asked to do any kind of work not only because of their young age, but more importantly because of the child's anxiety to know and do new things. They also know that these children could be put to long hours of work since they do not get exhausted soon and do not feel the job monotony. As a matter of fact, they are ordinarily interested in

getting the work done by the children unmindful of the feelings and reactions (suppressed) of the young children employed by them.

Exploitation in terms of working hours: It is apparent from the Table III that an equal number of girls (46.66%) have frequently faced lack of leisure during work and another 46.66 per cent of them have rarely faced the same. Majority of boys (65.33%) also rarely faced 'lack of leisure during work' both together figuring to 56.00 per cent of total child labourers. Majority of the child labourers (61.33%) were rarely 'involved in additional work during night' who constituted both girls (52.66%) and boys (70.66%). Frequency of 'long working hours' were reported by a great majority of girls (74.66%) and a vast majority of boys (88.00%) together forming 81.33 per cent of total child labourers. These results were in conformity with the findings of Bhargava (2003).

Unduly long hours of work is another major form of exploitation of child labourers. In agriculture and domestic work, these children were put to excessively long hours of work varying from eight to twelve hours or more. Further, more night work is not uncommon, especially at the time of harvesting and storage. Perhaps this was because the employers feel that they could extract maximum work from the children. It is

TABLE II
Distribution of child labourers in terms of exploitation in work

(Girls : n=75; Boys : n=75; Total : N = 150)

Work	Frequently			Sometimes			Rarely		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Involvement in highly tiresome and laborious work	54 (72.00)	63 (84.00)	117 (78.00)	21 (28.00)	11 (14.66)	32 (21.33)	-	1 (1.33)	1 (0.66)
Involvement in unsuitable work	33 (44.00)	54 (72.00)	87 (58.00)	28 (37.33)	13 (17.33)	41 (27.33)	14 (18.66)	8 (10.66)	22 (14.66)
Heavy work load	48 (64.00)	55 (73.33)	103 (68.66)	20 (26.66)	20 (26.66)	40 (26.66)	7 (9.33)	-	7 (4.66)
Tiresome working posture	46 (61.33)	28 (37.33)	74 (49.33)	12 (16.00)	25 (33.33)	37 (24.66)	17 (22.66)	22 (29.33)	39 (26.00)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

TABLE III

Distribution of child labourers in terms of exploitation in working hours

(Girls : n=75; Boys : n=75; Total : N = 150)

Working hours	Frequently			Sometimes			Rarely		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Lack of leisure during work	35 (46.66)	13 (17.33)	48 (32.00)	5 (6.66)	13 (17.33)	18 (12.00)	35 (46.66)	49 (65.33)	84 (56.00)
Involvement in additional work during night	16 (21.33)	9 (12.00)	25 (16.66)	20 (26.66)	13 (17.33)	33 (22.00)	39 (52.66)	53 (70.66)	92 (61.33)
Long working hours	56 (74.66)	66 (88.00)	122 (81.33)	19 (25.33)	9 (12.00)	28 (18.66)	—	—	—

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

this type of employers who do not have any consideration for the tender age of the child workers and extract work from the children as long as they could, for the sole reason of having more production and consequently high profits. Majority of them stated that they worked beyond stipulated hours because of fear of termination of their job. As it is understood that girls work to supplement their families' inadequate incomes, they may not want to go against the instructions of their employers for fear of losing their work.

Work Hazards: It could be inferred from Table IV that majority of girls (58.66%) had frequent cuts and injuries and same number of boys (58.66%) had sometimes faced such hazards during their work. A large majority of total child labourers (86.66%) which include both girls (84.00%) and boys (89.33%), rarely faced burns while working. A sizeable majority of girls (72.00%) were sometimes and a great majority of boys (81.33%) were rarely exposed to chemicals.

Exposure to extreme weather conditions was frequently seen in a high majority of girls (72.00%) and boys (69.33%) figuring to 70.66 per cent of total child labourers. All the girls (100.00%) and 97.33 per cent of boys together making an extremely high majority of child labourers (98.66%) have rarely come across any accidents.

Children especially the girls who were working in agricultural sector are subjected to occupational hazards such as exposure to machinery, biological and chemical agents and constant physical effort. They were found to be involved in works like mixing, loading, applying pesticides, fertilizers or herbicides, some of which are highly toxic and potentially carcinogenic. Pesticides exposure poses a considerably higher risk to children than adults and has been linked to an increased risk of cancer, neuropathy, neuro-behavioural effects and immune system abnormalities. In construction, where children are often used for fetching, carrying and similar tasks, they are vulnerable to falls, to cut, injuries from falling objects, to damage from the lifting of heavy weights and other types of accidents. Similar results were reported by Reddy (2007). Their lack of training and experience in handling tools, their span of concentration, the use of unguarded machinery that is designed for adults, the insalubrious state of work places resulting from dust, lack of hygiene, are all potential sources of accidents and injuries. Such dangers were compounded by fatigue due to excessive hours of work, under nutrition and physical weakness of children.

It is a reality that wages of children are generally fixed at much lower level than those of adults, despite the fact that child workers, in many situations, give a

TABLE IV
Distribution of child labourers based on the work hazards faced

(Girls : n=75; Boys : n=75; Total : N = 150)

Category	Frequently			Sometimes			Rarely		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Cuts and Injuries	44 (58.66)	29 (38.66)	73 (48.66)	21 (28.00)	44 (58.66)	65 (43.33)	10 (13.33)	2 (2.66)	12 (8.00)
Burns	5 (6.66)	6 (8.00)	11 (7.33)	7 (9.33)	2 (2.66)	9 (6.00)	63 (84.00)	67 (89.33)	130 (86.66)
Exposure to chemicals	-	-	-	54 (72.00)	14 (18.66)	68 (45.33)	21 (28.00)	61 (81.33)	82 (54.66)
Exposure to extreme weather conditions (sun,rains & cold)	54 (72.00)	52 (69.33)	106 (70.66)	13 (17.33)	11 (14.66)	24 (16.00)	8 (10.66)	12 (16.00)	20 (13.33)
Accidents	-	-	-	-	2 (2.66)	2 (1.33)	75 (100.0)	73 (97.33)	148 (98.66)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

greater output in terms of the total work done by them by working more quickly and uninterruptedly for longer hours at one stretch under strict discipline without any grouse or complaint. As a matter of fact, the employers are ordinarily interested in getting the work done by the children unmindful of the feelings and reactions (suppressed) of the young children employed by them. It is this type of employers who do not have any consideration for the tender age of the child workers and extract work from the children as long as they could, for the sole reason of having more production and consequently high profits. All this shows a cruel and inhuman attitude towards the children who start working for their survival at a very young age. Social mobilization in this area should aim at creating 'a first call' for the elimination of child labour among the community and to influence attitudes and behaviours of all members of society so that the scope and meaning of the right of children to protection from exploitation and harmful work and the right to education is understood.

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