

Consequences of Involving Children in Labour Activities : A Study in Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

It is believed that a child has all the potentialities which if properly developed, will make him into a better man for any walk of life. The individual differences among the grown-up people is the result of the environment in which they are groomed. Keeping in view the objectives of Analyzing the Consequences of Involving children in labour activities in Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh, a Descriptive research design was used for conducting the study. Regarding the basic need satisfaction, food was moderately satisfactory for majority of girls and boys, whereas shelter was moderately satisfactory and unsatisfactory for girls and boys, respectively. The psychological needs like security, protection, recognition, praise, adequacy contentment and creative expression were unsatisfactorily met for majority of both girls and boys. Untidy physical appearance, unclean teeth, dispigmented hair and weak appearance was observed in most of the girls and boys. As per the nutritional status, most of the girls and boys were found to be undernourished to moderately nourished. Most of the girls and boys were unsatisfied with the sociological needs. Regarding the psychological bearings/ personality traits, majority of girls and boys were social in their behaviour, submissive in nature, and had the feeling of inferiority. The family relations of both girls and boys were such that they had average relationship with their father and also the sense of responsibility by both the parents towards the child was average. Most of the girls and boys had three friends with whom they frequently involved in activities like playing games/ sports and gossiping. Most of the child labourers had low self perception.

CHILD labour is a concrete manifestation of violations of a range of rights of children and is recognized as a serious and enormously complex social problem in India. Working children are denied their right to survival and development, education, play, opportunity for developing personality, talents, mental and physical abilities and protection from abuse and neglect. Not with standing the increase in the enrolment of children in elementary schools and increase in literacy rates since 1980s, child labour continues to be a significant phenomenon in India. Children undertaking heavy works, carrying heavy loads and maintaining awkward body positions for a long time, can develop deformation of the spinal column and skeletal damage or impaired growth. Heavy work at an early age also has direct consequences on the child's physical and mental development. Physically, children are not suited to long hours of strenuous and monotonous work. Their level of concentration is also lower than that of adults. Their bodies suffer the effects of fatigue faster than adults, and most suffer from malnutrition, which lowers their resistance to disease. Against this background, the present study was undertaken to analyse the consequences of involving children in labour activities.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design coupled with selected case studies was used for conducting the study. Mahabubnagar district in Andhra Pradesh was purposively selected for the study. Out of the 64 mandals, five mandals were selected from Mahabubnagar district through simple random sampling method. From the five selected mandals, three villages from each mandal were again randomly selected, thus making a total of 15 villages. 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 consequences due to the children involvement in labour activities were studied in terms of various aspects of life such as : a) Extent of Basic need satisfaction (health status and physical appearance, b) Psychological bearings, c) Family relations, d) Social behaviour (number of friends passed

and activities involved with friends) and e) Self perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of child labourers based on their extent of basic need satisfaction : The consolidated results furnished in Table I indicate that majority (70.00%) of the child labourers basic needs were unsatisfied. Out of which, girls were 69.33 per cent and boys form 70.66 per cent, followed by a small number of total child labourers (23.34%) with 22.66 per cent girls and just less than a quarter per cent of boys (24.00%) had moderate satisfaction of basic needs. As for satisfaction of basic needs were concerned, a meager number of girls (8.00%) and boys (5.33%), both combinedly constituted to 6.66 per cent of the total child labourers. Similar results were observed earlier by Lieten (2000).

The basic reason for this situation is the grave / acute poverty of the families and the vulnerable conditions in which the child labourers live. Hence, the situation of the child labourers from the stand

point of basic need satisfaction is most disappointing. As the children come from extremely poor families the parents had to force their children to work and supplement the family income. It is clear that the income provided by the working children is critical to their survival.

a) *Health status of child labourers* : The health status of child labourers was studied in terms of their: (i) physical appearance, and (ii) nutritional status.

i) *Physical appearance of child labourers* : Table II indicates that out of the total child labourers, a huge majority (87.33%) had dispigmented hair of which 82.66 per cent were girls and boys accounted to 92.00 per cent. A large majority of girls (89.33%) and boys (80.00%) together constituting to 84.66 per cent of child labourers had weak appearance. Untidy appearance was noticed in 82.00 per cent of the total child labourers, which include both girls (78.66%) and boys (85.33%). A good majority (70.00%) of child labourers were observed to have possessed unclean

TABLE I

Distribution of child labourers based on their extent of basic need satisfaction

| Extent of basic need satisfaction | Girls (n=75) | | Boys (n=75) | | Pooled (n=150) | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent |
| Satisfaction of basic needs | 6 | 8.00 | 4 | 5.33 | 10 | 6.66 |
| Moderate satisfaction of basic needs | 17 | 22.66 | 18 | 24.00 | 35 | 23.34 |
| Dissatisfaction of basic needs | 52 | 69.33 | 53 | 70.66 | 105 | 70.00 |
| Total | 75 | 100.00 | 75 | 100.00 | 150 | 100.00 |

TABLE II

Distribution of child labourers based on their physical appearance

| Category | Girls (n=75) | | Boys (n=75) | | Pooled (n=150) | |
|-------------------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | No | Per cent | No | Per cent | No | Per cent |
| Untidy appearance | 59 | 78.66 | 64 | 85.33 | 123 | 82.00 |
| Unclean teeth | 47 | 62.66 | 58 | 77.33 | 105 | 70.00 |
| Dispigmented hair | 62 | 82.66 | 69 | 92.00 | 131 | 87.33 |
| Bleeding gums | 18 | 24.00 | 16 | 21.33 | 34 | 22.66 |
| Weak appearance | 67 | 89.33 | 60 | 80.00 | 127 | 84.66 |

*Multiple responses

teeth who include both girls (62.66%) and boys (77.33%). The food that the child labourers consume does not provide for enough nutrients and were unable to meet the nutritional requirements of their bodies and were undernourished. Physical deterioration results from keeping late hours, excessive fatigue, exposure to the elements, irregularity of sleep and meals made a large majority (84.66%) of child labourers appear weak.

ii) Nutritional status of child labourers: From the Table III it is clear that a large (32.00%) number of child labourers with an equal per cent of girls (32.00%) and boys (32.00%) were observed to be undernourished (with moderately visible symptoms of vitamin deficiency). While, 24.00 per cent and 33.33 per cent of girls and boys, respectively were noticed to be moderately nourished (with few visible symptoms of vitamin deficiency) both comprising to 28.66 per

cent of child labourers. More than one fourth number of girls (29.33%) and a quarter number of boys (25.33%) together making 27.33 per cent of child labourers were appeared to be severely under nourished (with severe visible symptoms of vitamin deficiency). Poor nutrition, long hours of strenuous work, and poor working conditions have a cumulative deteriorious effect on children. They are deprived of normal growth and development and suffer the ill effects.

b) Psychological traits of child labourers : On careful observation of psychological traits of child labourers, it is evident from Table IV that a good majority (78.00%) of the total child labourers were social in their behaviour of which 72.00 per cent of girls and boys at 84.00 per cent were social in their behaviour. A huge majority (82.66%) of girls and 68.00 per cent of boys formed a sizeable majority (75.33%)

TABLE III
Distribution of child labourers according to their nutritional status

| Category | Girls (n=75) | | Boys (n=75) | | Pooled (n=150) | |
|--|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent |
| Well nourished (Without any visible symptoms of vitamin deficiency) | 11 | 14.66 | 12 | 16.00 | 23 | 15.33 |
| Moderately nourished (With few visible symptoms of vitamin deficiency) | 18 | 24.00 | 25 | 33.33 | 43 | 28.66 |
| Under nourished (With moderately visible symptoms of vitamin deficiency) | 24 | 32.00 | 24 | 32.00 | 48 | 32.00 |
| Severely under- nourished (With severe visible symptoms of vitamin deficiency) | 22 | 29.33 | 19 | 25.33 | 41 | 27.33 |

*Multiple responses

TABLE IV
Distribution of child labourers according to their psychological bearings

| Personality traits* | Girls (n=75) | | Boys (n=75) | | Pooled (n=150) | |
|------------------------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent |
| Anxious | 27 | 36.00 | 36 | 48.00 | 63 | 42.00 |
| Composed | 48 | 64.00 | 39 | 52.00 | 87 | 58.00 |
| Aggressive | 13 | 17.33 | 24 | 32.00 | 37 | 24.66 |
| Submissive | 62 | 82.66 | 51 | 68.00 | 113 | 75.33 |
| Unsocial | 21 | 28.00 | 12 | 16.00 | 34 | 22.66 |
| Social | 54 | 72.00 | 63 | 84.00 | 117 | 78.00 |
| Feeling of inferiority | 64 | 85.33 | 45 | 60.00 | 109 | 72.66 |

*Multiple responses

of child labourers were observed to be submissive in nature. Majority (85.34%) of girls and boys (60.00%) were observed to have a feeling of inferiority, making 72.66 per cent of total child labourers. Composed behaviour was seen in 64.00 per cent of girls and 52.00 per cent boys together figuring to 58.00 per cent of child labourers. More than one third of girls (36.00%) and nearly half of the boys (48.00%) were found to be anxious in nature. While a less number of girls (17.33%) and boys (32.00%) were identified as aggressive who formed 24.66 per cent of total child labourers. These results were in accordance with the findings of Bhargava (2003). Only 28.00 per cent of girls and 16.00 per cent of boys making a total of 22.66 per cent of child labourers were observed to have unsocial behaviour. One of the most salient characteristics of much exploitative child work is its repetitive dullness and sameness. In short, its lack of stimulating variety of creativity. It has been widely observed in different settings, that children confined to this sort of work, or who are isolated from free and spontaneous contact with others - especially other children - show unmistakable symptoms of stunted psychological development.

c) Family relations of child labourer: Observation of the Table V revealed that a considerable number (45.33%) of total child labourers who include girls (42.66%) and boys (48.00%) had an

average relationship with their fathers. Half the number of total girls (50.66%) possessed a good relationship with their mothers, whereas, 44.00 per cent of boys had an average relationship with their mother. Regarding relation with siblings, a sizeable majority (52.00%) of boys and girls (44.00%) expressed good and average relation with their siblings, respectively. A good majority (47.33%) of child labourers having both girls (46.66%) and boys (48.00%) felt an average sense of responsibility by parents towards their children. The responses show that children recognize the care shown by their parents and even if they feel overworked or deprived of schooling, they do not directly blame their parents for it. Most of the children felt that they were loved by both parents and most children loved their parents in return and got emotional support from their family members. The children expressed that their siblings play a very loving and supportive role in their lives.

d) Social behavior of child labourers

i) Number of friends the child labourers possessed : It is apparent from Table VI that out of the total child labourers a considerable majority (35.33%) of them had three friends who constituted 36.00 per cent of girls and 34.66 per cent of boys, followed by 27.34 per cent with both girls (16.00%) and boys (38.66%) who had friends numbering four

TABLE V
Distribution of child laborers according to their family relations

| Relations | Good | | | Average | | | Poor | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total |
| Relation with Father | 29 (38.66) | 19 (25.33) | 48 (32.00) | 32 (42.66) | 36 (48.00) | 68 (45.33) | 9 (12.00) | 13 (17.33) | 22 (14.66) |
| Relation with Mother | 38 (50.66) | 25 (33.33) | 63 (42.00) | 27 (36.00) | 33 (44.00) | 60 (40.00) | 5 (6.66) | 9 (12.00) | 14 (9.33) |
| Relation with Siblings | 33 (44.00) | 18 (24.00) | 51 (34.00) | 22 (29.33) | 39 (52.00) | 61 (40.66) | 16 (21.33) | 18 (24.00) | 34 (22.66) |
| Sense of responsibility by parents towards the child | 29 (38.66) | 22 (29.33) | 51 (34.00) | 35 (46.66) | 36 (48.00) | 71 (47.33) | 4 (5.33) | 8 (10.66) | 12 (8.00) |

Girls : n=75; Boys : n=75; Total; N = 150; Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

TABLE VI
Distribution of child labourers according to the number of friends possessed

| Category | Girls (n=75) | | Boys (n=75) | | Pooled | |
|----------------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|--------|----------|
| | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent |
| No friends | 11 | 14.66 | 4 | 5.35 | 15 | 10.00 |
| One friend | 9 | 12.00 | 6 | 8.00 | 15 | 10.00 |
| Two friends | 16 | 21.34 | 10 | 13.33 | 26 | 17.33 |
| Three friends | 27 | 36.00 | 26 | 34.66 | 53 | 35.33 |
| Four and above | 12 | 16.00 | 29 | 38.66 | 41 | 27.34 |
| Total | 75 | 100.00 | 75 | 100.00 | 150 | 100.00 |

and above. While only two friends were possessed by both girls (21.34%) and boys (13.33%) together figuring to 17.33 per cent of child labourers. An equal per cent of child labourers had no friends (10.00%) and only one friend (10.00%) for another one tenth of them. Out of which, 14.66 per cent girls and 5.35 per cent of boys had no friends and a small percentage of girls (12.00%) and boys (8.00%) had only one friend. This implies that most of the child labourers were friendly in nature and maintained satisfactory social relations with others. It may be noted that one tenth of the total child labourers did not possess any friends. This shows that these children had unsatisfactory social adjustment such as lack of confidence in several social situations, not able to take initiative in social occasions, feeling of self consciousness, hostility and so on

ii) *Activities involved with friends* : It could be interpreted from the Table VII that a large majority (70.00%) of total child labourers frequently play games/sports with friends, Of which girls were 64.00 per cent and boys forming 76.00 per cent. While a huge majority of girls (97.33%) and boys (93.33%) together making 95.33 per cent of total child labourers rarely involved in studying activity. Regarding involvement in recreational activities, going to movies was a rare phenomenon among a huge majority of girls (96.00%) and boys (62.66%) who formed 79.33 per cent of child labourers. Majority of boys (54.66%) and girls (52.00%) were involved in watching television with their friends 'frequently' and 'sometimes', respectively.

Gossiping was frequent among a large majority (70.66%) of child labourers who included both girls (62.66%) and boys (78.66%), whereas, a considerable majority (62.66%) of girls rarely, and boys (69.33%) frequently roamed around along with their friends. Strict control was exercised on the child labourers by their elders. It was observed that most of the child labourers 'watched television' either in their employer's home or in the neighborhood houses. 'Gossiping' was the frequent activity of child labourers with their friends when there was collective work, or when they accompany while going to work or in the way back home.

e) *Self perception of child labourers* : It was quite obvious from Table VIII that a sizeable majority (46.68%) of child labourers had low self perception which comprised of 52.00 per cent and 41.33 per cent girls and boys, respectively. Medium self perception was exhibited by 32.00 per cent of girls and considerable number of boys (45.33%) figuring to 38.66 per cent of total child labourers. Whereas the remaining 14.66 per cent of child labourers with 16.00 per cent girls and 13.34 per cent boys had shown a high self perception, Similar findings were reported by Reddy (2002) and Reddy (2007). The lack of adequate opportunities by way of recreation, denial of education, love, inadequate nutrition and the low socio-economic status of the family has an impact upon the child's self perceptions and this effected the opportunities for them to broaden their experiences and their development.

TABLE VII
Distribution of child laborers based on their activities involved with friends

| Activities | Frequently | | | Sometimes | | | Rarely | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total |
| Plays games / sports with friends | 48 (64.00) | 57 (76.00) | 105 (70.00) | 14 (18.66) | 12 (16.00) | 26 (17.33) | 13 (17.33) | 6 (8.00) | 19 (12.66) |
| Studying | 2 (2.66) | - | 2 (1.33) | - | 5 (6.66) | 5 (3.33) | 73 (97.33) | 70 (93.33) | 143 (95.33) |
| Involvement in recreational activities like | | | | | | | | | |
| a) Movies | - | 16 (21.33) | 16 (10.66) | 3 (4.00) | 12 (16.00) | 15 (10.00) | 72 (96.00) | 47 (62.66) | 119 (79.33) |
| b) Watching T. V. | 18 (24.00) | 41 (54.66) | 59 (39.33) | 39 (52.00) | 28 (37.33) | 67 (44.66) | 18 (24.00) | 6 (8.00) | 24 (16.00) |
| c) Gossiping | 47 (62.66) | 59 (78.66) | 106 (70.66) | 17 (22.66) | 11 (14.66) | 28 (18.66) | 11 (14.66) | 5 (6.66) | 16 (10.66) |
| d) Roaming around | 12 (13.33) | 52 (69.33) | 62 (41.33) | 18 (24.00) | 14 (18.66) | 32 (21.33) | 47 (62.66) | 9 (12.00) | 56 (37.33) |

Girls : n=75 ; Boys : n=75 ; Total : N = 150; Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

TABLE VIII
Distribution of child labourers according to their self perception

| Category | Girls (n=75) | | Boys (n=75) | | Pooled (n=150) | |
|---------------------|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent | No. | Per cent |
| Low (4-8 score) | 39 | 52.00 | 31 | 41.33 | 70 | 46.68 |
| Medium (9-13 score) | 24 | 32.00 | 34 | 45.33 | 58 | 38.66 |
| High (14-18 score) | 12 | 16.00 | 10 | 13.33 | 22 | 14.66 |
| Total | 75 | 100.00 | 75 | 100.00 | 150 | 100.00 |

Government should adopt measures designed to afford genuine protection to child labourers. They could provide tax reductions, subsidies and other kinds of bonus for those employers who displaces the child labour with adult labour. Campaigns needs to be conducted by Government and Non-Government organisations for creating awareness on the ill effects and adverse consequences of Child labour. Intensive and meaningful training programmes to be organized for all departmental officers working with child labour in order to bring an attitudinal change and focus their efforts to implement these legislations.

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