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A Sociological Study of Child Labours in Shivpuri Town M.P. India

Abstract

Child labour is commonly associated with poverty. However, the empirical evidence on this link is weak. Child labour in India is to be found in almost every sector of the informal economy. Children are to be found working in workshops and small factories, in *dhabas* and restaurant, on the street as well as domestic servants. It is generally assumed that as household wealth increases children will be progressively withdrawn from labour activities in favour of schooling. Being out of school and deprived of education, the world of prospects, possibilities and opportunities is closed for them. Any work that denies them their right to education must therefore be regarded as hazardous. This paper analyses the relationship between education and the phenomenon of child labour in Shivpuri town. Poverty is really the most important reason for child labour and consequently low school participation in the city. Parental motivation for education and the quality of education are other factors being highlighted in the search for the reasons of low school participation and high incidents of child labour. The study shows that as children are enjoying their right to education, there are changes in the existing socio- economic formation towards greater participation and confidence of the people.

Keywords: Children, Family Size, Households, Income, Literacy, Child Labour, Poverty.

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Introduction

Child labour is a wide-ranging problem of the society, especially in the underdeveloped countries and nations that are in a development stage. It is a cause of major concern for the government. Children work and exert for various reasons and the prime and the top reason is poverty and illiteracy and the induced pressure in their life so that they can escape from this plight of poverty (Khan 1979; Gangrade and Gandhi 1983). Child labour is generally speaking, work for children, which harms them or exploits them in some way (physically, mentally, morally or by blocking access to education). In other words, child labour includes children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages, under conditions damaging to their health, to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future" (ILO 1983). The issues and exclusion of education and poverty are intricately related to child labour. Poverty provides the potential condition of putting children to work. The children are also forced to earn livelihood for themselves as well as for their families and it prevents them from realizing their full potential (Weiner 1991; Mishra 2000; Zutshi et al. 2006). Child labour and the worst forms of child labour, as defined by International Labour

Objectives

To explore the socio-economic conditions of child labour households and find out various reasons for the emergence of child labourers in Shivpuri town. To find out working hour of the child labour in Shivpuri town, to determine the average income of the children and their contribution to the family, to identify the various types of child labour

Methodology

This is a descriptive cum analytical study. It portrays the problems and socio-economic characteristics of children working in Shivpuri town and tries to provide solutions. A survey based on a sample of 347 child workers was conducted in the various sectors of economy in Shivpuri town. Only primary sources of information have been made use of in the study. Primary data for all categories of child workers were collected through personal interview using interview schedule. As regards the sample

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methodthe researcher adopted random sampling. 347 working children were selected from different areas randomly and interviewed. Different tools of empirical research viz., interview with child labourers with the help of structured and guided schedule, formal and informal discussions and participant observations etc. form part of the methodology of the present study. A field diary had also been maintained to note down the off-coming comments for analysis. The data and information so collected have been tabulated, analyzed and presented in a report form. Table 1 show the surveyed child labour population in Shivpuri town.

Study Area

Shivpuri is located between 25°-24' to 25°-26'N latitude and 76°-38' to 76°-41' E longitudes. It is well connected by roads and is located on National Highway No.3 at about 113 km. South West of Gwalior and 98 km. from Guna. National Highway No.25 also connects it with Jhansi (U.P.). Recently Shivpuri has been connected by rail to Gwalior, Guna, Indore, and Kota. The municipal area of Shivpuri town has been divided into 39 wards and the total population of Shivpuri town is 2, 11,532 as per 2011 census.

Socio-Economic Composition of Child Labour in Shivpuri Town

Employment of children is a reflection of numerous social, economic and demographic factors. The family background of the respondents assumes more significance because it is the family where the child learns the basic skills to cope with social norms, values and demands.

It has its own pattern of interpersonal relations, acts as an agency for socialization which in turn is affected by the socio-economic conditions of the family.

Table- 01.
Location of child labour in Shivpuri Town

S.No.	Surveyed Areas	Numbers	Percentages
1	Madhav Chowk	35	10.09
2	Sadar bazaar	45	12.97
3	Tekri Gali	37	10.66
4	Near Gandhi Park	35	10.09
5	Jhansi Tiraha	34	9.80
6	Old Bus Stand	31	8.93
7	Hospital Chowk	29	8.36
8	Purani Shivpuri	39	11.24
9	Gurudwara Chowk	34	9.80
10	New bus stand	28	8.07
Total		347	100

Age-Sex Composition

Table 2 shows the Age-Sex composition of the child labour. An analysis of the data in this table shows that the highest percentage of child workers is in age group 12 to 14, which constitutes 42 per cent of the total child labour population. Other major contributions are of the age group 9 to 11 and 6 to 8, which are 32 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

Table- 02. Age-sex composition of child labour in shivpuri town

Agegroup	Numbers		Total %	Cumulative percentages
	Male %	Female %		
Below 6	4	3	7	7
6 to 8	15	4	19	26
9 to 11	28	4	32	58
12 to 14	41	1	42	100
All	88	12	100	100

The remaining 7 per cent children belong to below 6 years of age. In this survey the males contribute 88 per cent of the total child labour and girls contribute only 12 per cent while majority of those aged below 8 years work with their family members. There is one female child worker found in the age group of 12 to 14 years because of that, all of the work in this study is not favorable for that age group. A unique trend has been found in the table that as the age group increases, the percentage share of child labour also increases.

Occupational Structure

Table 3 indicates that eight categories of work are being undertaken by children in Shivpuri town. Out of these eight categories, girls were engaged only in two types of work. These are domestic help and rag picking. But so far as boys are concerned, they are engaged in all types of work. The table shows that majority 25 per cent of the child workers were engaged in rag picking followed by *dhaba* workers/road side cafe 24 per cent. 8 per cent were involved in cycle / scooter repairing 19 per cent were mechanics followed by vendors (11 per cent) and some worked in tea shops/juice corners (5 per cent), 3 per cent worked as rickshaw or hand cart pullers and remaining 5 per cent engaged in other activities like domestic help, barbers, washing cars and collecting firewood. Thus we see that children are engaged in all types of work no matter what their age.

Table- 03.
Occupational Structure of child labour in Shivpuri town

S. No.	Types of works	Percentages	Cumulative percentages
1	Dhabas/Hotels	24	25
2	Mechanic	19	44
3	Repairing work	8	52
4	Rag pickers	25	76
5	Tea shops/Juice corners	5	81
6	Vendors	11	92
7	Rickshaw/Hand Cart	3	95
8	Others	5	100
Total		100	100

Monthly income of child labour

Table 4 indicates the income of child workers in the Shivpuri town. The monthly earning of child labourers was calculated on the basis of type of work performed, hours worked and nature of payment they

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have received from all working days in a month. Table 5 indicates that majority of working children (24%) received a monthly income between Rs. 2000 to 2500. The wages of working children in Shivpuri town ranges from Rs. 500 to Rs. 3,000 per month. There were 23 per cent children who earned between Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 per month followed by 15 per cent children whose earnings were between Rs.1000 to Rs. 1500 and 11 per cent earn Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000. Besides, there were 18 per cent children who earned more than Rs. 2,500 per month and remaining 9 per cent earned up to Rs.500 All the children received their income in cash, some on daily basis, some weekly and some monthly, depending upon the type of work they were doing.

S. No.	Monthly Income (RS.)	Percentages	Cumulative percentages
1	Up to 500	9	9
2	500-1000	11	20
3	1000-1500	15	35
4	1500-2000	23	58
5	2000-2500	24	79
6	Above 2500	18	100
Total		100	100

Daily working hours of the child workers

As per the law, children should not work for longer hours. But in practice the law is not strictly followed. When asked them about their daily working hours, they gave a number of mixed responses which is presented in Table 5 indicates that irrespective of occupation, majority of child workers 35 per cent were found to work for 12 to 14 hours a day. The author surprised to note that none of the children had normal working hours of less than four hours a day. More than 14 hours of work were undertaken by 12 per cent child workers. There were 25 per cent children who were working for 10-12 hours a day. Only 12 per cent children used to work for below 13 hours a day and 15 per cent of child labour work for 8-10 hours, these children were self-employed.

S. No.	Working hours	Percentages	Cumulative percentages
1	Below 8	13	13
2	8 to 10	15	28
3	10 to 12	25	53
4	12 to 14	35	88
5	More than 14	12	100
Total		100	100

Causes of child labour

Table 6 indicates that about 24 percent of child workers gave importance to work because of poverty, 18 percent said they wanted to earn money and 17 percent, opined that it was due to parents' compulsion. Besides these, 19 percent were not interested in studies, 10 per cent wanted to supplement family income, 8 percent wanted to learn the work and 4 percent had no earning member in the family. Thus, it is seen that a number of reasons have been given to prove that work is more important than education. It is clear from the table that majority of the child workers preferred to work, not only because of poor economic condition, of the family, or because they want to earn money, but also because neither the parents nor the children themselves were interested in school education. Both the parents as well as the child workers viewed life from the point of view of present small return without education, rather than future higher (probably) returns after a certain level of education.

S. No.	Causes of child labour	Percentages	Cumulative percentages
1	Poverty	24	24
2	Earn money	18	42
3	Parents compulsion	17	59
4	Not interested in study	19	78
5	Supplement family income	10	88
6	Learn the work	8	96
7	No earning hands	4	100
Total		100	100

Educational level of the family

Education acts as a catalyst for social upliftment enhancing the returns on investments for almost all aspects of developmental efforts, be it population control, health and hygiene, women empowerment or poverty reduction. Data from Table 8 reveals that literacy levels of the parents in the sampled are low. 65 percent fathers and 76 per cent mothers could neither read nor write. A study of child labour indicates that only 8 per cent fathers and 5 percent mothers had studied up to primary level, 11 percent fathers and 7 percent mothers read or write only.

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Table- 07. Educational level of the family

S. No.	Educational level	Father		Mother	
		Percentages	Cumulative percentages	Percentages	Cumulative percentages
1	Illiterate	65	65	76	76
2	Read and write only	14	79	7	83
3	Up to primary level	8	87	5	88
4	Primary or Higher	13	100	12	100
Total		100		100	100

Size of the family

The size of household has an important bearing on the determination of economic conditions of the households. Table 08 shows the size of the family in child labour households. Data reveals that the percentage of the family size increases with the increase of the family members. As regards the size of the family, 14 percent child labour belonged to families with three to five members, 20 percent has six members in their families while the majority of child labour 49 percent has seven or more than seven members in their family.

Table- 08. Size of the family			
S. No.	Types of works	Percentage s	Cumulative percentage s
1	Up to 2	3	3
2	3	6	9
3	4	8	17
4	5	14	31
5	6	20	51
6	7 and above	49	100
Total		100	100

Contribution Level of Children to Family Income

The findings of the study indicate that child workers' contribution to family income is quite significant. If we consider various income groups of child labour households, we find that children contributing more than half the income to their family. 28 per cent of children contribute 40 to 60 per cent of their family income and one fifth children contribute 60 to 80 per cent of their family income. About one- third of children share up to 20 per cent of their family income, in which about one- fourth of children contribute 20 to 40 % to the total family income. Only 8 per cent children contribute less than 20 per cent income to their family and 21 per cent children share more than 80 per cent to their family income (Table 09).

Table- 09. Contribution level among child labour in family income

S. No	Contribution range	Percentage s	Cumulative percentage s
1	Below 20%	9	9
2	20-40%	21	33
3	40-60%	30	61
4	60-80%	22	85
5	Above 80%	15	100
Total		100	100

It is not possible to eradicate child labour without eradicating poverty. The regions where child labours flourish are characterized by inadequate economic growth, poverty, unemployment, over population and lack of basic social services, such as education and health care. The main cause of child labour is poverty, unemployment, illiteracy of the parents and excess population. Among these, poverty is the primary reason for the existence of child labour and other factors are inter-related to each other. Author observed that poor families have more number of children, so it becomes very difficult for them to survive on the income of only one family member which is quite less. So they make their small children their source of income. They make their children work in factories, shops, household work, even selling items on street. The employers who prefer child workers for many occupations further aggravate this issue. They get a docile or submissive work force of unorganized and non-unionized children who put up with low wages and exploitative conditions. Again juvenile work force is characterized by long working hours in sub-human conditions, very little money and practically no freedom nor any kind of social security. Child labour in India is a grave and extensive problem. Children under the age of fourteen years are forced to work in various sectors of economy in Shivpuri town. Child labour is one of the main components in these unorganized sectors of Shivpuri town. Children pay extremely low wages, for which adults refuse to work, while forcing the youngsters to slave under perilous and unhygienic labour conditions. Many of these children are migrant workers, the majority coming from surrounding areas of Shivpuri district, who are sent away by their families to earn an income to be sent directly home. Thus, children are forced to endure the despicable conditions, as their families depend on their wages. The situation of the children is desperate. Most work around twelve hours a day, with only small breaks for meals. Ill-nourished, the children are very often fed only minimal staples. The vast majority of migrant child workers who can't return home at night sleep alongside their work place, further inviting sickness and poor health.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Child labour is a significant problem in India. The prevalence of it is shown by the child work participation rates, which are higher in India than in other developing countries. The major determinant of child labour is poverty. Even though children are paid less than adults, whatever income they earn is of benefit to poor families. In addition to poverty, the lack of adequate and accessible sources of credit forces

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poor parents to engage their children in the harsher form of child labour - bonded child labour. Some parents also feel that a formal education is not beneficial, and that children learn work skills through labour at a young age. The state of education in India also needs to be improved. High illiteracy and dropout rates are reflective of the inadequacy of the educational system. Poverty plays a role in the ineffectiveness of the educational system. Dropout rates are high because children are forced to work in order to support their families. The attitudes of the people also contribute to the lack of enrolment - parents feel that work develops skills that can be used to earn an income, while education does not help in this matter. Changing the structure of the workforce and hiring a high number of currently unemployed adults in greatly improved work conditions is only the first step in this lengthy process. A cycle of poverty is formed and the need for child labour is reborn after every generation. India needs to address the situation by tackling the underlying causes of child labour through governmental policies and the enforcement of these policies. Only then will India succeed in the fight against child labour. In conclusion poverty constraints and income opportunities play important role in the decision to send children to school or to work. Continuation of education for the long run will break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and backwardness and an inclusive process of national development on principles of equity and social justice is established. Therefore, it is one of the obligations of the state to take steps to ensure that every child is in school and that no child is engaged in work.

1. There should be compulsory education to all school aged children because education helps children learn skills that will help them earn a living.
2. The age of children should be amended from 14 years to 16 years.
3. Children should be paid the same wage as adults; this will remove the economic incentive to employ child labourers.
4. Children should be provided with non-formal job oriented education, such that it enhances their skill, which would enable them to shift to more remunerative satisfaction and less hazardous alternative employment.
5. There should be a practical time bound standardization or uniformity programs to eliminate child labour.
6. The legislature should define 'child labour' and thereby remove the confusion regarding the scope of child labour.
7. The constitution should cast a duty on the guardian to send the child to school.
8. Not only government but also every citizen takes to responsibility to give financial support to every economically poor family.

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