

The Status of Child Labour in Western Odisha: A Historical Analysis

Abstract

The complex issue of child labour is a developmental issue worth investigating. The notion that children are being exploited and forced into labour, while not receiving education crucial to development, concern the nation. All the policies that the Indian Government has placed are in accordance with the Constitution of India, and all support for the eradication of Child Labour. The problem of Child Labour still remains even though all of these policies are existence.

What are the causes of Child Labour in India? How do Government policies affect it? What role does education play in regard to Child Labour in India? A critical analysis of the answers to these questions may lead in the direction of a possible solution. These question will be answered through a historical analysis of the problem of child labour as it is now, analysing how prevalent it is.

Keywords: Child labour, potential Citizen and hazardous occupations

Introduction

Children are the blooming flowers in the garden of society. They are the most valuable assets of the nation as "today's children are the potential citizens of tomorrow". The quality of life, the relish today would categorically determine the quality of life of the future population of the nation. The children have rights like other human beings, to be respected with regards to their integrity, dignity, interests and opinions. But significantly, enough children in India are deprived of even the basic human rights, which they ought to be in any civilised society.

There is no denying the facts that children being defenceless and voiceless have suffered throughout the ages at the hands of society, the community and parents. Millions of children, for example, are physically or sexually abused or economically exploited by those who are presumed to bestow them security and love. Despite hectic planning, welfare programme, legislation and administrative actions in past five decades; especially after 1979 – International year of the child; the majority of Indian children continue to remain in distress and turmoil. We still score the first rank in the world when the highest number of child labourers is discussed about. A child is an invaluable asset to any society and has a definite role to play in the development of the nation. The future of the country depends on how its children are being nurtured to become the future citizen of the country. Some of the children, forced by their socio-economic conditions, take up work at a crucial formative age. A child whose legitimate place is at school is found to be holding a chisel in his hand to supplement the income of his family. This not only prevents these children from getting a basic education but also is highly detrimental to their health and leads to the intellectual and physical stunting of their growth. Deprivation of life of academics and other activities of joyful childhood leads to underdevelopment of their innate capacity, which further perpetuates a scenario of poverty, illiteracy, underdevelopment and deprivation.

Child labour is one of the most violated human rights issue and therefore it is universally condemned. Over the years, there has been a growing concern among different social partners on the prevalent of child labour, whereby thousands of children are deprived of their essential qualities of childhood and are forced as cheap substitutes for adults. Child labour is a complex phenomenon cannot be dealt in an isolated manner. Therefore, it is required to pull the efforts of various social partners towards prevention and elimination of child labour. Efforts have to be made to prepare various social partners and stakeholders so that they can play a role as change agents.



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Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study the socio-economic background and living conditions of child labour.
2. To identify various reasons which prompt children to take up employment.
3. To highlight the working conditions and problems of child labour.
4. To study legislative provisions for the child labour in odisha.
5. To suggest measures which may help mitigate the evils of child labour.

History of Child Labour

History of child labour states that industrial revolution saw children working in factories, mines, and even having an own small business like, selling foods, flowers and doing such unusual kind jobs. Some children started being a tourist guide, some set of a small shop of their own and some open up restaurants in their backyard and work as waiters too. Some children, however, choose to be actors and singers.

Although child labour was not new to the world, it is believed that during 1780 and 1840, there was a massive increase in child exploitation. During the industrial revolution, was very common to find children working in factories. In 1788, more than 60% of workers in textile mills of England and Scotland were children. Many laws were passed to eradicate child labour but hardly succeeded.

By now, many people were aware of increasing demand for educated workforce and the people of upper class had started to rule over the poor children. The demand for educated workers provided all the extra reasons for children to join the school. But, there were parents who could not afford to send their children to schools, and hence children volunteer to work in factories, mines, mills, etc.

In mines, children were to crawl through tiny pits to reach the coalface, and also were to operate on the ventilation ports. In mills, this child workforce grew annually. Out-working others and long working hours with more intensity were the dreams each child had, and this would mentally challenge them.

With the advent of modern industrialisation (Saxena, 1974) there came a tendency among the employers to have quick profits at low cost. Hence, in almost all countries there is the appointment of children in large numbers in a different establishment. Employing child is a beneficial proposition as it reduces the cost of production. Added to this, another important advantage is easy availability, easy monitoring, control and can be easily exploited. In India also, with industrial revolution, a large number of children came to be employed in factories and their employment still continues in certain industries in spite of certain legal provision as regards to their age, an hour of work, etc.

World

Maximum child labour is from in Asia-Pacific region (Bhandevi, 2006). Minimum 26% of the child population in the age of 5-14 in the world are engaged in child labour. The extent of child labour in the world is as follows:

**Table-1
Magnitude of Child Labour (Global Level) in the year 2006**

Sl. No.	Age-Group (Years)	Economically Active	Child Labour	In Hazardous Occupation
1	5-17	317 Million	218 Million	126 Million
2	5-14	190.7 Million	165.8 Million	74.4 Million

Source: V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida, U.P.

**Table – 2
Distribution Working Children by Sector in the year – 2006 (Percentage)**

Sector	Percentage
Service	22
Industry	9
Agriculture	69

Source: V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida, U.P.

**Table – 3
Global Trend in Children Economic Activity by Region in the year 2006 (5-14 years age groups)**

Region	Magnitude (In Millions)
Asia & Pacific	122.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	49.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	5.7
Other Region	13.4
The World	190.7

Source: V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, Noida, U.P.

From the above table, we can see the extent of child labour in the global level. In Table-1, the Sl. No. 2 comes in the category of child labour as it is in the age group within 5 to 14. It is observed from the said table that out of 190.7 million children who are economically active in the whole world, 165.8 million are child labour which includes 74.4 million in hazardous occupations. As per Table-2, it is found that in the whole world maximum number of child labour (69%) are engaged in the agriculture sector where is a minimum number of child labour (9%) are engaged in the industrial sector (ILO, 2010). Table-3 indicates the magnitude of children in different at a global level which is maximum in Asia & Pacific region and minimum in Latin America and Caribbean region.

India

India has the largest number of child labour in the world and withdrawing them from work and ensuring their rehabilitation is a major challenge facing the country (Behera & Behera, 1993). As per the census of India, 2001, the number of child labour in our country has been estimated as 12,591,667. If we compare 1971 census onwards, the phenomenon of child labour has shown an increasing trend (Labour Bureau, 2001). Child labour in India is much more of a rural phenomenon than urban. There are 90.87% of working children in the rural area and 9.13% working children in an urban area (Census Report, 2001). The government of India has been spending 3.5% of the total budget in the field of mass education and poverty

elevation. As per the report of the World bank 75% of the Indian's are below poverty line yet, Govt. of India report says that only 25% of are below poverty line.

Table – 4**Magnitude of Child labour at National Level since 1971 census.****The extent of Child Labour identified in different census reports**

Year	Number of Child labour	Trend
1971	10,753,985	
1981	13,640,870	26% increased
1991	11,285,349	25% decreased
2001	12,666,377	12% increased
2011	4,353,247	65% decreased

Above table indicates the number of child labour identified in India in different census surveys. If

we compare the report of different census mentioned in the above table we will find that the percentage of child labour has been increased to 26% in 1981 as compared to 1971. Again, the percentage of child labour has been decreased to 25% in the year 1991 as compared to 1981 and again increased to 12% in 2001 as compared to 1991 census. If we compare census of 1971 with that 2001, we can see the percentage increased up to 70.08% in 2001. As per the Census Report of 2001 and 2011, it is observed that percentage has come down to 65%, which is a great achievement for the country (Census Report, 2011). So we can conclude that the percentage of child labour increased in all census except in 1991 and 2011. So, the number of child labour in our country is has declined over the years.

Table -5**State-Wise Distribution of Working Children according to 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 census in the Age-Group of 5 – 14 years.**

Sl. No.	State/ UT	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
1	Andhra Pradesh	16,27,492	19,51,312	16,61,940	13,63,339	4,04,851
2	Arunachal Pradesh	17,925	17,950	12,395	18,482	99,512
3	Assam	2,39,349	**	3,27,598	3,51,416	99,512
4	Bihar	10,59,359	11,01,764	9,42,245	11,17,500	4,51,590
5	Chhattisgarh	-	-	-	3,64,572	63,884
6	Goa	-	-	4,656	4,138	6,920
7	Gujarat	5,18,061	6,16,913	5,23,585	4,85,530	2,50,318
8	Haryana	1,37,826	1,94,189	1,09,691	2,53,491	53,492
9	Himachal Pradesh	71,384	99,624	56,438	10,774	15,001
10	Jammu & Kashmir	70,489	2,58,437	**	1,75,630	25,528
11	Jharkhand	-	-	-	4,07,200	90,996
12	Karnataka	8,08,719	11,31,530	9,76,247	8,22,615	2,49,432
13	Kerala	1,11,801	92,854	34,800	26,156	21,757
14	Madhya Pradesh	11,12,319	16,98,597	13,52,563	10,65,259	2,86,310
15	Maharashtra	9,88,357	15,57,756	10,68,427	7,64,075	4,96,916
16	Manipur	16,380	20,217	16,493	28,836	11,805
17	Meghalaya	30,440	44,916	34,633	53,940	18,839
18	Mizoram	***	6,314	16,411	26,265	2,793
19	Nagaland	13,726	16,235	16,467	45,874	11,062
20	Odisha	4,92,477	7,02,293	4,52,394	3,77,594	92,087
21	Punjab	2,32,774	2,16,939	1,42,868	1,77,268	90,353
22	Rajasthan	5,86,389	8,19,605	7,74,199	12,62,570	2,52,338
23	Sikkim	15,661	8,561	5,598	16,457	2,704
24	Tamil Nadu	7,13,305	9,75,055	5,78,889	4,18,801	1,51,437
25	Tripura	17,490	24,204	16,478	21,756	4,998
26	Uttaranchal	-	-	-	70,183	28,098
27	Uttar Pradesh	13,26,726	14,34,675	14,10,086	19,27,997	8,96,301
28	West Bengal	5,11,443	6,05,263	7,11,691	8,57,087	2,34,275
29	Andaman & Nicobar	572	1,309	1,265	1,960	999
30	Chandigarh	1,086	1,986	1,870	3,779	3,135
31	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3,102	3,615	4,416	4,274	1,054
32	Daman & Diu	7,391	9,378	941	729	774
33	Delhi	17,120	25,717	27,351	41,899	26,473
34	Lakshadweep	97	56	34	27	28
35	Puducherry	3,725	3,606	2,680	1,904	1,421
TOTAL		1,07,53,985	13,640,870	12,185,349	12,666,377	4,353,247

It is observed from the table -5 that the number of child labour identified in all the States and Union Territories of India in the Census of India 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. Andhra Pradesh has the maximum number of child labour as per the Census of

1971, 1981 and 1991. However, Uttar Pradesh placed in 1st position in the 2001 and 2011 Census. The position of Odisha is in 11th place in the year 1971 and 1991. The number of child labour has increased in the Census 1981 and position of Odisha has come

to 9th position whereas the number had decreased in 2001 and 2011 and the position of Odisha is placed at 12th place in the country. We can see that except the year 1981 the trend in Odisha is encouraging. As

Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Goa are newly formed States, data are not provided. In 1991 the Census was not conducted in Jammu & Kashmir due to various reason.

Table – 6: History of Legislation Relating to Child Labour in India.

Year	Legislation	Age	What it says
1981	The Factories Act	7	Working hours limited to 9 hours
1891	The Factories Act	9	Working hours limited to 7 hours
1901	The Mines Act	12	Specifically for mines
1911	The Factories Act	9	Work in certain dangerous processes prohibited
1922	The Factories (Amendment) Act	15	Working hours limited to 6 hours
1923	The Indian Mines Act	13	Raised the age to 13 years
1926	The Factories (Amendment) Act	15	Working in two separate factories on same day prohibited
1931	The Indian Ports Act	12	Related to child labour handling goods at ports
1932	The Tea District's (Emigrant Labour) Act		Migration was prohibited without parents
1933	The Children (Pledging of Labour) Act		First law against bonded labour
1934	The Factories (Amendment) Act	12 - 15	Employment prohibited in certain area and employment hours restricted to 5 hours
1935	The Mines (Amendment) Act	15	Working hour regulated to 10 hours above ground and 9 hours underground
1938	The Employment of Children Act	13	Handling of goods allowed for 12-14 years of age
1948	The Factories Act	14	Concerning employment in government establishment
1951	Employment of Children (Amendment) Act	17	Prohibited working for 15-17 at ports and railways
1951	The Plantation Labour Act	12	Prohibited working of children under 12 years
1952	The Mines Act	15	Required medical certificate for underground work
1954	The Factories (Amendment) Act	17	Prohibited work at night
1958	The Merchant Shipping Act	15	Prohibited work on ship except in certain areas
1961	The Motor Transport Worker Act	15	Prohibits working in any motor transport undertaking
1961	The Apprentices Act	14	Prohibit apprenticeships/ training
1966	The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act	14	Prohibits working in tobacco
1978	Employment of Children (Amendment) Act	15	Prohibits working on and near railway premises
1986	The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act	14	Most comprehensive bans employment in specified industries regulates the working conditions were not prohibited uniformly on the definition of child in related laws.

From the above table-6, we can draw a clear picture about the different types of provisions relating to the prohibitions and regulations in respect of age of Child Labour implemented under different Acts.

Odisha

As per the survey conducted in the year, 1997 with the directives of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India 2,15,222 number of child labours were

identified in the State of Odisha. However, as per the 2011 Census of India, 92,087 children were identified as labour in the State of Odisha. The economic exploitation of children in Odisha has always been an area of concern. Most of the child labour work in highly exploitative and hazardous conditions and are deprived of even the most minimal education facilities (Labour Report, 2002).

Table – 7

Extent of Child Labour in Odisha under different Census periods.

State	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Odisha	4,92,477	7,02,293	4,52,394	3,77,594	92,087
Trend		43% increased	36% decreased	17% decreased	75% decreased

The above table indicates the number of child labours identified in Odisha in five different Census. We can observe that the percentage of child labour has increased to 43% in the year 1981

Census, whereas, it has decreased to 75% in the year 2011 because of the State Government initiatives and the provision of providing mid-day meal to attract the children to attend schools.

Table – 8
Result of Child Labour Survey – 1997 (Odisha)

Category	No. of Essts/ Households Surveyed	No. of Essts/ Households found to have Employed Child labour	No. of Child Labour identified from		
			Esst.	Households	Total
Hazardous	22,543	13,083	19,190	4,571	23,761
Non-Hazardous	2,32,168	1,61,728	1,09,593	81,868	1,91,461
Total	2,54,711	1,74,811	1,28,783	86,432	2,15,222

A District Level Survey of child labour was held with the directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the whole country including Odisha in the year 1997. Table-8 indicates the statistics of the said survey in all the 30 districts of Odisha. As per the statistics 2,54,711 number of establishments and households were surveyed including 91% of non-hazardous and 9% in hazardous category out of which a total of 174811 (i.e. 69% of the total sample area) establishment/ households found to be employing child labour comprising 7% from hazardous and 93% from the non-hazardous (Labour Statistics, 1997) category. During the survey 2,15,222 number of child labour were identified in which 18% of child labour were found to be engaged in the hazardous sector and a percentage of eighty-eight from the non-hazardous sector.

Table – 9

Occupation and Processes Wise Extent of Child Labour in Odisha as per survey, 2005

Nature of industries, occupation & processes	No. of child labour identified
Beedi Making	11,747
Weaving	413
Newspaper Hawking	15
Vendor	150
Rag Picking	13,000

Source: State Labour Institute, Odisha, Bhubaneswar

Above table indicates the number of child labour identified during the survey held in 1997 in above five categories of industries, occupations and processes (Labour Statistics, 2005). Although there are many hazardous occupations/processes as per the child labour (P&R) Act, 1986, yet data is available only in the above five categories. However, maximum child labours were identified Rag Picking category whereas minimum child labours were found in newspaper hawking.

Conclusion

In Western Odisha, 79% of its population depends on agriculture and nearly 48% live below poverty line. It is obvious that children are compelled to work in hazardous and non-hazardous occupations taking the life of children to danger. Not merely poverty, but social and economic factors sometimes influence the parent's decision for sending the children to work or to school.

There are many reasons of child labour such as, having more number of children, migration due to lack of works in the villages, alcoholism and bad habits of the elders, using girl children to assist their mother at home and taking care of younger siblings, low wages, illiteracy of parents, inability of the sick

parents to feed their children, severe economic problems, family debts, barren and wastelands, high rate of interests on loans, etc. (Handbook, 1997). In the process of rescue and rehabilitation of child labours, the labour officials return the rescued child to their parents following the procedures against the employers. But, due to economic pressure and poverty, again the child has to move to perform work.

Therefore, to eradicate child labour from its root, the committee should be constituted at the village level involving Officers, Teachers and Educated persons and awareness & responsibility should be given to initiating actions to solve the problems of child labour.

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