

CHAPTER - 5

Perception of Child Labour: Parents and Employers

5.0 Introduction

“ Poverty in India has been a long-standing issue. Its’ reality manifests in incidences and severity over the years. This work starts from the basic premise that poverty, a major problem of rapid urbanization in developing nations, is a major contributory factor in the growth and exacerbation of child labour. Child labour in Saharsa District reflect prevalent urban poverty which compel parents to send children of school age to work to boost family income. For many hours a day, children of poor parents are engaged in economic ventures such as street hawking, cart/wheel barrow pushing, bus conducting, plaiting of hair as well as being apprenticed to artisans. By focusing on the linkage between parent poverty and exacerbation of child labour, it is expected that some primary data generated that assist in understanding the root causes and implications of the phenomenon in automobile servicing sector in Saharsa district.

Child labour is considered as one of the faces of the poverty of over 70% of households in India; an essential means of income for families on the poverty line. This study is to determine the parents and employers perception and the effects of child labour.

Appropriate age of working in a car showroom, garage The respondents were given a hypothetical situation wherein they had to provide age of children who could work for a garage or restaurant. The findings were surprising as around 41% respondents in both the study districts said that children/individuals below the age of 18 and preferentially between 14-18 years were suitable for working in garages and restaurants.

Child labour is worldwide phenomenon. the child who has negligible bargaining power in the household is effectively an instrument for the parents maximisation effort. Extra household bargaining model occurs where parents, being unable to make a child work productivity for want of complementary resources, send the child to an employer. The bargaining is between the parents and the child's employer over aspects of wages to be paid for child work and the faction that is paid in form of food to the child. The cash component paid to parents are spent by the parents.

5.1 Employment of the Parents of the Respondents

Children's involvement in work also depended on whether their care takers (parents and guardians) worked or not. The research findings indicated that most responded in affirmative, with 47.1%. This indicates that the children assisted in daily home activities and businesses to supplement the small family incomes. The services of the children were not paid since they were

assisting their own families. 41.4% of the children said that their parents did not work. This implied that they fended on their own for survival, being independent workers (self employed) or working for pay. The least percentage, 11.4% said that their parents did not work often and thus also became own account workers. Notwithstanding the fact that the biggest percentage of children had their caretakers employed, those whose parents did not work or worked seldom totalled 52.8%, overlapping those who responded in affirmative implying that they were in most cases own account workers and therefore independent of the parentage bond and care.

Table 5.1: Number of Children who's Caretakers were Employed and Unemployed

Response	Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulativ e Percent
Yes	33	47.1	47.1	47.1
No	29	41.4	41.4	88.6
Sometimes	8	11.4	11.4	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	

5.2 Size of the Homestead of the Respondents

The size of the family (persons living in the respondents' homestead) also determined as to whether the children worked or not. As listed in Table 9 below, findings indicated that 21.4% (2 persons and less) was the least percentage number of people in a homestead. This was followed by 38.6% (3 to 5 persons) and 40% (more than 5 persons) being the highest. This

implies that the increase in the number of occupants of a particular household meant an increase in expenditure on family basics and therefore reduced incomes. Children who came from large families had to work to supplement family incomes to meet daily basics, and those with small families, unless own account labourers, their caretakers fended for them. The size of the family largely correlates to children in child labour.

Table 5.2: Number of Persons Living in the Respondents' Homestead

Number of persons	Frequenc y	Percen t	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2 people and less	15	21.4	21.4	21.4
3-5 people	27	38.6	38.6	60.0
More than 5 people	28	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	70	100.0	100.0	

5.3 The Community's Perception of Child Labour

The community's perception of child labour was seen more as a positive investment than negative. Child labour was embraced in most communities as it is seen as a way of supplementing meagre family incomes. Traditionally, children were also supposed to work and as such embraced. It was also noted that there was a possibility that the members of the community were not aware of the laws in place and their mandate as custodians of the law to prevent and detect child labour within their areas of residence. On the other hand, a section of the community did not embrace child labour and they were of the view that children should only engage in

light work. The community was also aware of the dangers of child labour to children's health.

Table 5. 3: Community's Perception about Child Labour

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Children are supposed to do light work and for those above the ages of 14 they can do work but under the supervision of an elder.	1	9.09	9.09	9.09
Different communities perceive realities differently but most people know it's a bad thing because no one wants there child to go and work as a maid.	1	9.09	9.09	18.18
Due to traditions in India, things such as child labour don't exist.	1	9.09	9.09	27.27
In my view, the community is aware about child labour and its dangers but they lack the responsibility to report or talk to those encouraging and participating in it.	1	9.09	9.09	36.36

It's both positive and negative, on the positive part they contribute to the family income, and negatively, it dangers children's health.	1	9.09	9.09	45.45
It's likely that the community is not aware of the laws in place and their mandate to prevent and detect child labour within their areas.	1	9.09	9.09	54.54
Many communities see child labour as supplementing household income and are comfortable.	1	9.09	9.09	63.63
Some people have acquired the knowledge about child labour but some have gone ahead to indulge these children in work.	1	9.09	9.09	72.72
The community still ensures children should be labourers which should not be the case.	1	9.09	9.09	81.81
They don't see any problem simply because they can't differentiate between child work and child labour.	1	9.09	9.09	90.9

Traditionally children are supposed to work and today children of a given age are supposed to work. Traditionally even a 3 year old would go hunting with the father and as for today it is still among some community members.	1	9.09	9.09	100.0
Total	11	100.0	100.0	

5.4 Positive Effects of Children's Participation in Child Labour in General Based on a Child and Family

Children's upbringing in a home involves such activities that are in most cases seen as mandatory and those that supplement family incomes to meet basic needs. The study indicated that children were told to engage in work so as to be responsible, acquire knowledge of day today work, and increase family production and to meet scholastic materials. On the other hand, there were some families that outright were against child labour as it was seen as a hindrance to pursuing an education and the conditions of labour not being favourable for the children to work (health hazard).

Table 5.4: Positive Effects of Child Labour Based on the Child and the Family

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	9.09	9.09	9.09
Children contribute to the production levels of the community.	1	9.09	9.09	18.18

If it is light work a child grows up as a responsible person being able to do a little housework.	1	9.09	9.09	27.27
If the children do light work they are kept busy and they acquire added knowledge of day to day work.	1	9.09	9.09	36.36
Increases household income.	1	9.09	9.09	45.45
Learns responsibility, supplements family income and labour.	1	9.09	9.09	54.54
No because they miss out opportunities like education, they also endure a lot and these conditions are not favourable for them to work.	1	9.09	9.09	63.63
I don't agree to the question because I don't believe in child labour.	1	9.09	9.09	72.72
There are positive effects.	1	9.09	9.09	81.81
They add income to the family, they contribute to scholastic materials, acquire skills for survival.	1	9.09	9.09	90.9
To earn on income, supplement household income.	1	9.09	9.09	100.0
Total	11	100.0	100.0	

The community at large embraced child labour as children basically provided cheap means of labour to the urban informal sector. Children's involvement in work also meant acquisition of skills (apprenticeships) to children and supplemented the labour shortage as a form of alternative level of employees in the urban informal sector.

Table5.5: Positive Effects of Child Labour Based on the Child and the Community

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid per cent	Cumulative per cent
Supplements family income	5	45.45	45.45	45.45
Brings in cheap labour force.	1	9.09	9.09	54.54
Nothing	1	9.09	9.09	63.63
Provision of cheap labour to urban labour force, skills and apprenticeship to children.	1	9.09	9.09	72.72
Skills acquisitions	1	9.09	9.09	81.81
They are alternative means of employment in the urban informal sector.	1	9.09	9.09	90.9
They have misused children I can't say there are positive effects.	1	9.09	9.09	100.0
Total	11	100.0	100.0	

5.5. Negative Effects of Children's Participation in Child Labour in General Based on Children as Individuals

Children's participation in several activities exposed them to a number of health hazards in addition to failure to pursue an education. Children for instance according to the findings were exposed to sexual exploitation especially those who worked as domestic servants, HIV and early pregnancies, retarded growth, prone to crime (children in crime), accidents, psychological stress, bad behaviour and child violence. It is to a large extent that children were affected by their involvement in child labour. Their positive contribution to the family and the community at large is overridden by the negative consequences.

Table 5.6: Negative Effects of Child Labour Based on the Individual Children

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Accidents, contraction of HIV, exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse.	1	9.09	9.09	9.09
Children are denied their rights like right to education.	1	9.09	9.09	18.18
Children have missed out on there childhood and some end up not going to school, easy spread of diseases.	1	9.09	9.09	27.27

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Collecting of metal scraps expose children to dangerous weapons like bombs and other dangerous gases, those who beg stand high chances of getting HIV, early pregnancies and eventually early marriages.	1	9.09	9.09	36.36
Easy spread of diseases, accidents, the children end up becoming criminals.	1	9.09	9.09	45.45
Exploitation of children, failure to attain formal education	1	9.09	9.09	54.54
Interferes with children education/drop out of school, affects normal child growth.	1	9.09	9.09	63.63
It's harmful to their health, distracts their education, hampers child growth and development.	1	9.09	9.09	72.72
Prone to crime, develop diseases when very young, they develop bad habits.	1	9.09	9.09	81.81
Psychological consequences	1	9.09	9.09	90.9
These children suffer violence where by they are even beaten and punished by the people they work for, they are also exploited and this makes them hard to enjoy their rights. Some kids like girls are sexually abused and this makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.	1	9.09	9.09	100.0
Total	11	100.0	100.0	

5.6. Negative Effects of Children's Participation in Child Labour in General Based on a Child and Community

The research findings according to Table 5.7 below indicate that children were widely exposed to risks and criminal activities since they worked till late and thus affected negatively. The children were exposed to defilement, accidents, health risks like catching pneumonia, dropping out of school and high chances of becoming criminals. Children in crime become a nuisance to the community as a whole in form of criminal gangs and yet still, they also come out as children in conflict with the law. The community on the other hand benefited from cheap employment although it can be noted that the adults stayed unemployed, an effect that further facilitated child labour.

5.7. General Perception of Children's Participation in the Labour Force

The general perception of children's involvement in child labour was mixed. Some respondents according to the research findings supported its existence, while others were strongly against it. For instance, those in support of child labour said that children acquired responsibility, developed skills and supplemented household incomes, and others were of the view that children were supposed to do light work and thus their employment in domestic service. Other perceptions on child labour included; led to the failure to pursue an education and increased school dropouts, early marriages and overall, it was against the laws of the country.

5.8 Principal Goals of the Institution

The above institutions based on their mission statements had a major goal of protecting the child. The research findings from the key informants indicated that the institutions aimed to improve the health of the children through improving their nutritional status, encourage their education, protection against child abuse and neglect, provide psychosocial support, law and order, enforce laws and to mobilize resources to build capacity for the children.

5.9. Institutional Initiatives to Address the Problem of Child Labour in the Automobile Servicing Sector

According to the research findings, the institutions representing the government, the international community and civil society had various initiatives on addressing the issue of child labour. These included but not limited to; awareness raising on the rights of the child, building and strengthening structures for child protection, policy influence and advocacy, service delivery, school peer group programmes, enforcement of labour laws, media campaigns, research, training and monitoring programmes. All these initiatives were and are aimed at combating child labour.

Table 5.7: Institutional Initiatives to Address Child Labour in the Automobile Servicing Sector

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Awareness raising and sensitization, building and strengthening structures for child protection, policy influence and advocacy, service delivery.	1	9.09	9.09	9.09
Community sensitization programmes and media programmes, school peer group programmes, stakeholder sensitization programmes.	1	9.09	9.09	18.18
Coordinating stakeholders against child labour, National Child Labour Policy should be implemented.	1	9.09	9.09	27.27
Enforcement of labour laws, sensitization of the rights of children, sensitize the community not to employ young children under 18 years.	1	9.09	9.09	36.36
Religious and media campaigns against physical, sexual and emotional violence.	1	9.09	9.09	45.45
Research, i.e. the results help inform the public to raise awareness on fighting child labour.	1	9.09	9.09	54.54

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Sensitization of parents/guardians about the negative implications of child labour, formation of child rights.	1	9.09	9.09	63.63
We conduct research studies and this helps us learn the nature of the problem, we have also provided communication materials to the communities that help in educating about child labour.	1	9.09	9.09	72.72
We have a community based growth monitoring programme that identifies the children in need; we provide necessities to the children.	1	9.09	9.09	81.81
We have created research clubs in schools that help teach the kids about child labour.	1	9.09	9.09	90.9
We have trained people including teachers and village teams about child labour; we also have a toll free number (child help line) that is used to report these cases.	1	9.09	9.09	100.0
Total	11	100.0	100.0	

5.10 Tasks Which Are (Seen As) Exclusively Children's Work

AUTOMOBILE SERVICING workshop: Cleaning the equipments, helping the chief mechanic by serving the utensils, wiping the vehicles after it is repaired, serving tea, snacks, cigarettes and betel leaf to the head mechanic and the owner of the cars, cleaning motor parts, changing oil, working in "hard-to reach" spots or inside the drawer compartment of the steel closets.

A number of points stand out Firstly, a significant proportion of 'children's tasks' are those that are seen as best done by small agile bodies the 'nimble fingers' claim. In a striking example, children who work in the motor workshop it is very easy for a child to get under a car. The physical size of the person doing the task is therefore seen as vital. Small children also dart easily in and around crowded workspaces.

A second factor is that adults shy away from many tasks performed by children on grounds of status, particularly if they are seen as dirty tasks.

A third factor is that the low cost of children's labour makes it possible to use their labour inefficiently. Few employers will be willing to pay fulltime adult employee wages for tasks which are intermittent, unskilled or low priority. For example, small boys are employed in tea shops and restaurants where their main roles are wipe tables, sweep, and run errands. Customers are repulsed by being served by the same person who cleans the table, so adults are not involved in cleaning. And employers prefer not to employ adults just for this job because of the expense. Similarly, children are attractive as domestic workers as they can live at no additional cost in the employer's house, and can be available constantly, including to perform

low-priority tasks like entertain the employer's children. The higher cost of adults would make this an inefficient and costly use of their time. Many also, however, felt that the proportion of children working was higher now than in the past.

In the views of both rural and urban employers, while around one-fifth of children worked previously, that proportion has more than doubled, particularly in urban areas. Rural employers estimated that between 41% and 60% of children now work, rising to between 61% and 80% among urban employers.

A second factor is likely to be sectoral changes: there has been an almost 10% shift in children's employment away from the relatively hidden agricultural sector, and into the relatively more visible non-agricultural, particularly service sectors. Other than these the employers mentioned that children were found working in shops, motor workshops, hot food shops, battery workshop, tailoring shops, tea stalls, working as office assistants and also as boatmen.

5.11. IMPACTS ON EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES

The employers of child labour in the areas studied are under considerable pressure as a result of working children's increased work opportunities and choices of sectors, including better-paid and more attractive new sectors, as well as the flexibility and security of homebased work. These increased opportunities had impact on their working conditions. The employers have

changed their behaviour in the following ways in an attempt to recruit and retain child workers:

• **Good behaviour.**

Most rural and urban employees claim that they speak nicely and try to avoid getting angry with children if they make any mistakes at work. Some stated that they no longer physically or verbally abuse child workers.

• **Good working conditions/attractive remuneration.**

Most rural and urban employers stated that they had to raise salaries of their child employees regularly in order to keep them in the job. Extra leave was also another factor mentioned by employers.

• **Constant Care.**

All employers interviewed commented that they are more alert about the children's health-related needs.

• **Extra benefits.**

Some employers also pay small bonus payments or provide good food as rewards for good work.

• **Meeting basic needs and rights.**

Some employers felt it was Important to pay attention to children's basic needs and rights in order to make them stay. The most important of these were: allowing the children to rest when they are unwell; giving them time to bathe and have lunch; giving them three meals a day, new clothes several times a year and a place to stay. In addition, the employers give some money for snacks, allowing them to go out for half an hour everyday,

providing them with daily essentials like oil and soap, asking them about their health every now and then, and help them getting medication if they fall sick. Some employers of domestic workers supported children's schooling and study.

• **Concern for the future.**

Parents and guardians are particularly concerned about employment which they do not think the child is learning enough in, or in which he or she may not have future prospects. This makes employers concerned about teaching tasks which should be beneficial for the children's future.

- Others. Employers also listen to children's opinions, stand up for employees if there is a complaint against them, assign work according to capacity, avoid discrimination and they treat the children as their own family members.
- Negative strategies. Oppressive means of keeping child workers in work continue to be common. Few employers of domestic workers allowed them to leave the house, out of the fear that they would be 'spoiled' or leave the job. Others use threats, such as false allegations of theft and threats to file cases against children if they leave. Sometimes employers pay wages in tiny installments and do not allow them to go to their villages on leave. Even if the leave is granted the children may not be allowed to go unless they repay loans which they have taken previously.

5.13 Parents Interviews

The majority of the parents 79.26% (279) have good knowledge of child labour. Most of the parents 66.19% (216) consider child labour as

hazardous, while 33.81% (136) believe it is beneficial. Adverse effects of child labour perceived by parents' ranges from sexual harassment, teenage pregnancy, termination of formal education, to the contraction of sexually transmitted disease. Out of the 352 parents, 27.96% (78) admitted they practice child labour while 72.04% (201) did not. Activities of children out of school When the respondents were asked about the activities of children who were out of school 47.5% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 41.8% respondents in Simri-bakhtiyarpur said that these out of school children are involved in some sort of work, either at their homes or outside their homes. Children involved in work for earning money In Sadar Block Kahra 60.4% respondents said that they know children who are out of school and involved in some economic activity whereas in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur, 73.1% respondents said that they know children who are involved in economic activity or who work for earning. Further Reasons for working children 89.8% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 96.9% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur reported poverty as reason for children to seen work for income.

Working hours of children The Child Labour Prohibition an Regulation Act 1986 Section 7 clause (2): “The period of work on each day shall be so fixed that no period shall exceed three hours and that no child shall work for more than three hours before he has had an interval for rest for at least one hour”. During the study, 47.6% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 30.5% respondents said that the children who work for money generally work as much as adults (around 8-10 hours) whereas 36.9% respondents in

and 53.9% Sadar Block Kahra respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that children generally worked for lesser hours than adults. In addition, around 15% respondents in both the Blocks said that children were working more than the adults.

5.14 CONCLUSION

Should children be working? Around 85% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and around 75% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that children should not work. Almost the same percentage of respondents felt that working of children was inappropriate. Action by the government on working children 66.9% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 63.6% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that government is actually doing nothing on the issue of working children.

Knowledge about Law against Child Labour 72% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 67.1% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur knew about the Existence of a certain law against child labour in the country.

Law banning children from working altogether When the respondent were asked on their opinion on completely banning child labour, around 87% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and around 86% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that there should be a law in the country which completely bans child labour.

When the respondents were asked regarding the appropriateness of employing children, 89.1% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 83.2% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that it was not appropriate to employ children in any work.

Working ability and payment to children 42.3% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and around a quarter of all respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur felt that children were as efficient as adults in carrying out any activity.

It clearly shows that most of the respondents, who are also potential employers could possibly exploit a person below 18 years working in his or her establishment as this person below 18 years would be made to work like an adult but would not be paid like one. Further, almost all the respondents said that poverty was the main reason behind working children. This was the sole reason behind working children out of options such as lack of implementation of Child Labour Act 1986, lack of knowledge, behavioural issues and so on.

Injured Child When the respondents were asked about whether knowing any child in and around their locality who got injured or died while working, 30.3% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 16.2% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that they knew or have seen a child who got injured or died while working. **Injured Child**

Blame for an injured child When the respondents were asked as to who was to be blamed for an injured child the major onus for an injured child was put on the employer as around 69% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and around 68% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that employer was the responsible for an injured child. However, 27.2% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 20.5% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur blamed parents for injury occurred to a working child.

Appropriate age of working in a car showroom, garage

The respondents were given a hypothetical situation wherein they had to provide age of children who could work for a garage or restaurant. The findings were surprising as around 41% respondents in both the study districts said that children/individuals below the age of 18 and preferentially between 14-18 years were suitable for working in garages and restaurants. Penalty if a child is injured As an addition to the hypothetical question another question was asked as to what could be the consequences if the child met with an accident while working in a garage or restaurant. Around 63% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 61.6% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that a monetary compensation needs to be paid to the child or the parents/ guardians of the child. This gives an indication that in case of accident of a working child one can get away from punishment by just making some monetary compensation to the child or the parents/guardian of the child.

Responsibility for a working child When it comes to responsibility for a working child 42.1% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 57.9% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur feel that the parents/ guardians of a working child is responsible for him/her. Further, in all other more than half of the respondents reported that in case of an accident of a child in the work place the employer was responsible for the working child.

Parents, Employer, Government and the Child of Sadar Block Kahra and Simri-Bakhtiyarpur all the respondents said that the overall responsibility vested with the parents of the child. In all other respondents /more than 80%

respondents said that the overall responsibility of a working child vested with the parents of the child.

A child who does not work 85.3% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 72.4% respondents in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur felt that if a child is not working should actually be at school. The child should not roam around, play or beg if the child is not working.

About employing children When the respondents were asked if they would allow children to work in their establishment, 64.6% respondents in Sadar Block Kahra and 57.8% in Simri-Bakhtiyarpur said that they would completely disallow any child in their establishment for the purpose of working.

However, it was surprising to find that almost a quarter of respondents in each of the block were of the opinion of providing study Opportunities along with work to a child who approached them for work.

