

Child Labor and Household Wealth: Empirical Finding from Carpet Belt of Bhadohi District

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Abstract—Some studies on child labor have shown that, at the level of the household, greater land wealth leads to higher child labor, thereby casting doubt on the hypothesis that child labor is caused by poverty. This paper argues that an increase in the land ownership brings about a corresponding increase in the economic status of the household thereby enabling the family to bear the cost of sending the children to the school, thus resulting in a decreased incidence of child labour. However contrary to the findings of these studies: Bhalotra & Heady (2002, 2003) & Edmonds & tank (2002), these studies reveal that as the landownership increases the incidence of child labour increase.

This study suggests the possibility of inverse relationship between land holdings and child labor. Using a unique data set, it was found that landowning status directly reflects the incidence of child labour. In Bhadohi, some had small land holdings, less than a hectare or just a little more and they used it to grow food for the family, thereby saving on necessary expenses. Hired labour children mainly belong to landless family. The turning point beyond which more land leads to a decline in child labor occur around 4 ac of land per household.

1. INTRODUCTION

Millions of children all over the world today are working many in servitude and under hazardous condition. A large number of children of tender age are being exploited and compelled to work for long hours for low wages and under condition damaging to their health, and their physical, social, psychological and mental development.

Generally, poverty is seen as the sole determinant of child labour which compels children to enter the labour force, but some of the researchers like Burra (1997) cite poverty as "the classic defense offered by apologist for child labour and insist that the prevalence and persistence of child labour itself reinforce, if poverty not creates. Poverty takes many faces as it comes across as caste, as landlessness, as corruption, as lack of adequate and quality education and health facilities, as gender, and as age.

Generally guardians/ parent's perception towards their work culture that tradition should be passes from one generation to another generation, it would be possible only when their children enter in the workforce at an early age and learn the

skill related to work. Employers prefer to employ children as they can be paid less, are more flexible, can be abused without provoking retaliation and are not recognized like adult workers. Thus, the problem of Child labour exists but not in an organized manner, mostly it is in the form of family labour where the skill is passed from one generation to another generation. As well as estimates of the number of child labourers vary, owing to the differences in methodology used for enumeration of their numbers as well as because of conceptual difference in defining child labour. While statistics from the government of India conducted census indicate a progressive decline in the absolute numbers over the decades, result from other survey suggest the contrary.

However, in spite of these differences in estimates, it is undisputed that over 10 million children in India are working as child labourers, millions of whom are doing jobs those are detrimental to their health and safety. These include children who work in the and well documented industrial sector as well as the visible children who work in agriculture sector and other informal sector like home based carpet manufacturing.

Objective: The main aim of the present study is to find out the relationship between landowning status of child labour family and number of child labour working in carpet industry in Bhadohi. In order to find out that landowning status directly reflects the incidence of child labour or not attempts to compare the findings of the present study with previous studies (Bhalotra and Heady (2002).

2. HYPOTHESIS

Ho - There is no relationship between land ownership and incidence of child labour.

H1 - There is statistically significant relationship between land ownership and incidence of child labour.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was mainly based on primary data collected from the field interviews and discussions with carpet weavers, child

labourers, contractors, exporters, NGO activists, and government officials in Khamaria area where carpet production is concentrated. The sample was taken from this area, as 300 looms run in the region as mentioned in the official data. Its total area is 5.1 Km². There are 290 villages in this area; it is 17 km far from the Bhadohi district. The tools used for primary data collection were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and on-field observations and case studies.

A total of 134 child workers were interviewed from 55 looms over a 4 month period (Nov 2009 to Feb 2010). The child workers were selected by using the random sampling technique, both of those who work as family labour assisting the family members & work as non-wage earners and those who work as hired labour who work against the wage in neighbourhood loom sheds in the same village, block or other districts. There are two types of hired labour – the locally hired labour and the other is migrant labour. This was done in order to compare the situation in the family child labour with that of the hired child labour.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

This Paper has been divided into two sections. Section one presents demographic features of Uttar Pradesh and Bhadohi. Section two presents the findings of field survey of 55 loom enterprises regarding the landowning status of child labour. This section also attempts to compare the findings of the present study with previous studies (Bhalotra and Heady (2002)

5. DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF UTTAR PRADESH AND BHADOHI

Since independence the government has made a number of provision for the lower castes, in the constitution [Part XVI, Articles 330-342] as well as in legislation [The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (Prevention of Atrocities)], Act, 1989, the bonded labour system (abolition) Act, 1976, the Child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986], but again the enforcement of these legislation is weak. Closely linked to caste is the issue of landlessness, which again makes substantial differences to the chances of survival and standard of living of a family. Even a small piece of land can grow enough of one or two grains/food crops annually in order to feed the family, thereby reducing their monetary expenditure on food. A large piece of land can produce enough not just for the family, but also for sale. Traditionally the lower castes had no or very little land to their name. After the Independence, the five years plans addressed the issue of land reform at the level of the Central Government and introduced land Reform Acts that either placed a ceiling on the size of land holdings and redistributed surplus land, or consolidated disparate landholdings or drew up tenancy contracts. It was left up to the states to regulate the ceilings and implement the laws.

The success of these laws has been patchy from one state to another, and the states where child labour is most prevalent have not had a good track record in terms of honest land reform (Besley and Burgess 2000, Land Reform poverty reduction and growth: Evidence from India: Indian child, 2000, India Land) In U.P. the government has made efforts to redistribute ceiling surplus land (pattas) among the landless "However, most of the land distributed is government land and there is still a large gap between the ceiling land which could have been potentially acquired and distributed. In many of the study village lands available for distribution has virtually been exhausted but landlessness still exists and there is considerable demand for patta land". (Institute of Human Development, n.d., "Anti poverty programme in Uttar Pradesh: An evolution", p 110) to the some extent that these efforts have been successful, they have made a difference in the conditions of many families.

Table 1: Rural Poverty Incidence and shows by land ownership in Uttar Pradesh.

1999-00 Amount of land owned	Poverty Incidence (%)		Percentage of Population poor
No land owned	28.4	4	4
0-0.4 hectares	41.1	44	58
0.4-1 hectares	28.6	26	24
1-2 hectares	22.0	14	10
2-4 hectares	11.6	8	3
4+ hectares	6.8	3	1
Overall	31.0	100	100

Source: World Bank, May 8, 2002, Poverty in India: The challenges of Uttar Pradesh.

Landowning and Occupational Status of Family of Working Children in Bhadohi:

Bhadohi district is well known for the production of handmade carpets in the world and is scattered across some 1274 villages. There is now a large concentration of looms in radius of about 75 kilometers around the Bhadohi khamaria strip. Over the years there has been a great deal of diversification and improvement in the design and quality of the carpet manufactured. The total value of carpets manufactured in this belt constitutes 80 percent of India's total carpet output and more than three – fourth of total carpets export in the country is also from this belt.

Carpet weaving in Bhadohi is a family tradition. A child starts learning knotting from the early age and after the few years of practice on the loom under the guidance of the family members become a skilled hand. Traditional system of weaving and engaging children in the weaving process has been continuing since decades in the handmade carpet industry in the belt.

In Bhadohi, some had small land holdings, less than a hectare or just a little more and they used it to grow food for the family, thereby saving on necessary expenses. Agricultural labour requires hard, manual labour at certain periods of the

year but to make it their only source of income would require large landholdings as well as technical and labour inputs that most lower castes cannot afford. Non agricultural work like carpet weaving pays more in concentrated terms compared to other fields and consequently most weavers want to do both.

Table 2: below explores the actual landholding condition of working children's family in study area. It was found that landowning status directly reflects the incidence of child labour. Hired labour children mainly belong to landless family. In table 57.5 percent of children in general belong to landless status and 42.5 percent were from marginal (<2) peasant families. In which 77.3 percent of hired labour children belonged to landless family where family labour percentage were only 53.6 percent while in case of marginal (<2) percent of family labour children had larger share with 46.4 percent but hired labour had only 22.7 percent share in total hired labour children.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of working children by their landowning status

Landowning status of the family (in Big has)	Type of labour		Total
	Hired	Family	
Landless	16(77.3%)	60(53.6%)	76(56.7%)
Marginal < 2	6(22.7%)	52(46.4%)	58(43.3%)
Total	22(100%)	112(100%)	134(100%)

So it supports the findings of Dutta & Jutsi study where 29.2 percent of Household (those which contribute income / wage child labour) belongs to class of the purely landless and marginal peasants. But does not support the finding of these (below given studies) studies.

- Bhalotra and Heady (2002), who have tried to show (using data from Pakistan and Ghana) that households which own (or operate) relatively large amounts of land tend to make their children work more. Since a larger landholding would typically mean greater wealth, this seems to suggest that greater poverty does not lead to greater child labour. The main reason why greater land ownership may contribute to higher child labour is, as Bhalotra and Heady recognized, that in the absence of a properly functioning labour market, owning or controlling land amounts to having the opportunity for more productive use of the household's labour including child labour Hence, if two households are equally disinclined to send their children to work but one has more land, then that household may choose to make the children work simply because that household finds it more rewarding to make children work. So, it is not surprising that at the margin, land ownership makes a difference. Households that start their own business are more likely to send their children to work. The reason must be the same, that is, a household that starts its own business is like a household

with a lot of land. It has greater opportunity to use its own labour more productively. This does not mean that poverty is not a determinant of child labour, but simply that child labour, like all other inputs, responds to incentives and opportunities. Basu et al hypothesized that if there were sufficiently disaggregated data for households, ranging from those that owned no land to those that had very large quantities of land, they would find a non-linear relation with child labour first rising as land ownership rose and eventually falling.

Thus it can be hypothesized here that....

4. **H₀**: There is no relationship between landowning status and incidence of child labour.

H₁: There is a statistically significant relationship between land owning status and incidence of child labour.

Here for testing of hypothesis chi-square test were used.

At 5% level of significance & D.F. is 1 then $t_{tab} = 3.841$, so $t_{cal} = 4.226 > t_{tab} = 3.841$

- Thus alternate hypothesis is accepted; it means there is statistically significant relationship between land owning status and incidence of child labour.
- There is no denying the fact that there is a statistically significant relationship between land owning status and the incidence of child labour, a fact which has been corroborated by a real studies by Bhalotra & Heady (2002, 2003) However contrary to the findings of these studies, this study reveals that as the landownership increases the incidence of child labour actually seems to decrease rather than increase as reported by these studies. This may be ascribed to the fact that an increase in the land ownership brings about a corresponding increase in the economic status of the household thereby enabling the family to bear the cost of sending the children to the school, thus resulting in a decreased incidence of child labour.
- The exploration of the landowning status of children reveals important discrimination. Land status should be seen along with occupational status. In the table 5.12: below it is explored that in general most of the child workers family occupation is carpet weaving, it was 67.2 percent of the total working children; 17.9 percent had agriculture as main occupation and rest 14.9 percent worked as agriculture labour – those who had lesser land or no land to grow food on their land worked in another people's land as daily or controlled labour.
- 90.9 percent Hired labour were in agriculture labour category and 9.1 percent had agriculture as their main occupation. But no one was in category of carpet weaving because for occupying one's own loom there was need for money. So due to poverty hired labour was under more

pressure to earn money. While in case of family labour children, it was found that most of them had carpet weaving as main occupation; it was 80.36 percent and rest had agriculture as their main occupation because compared to hired labour children, family labour had more land to grow food.

6. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION:-

It is noteworthy that legislative measures have been most effective in reducing the incidence of child labour. There was remarkably high awareness among the villagers about the child labour (Prohibition and regulation) Act 1986. Even children were aware of the fact that if they were caught while working, then their parents and the loom owners would be penalized. There were also complaints about the high rate of laziness in the labour department. However, all this has created an environment in which the employment of children is, at least feared. Overall it is apparent that the problem of child labour continues unabated in India in spite of lots of governmental efforts largely because of the gap between policies and legislation on the one hand and the implementation on the other. And this gap may continue in future also if a clear cut policy direction and efforts to prevent children from entering the labour market are not initiated.

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