

Child Labour in India: A Study of Saharsa District of Bihar

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Abstract—*The future of any nation depends upon the sound development of children. For construction of civilized, cultural and happy society, we have to educate and train own children properly because tomorrow they would take the nation towards prosperity. Child labour is a global phenomenon. This study, therefore explore its effects on health, safety and education of the children involved. Several attempts by the Government of India to live up to its mandate of protecting the rights of the children as enshrined in the legal, policy and programmatic frameworks, is far from reality. This ineffectiveness and inefficiency on the part of the state has created mistrust and the loss of confidence by the public as a whole; whose cooperation is vital and therefore urgent in reducing child labour. The study also sought to critically assess the effectiveness of the existing strategies in tackling the causes of child labour and to analyse the ethical challenges of implementing such schemes, and recommend measures to remedy the situation of child labour.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The future of any nation depends upon the sound development of children as Wordsworth has also said “The Child is father of the Man.” For construction of civilized, cultural and happy society, we have to educate and train own children properly because tomorrow they would take the nation towards prosperity. Child labour is a global phenomenon. The term “child labour” is generally used to refer “all children who are less than 15 years old and forced to work on regular basis to earn livelihood for themselves and their family in organization or non- organization and hazardous and non- hazardous condition that are exploitative and affective to their health and to their physical and mental development and deprived of education and training opportunities. But due to an increase in child labour in India, the future of children seems to be in dark.

This study, therefore explored its effects on health, safety and education of the children involved. Several attempts by the Government of India to live up to its mandate of protecting the rights of the children as enshrined in the legal, policy and programmatic frameworks, is far from reality. This ineffectiveness and inefficiency on the part of the state has

created mistrust and the loss of confidence by the public as a whole; whose cooperation is vital and therefore urgent in reducing child labour. * While the problem of child labour is far from over and cannot be left unchecked, it is against this backdrop that the research was carried out to analyse the problems of child labour in Automobile Servicing Sector in Saharsa district, and in order to find a substantive solution by recommendations to the problem of child labour.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study also sought to critically assess the effectiveness of the existing strategies in tackling the causes of child Labour and to analyze the ethical challenges of implementing such schemes, and recommend measures to remedy the situation of child Labour.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted by using the snowball sampling (purposive) in Saharsa district. The investigation covered two blocks among ten under two sub-divisions of Saharsa district. One block from Saharsa Sadar Subdivision was Sadar Block Kahra and other was Simri-Bakhtiyarpur Block from Simri-Bakhtiyarpur Subdivision, which were chosen to be representative of other sub-towns/markets in Saharsa district since they were identified as areas of high child labour concentration.

Both qualitative and quantitative data techniques of research were used during the study and these included; interviews, questionnaires, photography and observation methods. Interviews were held with selected staff from the owner of the Automobile Servicing Sector of Saharsa district and the relative public authorities. This involved collecting primary information by interviewing a sample of 100 working children and 11 key informants. Each respondent was able to give their personal points of view, data of which was highly reliable and substantive for the study. This enabled flexibility in the study

while we achieved a deeper understanding. For secondary data; the researcher made reference from dissertations, print media (News Papers and Magazines), reports and books with relevant literature, policy statements, legislation etc.

4. ROLE OF PARENTS

The study observed that children who came from poor households and their parents were unemployed engaged more in labour activities to supplement meagre family incomes. Household poverty is one of the underlying causes of child labour that affects school enrolment as many cannot afford school fees and scholastic materials. Child labour becomes a majority option for most families for survival which eventually affects the academic performance of some children who labour for fees and it also endangers them physically and psychologically. While it might seem obvious that the children had to fend for their families, parental consent to work comes in the way as a major issue of maximum consideration in child employment. Parents allow their children to work and thus played a big role in influencing child labour.

5. IMPACT OF SIZE OF THE FAMILY

The size of the family is also a contributing factor to child labour given the fact that the larger the family, the less the affordability of school fees and maintenance. Forty (40) percent of the respondents came from families that had more than five members, 38.6 percent represented families that had between 3 and 5 members and 21.4 percent represented families that had 2 or less members. The larger the family was, the less the affordability of its maintenance. It was reported and observed that polygamy has an effect on child labour in terms of violence and failure to meet the daily needs. Children under polygamous families faced hard conditions under the peril of their step parents which forced them to abandon their homes and try a better life somewhere else. Domestic violence represented 36.4 percent (highest) as a significant cause of children's participation in the automobile servicing sector.

6. PLACE OF CHILD IN THEIR FAMILY*

Traditionally, children have been viewed as property of their parents, and as such, neglect and abuse of children was seldom questioned. Society today has been hampered by this traditional adage. Children have been a constant subjection to exploitive domestic service, an activity that has not only affected their education, but also their physical and mental growth. Parents should be responsible not only for the provision of basic necessities, but also to secure and nurture an emotional environment that would stop children from getting involved in hazardous child labour. Child abuse and neglect should be viewed as acts of commission and omission which interfere with the chances of children to develop their potential as human beings. Such interference must be judged by in

terms of the conditions which permit and encourage the unhealthy development of potentiality in each child.

7. IMPORTANCE OF DATA ON CHILD LABOUR

The importance of literature/data on child labour is very essential if child labour is to be addressed from an ethical point of view. The lack of data, especially gender disaggregated data may hinder the ability to find solutions to the child labour problem in Saharsa. This highlights the importance of study and research on the issue of child labour to avail statistics and viable information; such statistical information could be very instrumental in developing ethical principles and practice in response to child labour. Let's consider the following information on child labour and how it could for instance inform ethical practice.

8. PLAN OF THE STUDY

Above facts further enabled the researcher to find appropriate recommendations as listed in the preceding chapters. The information collected was organized according to six chapters in order to make meaningful presentations and discussions, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter one of the study contained general background and introductory information including; background of the study, problems of the child labour, scope of the study, child labour in the world history, definition of child labour and key terms, statement of the problem, objectives and justification of the study.

Chapter two gives related information to the study from various reviewed literature. Literature was organized based on the study objectives so as to make meaningful conclusion and suggestions, categorization of data with regard to the general characteristics, and magnitude of the child Labour etc. worldwide.

Chapter three of the study contained the fundamental rights and directive principle of state policy in context of prevention of child labour. This chapter presents an assessment of the effectiveness of the existing strategies on child labour, suggested, and recommended measures to the situation of child labour in India. After the independence of India from colonial rule, India has passed a number of constitutional protections and laws on child labour. There are number of child labour legislations prohibiting the employment of children below 14 years and 15 years in certain specified employments but due to lack of political will and in absence of realistic measures to tackle the problem, the percentage of child labour in the total labour force of the country kept on increasing over the years. In fact, the evil of child labour has not only survived but has become deep rooted and multi-dimensional.

Chapter four of the study presented the child labour in automobile servicing sector in Saharsa district of socio-

economic background, occupations and income of their family members, wage, working conditions, nature of work, hours of work, etc..

Chapter five elaborated the perception of child labour parents and employers. This study presented the parents perception and effects of child labour in Saharsa district and the effects of child labor. Chapter six was the last chapter presented with the conclusions and suggestions. *

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Family characteristics have played a crucial role in the employment of children based on the type of family (polygamous and monogamous), family size and the employment of parents.

The labour department alone cannot do the eradication of child labour. Labour department needs to have a cadre of youth volunteers who can be trained as 'Social Mobilisers' who will be responsible for withdrawing children from work as well as monitoring school dropouts and children with irregularity of attendance with local community groups to organize child rights protection committees which can be the watchdogs of various government departments dealing with child labour eradication. Liaise with local officials in the education, labour, police, and social welfare departments, bring problems, and identify solutions. And need to co-ordinate all the concerned departments of education, police, youth, welfare panchayat raj, and women and child development. The responsibility of ensuring this should be that of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangatanas (NYKS) under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has a huge network of youth clubs across the country. They must spearhead a campaign against child labour and for children's right to education in the entire country. The Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangatanas (NYKS) must take up the issue of abolition of child labour. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj must provide training for the gram panchayats to track children and protect their rights. There is a need to also establish mobile courts for quick and timely action to rescue children and bookcases. Youth volunteers, gram panchayats, schoolteachers, officers of labour department and so on must all be given training about child labour and their respective roles in abolition of child labour. Training modules are to be prepared on the issue of child labour and education. Special Task Force against child labour must be set up at a district and sub-district levels. District authorities must take necessary initiative to take action in favour of children.

The research findings collected revealed that child labour is still rampant of Saharsa District and its effects on health, safety and education of the children. Significantly, poverty

was seen as the main factor accounting for child labour in Saharsa District. while other factors observed included; weak national laws and domestic violence. It is upon this background that the researcher called on the Government of India as well as Bihar, associated NGO's, international organizations and the populace who remain incompatible in goals, to foster a sustainable child labour strategy in the fight against child labour. The government should mainly develop a body of ethical principles against child labour, be politically committed, as well as foster the implementation of labour laws and policies.

It has been seen that a large number of child labour are serving in automobile servicing sector in Saharsa district under great health and safety hazards. we intend to give the scenario in which child labour gets various challenges that have emerged due to this particular problem. Various facts and data from authentic sources have been tabulated and presented in respective sections. The required efforts to overcome these problems are proposed. Finally we conclude that the proposed solution may be found worthy in overcoming the challenges that have emerged due to the child labour.

The researcher encountered a few limitations during the study especially when it came to interviewing the child labourers. Some were not willing to give information unless you paid them and at some instances, the researcher had to wait till late in the evening when the children were through with their work to interview them. For the key informants, given their busy schedules, some interviews were rescheduled to fit their timetables, which also sometimes failed. The research took slightly long to conduct particular interviews which delayed the study and the to and fro movements were costly.

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