

A Study of The Impact on Covid-19 On Child Labour in Urban Industrial Locations

Arif Mohd Bhat

Choudhary Charan Singh University Meerut

ABSTRACT

Children are like burgeoning flowers in society's garden. They need to be shielded from society's negative impacts since they are so fragile. Child work is a societal scourge that stunts children's growth both physically and mentally. In this decade, child labour has declined as a result of several attempts. However, the situation has altered as a result of COVID-19. In whatever type of calamity, children suffer the most. Nothing will change with COVID-19. Both primary and secondary sources are used in this investigation. According to the report, the COVID epidemic affects the working circumstances for children.

Keywords: Child Labour, COVID-19, urban industrial locations

I. INTRODUCTION

Disasters like the COVID-19 epidemic might cause the economy to weaken, which would force kids into alternative types of employment. The lockdowns had the most negative effects on employees in the informal economy who were hired on a daily wage, casual labourers, unskilled workers, migrant workers, self-employed, outsourced workers, and sellers. In such a situation, children are compelled to work as inexpensive labour. According to earlier studies, child labour increases by at least 0.7 percent for every percentage point that poverty rises. 218 million kids between the ages of 5 and 17 work across the world. 152 million of them are kids who have been forced into labour. Despite the fact that child labour has decreased by 94 million since 2000 as a result of government efforts at all levels, job losses, rising poverty, and lockdowns may be pushing more kids into dangerous and exploitative jobs as families turn to any means at their disposal to make ends meet.

DEFINITION OF CHILD LABOUR

While define the term 'child labour', we have to consider two major indicators i.e exploitation and age. The UN Convention on the Child Rights (1989) and the ILO Convention 182 on Worst Forms of child labour have defined a child as a person who has not completed the age of 18. In the context of exploitation, UNICEF has given a comprehensive formulation at defining child labour. The explanation of the term 'child labour' is engagement of children in work for Volume XII, Issue VIII, August/2020 Journal of Interdisciplinary Cycle Research ISSN NO: 0022-1945 long hours, at low wages, in unhealthy and dangerous conditions thus depriving them of education and resulting in excessive physical, social and psychological strains. Government of Andhra Pradesh defines child labour as “Such work does not facilitate the psychological and social development of the child and on the whole, inhibits the child's self esteem. All Children out of school are Child Labour.” According to this definition those children out of school is treated as child labour.

COVID-19 AND CHILD LABOUR

COVID-19 is that the communicable disease caused by the recently discovered corona virus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when an individual with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. The Corona virus disease (COVID-19) has impacted every segment of life like commercial establishment, education, economy, religion, transport, tourism, employment, entertainment, food security, sports, etc. The outbreak is a major destabilizing threat to the global economy. More children might be forced into exploitative and unsafe jobs. Those already working may do so for longer hours or under worsening conditions.

OBJECTIVES

In order to provide a definite direction to the study certain objectives are specifically highlighted as follows:

- To conduct a thorough analysis of COVID-19's effects on child labour in urban industrial areas
- To examine the social, economic, political, and ethical variables that influence child labourers' decision to undertake employment at a young age;
- To investigate potential remedies for the issues with child labour

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methods used for data collection in this study are Case study method, survey method; empirical research methods like participant observation are combined. The present study has been based on field as well as documentary sources. Field sources constituted child workers, their parents and employers. The published material available on the subject in the form of books, journals, reports, newspapers, etc., have been used as documentary source. The study Volume XII, Issue VIII, August/2020 Journal of Interdisciplinary Cycle Research ISSN NO: 0022-1945 utilised mainly the primary data collected personally from 400 child labour and their families belonging to the urban, industrial centres of Guntur district. This sampled universe has been selected on random. These units include manufacturing units, construction works, mining and quarrying, hotels and restaurants, bakeries and biscuit making units, rag picking, community, social and personal services including repair shops, super bazaars and jewellery shops.

Table 1: Age and Sex distribution of the working Children

Age	No of respondents		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Below 10 years	22(8.73%)	20(13.51%)	42 (10.5%)
10-14	103(40.87%)	61(41.22%)	164(41%)
15 - 17	127(50.4%)	67(45.27%)	194(48.5%)
Total	252(63%)	148(37%)	400(100%)

Table 2: Distribution of the child labour in various fields

S.No	Feild	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Construcion	12 (4.76%)	10(6.76%)	22(5.5%)
2	Manufacturing	14(5.56%)	16(10.81%)	30 (7.5%)
3	Mining & Quaring	18(7.14%)	-	18(4.5%)
4	Repair shops	25(9.92%)	-	25(6.25%)
5	Hotels/Dabhas	32 (12.7%)	15(10.14%)	47(11.75%)
6	Bakery/Biscuit	46(18.26%)	46(31.08%)	92(23%)
7	Rag picking	21(8.33%)	11(7.43%)	32(8%)
8	Sellers/Vendors	65(25.79%)	30(20.27%)	95(23.75%)
9	Others	19(7.54%)	20(13.51%)	39(9.75%)
	Total	252 (63%)	148 (37%)	400 (100%)

Table 3: Community distribution of working children

S.No	Sex	OBC	SC	ST	OC	Total
1	Boys	87(61.7%)	64 (63.37%)	28(53.85)	72(67.92)	252(63%)
2	Girls	54 (38.3%)	37(36.63%)	24(46.15%)	34(32.08)	148(37%)
3	Total	141(35.25%)	101(25.25%)	52(13%)	106(26.5%)	400 (100%)

Table 4: Child labour- Reasons for getting employment

Age group/ Reason	To supplement the family income	Living for the family	Forced by Parents	Closure of schools due to lock down	Other reasons	Total
Below 10 years	17	8	9	4	4	42 (10.5%)
10-14	88	31	20	18	7	164(41%)
15 - 17	98	61	24	6	5	194 (48.5%)
Total	203 (50.75%)	100 (25%)	53 (13.25%)	28 (7%)	16 (4%)	400 (100%)

REASONS FOR HIRING MORE CHILD WORKERS DURING POST COVID

There is every reason to believe that post COVID-19 there is likely to be an increase in incidences of child labour across the country, particularly so in the poorer parts of the country. The reasons are manifold and there are both push and pull factors. The country has witnessed an exodus of migrant workers from cities and urban agglomerates during the period of lockdown. Economic activities have resumed to a particular extent. Local workers have a reservation wage and won't wish to figure below a particular wage level. Locally available children from the poorer sections of the workforce might be used to fill such shortages in the labour market. The study also reveals the same. In construction field in Tenali town the wage for skilled labour is increased from Rs. 600/- to Rs 700/- during post COVID period. Children are available for less than 400/-per day at the same time. Employers are looking at the possibilities of having workers with low wages and they may employ children as they work for relatively less wages.

In urban service sector there is a perceivable lack of effective demand in the economy. Recession had occurred even before the pandemic struck, and the situation has only become worse. Employers across the board are desperately attempting to minimize costs. They would be tempted to employ child workers as the cost is

almost half. In rural areas where migrant workers have since returned, there is a huge livelihood crisis. There aren't enough jobs to supply gainful employment to job-seekers in rural areas where migrant workers returned in large numbers. Wages tend to fall below subsistence levels under such circumstances. This creates a very conducive atmosphere for engagement of child workers. Schools are conducting online classes and youngsters in poorer sections of the society are not in a position to access online classes. Such children are confined reception during a social context where their families are finding it difficult to manage the bare necessities. Livelihood compulsions and availability of children at home and without school to attend is a recipe for a spike in incidences of child labour.

III. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- One prevailing perception that will go against children's is that they are not being affected by Corona virus as compared to older people in the family. This will work as a push factor for youngsters to be sent them to work, whilst older people will remain at their houses with the fear of infection.
- From the study, it was revealed that child employment is a consequence of economic compulsions confronted by poor families and the economic advantages the employer finds in hiring children. Almost all sectors of the society badly affected due to lockdowns. Workers in the informal economy, who were working on a daily wage, casual labourers, unskilled workers, migrant workers, self-employed, outsourcing workers, street vendors were the worst-affected due to the lockdowns. Children are forced into the labour market as an inexpensive source in such a context.
- Viewing the disadvantaged position of the families of the child labour, the employers, on the other hand try to extract the maximum work from the child labour for very low wages. The family pushes away the child and the informal sector pulls in the child.
- The incidence of child labour is higher among the lower castes. The lower castes in general are engaged in manual jobs which require no skill and Qualifications. They are backward both economically and socially which compel them to take up odd jobs for survival. Their poor economic status or conditions compel them to send their children to work rather than to schools, as they are unable to bear the expenses of schooling. During post COVID period poor become poorer and their conditions become worse and children were also need to work for getting daily needs of their families.
- Due to COVID almost all educational institutions conducting online classes but the poor and lower middle-class people are not in a position to attend online classes lack of smart phone/laptop and internet connection.
- COVID pandemic worsen the conditions of lower middleclass people in particular. They are not in a position to pay school fees and provide laptop and internet connections and their children were out of school.
- The study reveals that the statutes are not being implemented to regulate the provisions meant for the child labour. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat which have announced relaxation of labour laws in the post-lockdown period. In general, enforcement of labour laws is lack in our country. Such relaxations will further undermine the implementation of labour laws. In such a context, as enforcement is far from strict. As a result, they are put to long hours of work and work almost equal to or more than the adults for very low wages under poor working conditions.
- When lockdown began to lift in June and factories reopened, work for adult daily-wage workers still proved hard to come by. Industry, keen to cover the three months of losses, trying to find the most cost-effective labour possible. With impoverished families deep in debt, and their children not in school, many agreed to send their children to employment in factories, farms and restaurants. Once a child has started working and earned even a small amount of money, they are unlikely to go to school, this follows a cycle of poverty, vulnerability and exploitation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The economy is gradually recovering from the pandemic disaster. The vaccine for COVID may reach to the people soon. On the other hand, Child labour is a social evil and existing from times immemorial. Eradication of child labour is a gradual process. The immediate step that can be taken is empowerment. Social protection, easier access to credit, job creation, frequent labour inspections and tighter law enforcement, and measures to get children back into the school with free education can help mitigate the crises.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Burra Neera. Child Labour and Education: Issue Emerging From the Experience of Some Developing Countries of Asia, UNESCO-UNICEF, Paris 1989.
- [2]. Census of India, The Registrar General & Census Commissioner 2011.
- [3]. Child Labour eradication programmes in Andhra Pradesh, MV Foundation 2014.

- [4]. Core Training Manual on Child Labour, ILO Project(SACB) Action Programme, Dr. MCR HRD IAP Hyderabad 2003.
- [5]. District Census Hand book-Guntur, Census of India. The Registrar General & Census, Commissioner 2011.
- [6]. <https://www.thequint.com/author/1439515/drkingshuk-sarkar-dr-helen-r-sekar>
- [7]. ILO Report on Global Estimates of Child Labor Published by International Labor Organization, 2017.
- [8]. International Labour Organization, 'ILO Monitor: COVID-19, and the World of Work', third edition, ILO, Geneva 2020
- [9]. International Labour Organization, 'COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy: Immediate responses', ILO brief, ILO, Geneva, 'ILO Monitor 2020.
- [10]. International Labour Organization, 'COVID-19 Impact on child labour and forced labour-the response of the IPEC+ FLAGSHIP Programme', ILO, Geneva, May 'ILO Monitor 2020.
- [11]. International Labour Organization, 'COVID-19 and child labour- A time of crisis, A time to act, International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, New York, 2020.
- [12]. Sanchita Sharma Millions of children may be pushed to work due to COVID-19, Hindustan Times, New Delhi 2020.
- [13]. State Action Plan for elimination of Child labour, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, 2013