



A Socio-Economic Analysis On The Level Of Child Labour In Raichur District Of Karnataka State- An Emprical Investigation

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Abstract

Child labour continues to be an important developmental concern in India despite efforts made by the central and state governments during the post-independence period. In the global scenario India is being portrayed as a country in which the level of human capital development is very low. Due to various reasons in India children work at agriculture and industries instead of learning in schools. This creates a low level of human development in India. At large this affects on the economy of India. There is a significant relationship between the high numbers of child labourers and low numbers of school dropouts of children. Hence, the present study is placed in this context to analyse the relationship between rampant child labourers and high level of school dropouts in the district of Raichur in Karnataka state. A significant numbers of studies have been reviewed in this study to enhance the understanding of the problem of child labour. In order to fulfil the objectives of the study together qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed. Both questionnaires and interview methods are used to acquire the required primary data from the children, their parents and employers in the district of Raichur. As the present study clearly indicates that the majority of the children in Raichur district were working in agricultural sector. Among the remaining child labourers majority of the boys were involved in livestock rearing. As the analysis of the data indicated that parents of these children were lacking awareness due to that they do not send their children to schools, results in child labour. The working conditions of the child labourers in Raichur district were very poor and unhealthy.

Keywords: Child Labour, School Dropouts, Agricultural Labour, Economic Problems.

SECTION-I- INTRODUCTION:

It is apparently evident that any country's development is closely associated with its human resource. The competent human / man power is the real power for the real transformation of a country. Hence primarily the institution of education makes a person competent enough to deal with the challenges ahead posed by the 21st century global capitalist economy. But even today Child Labour is remaining to be a significant developmental problem throughout the world, including India, even though India had made several considerable efforts to eradicate the problem of child labour.

According to the recent report (2015) on child labour by International Labour Organization there are 168 million child labourers working across countries. As the official data indicates that there are over 12 million child labourers in India, but many NGOs believe that this number may go high up to 60 million. Among the Asian countries India is one of the main users of child labour (Singh, 2003).

In the global scenario India is being portrayed as a country in which the level of human capital development is very low. Such situation imparts on the growth of Indian children in the future. Children are the future assets of a country and it is the responsibility of the country to protect them and develop their human capital and make them realise their capabilities.

Due to various reasons in India children work at agriculture and industries instead of learning in schools. This creates a low level of human development in India. At large this affects on the economy of India. There is a significant relationship between the high numbers of child labourers and low numbers of school dropouts of children.

Hence, the present study is placed in this context to analyse the relationship between rampant child labourers and high level of school dropouts in the district of Raichur in Karnataka state.

1.1.DEFINITIONS OF CHILD LABOUR:

There are clear differences and ambiguities among many countries while deciding on who is child labour. In this backdrop here an attempt is made to have a clear conceptualization of concepts like child and child labour. As "International Labour Organization defines child as a persons who has not completed his or her 15 years of age".

The international labour organization and UNICEF define, "Child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood and their dignity which hampers their access to education and the acquisition of skills and which is performed under deplorable conditions harmful to their health and their development". UNICEF also states that a child is involved in labour activities if between 5 and 11 years of age, he or she did at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work in a week, and in case of children between 12 and 14 years of age, he or she did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 42 hours of economic activity and domestic work per week.

On par with the above international standards of child labour age in India also several attempts have made by the constitution and parliaments to provide constitutional and legislative structures for child labour. In the Constitution of India it is mentioned that “No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other 8 hazardous employment”. According to The Child Labour Act (1986) “child as labour who has not completed his fourteen years of age. Whether part – time/ full time in any occupation, engagement of child in the labour force simply mean a complete or partial denial of childhood to him” (Government of India, 1986).

The Right to Education Act (RTE), which describes the modalities of the provision of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under the Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. From 1st April 2010 India became one of the 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child.

Hence, child labour is a practice of having children engage in economic activity, on a part- or full-time basis. This work deprives children of their childhood, and is harmful to their physical and mental development.

SECTION-II- REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

With the increasing numbers of child labourers throughout the world, the problem of child labour is the major realm among the economists. In this study here an attempt is made to review the selected studies on child labourers in India and other countries. There are several studies conducted to analyse the major impact of education on child labour. These studies revealed that working children and out-of-school children have a strong association.

In the study conducted by Nangia (1981) showed that child labour is highly correlated to the rate of literacy, negative association between the two variables was found to be significant at 99 per cent level of confidence. In an another study conducted by Acharaya (1982) on child labour indicated that limited numbers of schools, their absence in several villages, the clash of school timings and agricultural operations, and the cost of schooling as well as its restricted nature of providing job opportunities facilitates the path of children of underprivileged classes to enter into the labour market. As such, the phenomenon of child labour is the product of such indifference to education.

Psacharopoulos in his study (1997) used household survey data from Bolivia and Venezuela and showed that though working children contribute substantially to household incomes, the educational attainment of children who work is significantly lower than that of non-working children. Hirway (1991) also pointed out that the correlation between the incidence of child labour and illiteracy was highly positive, indicating that lower the literacy, higher the incidence of child labour. In this way Cavalieri (2002) also found a significant negative effect of child labour on educational performance.

Another study conducted by Khatu et. al. (1983) on 'working children in India' depicted that the children who are working affected by the rigidity and inflexibility of the schooling system. The formal structure of schooling does not allow children to take time off during sowing and harvesting seasons nor does it allow children to re-enter the school system at times convenient to them and their families. The subsistence economy of rural India forces poorer households to utilize the labour of their children whether it is for agricultural operations or for household chores, which releases adults for a more directly productive activity.

Punecha (2006) conducted a research study on the child labour which revealed that several parents, particularly who are living in the rural and slum areas, cannot afford the prescribed minima of uniforms, books and stationary etc. even though education is free up to primary level.

In this way, Weiner (1991) pointed out that education should not be regarded as merely as a right granted by the state, but as a duty, imposed by the state. When education is made a duty, parents, irrespective of their economic circumstances and beliefs, are required by law to send their children to school. It is the legal obligations of the state to provide an adequate number of schools, appropriately situated, and to ensure that no child fails to attend school. Some studies established that besides the necessity of work, inadequate expenditure on elementary education, inadequate or absence of educational infrastructure, and low quality, irrelevant and inaccessible education also play important role behind sending children to work.

A study Conducted by Kayange (2004) on domestic child labour revealed that debt bondage is a system whereby children work in order to pay off a debt, which has been incurred by their parents, relatives or guardians. Employers and creditors offer these loans to destitute parents in a conscious attempt to secure the cheap labour of their children. The debt binds the child to their employer until it is paid in full. This is an especially common problem in India where it has been reported that children are often sent away from their villages to work as domestics in order to clear a family debt. The child is either sent to a household to pay off the debt by providing domestic assistance or the wages they earn are sent directly to their parents, who then gradually pay the debt. These loans have immensely high rates of interest and, due to the profoundly low wages the children earn; it is very hard for any child to pay off the debt in their lifetime. In many cases, the debt is passed on to a younger sibling or onto their own children.

Ghosh (2004) conducted a study on brick kiln industry which revealed that the pattern of labour recruitment in the brick kilns, and the mechanisms of deployment, payment of advances and wages bear a striking similarity across the country. Recruitment is almost entirely through middlemen (known as Jamadars or Sirdars in the brick kilns around Delhi), based on a system of advances. There are distinct processes within the brick kilns, giving rise to a segmented workforce including moulders, loaders, stackers, firers and removers. The wage payment systems are different for different processes and the labour contractors are usually paid a commission through an informal deduction from the labourers' wages. Workers are paid a part of their wages during the employment period on a weekly basis, with the remainder being adjusted at the end of the season. This binds the worker (and her/his family) to the kiln during the

season, whereas the carry-over of advances from one season to the next ensures their availability for the next season. The work usually entails long working hours and very low payment. In a number of cases, a high degree of coercion is used to discipline the workers and to curb protests against breach of contract, which are very common.

A study by Srivastva (2005) on bonded child labour in India revealed that the employment and livelihood potential of agriculture in such areas is extremely low and is subject to large seasonal fluctuations. Therefore, loans have to be taken by the poor labourers to tide over seasonal shortages or contingent expenditure. The labourers are generally caught in a vicious cycle of debt as they repay the older debt with newer ones. The older a debt becomes the chances of sending their children to pay off the debt increase.

ILO (2002a) in its study on 'decent work and informal economy showed that debt bondage to a landlord is a particular kind of forced labour that can entrap children from poor families in agriculture without land or with too little of it to meet their subsistence needs. If the parents become indebted, they may have little choice but to bond their children into agriculture or domestic labour to repay the debt. Debt bondage replaces children ultimately at the mercy of the landowner, where they suffer economic hardship and are deprived of an education.

SECTION-III- OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- ❖ To analyse the relationship between child labour and the pattern of school dropouts among the children in Raichur district.
- ❖ To critically examine the governmental measure for the removal of child labour in Raichur district.

SECTION-IV- METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study together qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed. Both questionnaires and interview methods are used to acquire the required primary data from the children, their parents and employers in the district of Raichur of Karnataka state. The sources of secondary data for the study are; existing literature and data in websites, various publications of Central and State, and other sources like books, magazines, newspapers, reports, articles, seminar papers published by universities and research institutions. Apart from the published material, study is also based on discussions with various people such as officials and non-officials of the women and child welfare officers and members of panchayaths of Raichur district. Raichur is an administrative district of Karnataka state, which is located in the northeast part of the state. It is also a part of Hyderabad Karnataka region, which has the history of being economically and social backward. According to the census (2021) the population of the district of Raichur was 19,24,773. This district has 5 taluks namely, Raichur, Devadurga, Sindhanur, Manvi and Lingsugur.

SECTION-V- MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

As the present study clearly indicates that the majority of the children in Raichur district were working in agricultural sector. Particularly, these children go with their parents to work, and were paid wages equivalent to women or less than those paid to women. Very significant aspect of this pattern is that the portion of girls was more among child labourers working in farming. This is due to girls in the villages were taken out of the schools after girls attain puberty and they start working with their mothers, sometimes in their own fields. Mostly, child labourers perform the following works in the agricultural fields; weeding, transplantation, harvesting, clearing the fields, etc. There were some incidents of the children applying fertilisers and pesticides. This was certainly hazardous.

It was found that agriculture is the major occupation of the people in Raichur district, they grow mainly cotton, chilli and tobacco. As earlier it was mentioned that majority of the child labourers are existing in the field of agriculture, children collect tobacco leaves from the farming areas, without realizing how harmful for their health. Along with collecting tobacco leaves children were also involved in the process of threading tobacco leaves. Sometimes children chew this tobacco leaf which is also harmful for them.

Among the remaining child labourers majority of the boys were involved in livestock rearing. It was found that parents of the children would take money from the land lords or big farmers in their villages, and in return send their children for work to look after their cattle. In this sector child labourers perform the works of cleaning of cattle shed, transportation of dung on head, bringing fodder from the field, taking the cattle for grazing, etc. This type of work starts from the early morning of around 6 and ends at the evening. The children involved in this work were exposed to dangerous animals and insects. Several children had met with accidents while tending to cattle on narrow roads with frequent vehicular traffic. Children also met with severe injuries when they tended the cattle.

As the analysis of the data indicated that parents of these children were lacking awareness due to that they do not send their children to schools, results in child labour. Meagre attendance at governmental schools is the common sight, whereas children work at farms to gain monetary benefits, according to the wishes of their parents. As the primary data depicted that about 20% of the children in the age group of 5-14 years work outside their farms for payments. Around 40% of the children are out of the school which shows the rampant scenario of existence of child labour.

The working conditions of the child labourers in Raichur district were very poor and unhealthy. The payments given to the children were very low. It was found that there was gender discrimination in the payments given to these children, whereas always lesser payments were given to girls compared to boys.

From the sample districts it was found that in the domestic work mostly girls were employed and they were being exploited. Most of the time female children do domestic work in their families and relatives. It was very rare that they would work outside their family limit. As the study found that poverty is the major cause for child labour. Due to poverty family needs income for the survival and parents send their children to obtain extra income.

The level of education among child labourers varies according to their age groups. There is an inverse relationship between the proportion of child labourers attending the school and age groups. The proportion of child labour attending the school would be high in the younger age groups, and this declined as the age of child labour increased. In contrast, the dropout rate was positively correlated with the age groups. The implication is that as children drop out at different stages (primary, middle and high school levels), they are employed in the work.

As it was found that there were significant numbers of child labourers working in informal sectors like shops, hotels and other establishments. Such hotels existed near village or towns, in which children worked as cleaning tables, vessels or supplying food. These child labourers had to work for very long hours for earning mere payments.

There were also domestic, low investment industries existed in Raichur district, in which children were employed for rolling agarbathis and bidis. They were employed in brick making process also. As a result, there is also high incidence of girl children assisting their mothers in this activity, especially, if the activity is home-based. Boys are usually involved in the brick making industry.

The study also found that there were no informal trainers in the villages. This could be attributed to the following reasons. First, the decline of traditional artisan activities was cited as an important reason why master trainers were absent in several villages. Second, the discussions with carpenters in a few villages revealed that they only passed on the trade to their children. They also said that children and adolescents in the village were not interested in carpentry that was useful only for the making and repairing of agricultural implements. They were rather keen to acquire more broad based carpentry skills. Third, the adolescents typically went to towns to work in sectors such as garages, carpentry, bar bending, plumbing, etc., not so much to earn for livelihood but to obtain the skills and earn better incomes.

Village level organisations have potential to play an important role in addressing the issues relating to child labour. The village profiles show that Gram panchayats (GPs), Anganawadi centres, Continuing Education Centres, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), School Development and Management Committees (SDMCs) and youth associations were key organisations that existed in the study villages.

The presence of these organisations was not uniform across the sample villages. In all the villages, we came across gram panchayats, self-help groups, anganawadi centres and SDMCs. The presence of other organisations was restricted to only some villages. According to the key informants in the village, the importance of SHGs, GPs, anganawadi centres and SDMCs had increased phenomenally in the last ten years. A phenomenal increase in the number of SHGs has been due to the introduction of the Stree-Shakthi programme, efforts made by the cooperative credit banks in Raichur district and NGOs in both the districts. The evidence on growing importance of youth associations, religious associations, etc was mixed. On the other hand, the importance of chit funds seemed to have declined in rural areas. Awareness spreading among different actors and stakeholders is also an important step to be taken.

SECTION-IVI- CONCLUDING REMARK:

Child labour continues to be an important developmental concern in India despite efforts made by the central and state governments during the post-independence period. India seems determined to eradicate child labour when looking at its laws. But at the implementation level its impact is very low, mainly due to poverty and lack of awareness and education. In order to solve the problem of child labour the governments have to strictly enforce the laws pertaining to child labour. Further, the general public need to be made aware of the adverse impacts of practising child labour. Governments also must ensure that each child goes to school and provide employment opportunities adults. Finally, the owners of non-organized sectors, like shops and hotels must pledge of not employing children.

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