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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SCOURGE OF CHILD LABOUR: EFFECTS AND WAYS TO CURB SUB THEME-5-STATUS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SENIOR CITIZENS

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ABSTRACT

Child labour by definition refers to engaging children in work, thereby depriving them their childhood and their right to education. This has been a major issue of concern in developing countries for a very long time now. In India, child labour is now being recognized as a grave and enormous problem that has a long term social and physical impact on children. Working children are denied their right to survival, development, education, standard of living and opportunity for developing their personality and talent. This paper aims to analyse the scourge of child labour in India, by identifying its effects on the Indian Society. After due identification, the aim is to find ways to curb this social evil and to restrict it to bare minimum. The methodology of this research will be to visit hubs of child labour in and around Kota City like restaurants, dhabas, tea stalls, factories, repair shops etc to find the extent of penetration of child labour in our society. The objectives are evaluating reasons forcing children to work at this age, effect of child labour on their physical and social development and ways to curb child labour and suggesting solutions at all levels of society. Results indicate that child labour can be found in nearly every industry. The persistence of child labour is due to the inefficiency of law, administrative system, lack of wage regulation, corruption, family size and condition, urban migration and opportunity cost of education. Education is a solution at all levels. Strict Judiciary and political system can go a long way nipping this evil in the bud.

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INTRODUCTION

Child labour by definition refers to engaging children in work, thereby depriving them their childhood and their right to education. This has been a major issue of concern in developing countries for a very long time now. In India, child labour is now being recognized as a grave and enormous problem that has a long term social and physical impact on children. Working children are denied their right to survival, development, education, standard of living and opportunity for developing their personality and talents. Child Labour in India is prohibited under the Mines act of 1952. Children are the future of any country. They instill hope for a better tomorrow. A hope for not just a strengthened economy and progressive nation. However, we as a nation, as individuals, as government have failed to protect our children from this evil. We have failed to secure our children, to give them a normal childhood and a better tomorrow. And therefore, this paper aims to analyze the scourge of child labour in India, by identifying its effects on the Indian Society. After due identification, the aim is to find ways to curb this social evil and to restrict it to bare minimum.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To fulfill the objective, the plan was to visit hubs of child labour in and around Kota City like restaurants, dhabas, tea stalls, factories, repair shops etc the methodology of this research will be to visit to find the extent of penetration of child labour in our society. Kota city proves to be a great research and sampling area due to its growing urbanization on the one hand to agricultural penetration around it. Due to its growth as an educational hub in the recent years many families from in and around Kota city have left their homes, to settle in Kota in search of jobs, resources and a decent standard of living. Almost all of these families have children below the age of 14 years, who in an effort to supplement their family income are working full or part time, doing odd jobs, running errands etc. All these activities fall under the umbrella of child labour.

The areas visited were as under

- Gumanpura
- Nayapura
- Rangbadi

- Bajrang Nagar
- Vigyan Nagar
- Dadabadi
- Shreenathpuram
- Mahaveer Nagar
- Indra vihar

Tools and Technique: Data was collected through personal visits to the specified research areas by identifying homes and places of work for children below 14 years engaged in child labour. A survey was done by asking questions to people in and around these areas especially the parents and relatives of these children.

Following information was collected from the research:

Reasons behind the curse of child labour

Poverty: The first and foremost reason behind the spread and continuous increase in child labour is poverty. Among the 150 people questioned, 112 people believed that their child was an additional source of income and his/ her earning, however meager was essential for their livelihood.

Lack of family Planning: The second reason that came into light was lack of family planning, subsequently leading to poverty and hence child labour.

Lack of Parental Education: The third major reason behind this evil was found to be lack of parental education. Around 52 percent of the people questioned were illiterate, 28 percent were educated up to class 4th, 11 percent people were educated up to class 8th and only 9 percent were above matriculate. Lack of parental education leads to parent not understanding the value of education for their own child, forcing them to work and suffer like they did in their childhood.

Sickness or Death in Family: Many of the children employed in these areas were orphans or were stranded. Lack of proper care, food and clothing forces these children to work on the streets to earn their daily bread. In a few families, it was observed that the child engaged in child labour was the only bread winner of the family. This was mainly due to addiction and disability of one or more parent. Such children were essential for the sustenance of their family and thereby from a very early age have engaged in child labour.

Child Labour is Cheap Labour: Children being easy targets are the favorites of shopkeepers, companies and factories who make them work as much as an adult at nearly half or sometimes even less than the wage of a normal adult. Children are lured into earning at an early age and then used to satisfy their selfish needs.

Gender Discrimination: A sad and bitter truth that was highlighted yet again was the percentage of girls engaged in child labour was much more than that of boys. This is because our society has yet again failed to treat the girl child with equal respect and care. In families with more than one girl children, they are often forced to work shoulder to shoulder with their parents to supplement family income and for sustenance and proper upbringing of the boy child.

Traditions: The most shocking revelation that was made was that even some well to do families especially those engaged in

family businesses etc believe in engaging their children in the family businesses at the tender ages of 10-11 years. They believe that this inculcates a sense of responsibility in their children and leads to their physical, mental and social development.

Effect of child labour on their physical and social development: Research suggested that there were catastrophic effects on the all round development of the children who were engaged in activities of child labour especially those engaged in factories, mines etc. Other than this, children engaged in doing odd jobs at hotels, restaurants, dhabas etc suffered from low self esteem and a low will to have a better future. These children believed that was very less to life other than earning two square meals a day. Both categories of children had low ambitions and had low or nil thoughts for the future. Many of them were suffering from depression and anxiety and were slowly becoming preys to other social evils like addiction to smoking and drugs. It was noticed, in the absence of proper guidance and care, children as young as 10 years of age were found to engage in smoking and tobacco addiction. Children engaged in part time jobs were a little better off than full time workers. Though, even they were suffering socially as well as physically. Research also suggested that there was also effect on physical development of children. Many of them suffered from malnutrition and stunted growth. It was also found that the parents of such children were little or not at all concerned of what their child was eating or drinking on the job. Even while at home, very little attention was being paid on their nutritional requirements. The main reason behind this was their lack of inability to support their children, to provide for their meals mainly due to poverty but also due to lack of awareness. Long term effects were also observed. Child labour is a vicious cycle. On being questioned, adults, parents revealed that they too have started earning at a very early age. Here, a conclusion can be drawn that the effect of child labour on them was so high that they failed to understand how it affected their growth as individuals and in the absence of this understanding they let their children suffer the same plight. Hence the chain goes on.

Ways to Curb Child Labour: Research in these areas suggests that people blame politics and government for their plight. But deeper analysis suggests that the roots of this evil lie much deeper than this. There is a severe lack of will in people to change. There is hard resistance to modernity and education. The roots of superstitions, traditions and narrow mindedness are set so deep within their mental framework that any amount of political reforms or government schemes have failed to penetrate their mind set. People are so set in their ways that they show severe resistance to change and measures of government that are actually for their own benefit and upliftment. This however does not mean that the government has played its role. Failure at any level of the society is a failure on the part of the government, who at one step or another has not been able to take care of its people, its children. The trickle-down effect of government schemes aimed at uplifting of poverty stricken areas and children of those areas is very low. This shows a lack of will at all levels of the government. The population of our country is so high that providing education for all at affordable rates and at fusible areas is still a far etched dream. The teacher to student ratio in our country is one of the worst in our country. In the absence of education, children are forced to stoop to child labour to earn their livelihood.

Having said that, we suggest the following ways to curb child labour:

Introduction of new government schemes and with strict follow up: The government needs to identify areas and people with utmost care and efficiency where the basic necessities of life are not getting fulfilled. Yes, there are a lot of government schemes but we need more every day. Other than this, we need strict enforcement and follow up for these schemes to reach a vast majority of people. One such scheme could be opening recreational areas, schools and dining areas for children close to their parent's place of work, especially in case of laborers. Around 65% of our labour force is tied in governmental projects and hence opening schools in these areas could be one solution. Also, forcing the private sector to genuinely care for their employees and their children by introducing reforms and changes could also be a step in this direction.

Introducing social security allowance: Though difficult, introducing social security allowance to people in absolute and dire need of money and resources could be one step that might encourage people to invest in overall development of their child, thereby preventing child labour.

Start with You: We need to accept that the people who employ children at their homes or places of work in the name of giving them an opportunity to earn a livelihood and sustain themselves, are not as charitable as they pretend to be. They benefit greatly from the children they look upon as nothing more than cheap labour. These children do not question them, are always at their beck and call and can be molded into any form. Change begins at home. We must all refrain from employing children to perform our daily chores; instead we must focus on employing poor and needy adults and parents of these children. We must all always remember that Child Labour is illegal and inhumane.

See what you buy: We must start asking our retailer, shopkeepers and even our manufacturers, whether the brand they market is child labour free or not. Force yourself and people around to think about this and discourage them from buying, marketing and selling products that are manufactured in child labour prone factories or industries. It might not work that much at first, but it will create some awareness and will be a step in the right direction. Another option is to make a conscientious decision to go with organizations like Good Weave. Formerly known as Rug mark, this is a global network of organizations, committed to end child labour in carpet and readymade garment industry. This industry used to be one of the most notorious with incidents of atrocious working conditions and forced child labour. Many organizations including Bachpan Bachao Andolan, have worked through their rescue operations and liberated many bonded child laborers from the carpet industry. As responsible citizens, you must go for brands promoted by Good Weave as those have been certified to be child labour free after a rigorous process of investigation.

Know your laws: One of the first steps to making the society child labour free is to yourself know about the provisions laid down in our Constitution for the protection of children, as well as the various laws in place to stop their exploitation and ensure prosecution of offenders. This awareness equips us to assess the situation of this hideous crime and we will know of ways and measures to curtail it.

Informing people around us of penalty laid down by law for the protection of children, has a good chance of keeping people from destroying childhoods. It will force them to think twice before taking such risks.

Be the voice of change: Report abuse: Be aware of any form of child abuse or exploitation happening around you. Remember, such children need us to be their voices. Know about the concerned authorities in your locality such as the RWA head, NGOs or CBOs active in your area. When you come across any case of child labour in your surroundings, immediately inform the police at 100 or call the Child Helpline at 1098 or reach out immediately to the NGOs/CBOs in your locality. You can also inform these concerned authorities either personally or through a phone call or letter. Phone calls or letters can be used to keep your identity anonymous in case the offender is someone influential.

Counseling for parents: Make the parents understand the ill-effects of child labour will surely go a long way in ensuring effective rehabilitation of the child. While the parents are likely to cite reasons like poverty and illiteracy, you can counsel them to understand this vicious circle. Poverty leads to child labour and child labour in turn, ensures that poverty remains. If there has to be an economically bright future for these families, their children must be provided with quality education and skill building.

Family Planning Awareness Camps: Organize camps in and around your area that takes family planning as a topic of utmost importance. Discuss it openly with young and poor parents, suggesting ways and measures of family planning. This approach can nip the crime of child labour in the bud.

Facilitating girl child education: We need to ensure that the children are treated with equal respect and support at home. There is a need of careful analysis to find whether or not girls are working as child laborers to support their brothers and families. In such homes, spread awareness about equality among children and how a girl child deserves if not more, equal care and love and a right to education. Here, we can also market various government schemes that aid girl child education.

Anti-Addiction Camps: Help people in your neighborhood fight addiction by organizing camps and creating awareness about rehabilitation centers. In an addiction free environment children will not need to work full time jobs to support their families and their overall development-physical and mental will improve considerably.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2017: Government of India has notified the amendment in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Central Rules after extensive consultation with the stakeholders. The Rules provide broad and specific framework for prevention, prohibition, rescue and rehabilitation of child and adolescent workers. It also clarifies on issues related with help in family and family enterprises and definition of family with respect to child, specific provisions have been incorporated in rules. Further, it also provides for safeguards of artists which have been permitted to work under the Act, in terms of hours of work and working conditions. The rules provide for specific

provisions incorporating duties and responsibilities of enforcement agencies in order to ensure effective implementation and compliance of the provisions of the Act.

Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016: Government has enacted the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 which came into force w.e.f. 1.9.2016. The Amendment Act completely prohibits the employment of children below 14 years. The amendment also prohibits the employment of adolescents in the age group of 14 to 18 years in hazardous occupations and processes and regulates their working conditions where they are not prohibited. The amendment also provides stricter punishment for employers for violation of the Act and making the offence of employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the Act by an employer as cognizable. In order to achieve effective enforcement of the provisions of the Act, the amendment empowers the appropriate Government to confer such powers and impose such duties on a District Magistrate as may be necessary. Further, the State Action Plan has been circulated to all the States/UTs for ensuring effective implementation of the Act.

Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986: Article 24 of the Indian constitution clearly states that, "No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or employed in any hazardous employment." The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 designates a child as a person who has not completed their 14th year of age. It aims to regulate the hours and the working conditions of child workers and to prohibit child workers from being employed in hazardous industries.

Constitutional Provisions

Article 21 A: Right to Education: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6 to 14 years in such manner as the State, by law, may determine.

Article 24: Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc: No child below the age fourteen years shall be employed in work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.

Article 39: The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing: (e) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength.

INDICATIVE FINDINGS

Child labour can be found in nearly every industry. Almost all industries can be found in almost every industry. Digging deep, it is noticed that child labour being the cheapest form of labour is a preferred choice of industrialists. It is therefore, our duty as citizens to abolish and avoid all products manufactured as a result of child labour activities. We should also endeavor to spread awareness in this regard.

- The persistence of child labour is due to the inefficiency of law, administrative system, lack of wage regulation, corruption, family size and condition, urban migration and opportunity cost of education.
- Education is a solution at all levels

If the government joins hands with private investors willing to engage in education, there will be affordable and easy access to education for all. If we as responsible citizens, as per our own financial situation begin sponsoring education in our locality, be it just one child, the pressure on government will also be reduced and the resources will be utilized well.

- Strict Judiciary and political system can go a long way nipping this evil in the bud.

On the one hand the judiciary should make stringent laws introducing strict enforcement and high penalties and punishment. On the other hand, government should introduce child friendly schemes that support their growth and upliftment. Also, we as citizens should be aware of these schemes and laws so that we can spread awareness and ensure strict adherence to these schemes and laws.

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