

Born to work child labourers in bangalore sociology essay

[Sociology](#)



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Child labour is one of the social problems in India today though it has been legally prohibited. Low income and impoverished families in particular are forced to send their children to work for the survival of the whole family. Sometimes there are also cases which children themselves voluntarily dropped the school and started working without knowing the reasons why they worked while they could survive on their parents. Million children in India are still engaging in labour force as adult do. Based on the empirical study, this paper will examine the age group of children and kinds of works which children got into. The age group will be using the age group definition which is given by International Organisation which defines the children in the age group of five to fourteen. Work category will be analyzed through push and pull factors which attract and force children to work. There were 40 ex-child labourers were selected for the study from various parts of Bangalore. Key words: child labour, work, push factors, pull factors

Introduction

Child labour is a common phenomenon in developing countries and a debatable global issue (Chakrabarty, 2012). It is seen in different forms and problematically defined according to the level of development, social practices and culture. Sometimes child labour is labeled as child helping. That is why the issue has been tolerated by the family members throughout human history and practices particularly in low level developed countries where the family income and survival opportunities are limited. Everyone in the family has to contribute to the sustenance of the household. However, children who got into the labour are one of the vulnerable sections of population. In the ancient and medieval periods, children were engaged in

the farming activities and also might be engaged in so called slavery labours in particular circumstances. In 1860, 50 per cent of children in England between the age of five and 15 years were working (Sinha, 2011). Not to mention the slavery child labour issue in those periods, the particularity of child helping in the above two mentioned periods were the result of the lack of the educational and training opportunities, non-agricultural employment availabilities and traditional and cultural ways of living. With the lack of these career improving factors, to keep the effective existence and steady survival, family tended to train their younger generations to be competent enough to have the familial basic skills so that they could survive and live along and pass them on to the next generations effectively and uniquely. Shifting work phenomena were very less in the ancient and medieval time. Work and labour, It is believed that the work practice at a young age of cleaning, washing up, repair work, digging, weeding, and a host of other activities may help to understand, respect and appreciate the meaning of work and labour. The exponent of the socialization theory of child labour argue that the socio-cultural framework of peasant societies emit such socio-economic process whereby the use of child labour is socialized as an integral part of family-oriented social and institutional order[i]. Having said this, Leiten (2004: 67) further said that one should also weary of attempts to condone the position as future workers that many children are caught in. Many scholars argued that the work done by children on the farm, in the artisanal shop or in petty trading has served as a form of apprenticeship, preparing them, better than any formal or informal school system could, for the income generating profession in adulthood[ii]. The argument neglects the poverty problem and

labels it as socialization process especially in the third world impoverished countries. Such an argument which valued the child labour rather than the poverty was also seen in the report of the Department of Labor of the US government (1994: 24), written after senators Tom Harkin and George Brow had introduced the Child Labor Deterrence Bill that: The general perception in Asia is that children should work to develop a sense of responsibility and develop a career...it is argued that child employment apparently teaches children of the poor to acquire moral and ethical attitude and work habits at an early age[iii]. Mor Mbaye and Salam Fall (2000) said it (child labour) exists not only in the traditional Asian societies but also in African societies.

Authors stressed that in traditional African societies, the socialization and protection of children used to be the community's responsibility; a child was regarded as belonging to the kinship group as a whole rather than to the parents alone. The cash economy and urbanization are among the factors that have combined to undermine family structure and the representation, rites and myths relating to children. Socialization is no longer a community affair but the private business of the family unit[iv]. Economic point of view (poverty) was supported by many researchers and economists who had studied the problem. However, a number of differences in the way they formulate their arguments allows upcoming researchers and scholars to clarify this stance further. The explanation that poverty is transmitted from one generation to the next, with premature labour of children acting as the link between old poverty and new was put forth. Yet, there is no direct evidence to prove that labour entails lower future revenues and constitutes a medium of poverty transmission from generation to generation. The data

from the various surveys and censuses have helped to produce a contrasted picture of poverty (Bernard Schlemer 2000)[v]. The contemporary explanation which considers that poverty stems from urbanization and rural urban migration firmly refuted by census data demonstrating that there are no major differences in terms of either sectors of activity, earning or living conditions, between migrant and non-migrant workers. Even more important data concerns the fact that in most metropolitan areas of Brazil activity rates are higher in the migrant than the non-migrant population (Schlemer, 2000). Between the socio-cultural explanation and economic explanation, the later explanation seems to be more valid than the former one. Acute poverty is usually advanced as a reason for sending children to work which both pull and push factors are also influencing factors. This obviously is an explanation, which hardly requires either substantiation or verification. It is common sense to accept that the poor families from the poor district and the poor the country, the incidence of child labour is higher than the rich or developed countries[1](ILO. 1999)[vi]. For much of human history, children have subsidized to family welfare in a variety of ways, but intensified urbanization and the breakdown of traditional economic systems have made basic subsistence more precarious and put children at ever higher risk. The results of a nine-country survey in Latin America, for instance, showed that if teenaged children did not work, poverty rates would increase by ten to 20 per cent (Unicef, 2001)[vii]. The relative level of the child workforce in any one economic activity can vary widely from one country to another. However, on the basis of data collected by ILO from a number of countries, average levels can be estimated for children working in different branches of

economic activity and in various occupations. Cultural related explanation also emphasizes on the paternalism. Indian culture shapes attitudes toward paternalism is that there is no shame is attached to an adult male being subservient to another adult if the other is in the place of his father, uncle, or elder brother (B. Kling, 1998). Men are accustomed to being economically dependent on the family and deferential toward the family head. The major requirement is that the father surrogate reciprocates the relationship by assuming certain paternal obligations toward his subordinate. In India, a child learns to suppress his individualism and to view himself as an organic part of a family in which those above him in the family hierarchy are expected to cherish him and he, in return, is expected to help them (Kling, 1998). It is interesting to notice that the paternalism cultural explanation seems to have explanation of the patriarchal family system in the developing countries which the male child goes out for work to earn power to control his subordinates in the future married life. Female child laborer is another case; a case of poverty. Some culture assumes that child is the economic asset of the family particularly in the rural families where the people look for the help of the children rather than hiring outside labourers for farming activities and other related works. It is called family helping works. When it comes to point of helping family to survive, the works of the children are believed to have two comprehensive natures; labor and work. According to Stegeman (2004, P. 51), the labour of the child to assist familial situation is defined as any type of work being done in any mode of relationship. And the concept of work serves as a description of the physical or mental involvement[viii]. This means that the labour in the family does not seem to be counted if the work

is emotionally, physically, and culturally attached. The market entered the debate through a number of entry points (Naila Kabeer, 2003). It said Labour is widely recognized as the key asset of the poor, and the mobilization of household labour in a variety of paid and unpaid activities the essence of their livelihood strategies. Consequently the market for labour, particularly for child labour or for commodities produced with the help of the children's labour, constitutes an important aspect of the setting in which household livelihood strategies are divided and hence decisions about the utilization of children's labour is taken. The possibility was laid out that economic liberalization, globalization and increasing exposure to international market forces had exacerbated the incidence of the child labour. Many publicized cases of child labour were part of export-oriented industries. However, it was also recognized that children worked in a variety of activities, not all of them export-oriented and that the most hazardous or exploited activities that children worked in were not necessarily export oriented. Kabeer (2000b) argued that globalization has thrown workers in the rich industrialized countries into direct competition with workers in the poor, lowest economies of the South Asian countries and the issue of child labour has come to symbolize the politics of protectionism in the global competition for job (Kabeer, 2000b).

Literature Review

International Labor Organisation (ILO convention. 1999) has also tried to make a clear distinction between children working in socially and personally useful way; working for pocket money, doing household chores, helping in the family business during the school holidays whose conditions should be

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regulated and eliminated. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), working children at risk are children who are prematurely leading adult lives and working long hours for low wages, under conditions which are damaging to their health and to their physical or mental development.

International Labor Organisation (ILO), the term " child labour" is often said: As work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and interferes with their schooling by, depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work[ix]. International Labour Organisation (ILO) looks beyond the definition of child labour. The organisation looks into the nature of works which can be dangerous to children either physically or mentally harmful. Siddiqi and Patrinos in their paper named Child labour: Issues, causes and Intervention, said that Child labor is a pervasive problem throughout the world, especially in developing countries. Africa and Asia together account for over 90 percent of total child employment. Child labor is especially dominant in rural areas where the capacity to impose minimum age requirements for schooling and work is deficient. Children work for a variety of reasons, the most important being poverty and the induced pressure upon them to run away from this plight. Though children are not well paid, they still act as major contributors to family income in developing countries. Schooling problems also contribute to child labor, whether it is the inaccessibility of schools or the absence of quality education which spurs

parents to put their children in more moneymaking works. Traditional factors such as inflexible cultural and social roles in certain countries further bound to limit of educational enrolment and increase child labor. The authors view child labour as: Working children are the objects of extreme exploitation in terms of toiling for long hours for minimal pay. Their work conditions are especially severe, often not providing the stimulation for proper physical and mental development. Many of these children endure lives of pure deprivation[x]. As Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen argues, if poverty is to be defined not merely in terms of low income but as a state of deprivation of basic capabilities, nothing illustrates that more forcefully than child labour as " a result and also a cause of poverty, child labour is a prison that withers both capabilities and potential. UNICEF (2001: 1) further supports Sen that: A child labourer is a child denied the liberating benefit of education, one whose health, growth and development are threatened, who risks losing the love, care and protection of family and who cannot enjoy the rest and play that are every child's right". (Beyond Child Labor, Affirming Rights, March 2001). Not all works done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be beset for elimination. Children's or minors' involvement in work that does not disturb their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, supporting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school breaks. These kinds of activities add to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their

adult life. Article 3 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO. 1999) convention 182 in 1999 also divides the categories of the child labour which putting slavery works as the worst forms of child labour. The article puts dangerous works performed by children as kind of child labour. It originally says:(a). All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;(b). The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;(c). The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;(d). Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. ILO further says that labour jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions, in which it is carried out, is known as " hazardous work". Works and labor are defined differently. Lieten (2000) gives the definitions of the two as work as any type of work being done in any mode of relationship. The concept of work serves as a description of the physical or mental involvement in the job. Labor should be regarded as the production of goods and services that interfere with the normative development of children. This could also be the case when the child is doing strenuous household work that pre-empts schooling and leisure (Lieten, Child Work and Education, I: General Parameters and II: Field Work in Two UP villages, 2000). In Lieten's definitions, the author focuses on the relationship of the children and their

works. According to Lieten, although relationship is more important but if the works of children affect their development would be considered as child labour. Ingrid Stegemen (2000: 51-52) gives his own definition on child labour based on the definition of work and labor by G. K. Lieten: Children's engagement in activities that are considered intolerable, detrimental, hazardous should be considered labour and should generate concern and lead to intervention. According to above mentioned definition, author describes that only the works which can attract the intervention from legal authorities shall be considered as labour (child labor) or any works which are against the laws. It means that nature of works which can be draw attention and lead to intervention is in the hand of legal institution or authority. If the authority does not see the work as harmful to children, works performed by children should be considered as child help.

Methodology of Study

Need of study

As stated in the introductory chapter, there are various factors which contribute to the rise of child labour. These factors include poverty, migration, old model of children socialization, social factors such as uneducated parents, uncertainty of future and economic factors such as unemployment and low income. Although, there have been many studies on working children, this study is focusing only two aspects in the issue which are age category of child labourers and the works which they engaged in.

Objectives

There are only two objectives of this study. To study the age of children who engaged in paid labour To find out the nature of works of working children

Study Area

The study was conducted in Bangalore, the capital city of Karnataka. The data was collected in the BOSCO, which is the organisation works with the street and working children. Its center which came in the study is located in Chamarajpet, Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

Selection of Respondents

40 respondents will be chosen for study. Since the study concentrated on the child labourers, automatically, the children from the age of five to 14 will be studied. Due to the convenience, only boy children were included. There is no discrimination in selecting the respondents based on caste, religious belief, political views or other factors. Non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling) was used in collection of data. Data was collected through open ended questionnaire.

Findings of the Study

The study is focused only on two aspects. One is the age group of children when they engaged in paid work at the first time. it is to be noticed that these children are no longer the child labourers. They are now under the care of NGO. Second aspect is focused what kinds of works which children got in to.

Figure. 1. Age of children when they started working for the first time

The age of children who became child labourers were found differently from one case to another. In this research, there were five per cent of children started working since the age of seven, 2. 5 per cent at the age of seven, five per cent at the age of eight, 7. 5 per cent at the age of 13. Children who started working at the age of nine, 10 and 14 formed 12. 5 per cent each while 22. 5 per cent at the age of 11. Children were as young as seven years old engaged in wage labour. The situation of the family must have forced the children to engaged in such labour would be nothing but the financial problem. Sometime because of they have been forced by their siblings or relatives either uncle or aunty if they did not live with their parents. The study of the age group of children when they started working helps to understand the social economic background of the children. One also can re-examine the school enrolment and attendance of the children as well. The school enrolment did happen to most of the children since the free basic education is given to the children. But the attending the school means that the children have to choose between the two; the work and the school. When the children chose works, school attending would not happen since both the work (paid work) get not along hand in hand. The assumption from the finding is that if the child started working from the age of seven, it means that he would had attended class only till second standard if he got enrolled at the age of six. However, there were also students did not enrol in school at all. Researcher found one of the reasons which one child was forced to drop out. Chandra Shekha, an eleven years old boy who has stayed under good care of NGO for two years already narrated his story that. He was from <https://assignbuster.com/born-to-work-child-labourers-in-bangalore-sociology-essay/>

urban Bangalore. His parents died since he was very young. He lived with his other brothers and sisters in his aunty's house. He was the youngest child of all. At the age of nine, he was told by his siblings to drop out from his fifth standard and work. Chandra worked for 15 hours a day in the garage as a garage helper. Long working hour made him feel not very well almost every day although he was given one hour break during the lunch time. Salary was used for renovating the house. Chandra worked for two months till he was caught at the bus stand by NGO and put him under its good care two years ago. Now Chandra can learn computer course and language course. He said that he never thought of going back to work again. He likes to study.

Chandra's story tells us that he had to drop the school and started working so that he could contribute to the expenses of house renovation. He had to sacrifice his education for the care from his uncle's family. But what he got as his salary was so less which he could get paid only 50 rupees per day because he was young even he got paid less he was till happy. Chandra's case was similar to what Lia Fukui said about young children whose wage always got exploited. Fukui said the younger the child labourer, the lower the pay. Lia Fukui further argued that there are many children were forced to begin work from the ages of eight or nine. The younger children have very greater job insecurity (Schelmer, 2000: 120). However, the research in this study found that child as young as seven years old began work (Schlemer, *The exploited Child*, 2000, p. 120). There was another and similar finding in the study done by Beatiz and Maria-Isabel in their paper entitled *Living and Working Conditions: Child Labour in the Coal Mines of Colombia* (Bernar, 2000: 87-88). They found that the children started down the mines from as

young as six years old. These children were said to be ready to work as soon as they can pick up objects and drag them along. The authors found that the smallest children work at the pithead: sorting coal, carrying wood, tools, water and food. Older ones do jobs that demand a greater degree of resistance. Authors also said that although underground work is largely done by children between the ages of twelve and fifteen, they can be of any age as well.

Table. 1. Kinds of works which children performed

Frequency	Percent	Job
4	10.0	Mechanic
11	27.5	Waiter in restaurant
4	10.0	Cleaner

0	0	Salesman
5	12.5	Worker
0	0	Farming labourer
6	15.0	Construction

2	5.0	worker
0	0	Classical music band
5	12.5	Domestic worker
2	5.0	Washing dish in

12	30.0	restaurant
40	100.0	Total

Availability of jobs is one of the pulling factors attract job needy children for an alternative. There are ten kinds of employment which are popular among the children in this study. Study found that there were 2.5 per cent of children washed the dish in restaurant; 2.5 per cent played the drum in village classical band; 5 per cent of them worked as domestic worker; 10 per cent employed in the puncture shop or helping in mechanic shops, cleaners in garage and in bus formed 10 per cent; employed as salesman in local petty shops constituted 12.5 per cent, as a worker in garment factory made 10 per cent of respondents, as farming labourer formed 15 per cent, as construction workers made up of 5 per cent of total respondent. The last but not the least; 27.5 per cent of total respondents were employed as waiters in restaurant. The study found that waiter is the most popular job among the children. But if one sees all the kind of employment here, there is none of this employment should be listed

in the organized sector. Yet, one should not mistake the children who work in the garment industry since the children said it is only the small industry of one family in the village. All these jobs are not demanding high skills from the children but available any time where people just work in and got employed. For example, the waiter in the restaurant, the restaurant owner really needs children to work as waiter since children are young can be told to do any work from serving the food to customers, cleaning dish, cleaning floor, helping in kitchen and other tasks assigned by owners without so complaining. The children from poor families like working in the restaurant will get few benefits. First, children waiter can get some money tip from customers which these children and their parents always expect while working in restaurant. This benefit would be a good bonus to the basic salary. Second, working in restaurant, children can relax and it is not a heavy work although children have to work more than 10 hours. Third, children are given basic salary. Fourth, children might be given leftover food from the customer to eat or possibility to bring it home for their family members. From employers view, study was done by K. Hanumantha Rao and M. Madusudhan Rao (1998) on the Employers' view of child labour found that employers prefer children have less developed ego and status consciousness. Children are also less afflicted by feelings of guilt and shame, can be put on non-status, even demeaning jobs, without much difficulty. They are more active, agile and quick and feel less tired in certain tasks; they are more amenable to discipline and control and they can be coaxed, admonished, pulled up and punished for defaults without jeopardizing relations. Furthermore, children can almost do the same amount of work as

an adult does and they cost less in terms of wages and maintenance. Child workers are a great source of profit for they make a larger surplus value for the employers. Authors found that 64.80 per cent of the sample employers took children on grounds of their suitability for the jobs. Nearly three-fifths of the employers employed children to reduce labour cost or wages; more than half of the employers to extract more work, 28.80 per cent on account of the docile nature of children and more than one-third of the employers (Hanumantha Roa, 1998, p. 18). All these factors should be categorized in the pulling factors. Other works such as farming labour is not giving so much benefit to children as the waiter job does. However, these jobs sometimes dragged the children because there are family members working in that field for example, farming labourer and construction workers. Banpasirichote (1992) in their study in Thailand had similar findings that working children from the age of eleven to fourteen in Thailand show that majority of them are still in agricultural sector while 13 per cent of total numbers of working children are still involved in manufacturing sectors (Banapasirichote, 1992, pp. 11-12). In India, agricultural sector is still playing the most important role in million of Indians. Agricultural sector in India gives very big contribution to Indian economy. This contribution creates and its relationship with the demand for child labour in the rural economy. In the rural agricultural areas, some families owns the bigger property specifically land, which the families need the labourer but not beyond the children who rather dropped out from school due to the uncertainty of their future and poverty in exchange of accepting the paid job they were offered. This is the pulling factor which attracting the children. Kiran Bathy argued that the families which have

bigger ownership of land, sometimes to reduce the labour cost, they tell their children to work which proved that it is not landless families alone that send their children to work (Kiran, 1998, p. 1733). Children always engaged which is available to them. For example, if they are living in the city, there might be many construction sites so they would be going for that. And if they know somebody working in some small restaurant, they might get into that job as stated above. One of the children, through interviewing, told his story. He was ten years old from Bangalore lived in a family in which both of his parents were working as construction workers. He was not a single child in the family as there were other two more siblings. He could study only till fourth standard. When he was eight years old, he voluntarily put himself in working environment as a construction worker with a monthly salary of Rs 500 rupees. His work started from 6 o'clock in morning till 8 o'clock in the evening, the boy further narrated. He was given only 5 minute breaks and maximum 30 minutes for lunch time. So it means he worked at least 11 hours and 30 minutes every day. He worked for one year and half in that job till six months ago he was rescued by the NGO and put him under its care where he could study some language. Another case of one child: A child was 13 years old from Bangalore, lived with his both the parents and another older sister. Both of his parents were working. He worked as a waiter in restaurant. He worked continuously from 6 o'clock morning till 10: 30 o'clock evening, which was more than 14 hours. He was paid only Rs. 150 per day. These two cases of children and facts about the works of children indicate that working children are subjected to labour exploitation and wage exploitation by their employees.

Conclusion

From this study, working children is one of the most vulnerable sections of population. They are subjected to very exploitation; wage exploitation and labour exploitation. The most important thing is that they have been deprived off their educational rights, social right and basic rights which every child can enjoy. In the working places, they had long working hour but less pay without holiday and no other benefits. Future of working children is not clear. They remained unskilled and uneducated. Their family cannot get away from the impoverished status. When these children grow up, their younger generation might be still in the same condition. The poverty continues and their next generation is still vulnerable. Although, this is the small scale study, its significance should not be ignored. It gives light to next researchers to look into some other factors which effects the lives of working children in Bangalore, such as health issue, mental and physical issue and take the bigger step to look into the bigger numbers of working children to generalize the issue.