

# Child labour essay sample

[Countries](#), [India](#)



Since the era of globalisation, child labour remains a widespread phenomenon throughout the world. For large number of children work is an ordeal, on source of suffering and exploitation, and a fundamental abuse of human rights (Bequele, 1998). The consequences of child labour often result in education deprivation, social disadvantage, poor health, physical and psychological development. The causes of child labour are complex and wide ranging, but the future for child labour does show some good prospects. The 3 articles selected for this review highlights the problems and solutions of child labour in a developed country UK and a developing country India, and the 3rd article further explores and builds on the other 2 articles in terms of causes of child labour.

In 1st article ‘ child poverty and child outcomes’, Bradshaw (2002) traces how child poverty has changed over the last 20 years in UK and how child poverty compares with that in other countries. The 2nd article ‘ Child labour, the most visible type of child abuse and neglect in India’, Caesar-Leo (1999) also highlights the growing problem of child labour in India and seeks to clarify the complex reasons behind the problem. The 3rd article ‘ Does globalisation increase child labour’, Guarcello (2002) further explores and builds on the first two articles in terms of causes of child labour. All articles make systematic approach to illustrate each argument by utilizing clear and bold subtitles.

Both articles addresses the magnitude of child poverty on the basis of government resource, such as the Government of India Census and the Family Resources Survey from Department of Social Security, therefore suggests the accuracy and reliability of the sources. However, Caesar-Leo

(1999) criticizes the statistics collected by the government by emphasizing the difficulty to obtain an accurate estimate of working children, because number of girls is often underestimated because statistical survey do not take into account the full time housework performed by many girls. Hence compared to Bradshaw (2002), he presents a more critical view to the empirical evidence made available.

It is also interesting to note the language is much more involving and emotional in the article on India by Caesar-Leo (1999) than the article on UK. This is particularly evident under the subtitles 'causes and consequence of child labour' in the article by Caesar Leo, he presents a vivid picture of how the children in India are being exploited by utilizing a direct quote from a 12 year old boy working in a glass bracelet factory in India saying " I do my work at night as in the daytime there is checking. I earn Rs 32 (less than \$1) for a toda, while the elders get Rs64 for the same", he also makes extensive use striking examples of the consequences of child labour such as ' resort to begging or other illegal means of making money to survive' and ' female and male children who are sexually exploited face severe physical and mental trauma' to gain much of my own sympathy and sorrow towards the children in India. On the other hand, Bradshaw (2002) just lists the possible outcomes of child poverty such as physical, emotional and behavioral without going into much detail like Caesar-Leo. Personally, I feel the children in India deserve a lot more attention than those in UK just from the powerful image drawn by Caesar-Leo.

All 3 articles I have chosen for this review address the causes of child labour in general. A number of perspectives characterize the literature around this topic, perhaps the most accepted view amongst the 3 articles is that economic condition and government policies are of main causes of child labour. This is evident in Bradshaw (2002) article, where he argues jobs became more insecure, part time, and episodic in the two periods of rapid rising unemployment in the early 1980s and early 1990s, and a large number of young people left school and sought to enter the tight labour market in the early 1980s. However, Bradshaw did not indicate where this source came from nor did he provide references to further research in this area. Caesar-Leo (1999) also agrees cause of child labour is a result of economic problem, particularly an inequitable economic system which ensures that the benefits of economic growth are not shared by all. But his argument moves beyond the mere economic condition and attempts to address the cause of child labour on the individual level as well as on the macroeconomic level, he argues labour is forced by various factors such as poverty, broken home and he backs up his arguments with sources such as Ministry of Labour in India to increase the credibility of his arguments.

Moreover, Caesar-Leo builds on the cause of continuing child labour in India, he argues child labour is perpetuated because it is cheap and profitable and it serves the interests of a small but powerful group. I personally felt very empathetic towards the children in India compared to the children in UK because of the powerful image and details presented by Caesar-Leo.

Interestingly, Much of the evidence from the articles coincide with my own opinion towards child labour, India as a developing country with high power

distance, hence it is expected the poorer children will be forced to work for a living and be exploited by those of rich and powerful. On the other hand, UK is a developed country with excellent legal system, child labour should not be such a big problem except for those living in really poor conditions.

The 3rd article by Guarcello (2002) builds on both the previous 2 articles in terms of causes of child labour, and explores the theory behind the causes of child labour. He agrees economic condition in general is one of the causes for child labour likewise to the other 2 articles, but he moves beyond the general cause and further expands on the theories behind it in a logical manner. He argues each point with assumptions and then incorporates the relevant economic theories to come to a conclusion. For example, he assumes that most children normally do not choose to work, and most decisions are taken for them by their parents, so as long as the parents care about their own as well as their children's consumption, the decision whether to send a child to work depends on three things. Guarcello then applies the economic theories to the assumptions given, this case the cost of education (opportunity cost), the expected return to education, and the extent to which parents are able to finance educational investments. Finally, he outlines 3 possible outcomes such as the cost of increasing the child's future earning ability is higher than the maximum that parents are willing to pay for it, then the parents might send the child to work full time. Thus, by making assumptions and applying economic theories to each point, I believe it is the most logical and consistent way in addressing the cause of child labour.

In terms of future policies and reforms for child labour, Bradshaw (2002) presents a much more optimistic view for the children in UK while Caesar-Leo (1999) remains sour and doubtful. For example, Bradshaw suggests the prospects for child poverty in UK is very good as there has been numerous new measurements such as the National Minimum Wage, real increases in child benefit and child tax credit, which works together to reduce the child poverty. His argument is backed up on the empirical data gathered by government such as the annual report 'opportunity for all', which shows child poverty is moving towards the right direction. On the other hand, Caesar-Leo's argues there are serious limitations to law and enforcement machinery in legislations leading to rather blurred future for the children living in poverty in India.

He points out the two major limitations to the existing legislation. Firstly, it excludes agriculture, domestic service and family enterprise in informal sector. Secondly, the minimum age at which child completes high school education in India is 15 years, whereas the minimum age required by law for children to work is 14 years, the discrepancy gives children access to employment before they have completed the minimum number of years of schooling. It is interesting to note Caesar-Leo shares the same perspective as Guarcello (2002) in terms of data collected by government, as they both believe there are discrepancies to it.

In conclusion, all 3 articles I have chosen for this review deals with the exiting problems with child labour in general. While there are obvious

differences in articles, all of them still share the common perspective towards the cause of child labour.

Reference:

Michaela Caesar-Leo, 1999, ' Child labour: the most visible type of child abuse and neglect in India', Child Abuse Review, Vol 8, Issue 2 , Pp. 75 - 86

Jonathan Bradshaw, 2002, ' Child Poverty and Child Outcomes', Children & Society, Vol 16, Pp. 1231-140

Lorenzo Guarcello, 2002, ' Does Globalisation Increase Child Labour?' World Development, Vol 30, No 9, Pp. 1579-1589

Assefa Bequele and Jo Boyden, 1988, 2nd edn, Combating Child Labour, International Labour Office, Geneva.

" Child labour and India" [http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Child\\_Labor/childlabor.htm](http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Child_Labor/childlabor.htm) (13 Aug. 2004)