

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Consequences on Child Labour and Educational Access with Special Reference to Dakshin Dinajpur District

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issues of child labor and disrupted educational access worldwide, significantly affecting vulnerable populations. Economic downturns, school closures, and weakened social protections have deepened existing vulnerabilities, pushing children into labor markets and depriving them of educational opportunities. This study examines the impact of these crises on child labor and education, focusing on the mechanisms driving the increase in child labor and the barriers to education. The economic instability caused by the pandemic has placed immense pressure on families, particularly in low-income and migrant communities, leading to children being seen as economic assets. As parents lost jobs and income, children were forced to work in informal sectors such as agriculture, domestic labor, and street vending. School closures have further worsened the situation by removing the protective environment that education provides. With limited access to online learning due to a lack of resources, many children have been unable to continue their education, exacerbating educational inequalities. This study explores the socio-economic factors contributing to the rise in child labor and the disruption of education, as well as the role of social protection policies and government interventions. It highlights the gaps in education systems and social protections that have left children more vulnerable during the pandemic. By understanding these challenges, the study proposes recommendations for mitigating the adverse effects on child labor and educational access, emphasizing the need for comprehensive policy responses to protect children and ensure their right to education and protection from exploitation.*

Keywords: COVID-19, child labor, educational access, school closures, economic impact, social protection, vulnerable populations

