

# **A Study on Child Labour: A Serious Issue**

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**Abstract:** *Child Labour is the employment of children below the age of 14 years in any industry or business. Child labour is the practice of engaging children in economic activities. Child labour is an illegal act and has been big social issue for years. It is considered as exploitative for the future of children and country. Any type of job performed by the children in industries is difficult and demanding as well as more hazardous. Children have to perform a wide range of tasks and activities even after being a small age and low capacity.*

*Child labour remains a global concern despite numerous international efforts to eradicate it. This research paper explores the complex issue of child labour by examining its underlying causes, socio-economic consequences, and the various strategies implemented to eliminate it. By delving into these facts, this paper aims to contribute to the understanding and advocacy for child prevention. Despite of various rules and regulations by the government, child labour is still practiced..*

**Keywords:** Labour, health, anxiety, awareness, education

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Children are the greatest gift to humanity and Childhood is an important and impressionable stage of human development as it holds the potential to the future development of any society. The term 'Child Labour' is often used as a synonym for employed child or working child. The child is usually a person who is less than 14 years of age and develops less, immature and cannot understand the consequences of any work and is not aware of his rights. Child labour is defined as work that harms or exploits children. The working conditions of the child labourers are often found to be highly unhygienic and uncongenial and they suffer from various forms of exploitations in different parts of the world. Child labour restricts the right of children to access and the benefit from education and denies the fundamental opportunity to attend school. Child labour prejudices children's education and adversely affects their health and safety. Underage children work at all sorts of jobs around the world, usually because they and their families are extremely poor.

For decades, child labour has been an important global issue associated with inadequate educational opportunities, poverty and gender inequality. Not all types of work carried out by children are considered child labour. Engagement of children or adolescents in work with no influence on their health and schooling is usually regarded positive. The International Labour Organization (ILO) describes child labour as 'work that deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development'. This definition includes types of work that are mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful to children; or disrupts schooling

The practice of employing children for labour has a long and troubling history. In the pre- industrial era, children were often expected to contribute to family income, helping with agricultural work or artisanal tasks. However, it was the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries that led to a dramatic increase in child labour. Factories, mines, and mills became the new workplaces for children, who were subjected to gruelling, often hazardous conditions. These young labourers endured long working hours, inadequate pay, and a lack of access to education.

The dire situation led to a growing awareness of the need to protect children's rights and well- being. Various social reform movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries advocated for legal restrictions on child labour. Consequently, numerous countries implemented labour laws and regulations to limit child labour practices. Despite these significant efforts, child labour, a practice that has pervaded human history for centuries, involves the employment of children in various forms of work, often under exploitative and hazardous conditions. The background of child labour is a complex narrative shaped by economic, social, and historical factors.

During pre-industrial times, child labour was a common occurrence. In agrarian societies, children contributed to family income by assisting with farming and household chores.

However, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century, child labour took on a darker and more pervasive character. Factories, mines, and textile mills offered a seemingly endless supply of cheap and obedient labour, resulting in the mass employment of children, some as young as five or six years old.

These child labourers endured long and grueling work hours, often in hazardous environments, and without access to education. The early factory system exploited them, resulting in physical and psychological harm. In this era, child labour was driven by economic necessity, as impoverished families relied on the meager wages their children could bring home.

Public awareness of the dire consequences of child labour began to grow in the 19th century, partly due to the efforts of social reformers and advocates for workers' rights. Various countries enacted labour laws and regulations to limit child labour and ensure minimum working conditions. Simultaneously, movements emerged to secure children's right to an education, emphasizing the importance of their intellectual and physical development.

The international community recognized the urgency of addressing child labour. In 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) was established, with the mission of setting labour standards and promoting social justice. Over the decades, the ILO adopted conventions and recommendations specifically addressing child labour.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to promoting labour rights, improving working conditions, and fostering social justice globally. Established in 1919, the ILO develops and sets international labour standards and policies, aiming to ensure that workers around the world enjoy fair and decent working conditions. It addresses a wide range of labour-related issues, including child labour, forced labour, occupational safety and health, and workers' rights. The ILO plays a crucial role in advocating for workers' rights, providing technical assistance to countries, conducting research on labour-related matters, and facilitating social dialogue between governments, employers, and workers. Its ultimate goal is to promote social justice and inclusive economic growth by creating decent work opportunities for all. The ILO's work is based on the principles of tripartism, involving governments, employers, and workers in shaping labour policies and standards. It is a vital organization in the global effort to advance workers' rights and improve labour conditions worldwide.

Despite these significant efforts, child labour persists in various forms across the globe, driven by factors like poverty, lack of access to quality education, and the demand for cheap labour in informal sectors and global supply chains. The background of child labour is a reminder of the need for ongoing vigilance and international collaboration to protect the rights and well-being of children.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Child labour is a complex and deeply concerning issue with far-reaching socio-economic, culture and humanitarian implications. Several research papers have delved into various aspects of child labour, offering valuable insights into its causes, consequences, and potential solutions. Here, I review and summarize some key finding from a selection of research paper on child labour:

The study by Gordon Betcherman, Jean Fares, Amy Luinstra and Robert Prouty on "Child Labour, Education and Children's Rights" reviews the international legal framework relating to child labour and access to education and provides a statistical portrait of child labour and education participation. Its looks at why children work from the perspective of household decision making

The paper by Erica G Polakoff on "Globalization and Child Labour: Review of the Issues" reviews the relationship between economic globalization, poverty and child labour and highlights the effectiveness of domestic law and international convections foe protecting children's rights and well-being. Solutions to the problems of child labour will necessarily have to address the underlying processes of economic globalization that are exacerbating global poverty and consequently, increasing the need for poor families to depend on the paid labour of their children of survival.

The study by Ravinder Rena on "The Child Labour in Developing Countries: A Challenge to Millennium Development Goals" reviews that child labour is a serious and ongoing problem in our society that has its roots in the industrial revolution. It is caused by various factors such as poverty, lack of education, and cultural norms. It harms the well-being and development of children and violates their rights. There is a need for a global and coordinated effort to end

child labour and protect children's dignity.

Another study by Priya Ranjan on "An Economic Analysis of Child Labour" This paper shows how poverty in combination with credit constraints can give to the phenomenon of child labour in developing countries. Its further shows how banning child labour can reduce the welfare of the households intending to send their children to work, and suggests some alternative policies.

The paper by Edmonds and Pavcnik on "Child Labour and Development" explores the relationship between child labour and development, emphasizing how child labour can perpetuate the cycle of poverty. The authors find that child labour is often driven by poverty, but its consequences, including limited access to education, hinder long term development.

### **2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

1. To study the concept of child labour as it is a serious issue.
2. To understand that the primary goal is to protect the rights and well-being of children.
3. To evaluate it is essential to clarify that child labour is not objective but rather a critical issue that requires attention and intervention.
4. To identify and analyse the causes and consequences of child labour.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is based on mainly secondary data collected from different books, journals, internet etc.

#### **FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR**

Slavery:

Slavery is where one person is owned by and made to work for another person without having any say over what happens to them. Slaves are held against their will from the time of their capture, purchase, or birth, and are not allowed to leave or to refuse to work.

Child trafficking:

Child trafficking is the illegal trading (buying, selling and movement) of children for labour or sexual exploitation. Children are trafficked for many reasons, including forced labour, prostitution and recruitment as child soldiers and beggars.

Debt bondage:

Debt bondage is forced labour, where work is exchanged to pay off loans that people cannot pay off with money or goods. For example, a poor family may hand over their child to someone to pay off their debt, and that child will have to work for years until the debt is cleared.

Serfdom:

Serfdom is when a person is forced to live and work on land belonging to another person, often with little or no pay.

Forced labour:

Forced labour is when someone is made to work against their wishes. For example, Children in armed conflict are forced to fight or to work as cooks, porters and messengers. These children are abused and exploited, often being forced to kill or maim other human beings.

Sexual exploitation:

Sexual exploitation is the mistreating, abusing and/or taking advantage of someone for personal gain and profit, by involving them in prostitution or commercial sexual activity. Prostitution is the exchange of sexual activities for money. Children around the world, girls and boys, are exploited sexually, used by adults for sex or used in sexual images (pornography) or performances. They may be bought and sold into marriage, prostitution or slavery – in both developing and industrialized countries. Children are also kidnapped and then trafficked across borders and then sold to be prostitutes in foreign countries.

### **BONDED CHILD LABOUR**

Bonded child labour is a system of forced, or partly forced, labour under which the child, or child's parent enter into an agreement, oral or written, with a creditor. The child performs work as in-kind repayment of credit. Each child or the parent had taken an advance

of Rs. 1,00,000 to 2,50,000. The children were made to work for 12 to 14 hours a day and received only Rs. 2 to 3 per day as wages. The factory lends money to whoever needs it, puts a loom in the person's home, and then the family with children works out of their homes, bring finished product to pay interest and get some wages. The bonded child and family labour operations were moving out of small urban factories into rural homes.

### **CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR**

Children work because their survival and that of their families depend on it, and in many cases because unscrupulous adults take advantage of their vulnerability. It is also due to inadequacies and weaknesses in national educational systems. It is deeply ingrained in cultural and social attitudes and traditions.

Poverty:

Poverty is one of the most essential causes of child labour. Families living in poverty often rely on the income their children can bring in to meet basic needs. Inadequate access to education and healthcare due to poverty can force children into the labour market.

Lack of Education:

Limited or no access to quality education is a major cause of child labour. Insufficient access to quality education, including barriers such as high school's fees or a lack of nearby schools, can lead children to work instead of attending school.

Cultural Norms and Traditions:

In some cultures, child labour is normalized and considered a tradition. For example, children may be expected to help in family businesses or agricultural work from a young age. Such culture norms can influence parents to engage their children in labour from a young age. These cultural norms can make it challenging to eliminate child labour practices.

Urbanization and Migration:

Rural-to-urban migration, often driven by a lack of economic opportunities in rural areas, can lead to child labour in urban settings. Children may work in construction, factories, or as domestic labour in cities.

Economic Exploitation:

Employers often exploit children for their low labour costs. Children are paid less than adults, making them attractive for businesses. They are also less likely to unionize or demand better working conditions.

Global Supply Chains:

The demand for cheap goods in global supply chains can encourage child labour, especially in industries like textiles, agriculture, and manufacturing. Complex supply chains can make it difficult to trace the origins of products, allowing child labour to remain hidden.

### **CONSEQUENCES AND EFFECTS OF CHILD LABOUR**

Physical Health Effects:

Malnutrition: Child labour often leads to inadequate nutrition, resulting in malnutrition and stunted growth.

Exposure to Hazardous Conditions: Children engaged in hazardous work are at risk of physical injuries, illnesses, and long-term health problems.

Psychological and Emotional Effects:

Stress and Anxiety: Child labour can lead to stress and anxiety due to the harsh working conditions and fear of exploitation.

Trauma: Exposure to physical and emotional abuse in some work environments can cause trauma that may persist into adulthood.

Educational Consequences:

Limited Access to Education: Child labour can deprive children of the opportunity to attend school, hindering their educational development.

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Low Literacy and Numeracy: Children engaged in labour may have lower literacy and numeracy skills, limiting their future opportunities.

Victims of child labour usually suffer from depression and anxiety, pushing them to destructive habits like smoking, alcoholism, or drug abuse. Abusive environments also trigger a lifetime of low self-esteem, depression, and relationship difficulties. Walking over child labour, like it's nothing, we will be destroying our future communities because those children are part of our community today, as much as tomorrow.

#### **STEPS TO PREVENT CHILD LABOUR:**

Raise awareness:

Educate communities, parents, and employers about the negative consequences of child labour on children's well-being and future prospects.

Promote Access to Education:

Ensure that quality education is accessible and affordable for all children. Eliminate barriers to school attendance, such as school fees and the cost of uniforms.

Strengthen and Enforce Child Labour Laws:

Review and update existing child labour laws and regulations to align them with international standards. Enforce age limits, working conditions, and working hours for children, and impose penalties for violations.

Social Safety Nets:

Establish social safety net programs, such as conditional cash transfers, to provide financial support to impoverished families, reducing their reliance on child labour for income.

Youth Skills Development:

Develop vocational training programs to equip young people with practical skills and support their transition to decent work opportunities once they reach the legal working age.

Community mobilization:

Empower communities to take action against child labour by engaging local leaders and organizations in awareness campaigns, support programs, and child protection initiatives.

Supply chain accountability:

Encourage businesses to establish and adhere to responsible supply chain practices, ensuring that products are not produced using child labour. Promote transparency in supply chains through certification and auditing processes.

Legal aid and counselling:

Provide legal aid and counselling services to children who have been involved in child labour or have faced exploitation, helping them recover and reintegrate into society.

Gender equality:

Promote gender equality to ensure that both girls and boys have equal access to education and opportunities and are protected from child labour.

International cooperation:

Collaborate with international organizations, governments, and NGOs to develop and implement coordinated strategies to prevent child labour.

Preventing child labour is an ongoing effort that requires commitment and collaboration among governments, organizations, communities, and individuals. These steps aim to address the root causes of child labour, ensuring that children can grow, develop, and achieve their full potential in a safe and supportive environment.

#### **IV. FINDINGS**

Through a comprehensive systematic review, we conclude that child labour continues to be a major public health challenge. Child labour continues to be negatively associated with the physical and psychological health of children involved. Although no cause-effect relation can be established, as all studies included are cross-sectional, studies documented higher prevalence of different health issues in working children compared to control groups or general population.

This reflects a failure of policies not only to eliminate child labour, but also to make it safer. Although there is a decline in the number of working children, the quality of life of those still engaged in child labour seems to remain low.

#### **V. SUGGESTIONS**

Stakeholder must take responsibility: Children do not work because they want to, and parents would ideally much rather see their children receive an education. Child labour is socially accepted when people see no other option but to send their children to work. Governments must abide by internationally accepted agreements, companies must employ adults instead of children and – importantly – consumers must not buy goods produced by child labour.

Increased access to education: Removing children from child labour does not mean that they will automatically attend school. Schooling can be expensive, or of very poor quality, and so some parents think sending their children to work is the obvious alternative. Both large and smaller businesses can make their contribution by raising awareness about the importance of education in their workplaces, communities, industries or sectors.

Provide support for children: Children are also at greater health and safety risk in the workplace for a number of reasons:

- Lack work experience – children are less able to make informed judgments.
- Want to perform well – children are willing to go the “extra mile” without realising the risks.
- Learn unsafe health and safety behaviour from adults.
- Might not be carefully trained and supervised.
- Improve economic growth:

As many as 7.8 million Indian children are forced to earn a livelihood even if they also attend school. Many of these children drift away from the path of education completely and get end up in child labour. This means a country has a lack of formally educated adults who can contribute to the process of nation-building and to the country’s economic growth.

Engage with the sustainable development goals: We know that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, will only succeed if we work towards the goals together. The sub-Saharan African region is among those affected by situations of extreme poverty, state fragility and crisis, and by natural disasters and population displacements associated with global climate change, which in turn are known to heighten the risk of child labour.

#### **VI. CONCLUSION**

While progress has been made around the world in the fight against child labour, there's still a long way to go. In conclusion, child labour remains a deeply concerning issue that affects the lives of millions of children worldwide. Despite progress in recent years, child labour continues to persist due to a complex interplay of economic, social, and cultural factors. The consequences of child labour are severe, depriving children of their childhood, education, and physical and emotional well-being.

Efforts to combat child labour must be multi-faceted, addressing the root causes, enacting and enforcing strong legislation, promoting access to quality education, and providing support to impoverished families. The international community, governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals all have a role to play in ending child labour.

As we work collectively towards the goal of eradicating child labour, it is imperative that we remain vigilant and steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow up in a safe, nurturing environment, free from exploitation and able to pursue their dreams and potential. A world without child labour is not only possible but essential for the well-being of our future generations.

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