

Key Integrants of Child Labor in India: An Exploratory Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Human capital formation is considered important factor for the growth and development of an economy. Children form the foundation of human capital but if they are engaged as a labor in the economy, the future of any country cannot be imagined. Good education and health are very important parameters for human capital formation but the evil of child labor takes away these opportunities from the children and puts them in the dark world of poverty and exploitation. This paper is an attempt to reflect upon the current state of Indian economy in terms of child labor and its relevant integrants. Firstly, two specific antecedents of child labor have been discussed which are poverty and illiteracy. Second section deals with the causes, consequences and impact of labor on the child within three separate subheadings. Third section provides factual insights of the share of children in Indian labor figures as per census 2011. The last section discusses the holistic approach to the gravity of this problem and proposes the long term and short term policies to the government for elimination of child labor. In the conclusion section, future directions of this research are also provided for further investigations.

Keywords:

Child labor, Social & physical effects of child labor, Development economics, child labor abolition policies

1.Introduction

In the present scenario, holistic development is the prime concern of all the nations in the world. Human capital formation is considered important factor for the growth and development of an economy. But if the children, who are the future of the country, are engaged in child labor then how they can get good education and health, which are considered very necessary parameters for the human capital formation. Therefore, they should be provided planned care and ample socialization opportunities to ensure their development into full-blown human being.

In India, primary institution of society i.e. family take care of the responsibilities of the children but in recent years' qualitative changes in the structure and function of this institution have took place due to new constraints and consequently abuse and exploitation of child has eroded the traditional care. Due to continuous increase in family poverty and employers profit making behavior the plight of children has further aggravated. Under such circumstances the constitutional obligations of the state towards the child has made him/her a national concern and has been viewed as a "supreme assets of the nation". Indian government has been very much dedicated towards child labor abolition from the country. Article 24 of fundamental rights provided in the Indian constitution extend the provision of children protection from employments and avocations which don't suit their age. This provision is also strongly reinstated in the "Directive principles of state policy" in our constitution. An online platform known as "PENCIL (Platform for effective enforcement for No-Child labor)" functional with effect from 26.09.2018 has also been dedicated to this cause by the government. The primary aims of this platform

include both the enforcements of the legal provisions and the efficient execution of the “National child labor project (NCLP)”.

1.1 Relevant research on poverty, illiteracy and child labor

In spite of these various welfare schemes for children, a large portion of child population is still working both in rural and urban areas in very disgraceful and bad conditions. S. P. Singh (1991) highlights the fact that the main bottlenecks in the elimination of child labor from India are poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and rising population. With the help of multi-dimensional actions taken by the government and the public; at social and individual levels only can remove these bottlenecks. Elementary education is the only method which can help us in liberating the child labor from the profit making exploiters. For this purpose, two pronged strategies should be adopted by the Government. The first action in this regard is to remove constraints to the access to education by investing more in the elementary educational infrastructure. Secondly the Universalization of primary education as per the constitutional provisions need to be met by crediting ample funds directly to the child labor families and intensifying the schemes of rural development and alleviation of poverty.

Anju Kohli and Sadhana Kothari (2001) made an assessment of dimensions of child labor in the sense that large percentage of child labor is engaged in agricultural activities while the attention is paid to elimination of child labor in industrial activities. The percentage of child labor has declined over time, the decline in male child is more than the female child labor. The incidence of male child labor is higher in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, lower in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and medium in Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

There are many correlates of child labor among which poverty and dropout rate from the schools are very significant. They further suggested that the challenges before the policy makers are not only to eliminate the child labor but also to reduce the percentage of nowhere children. The study of S. Mahendra Dev (2001) concludes that a multipronged strategy is essential for removal of child labor. It relies upon the improvements in school quality, adult wages, economic growth, poverty reduction, etc. Child labor is an intricate problem which demands harmonizing strategies and intensive participation of various sections of civil society, i.e., human rights activists, NGO 's, lawyers, trade unions, media, employer's organizations, academics and so on. This study concludes with few suggestions for further research. Three areas have been identified for future research directions. Micro studies in different occupations, specific determinants of child labor and challenges in primary schooling comprise these prominent three areas. Therefore, one future domain for research would be the effect of educational regulation on child labor. After liberalization, education has been regarded as the most significant resources, but the claims have not been put into much effective real actions. He has also suggested some other related issues to understand the demand for education as another important area of research in the domain of child labor.

In his work “Economics of child Labor” Biswajit Guha (2001) what primarily motivates entrepreneurs to utilize child labor and the reasons or circumstances of a huge quantity of households to propel the children to do labor. This study empirically examined the problem in case of the continent of Asia. Here, child labor is being observed as a grave kind of human denial and various interwove strategies and policies are proposed to solve this problem. It is affirmed that this problem can't be solved in isolation. Its solution is linked with the solution of the problem of human deprivation. In developing or least developed countries, it has emerged as one of serious problems for the governments. This study examined problem of child labor in Asia and

covered twenty countries of Asia. He has also pointed out that the ILO has estimated that more than 76 million aged 10 to 14 years were economically active in 1995 of which 44.6 million are from Asia which signifies the gravity / intensity of the problem in this region.

Umesh Chandra Sahoo (1996) in his work "Child Labor Dimensions in India: An Appraisal" concludes "that invariably, backwardness and poverty are considered as the driving forces for the employment of children. Illiteracy. Low social status, lack of schooling facilities and the like seem to reinforce and stimulate employment of children. It is no wonder than that the legislative measures have remained more or less ineffective except perhaps in organized industries". Ultimately, all this shows that the "political will" is strongly prejudiced in favor of the business classes, and so long as the populace is unaware, the exploiters would keep gaining at their costs. The author has also highlighted the other significant determinants such as bondage, culture and tradition, education, unemployment, etc. for inviting the attention of the governments, officials, social workers and trade unions to check the malady of the child labor. He has also presented the historical perspective regarding the gravity of the problem with possible explanations. He is of the view that nearly 40 million child laborers do not come under the purview of the legislation. Therefore, prohibition of child labor makes it harder to protect such children from exploitation and other diverse forces of oppression. It is a serious lapse of the constitution of India which must be suitably revised to take care of such a large number of child workers.

Helen R. Sekar (2003) in his paper "Impact of Rehabilitation Programs on Child Labor" analyzed the "impact of various rehabilitation programs initiated by the government and NGO's on child labor". The specific aim of this paper is to examine the current provisions for abolition of child labor. The major activity pointed out by him in this project is establishment and operations of the special schools. "On the basis of field studies and secondary data, an attempt has been made to examine the effectiveness of the National Child labor Project in this study". From the review of the functioning of various programs under the NCLP, it appears that special school's component of the program package has been reasonably successful. However, in the area of awareness generation, very little had been achieved and the funds released remained largely unused. Running of special schools under the NCLP is very cost intensive, since the cost involved per child is about Rs. 4000, whereas in the formal schools the cost per child is only Rs.1000. Experience from both the government and non-government programs showed that nutritional interventions were more effective when they were a part of community developments efforts with complementary measures to reduce poverty and hunger.

Bhupinder Zutshi (2003) in his study "Child Labor Rehabilitation in India": A case study of Mirzapur-Bhadhoi Carpet Weaving Belt" examined the functioning of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) special schools undertaken by the project societies /NGO's in the Carpet weaving belt of Mirzapur-Bhadhoi in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The study aims to evaluate the NFE schools, examine their impact in reducing child labor and study the community response and acceptance towards the NFE special school's activities related to education and rehabilitation of children. The study suggested that the NGO's must conduct prior survey and identify only out of school children for enrollments in these schools. Areas to be selected for NFE schools should be carefully chosen especially those areas, where primary school facility is not available and Regular Institutional assessment of the NFE program should be conducted by the funding agencies.

Rajsekharan Pillai K. (1999) conducted a micro level socioeconomic study on child labor in the fishing sector of Kollam district in Kerala. In this study out of the seven fishing villages in the area, a sample of 250 child workers were drawn on a representative basis. In addition to the child workers, their parents were also contacted to get reliable information. The primary data in study

were collected through structured schedules. The primary aim of this paper was to scrutinize the socioeconomic conditions under which children are employed in fishing. According to this study, he concluded that the phenomenon of child labor that we can see in the fishing area of Kollam is different from that seen elsewhere. Here, children are generally drawn to employment not out of poverty. Parental negligence, the drive to become independent, traditional background, societal indifference etc. are the causative factors in child labor. It is evident from this study that the child workers spend a large amount for their personal expenditure, which includes certain bad habits. Child workers here have a satisfactory level of education and awareness. However, these are not sufficient to secure employment in the organized sector. The official programs, policies rules and regulations have proved futile to contain child labor in fishing, as it is more tradition bound.

C. Muthuraja (1999) highlighted the problems of child labor in brick industry in Madurai and Ramanad districts of Tamil Nadu. The researcher is mainly concentrating on the status of child labor in brick industry for this study. The researcher made a lot of visits to observe the condition of child labor in various brick kilns. The researcher observed that the entry of children into the brick industry was not a matter of choice but a matter of economic compulsion to supplement the family income. Hence, taking a child away from brick industry units will amount to a loss of family income which the family of the child can ill-afford. It is also evident from the study that brick industry suffered due to existence of corruption practices between the manufacturer and government officials. This is the reason for the absence of effective implementation of laws. The government should form a committee under the chairmanship of retired academician, inclusive of members from brick manufacturing government officials, brick workers, and few members from NGO's. The committee will act as "suggested body" for eradication of child labor in this industry.

Nisar A. Khan and Mohd. Haroon (2001) in their work entitled "Child labor in the lock industry" evaluate the problem of child labor in lock industry of Aligarh. The main objective of this study was to analyze the deep rooted and multi-dimensional problem of child labor in the lock industry of Aligarh and to spell out some alternatives to reduce its severity and intensity and consider approaches for elimination of child labor. In this study the total number of selected children was 350. This study concluded that the "problem of child labor is a socio-economic problem and not a matter that can be settled by mere legislation, better enactment of laws and by imposition of heavy penalty". The amendment in the child labor act 1986, banning the employment of children in all the processes of lock making, has not made any difference except that it has enabled the authorities to collect more money from the owners of lock making units employing children.

Burra (2005) highlights that about 100 million child population out of approximately 203 million in India falling in the age group of 5-14 are drop outs. But to include them all as child laborers would not be correct. While schooling and doing child labor simultaneously are not mutually exclusive always, the deprivation from schooling emerges as one of the major antecedent as well as consequences of child labor. This sums up the significance of schooling and education for development of skilled human capital.

Venkatanarayana, (2004) in his study states that those are the educationally deprived children "who cannot attend school due to economic, health or school related problems". Therefore, in order to solve the trouble of child labor, human capital formation has emerged as the most effective solution.

2. Child labor: A probing overview

Everlasting family poverty and profit motive behavior of the employers are the two most important factors that force the children to join child labor. It is the responsibility of the family/society to provide best possible type of favorable conditions/opportunities, in which overall protection and development of the child can be ensured as childhood is the best time for human growth and development of personality, which deserve protection and developmental opportunities. The existence of child labor in a country may also lead to an increase in population. It is the poor families who think that the children are assets for them and they go on producing more and more children without any liability on them. This kind of mushroom growth in population is not taken care of by their parents which makes them characterless and may deviate from the right path. In this way, some of them at a later stage may join the terrorist campus and other criminal streams which are the burning problems in most of the countries in the world.

The studies on child labor have revealed that poverty is both cause and effect for this problem. Therefore, a vicious circle of poverty is developed due to child labor in the economy among such families in addition; the problem of child labor also develops a social inequality by increasing the gap between the rich and poor persons in the economy. It is well accepted belief that the inequality of any kind in an economy is inimical for its growth and development.

So the problem of child labor is a global phenomenon and must be tackled globally. Even politicians do not check such type of growth in population due to the continuous fear that they would lose their vote bank of such poor persons which may play a decisive role for their success and failure in assembly elections. The gravity of the problem therefore necessitates its complete elimination from an economy.

The child labor improves marginally the distribution of income at the micro level, but at the national level it may increase the level of inequalities in income and wealth. The standard of living of the majority is worsened further. Similarly, it can be said that the income from the child labor is only a short run gain and not all in long run. It appears that the problem of child labor and the problem of bribe are analogous. As bribe serves the interest of both, i.e. the taker as well as giver, in the same way, the child labor serves the interest of the employer in the form of large profit and a mild increase in the income of the poor families. The problem of child labor may also be compared with the problem of black money prevailing in the economy. As black money inhibits the growth and development of an economy, similarly child labor goes against the interest of the adult labor.

A child employed today is future denied; a future denied for itself and for society as a whole. Child labor amounts to violation of children's rights in total. It amounts to utter wastage of human potentials. It amounts to utter wastage of human potentials. It should, therefore, invite attention of a large number of people, groups, political parties, labor unions, national governments, international organizations, NGO's of national and international coverage for the removal of child labor existing in various economies of the world.

If a balance sheet between the gains and harms that accrue due to child labor is drawn in an objective manner, it will be found that the gains are temporary and fragile, while the losses in terms of damages are considerable. Therefore, remedial measures to remove child labor should be initiated on similar lines as that of a campaign for attaining total literacy in the economy. The child labor may also affect the labor market for adults by displacing a few of them out of jobs and thus making them unemployed. Thus it indirectly accentuates poverty in the economy. this melody of poverty due to prevalence of child labor may not remain confined to the concerned

economies but may be inflicted to other developed/developing economies in the current scenario of globalization. It should, therefore, be tackled at the earliest by restricting the number of births in such poverty ridden families and providing them sufficient income for getting necessary facilities in terms of food, housing and clothes for bringing up the other children (according to the norms fixed by the Government) in the form of a good human resources for the economy.

In case of India, we have achieved significant economic progress which can be seen from five-percent growth in our GNP, due to the policy of economic liberalization, but the quality of human life has been lagging behind as evident from the availability of educational opportunity and access of health, nutrition, sanitation and safe environment and drinking water.

Various studies are conducted and from estimation it is found that about 92 million (NIPCCD) Indian children live below poverty line. Due to this, millions of children in India have joined as laborer in different industries and occupations, which are very harmful to their growth and development. In 1979, Gurupadaswamy committee appointed by the Indian government deliberated the subject of child labor and stated that “as long as poverty continued, it would be difficult to totally eliminate child labor and hence, any attempt to abolish it through legal recourse would not be a practical proposition. The committee recommended a ban on child labor in hazardous areas and a multiple policy to deal with the problems of working children”. “The child labor (prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986” was enacted based on the recommendations of this committee. This act “prohibits employment of children in certain specified hazardous occupations and processes and regulates the working conditions in others”.

In accordance with census of 2011, there are 10.1 million child workers in India i.e. 3.9 % of total child population (259.6 millions) in the age cluster of 5-14 years. This is very shocking news that “one in every ten workers in India is a child. If we allocate a tenth of India’s to this share we can see India's child labor has a stake in India’s GDP”. But in NGOs and researchers’ study it is found 44-110 million of which about 90 percent are working in rural areas and two million in hazardous industries. The ILO estimates that “more than 250 million child workers between the age of 5-14 are working either full time or part time in developing countries alone”.

From occupation wise information estimates it is found that about 50,000 children are in match and firework industries in and around the Sivakaro (Tamil Nadu), 20,000 in stone quarries (Kerala) nearly 28,000 in mines in Meghalya, 20,000 in fish freezing and processing unit quilt on (Kerala), 18,000 in handloom, nearly 7,000 (mostly girls) in bidi industries, about 10,000 in lock industry, more than 50,000 in carpet work, similar number in glass making, 13,000 in gem polishing and about 45,000 in Brassware.

According to International Labor Organization (ILO) child labor does not exist only in poor countries but in rich countries like United States and other European Countries also. Worldwide Child Labor situation shows that more than 200 million children between 4-14 years all over the world have to work every day. In China more than 75,000 persons including women and children were arrested on charges of slave-trafficking between 1991-93. A lot of children aged 16 are working in coal mines in Columbia. In Philippines there are at least five million children who work for long hours with meager pay in many commercial and industrial endeavors. This figure is increasing day by day from one sector to another especially when we know that employment of children in early age breeds several kinds of problems.

The market for the child labor is termed as the market for buyers, i.e., the children who offer their labor for sale and have little control on the wage-rate, the price for their labor. On the other hand, the adult workers have their unions, which take care of their wage-rate and other related problems. However, the children do not find themselves in such a situation as the labor supplied by them is considered as illegal. The child labor market is an illegal market and, therefore, the

children cannot have their unions and hence cannot bargain for their wages, so they work for quite a low wage and becomes a significant factor for a demand for child labor. The employers many times exploit the children for their weak position and helplessness as they have no resisting power in the absence of their unions. On this basis, one may conclude that the children have poor propensity to fight for their rights from the employers.

Family ownership of enterprises, existence of nuclear families and use of labor intensive technology in most of the formal as well as informal sectors in urban/sub-urban areas of an economy may also affect the demand for child labor. Families having their own enterprises may associate initially their children as trainees in their professions. In the process the children may lose their interest for schooling and start devoting most of the time in helping their parents. Finally, they leave the schools and become whole time employees in these enterprises. Similarly, the nuclear families, where both the husband and wife are employed, demand children for helping them in their household chores and other day to day activities. As most of the informal /un-organized sectors by their very nature are labor intensive, so the employers of such industries employ children at very low wage rate with an objective of making abnormal profit. Here, again, it is the cheapness of the child labor which attracts the employers to go for child workers in place of adult workers.

2.1 Causes of Child Labor

Various factors are responsible for the participation of children below 15 years of age in the highly competitive job market. However, studies conducted on child labor mostly indicate that everlasting family poverty is the root cause of this menace. In addition to this, the possible factors for this problem may be enlisted as follows:

- Abject poverty
- Adult work participation rate (WPR)
- Female literacy
- Per capita State domestic product
- Wage rate difference between adult and child workers
- Unemployment and underemployment among the adult workers
- Large family size
- Economic necessity of the family
- Debt and financial liabilities of the Heads of the households which may also lead to the bonded labor
- Absence of unions in case of child labor and it is commonly found in unorganized sector, where the fixation of wage rate is purely the monopoly of employers. Children are more docile than adults.
- Urbanization i.e. migration to cities.

There are various demand and supply side factors which determine the incidence of child labor. Poor persons need to propel their income by sending children to work which makes poverty one of the most significant antecedent of child labor. The relationship between poverty and child labor is two ways i.e. “poverty causes child labor and child labor causes poverty”. Economic development of the region is another importance predictor to reduce the child labor by extending better opportunities to the adult workers and investing in the education for children. Again converse relation between economic development and child labor may also be possible i.e., demand for child labor may fall with economic development. Here wage rate may be considered as the linkage factor for reducing the child labor. Another factor generally connected to low fertility and thereby responsible for child labor reduction is female literacy. In the case of

"nowhere" children, poverty is expected to have strong positive relationship while economic development, female literacy is expected to have strong negative relationship.

There are several other factors (mentioned above) that impact incidence of child labor. It has been observed by the researchers working in the area of child labor that there has been an increasing trend in the growth of unorganized sectors in the developing countries of the world. Further, it can be guess that there is a direct relation between the demand for child labor and the growth of unorganized sectors in an economy, i.e., the larger the number of such sectors, the greater will be the demand for child labor. Similarly, the goods produced by the child labor are cost effective due to availability of the cheap labor, the producers of such goods can afford to sell them at a competitive price in the foreign markets. This leads to an increase in foreign demand and to meet this additional demand, production of such goods should also increase and hence more child workers will be in demand. This implies that higher the foreign demand for goods produced by children, higher will be the demand for child labor and there is, therefore, a positive correlation between them. Further, the exports of such goods may also increase due to globalization and liberalization of the economies, which again may be a cause for increase in the demand for child labor.

Moreover, each economy in the world is passing through a phase of globalization and thereby facing a keen competition for their products. It is very difficult to compete with developed economies until the producers sell their products in the global markets at a competitive price which is possible only when they produce the goods at a lower cost than that of their counterparts. Therefore, to fulfill their objective to capture the market share globally, the employers hire the at very low wages. It implies that larger the competition in the global arena for the commodities produced in the informal sector, higher will be the demand for child labor in the local markets and hence a positive correlation between the two.

In addition to this, the other factor which attracts the employers for child labor is the inherent qualities of the children which suit them most. The children are more docile, spare themselves for more working hours, more agile and quick, more vulnerable to punishment and have no bargaining power. There are certain areas in unorganized sector, where adult workers are not preferred, and only children are found most suitable for the employers in such areas. For example, match-making, beedi making, carpet weaving, etc. are technically well-suited to children and highly profitable from the point of view of the employers, "hence little hands" have a large demand. Carpet industry in every carpet manufacturing country is the most demand oriented for children in the third world. Further, there are some social, physical, traditional and psychological characteristics of the children which are of qualitative nature and hence cannot be quantified, but certainly affect the demand for child labor.

2.2 Consequences of Child Labor

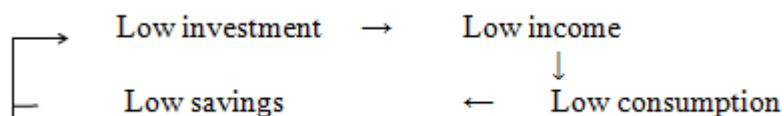
It may be noticed that every type of child labor is not necessarily a problem. It becomes a problem when the type of a labor done by a child affects his/her health and schooling hours, otherwise, it should be treated a helping hand in continuing his/her studies. However, there are certain areas of child labor which affect their overall growth and development in the form of complete human being. In this way, therefore, it is a grave problem for the all-round development of an economy and should be checked.

Generally, child labor is said to be caused by abject poverty of the families. However, there is a reverse effect too, it perpetuates poverty for the future generation. Its perpetuation develops a vicious circle of poverty in the economy. Poverty of the households compels their children to join labor market which deprived them from necessary education and a good health. It further implies

that they earn quite low wages which is not sufficient to remove the poverty of /her family and in addition to this it also affects the labor market of adults. Thus it indirectly accentuates poverty in the economy which may not remain confined to the concerned economies but may be infected to other developed/ developing economies in the current scenario, of globalization.

The vicious circle of poverty may also be explained as follows:

Figure 1: Labyrinth circle of poverty



Source: Developed by the author

This circle is vicious in the sense that it cannot be broken easily. Further, Child labor leads to economic recession in advanced countries and persistent poverty in developing countries through the nominal wage paid to the child workers which is far less than that of their counterparts, the adult workers. In this way the share of the profit to the capitalist goes on increasing continuously which gives birth to the recession in advanced economies and persistent poverty in developing economies .It appears that the child labor improves marginally the distribution of income at the micro level in the initial stages, but in the long run it develops serious inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth at the macro level and the standard of living of the large percentage of the population in the economy is worsened.

If an overall Balance sheet is drawn in an objective and dispassionate manner showing the assets on one hand and the liabilities on the other, it would be evident that the gains are temporary and fragile, while the losses in terms of damage which are caused are considerable. Therefore, the pursuing of the child problem is an urgent need for the overall development of an economy and its removal vigorously on the same pattern as of total literacy campaign.

A child employed today is future denied; a future denied for itself and for society as well. Child labor amounts to utter wastage of human potentials and amounts to violations of children's rights in total for them in becoming a good citizen. Therefore, it becomes obligatory for all to analyze this grave problem.

2.3 Impact of Labor on Child

Long hours of work (at work place) of the child along with his/her morning and evening work in his/her family becomes detrimental to their growth and development. Physical health and mental vigilance of the child can be deeply compromised with compulsive work demands under controlled supervision.

When family is supported financially by the working children, they gain liberty and start indulging in various activities unsuitable to their age like smoking, gambling, etc. which not only destroys their earnings but also severely affects their future development. Employers' attitudes of profit making with low expenditure encourage children survival in exploitative and abusive conditions which result in the form of occupational diseases, physical deformity and handicap. Children also elevate the danger of severe rates of adult unemployment by replacing them in the labor markets.

In this way the profit share of the capitalist increases and the share of wages to the workers diminish, and this kind of shift in income distribution certainly lowers the level of demand in developed economies.

The socio-psychological researches have predicted the real magnitude of the impact of physical labor on the growth of the child. It has its effect on the bodily growth, general fitness conditions and integrity of a child. Uncontrolled work pressures and severe physical labor makes the child both feeble and fearful. These conditions prohibit the intellectual or educational growth of a child.

Thus work, when undertaken for fulfillment of other selfish needs, become unsavory. Child labor, thus emerges as a social evil as it interferes with the normal growth process of a child towards adulthood. The use of children as a source of labor force, raise many other questions with demographic and Economic implications. Demographically speaking, the economic contribution of children is an important contributing factor in the demand for more children and consequently leads to population growth.

3.Census 2011: Figures about child labor

Census 2011 contains some very eye opening facts and figures about child labor ratio in Indian Population. The same is being discussed as follows:

Table 1: Population of both main workers and Marginal workers in Census 2011

All India Total Workforce	Male	Female
5-9 yrs	997384	843136
10-14 yrs	5781697	5004288
15-19 yrs	20919212	11377995
Total India	27698293	17225419
% of total workforce	10.08%	13.55%
Total workforce (all ages)	274783249	127083239

Source: Adapted from "Share of Child Labor in India's Growth Story" by Kumar, Nishit, Head, Communications & Strategic Initiatives, CHILDLINE India Foundation , pp. 2-3.

Table 1 shows the population of both Main workers and Marginal workers in Census 2011. It can be seen from the table that the children up to 14 the total number of children in the workforce is 12626505.

Table 2: Sectoral and Sex Composition of Child Labor as a Percentage to Total Workforce in Rural Areas of India, 2011

Sector	Male	Female
Agricultural Laborers	15.95	14.67
Plantation, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, etc.	13.98	13.05
Mining and Quarrying	7.13	14.69
Manufacturing (Household industry)	13.28	17.61
Manufacturing (Non-household industry)	9.64	16.90
Construction	9.72	12.12
Hotels and Restaurants	11.01	5.32
Transport & Communications	4.65	5.81
Financial, Real Estate, etc.	6.60	12.95
Education, Health, Household Work, etc.	3.34	6.17
Overall	10.08	13.55

Source: Compiled through Census India 2011, and Nishit Kumar, CHILDLINE, India Foundation.

Table 2 highlights the sector-wise distribution of child workers. It is seen that the largest number of child workers is in agriculture and lowest is in Education, Health, Household work, etc.

4. Discussion and suggestions

Human capital, similar to money capital, is the crucial resource for the growth and development of an economy. Therefore, the latent energy intelligence and talent of a child should not be wasted; rather it should be trained and educated for social, economic and cultural growth of the economy. Thus, it should be the aim of every government, society, teachers and parents to give proper and equal opportunities for the development of the children in the nation. If the children of a nation remain engaged in child labor then they are deprived of their right to education and hence cannot be the noble citizens of the nation (e.g. doctors, engineers, officers, etc.) which may also be considered as the measure for its development. Health similar to education is another crucial variable for the growth and development of human capital. Because the child workers remain engaged in the hazardous and risky nature of work, so they miss their golden time for attaining a good health. The best time of their life in which they should do sports for the growth of their health and personality, is wasted while doing child labor. There is also an illusion in the parent's opinion that the earnings of their children are worthwhile and contribute significantly in removing the family poverty. This is a short sightedness in assessing the problem of child labor. There has been a study in U.S.A. which reveals that one dollar income for working as a child labor reduces ten times earning capacity in later years of his adulthood.

Further, it is suggested that the policies for the removal of child labor can be of long-term as well as short-term nature. The long term policies are proposed to improve the societal conditions for

elimination of child labor while short term policies need to focus on living and working conditions of vulnerable children.

4.1 Long -Term policies

The purpose of long term policies is to bring about a gradual stand still to the problem of child labor, I. e., the complete elimination of this social evil. This could be achieved by raising the overall standard of society through the following measures:

(i) Removal of poverty: As there is a direct relation between the poverty level and child labor which is verified by various empirical studies, therefore, the reduction in poverty will also lower the problem of child labor. For this purpose, the government should generate additional, viable employment opportunities and the poor families must be given preference while giving employment from such opportunities by implementing the norm of one employee from each household. The gap between the demand for and supply of labor (unemployment) should be reduced by controlling the undue increase in population on one hand and increasing the demand for labor on the other. The provision of regular flow of income to poor families by providing employment to them is a significant mechanism for the removal of poverty in an economy.

(ii) Eradication of Illiteracy: It is a well recognized fact that education is the key factor for personal as well as national growth. India's literacy rate (74.04%) is still less than satisfactory and, therefore, the uneducated parents fail to appreciate the role of child education in raising their living standard. The dropout rate in schools is also quite high. Official data claims that "of the 100 children who join school in class 1, only 47 reach class VIII, which has also been recognized by our Prime Minister. At a meeting of the governing council of the National Mission for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan on Feb. 21, 2005, the Prime Minister has pledged more funds to boost elementary education. However, the fact is that the country does not spend enough on education in general and primary education in particular". Education has been allotted as a state subject in Indian constitution and the States barring a few like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh, are not giving it ample and desired attention. Schools in most of the rural areas lack the basic infrastructure facilities, including classrooms, portable drinking water and even toilets. In the absence of proper monitoring, absenteeism and carelessness among teachers is widespread. The lack of basic amenities and indifference of educators vitiate the pious academic atmosphere, propelling most of these students to drop out from their studies. If quality education is to be extended to the end beneficiaries' level, administration must ensure more efficient intervention of Panchayats. For managing and controlling the dropout menace, the mid-day meal scheme has, to some extent, been successful in serving the twin purposes of attracting students to schools and improving their physical health standards. The problem of staff shortage is more acute and, therefore, needs a serious attention of the government to boost education in the respective economies for eradicating the problem of child labor.

(iii) Increase Public Awareness: A surprisingly high number of persons are unaware of the unsafe working conditions in which children work and the consequences of forceful early employment on the child specifically and the society as a whole. There is a need to arouse awareness in the child workers, their parents and employers of the damage the early work can cause to the society, young earners and their generations to come.

(iv) Role of Trade Unions: The trade unions can play a very important role in the implementation of existing laws on the minimum age for admission to employment, minimum wages, working hours and rest intervals. Since working children are not members of the trade unions, they do not have the bargaining capacity over their conditions of work. Trade unions can work more effectively if they comprehend the physical and mental havoc the working children have to face,

and the fact that child labor reduces adult wages as well as adult employment. Therefore, trade unions come forward to tackle the evil of child labor which is affecting both child workers as well as adult work.

4.2 Short-Term Policies

Though our long-term objective is the complete elimination of child labor, efforts must be concentrated on short-term policies towards improving the working conditions of children through child labor laws and other welfare programs which are as under: (i) Welfare Services, (ii) Health and Nutrition, (iii) Working Conditions, (iv) Housing, (v) Recreation, (v) occupation and moral protection.

In addition to the detailed suggestions as given above, there are some suggestions which may be of valuable help for the stakeholders for the removal of child labor from an economy. These are as under:

- 1) Schooling or education is the most evident and the only best substitute to remove child labor from the concerned economies.
- 2) “Expenditure in social sector should be raised for overall development” as suggested by Noble Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen. and it was proved by my own study also that the government expenditure on education influences the Net State Domestic Product after a period of fifteen years in a significant manner. Thus expenditure on education requires fifteen years to make its contribution to the growth of economy. Thus policy makers and planners in designing the growth and budget policies of the state governments as well as for the central government should think about to raise the educational expenditure which becomes a productive investment capable of providing return and contributes to the National income.
- 3) Vocational training or skill building should be emphasized apart from regular education to aid children in attaining economic freedom in their adulthood.
- 4) Last but not the least governments must monitor the elimination of corrupt practices in social programs in order to ensure the benefaction of the end-users of the programs.

5. Conclusions and future direction

After a thorough investigation of the child labor problem in India, it has been observed that everlasting family poverty and employers profit making motive, are the key forcing factors for children to join labor force. As far as India is concerned we have achieved significant economic progress as evident from approximately five percent growth in our GNP, due to the policy of liberalization, but the overall quality of human life has been lagging behind which is evident from the lack of proper amenities of education, access to health, nutrition, sanitation and drinking water, etc. It will affect the economy in terms of inefficient and inadequate human capital formation which indirectly give birth to child labor and further aggravates the economy. Future studies can be undertaken for analyzing the child labor impact on various socio-economic parameters of development based on the results of census 2021. Focused examinations and experiments can be conducted on the mental and physical impact of labor on children and their future adult life.

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