

Child Labor in India: Initiatives and Challenges

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Abstract: "We have to start with the kids if we want to instill true peace in this world and fight a true war against war." The Mahatma Gandhi In India, child labor is a major concern because early admission into the workforce at a young age often results in dropping out of school, which reduces future opportunities for better living. Poverty is the primary cause of the complex issue of child labor. We will present a scenario in which child labor increases in this paper, along with an exhaustive discussion of the issues that have arisen as a result of this specific issue. The necessary actions to resolve these issues are suggested. In conclusion, we believe that the suggested solution would be valuable in resolving the issues that have arisen as a result of child labor. youngsters who work as youngsters are unable to develop emotionally, intellectually, or physically. There is currently no international agreement that completely forbids child labor. From the education of children and their families to the creation of comprehensive legislation and regulations regarding child work, this public health issue necessitates a multidisciplinary approach. We will talk about in this essay. India's Initiatives and Difficulties with Child Labor.

Keywords: Child Labor, Initiatives, Challenges, Emotional Development, Public Health, Labor Laws, Regulations, Intellectual, Education, Child Trafficking, Cultural, Poverty

Introduction:

Child Labour:

The greatest gift to humanity is childhood, which is a formative and significant period in human development since it has the capacity to shape a society's future. Growing up in an environment that supports their physical, mental, and social well-being helps children become responsible and effective members of society. Every country makes a connection between its current and its children's future. When youngsters work before they are ready, they unnecessarily diminish their current welfare or their potential to generate revenue in the future. This can occur through a reduction in their future external choice sets or a reduction in their own future productive skills. Children are compelled to forgo educational chances in times of severe economic hardship in favor of employment that are typically exploitative because they are often underpaid and work in hazardous conditions. [1]

When it comes to tackling the issue of child labor, India has always taken a proactive approach and has always supported the legislative, constitutional, and developmental measures needed to end child labor. The Indian Constitution contains pertinent clauses aimed at ensuring universal elementary education is made mandatory. Committees and commissions on labor have investigated the issues of child labor and issued numerous recommendations. The Indian judiciary, including the highest echelon, has exhibited very compassionate reactions towards the phenomenon of child labor. The issue of child labor continues to be a problem for the nation despite numerous proactive laws, regulations, and court rulings.

Work that harms a child's physical or mental development and robs them of their youth, potential, or dignity is sometimes referred to as "child labor." It describes jobs that interfere with children's education by denying them the chance to attend class, forcing them to leave early, or forcing them to try balancing school attendance with unduly demanding and lengthy work. These kinds of jobs can be mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children. Due to variations in how age groups are defined and how many children work in the official and informal sectors, there is variation in the statistical data regarding child laborers worldwide.

In India, child labor has long been an issue. A 2011 survey by the Indian government found that 10.1 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 were working as kids. Child labour is still used in many areas of the Indian economy, including agriculture, household work, and the unorganised sector, despite laws and policies designed to stop it and safeguard children's rights prohibiting it. [2]

Positive progress has been made in India's attempts to combat child labor in recent years. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, which forbade the employment of minors under the age of 14 in all professions and procedures, was modified by the government in 2016. The amendment also forbade the hiring of minors in dangerous jobs and procedures, ages 14 to 18. On the other hand, there have also been some alarming developments about child labor in India.

Challenges

- 1. Poverty and Economic Factors:** Child labor is still primarily motivated by poverty. Children who are struggling to make ends meet are frequently sent to labor to help supplement their income.
- 2. Lack of Education:** Child labor is perpetuated by limited access to high-quality education. Due to poor infrastructure, teachers, and schools, many families prioritize employment over education.
- 3. Weak Law Enforcement:** Although child labour regulations have been passed in India, they are not currently being sufficiently enforced. Effective eradication is hampered by inadequate monitoring and legal loopholes.
- 4. Informal Sector:** Regulation and monitoring are difficult because a large percentage of child labor takes place in this sector. Child exploitation is made possible by the frequent absence of control and regulation in this industry. [3]

Types of Childs Labour in India:

Children are becoming more and more involved in the unofficial sector and at-home labor. Children work in physical labor, in the domestic sector, dangerous factories, rag picking, beedi rolling, matchbox, brick kilns, and other jobs. These are the worst forms of child labor, according to the ILO:

- 1. Slavery:** Working for another person is the definition of slavery. Unable to demand anything, slaves are powerless. They must labor in accordance with their master's instructions.
- 2. Child trafficking:** The purchase and sale of minors for the purpose of forced labor or sexual exploitation.
- 3. Debt bondage:** People are frequently made to work as laborers when they are unable to repay their loans with their money and possessions.
- 4. Serfdom:** The term used to describe the practice of someone working on someone else's land is serfdom. Either some compensation for the labor will be offered, or none at all.
- 5. Forced Labor:** It is called forced labor when a child works against their will.
- 6. Beggary:** Poor parents frequently beg on roads when they have no other way to make a living. In an attempt to win over pity and obtain more money, they also cut a portion of their child's body. On red lights, small children are frequently seen pleading for money for medical care.

Causes for Child Labour:

Primary Causes:

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the main factor contributing to child labor is poverty. In destitute households, a child's earnings from employment are typically essential to the child's survival as well as the household's. Even if they are not very wealthy, children who work can contribute anywhere from 25 to 40% of the family income. The same conclusion has been made by other researchers, including Edmonds and Pavcnik on worldwide child labor and Harsch on child labor in Africa. According to the ILO, a significant contributing factor to children being forced into hazardous labor is a lack of worthwhile alternatives, such as reasonably priced schools and excellent education. For lack of something else to do, children labor. Lack of proper school facilities is a problem in many communities, especially in rural areas where 60–70% of child labor is common. Parents may question if attending school is truly worthwhile, even in cases when there exist schools. These may be too far away, challenging to get to, expensive, or of such low quality.

Cultural Causes:

Certain cultural attitudes have legitimized and hence supported child labor, both in the historical context of Europe when it was common and in the current era. Some people believe that work helps kids develop their skills and character. Child labor is a way for young children to learn and practice trades from their parents because it is a cultural tradition in many countries, especially those where small household enterprises and the informal economy are flourishing. Similar to this, girls' education is often undervalued in many cultures, or girls are simply not seen to need a formal education, and as a result, these girls are forced into child labor, such as providing domestic services.

Macroeconomic Causes:

Macroeconomic factors that promote child labor have been investigated by Biggeri and Mehrotra. The five Asian countries that they investigate are Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, India, and Pakistan. They contend that although child labor is not a recent issue, it is a significant one in all five. During the majority of human history, macroeconomic factors have fostered widespread child labor worldwide. They propose that both the supply and demand sides have a role in the causes of child labor. It is suggested that the rise of the low-paying informal industry rather than the higher-paying formal economy is one of the causes of the demand side, while poverty and the lack of adequate schools account for the supply side of child labor. There are some academics who contend that the extent of the informal sector, the rigidity of the labor market, the incapacity of industries to expand, and the absence of contemporary industrial technologies are important macroeconomic variables that influence the demand for and acceptance of child labor.

Other factors or causes of child labor in India include

- Poverty

- Poor literacy and lack of education
- Absence of primary education
- Lack of educational infrastructures and development
- Lack of parents' awareness
- Social and cultural environment
- Inactive implementation of child labour law and act [4]

Review of Literature:

For UNICEF, child labor has a different definition. According to UNICEF, a child is considered to be engaged in child labor if, during the course of a week, they are between the years of 5 and 11 they complete at least one hour of economic activity or 28 hours of household work; for children between the ages of 12 and 14 years old, they complete at least 14 hours of economic activity or 42 hours of domestic work. According to another UNICEF report, "Children's work needs to be seen as happening along a continuum, with beneficial work—promoting or enhancing children's development without interfering with their schooling, recreation, and rest—at one end and destructive or exploitative work at the other. Additionally, there are extensive fields of employment in between these two poles that need not harm a child's development." [5]

The definition of child labor has been provided by Bhat (2010). According to him, it is not straightforward since it encompasses three hard-to-define concepts: "child," "labor," and "work." In other communities, people cease to be considered children at different ages, despite his assumption that the term "childhood" could be defined by age. In the context of child labor, Bhat (2010) attempted to analyze the significance of schooling. He endeavored to ascertain the effect of child labor on kids' attendance at school. He made several recommendations about how education may be used to combat child labor. According to Bhat (2011), the first laws prohibiting child labor were passed between 1833 and 1844. It was agreed upon that children should not work, and the goal was to ensure that no child was engaged in anything that would conflict with their education. Still, a lot of children continued to be involved in child labor, even if it was illegal. [6]

According to Lavison's 2005 research, child labor is used in a variety of risky and hazardous occupations. Due to their exposure to health risks, these kids are especially prone to physical discomfort and harm. have made an effort to report that child labor is defined as any employment performed by youngsters outside of the family. They claim that working outside the home frequently exposes them to environmental risks that could endanger their health and well-being. that the development and economy of a country are impacted by the unskilled and uneducated labor produced by child labor. [7]

Objectives:

- To reveal the reasons and consequences of child labour in India.
- To identify the main challenges for eliminating child labour and abusive Practice
- To examine the causes and impact of child labour
- To find out an overview account on child labour in India
- To discuss about the laws and legal provisions to protect child rights in India

Research Methodology:

The research paper presented on the descriptive method based on non-empirical design. In order to collect data for the study, the secondary data was used such as books, research articles, journals, periodicals, census report and so on.

Result and Discussion:

Child Labour in Modern Era:

Economic activity has always involved the employment of children. In communist and pro-capitalist nations like India, children worked in trade and guild jobs. In these communities, connections at work were casual, and the office served as an extension of the home. As the youngster grew older, he or she found employment within the family, where they were not assigned risky or challenging tasks. A major component of their training and socialization was work. [8]

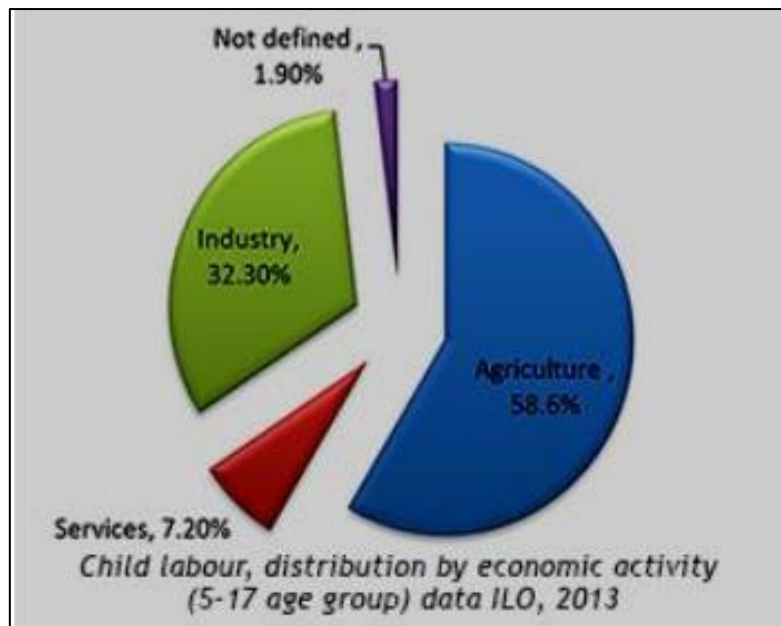


Figure 1: Child Labour in Modern Era

But when capitalism entered the industrialization process in the 18th century, this idea dynamically changed, and child labor started to be recognized as a societal issue. The family-based economy was shattered by the new economic forces that capitalism unleashed. The mechanization of agriculture resulted in the mass displacement of workers, as farmers were forced to leave their place of employment at home. They started working as wage earners. The youngster had to be brought to the labor market due to extreme poverty; this process was furthered by parents' lack of other work and children's lack of education.

The 2010 Census provided the sector-by-sector data on child labor in different occupations. The above table shows that child labor is more prevalent in urban areas (15.55% in manufacturing and 12.31% in agricultural) than it is in rural areas. The minimum percentage of child labor in the energy, gas, and water industries is 1.71% in urban areas and 1.22% in rural areas.

Child Labour in India:

Child work is a frightening topic in India. Around 20 percent of the youngsters in the nation are laborers, as reported by the statistics indicating one in five children under the age of 14 are employed as workers. In actuality, there isn't a trustworthy source for routinely gathering data on child labor. The Government of India conducts the Census every ten years, which is the sole trustworthy source of data on child labor in the nation.

Based on data from the 2001 Census, 1.26 crore of the 25.2 crore total child population is employed between the ages of 5 and 14. The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act lists 18 dangerous occupations and 65 procedures, all of which are performed by almost 12 lakh children. According to a poll conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in 2004–05, there are expected to be 90.75 lakh working children. The number of working children aged 5 to 14 has dropped to 43.53 lakh, according to the 2011 Census. [9]

Some Child Protection Laws in India, are:

Children Pledging of Labour Act, 1933: This Act forbids the pledging of children's labor.

Act of 1987 to Prevent Immoral Traffic: The purpose of this Act is to end the trafficking of minors, both male and female.

The 1986 Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act: This Act controls the working conditions of minors in certain occupations and prohibits children from working in certain occupations.

Act of 2006 Prohibiting Child Marriage: This Act's key idea is that (a) it is unlawful to force a child into marriage and (b) a child or minor is anyone under the age of 18, for girls, and 21 for guys.

The 2009 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act: The Directive Principles of State Policy contained a provision pertaining to the right to education, which granted the government a ten-year period to fulfill its duty of offering free and compulsory education. The inclusion of the Right to Education in the list of fundamental rights has rendered it a justiciable right under Article 21a.

Some Table Relating to Child Labour in India: Table 1:

Year	Percentage of working children (5-14)			Total number of working children (5-14) (in million)		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
2001	5.9	2.1	5.0	11.4	1.3	12.7
2011	4.3	2.9	3.9	8.1	2.0	10.1

*Source- Census 2011

Table 2: Distribution of working children by type of work in 2011 [10]

Area of work	Percentage	Numbers (in million)
Cultivators	26.0	2.63
Agricultural	32.9	3.33
Household industry workers	5.2	0.52
Other workers	35.8	3.62

Table 3: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh together constitute nearly 55% of total working children in India.

States	Percentage	Number (in million)
Uttar Pradesh	21.5	2.18
Bihar	10.7	1.09
Rajasthan	8.4	0.85
Maharashtra	7.2	0.73
Madhya Pradesh	6.9	0.70

Child Labour: Initiatives By Government of India;

National Policy for Children 1974: It is the first policy paper addressing children's rights and needs. It acknowledged that children are the nation's most precious asset. The strategy aims to further the process of ensuring the implementation of the UN Declaration of Rights and the constitutional requirements concerning children.

National Policy on Education, 1986: "Special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity" was demanded, with particular reference to the communities of Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC), and Indian women.

1987's National Policy on Child Labor: It includes the plan of action for addressing the issue of child labor. It called for a project-based plan of action to start projects for the welfare of working children in places where there is a high concentration of child labor, as well as a legislative action plan that would concentrate and converge general development programs for the benefit of children wherever practicable.

1993's National Nutrition Policy: It was presented as a solution to the undernutrition issue. Using both direct (short-term) and indirect (long-term) interventions, it seeks to address this issue in the areas of food production and distribution, education, health and family welfare, rural and urban development, and the development of women and children, among other areas.

National Population Policy 2000: Improving the lot of Indian children is the goal of the national population policy 2000. Free and mandatory schooling up until the age of 14, immunization of children against all diseases preventable by vaccines, 100% registration of births, deaths, marriages, and pregnancies, significant declines in the rates of infant and maternal mortality, etc., were all stressed.

The 2002 National Health Policy: The primary aim of this program is to attain a satisfactory level of well-being for the nation's entire populace. The strategy is to improve the infrastructure in the current institutions and build new facilities in places that lack it in order to expand access to the decentralized public health system.

In an effort to promote children's wellbeing, the Indian government adopted the National Plan of Action for Children (NPA), 2005. The NPA encompasses several important areas, some of which are related to child protection. These include: □ Ensuring the survival, development, and protection of girl children through the complete abolition of female foeticide, female infanticide, and child marriage; □ Addressing and upholding the rights of children in difficult circumstances; and □ Securing for all children legal and social protection from various forms of abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

The statistics provided in the upcoming chapters make it abundantly clear that, despite a number of targeted initiatives addressing the diverse needs of Indian children, much work has to be done to better their situation in all areas related to child survival, child development, and child protection. These areas also exhibit a high degree of gender inequality, which makes girl children especially vulnerable. [11]

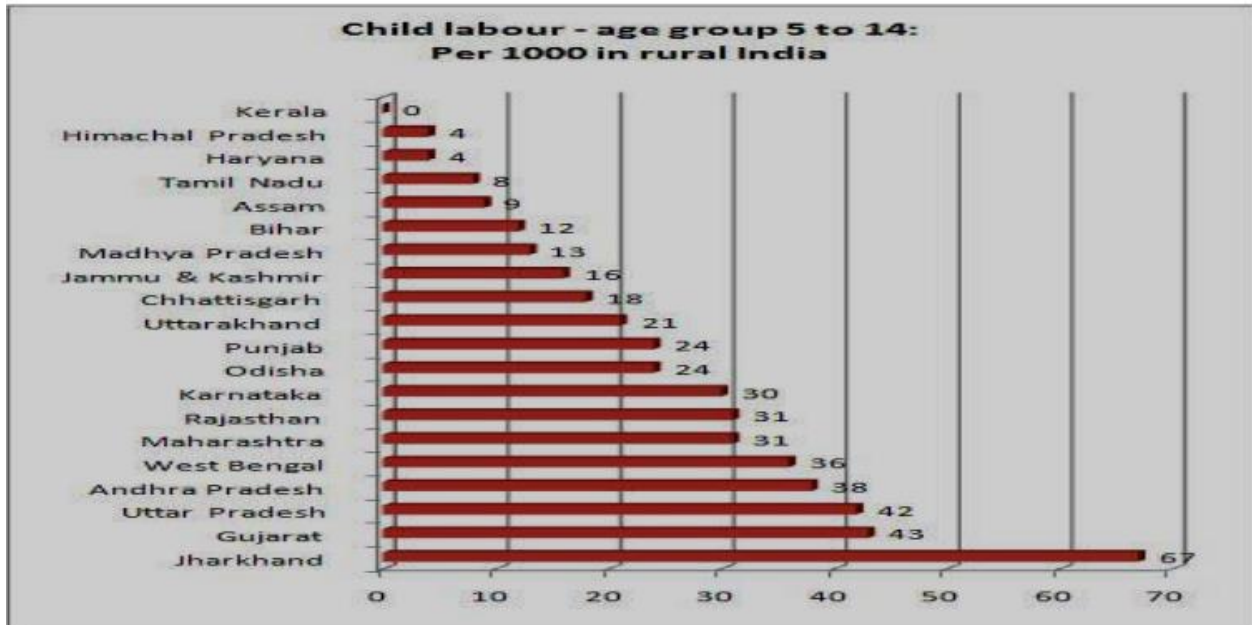


Figure 2: Child Labour in Rural India [12]

Conclusion:

In conclusion, child labor is still a serious problem in India, causing a variety of problems for the growth and well-being of young people. Their youth, education, and chances for a better future are being taken away from them, which is a violation of their rights. To solve this issue, however, coordinated efforts are being undertaken via social initiatives, awareness campaigns, and legislative measures. One of the key contributing reasons to this issue is poverty. Therefore, it cannot be solved by enforcement alone. Enhancing the financial circumstances of these children's families and rehabilitating these kids have been top priorities for the government. The welfare of children, the advancement of society, and the long-term growth of a country all depend on addressing and ending child labor.

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