

## Child Labour

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### Abstract

In India, the second largest country of Asia has the largest child labour force in the world (17.4 million). The main causes of child labour are Poverty, Parental illiteracy, ignorance, Parental unemployment, death, large family and Father's addiction as a family's causes and social causes as a Poor punitive law provisions. Child labour as a cheap commodity, Poor educational facilities. In child labour the international labour standards cite 15 years as the minimum age for employment. More female children are working vis-à-vis total female workers. Among working women, more than 9% are child workers. Rural areas had higher child labour participation rates for males and females than urban areas. As regards to sex differences, the child labour participation rate (CLPR) (0-14) for males is 1.38% and 1.21% for females. Most of the times, exploitatively low wages are paid. They are as low as Rs. 50-100 per month for an average of 10-12 hours of work per day.

**Keywords:** Child Labour; Poverty; Illiteracy; Punitive Law.



### Introduction

The innocent children, millions in number, are exploited and abused everywhere in different walks of life. By virtue of being a child, it is quite impossible for him/her to report his/her victimization to the concerned persons. The child workers have been suffering mental harm, physical injury, verbal harassment etc., in the hands of their employers and the parents as well.

#### *Meaning – Child Labour*

The ILO convention of 1973 set out a definition of unacceptable child labour which covered:

- Dangerous work jeopardizing the health, safety and morals of children below 14 years of age;

- "Normal" work for children below 14 years age; and
- Even part-time "light" work below the age of 12 years.

#### *Definition*

It is the employment of children in gainful occupations which are dangerous to their health and denying them the opportunities of development.

*(Kulshrestha)*

It is "that segment of the population which participates in work either paid or unpaid. (Government of India)

#### *What is the Difference between Child at Work and Child Labour.*

The terms "child at work" and "child labour" are quite different and often confusing and thus need clarifications. Especially in the developing countries, children are involved in the house-hold work of their families as soon as they are capable and accustomed for working. This age old system is beneficial as a part of informal preparation and training for adulthood tasks. This household work is virtually free from harmful effects and may prove interesting, educational and socially useful. However, work outside the family environment involves a sharp

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change of environment, discipline and life-style. Thus, "childhood" may terminate abruptly once a child is employed for wage earning and the child is subjected to various hazards related to his mental, physical or social health and it is here that the term "child labour" is mostly used.

#### *A view on Child Labour in India*

In India, with close to 42 percent of the population urbanized, urban child labour population urbanized, urban child labour accounts for only 5.8 per cent of the entire child labour in the country. The sectoral distribution of child labour in the countryside indicates that most of the children are engaged in agriculture, rather than in industrial sectors, which have become the focus of media attention and trade sanction initiatives. According to the census data of 2001, around 42 per cent of the child workers were engaged in their family farm in agriculture in animal husbandry and fishing respectively.

In 2012, 46 per cent of the rural child workers were engaged as agricultural labourers. Around 2.5 per cent of the officially registered working child population was engaged in household industry, usually a manufacturing unit conducted by a family member, and a further 4.7 per cent worked in other manufacturing units. Construction (0.7%) and mining (0.22%) were the other sectors where more than in agriculture, the physical and mental well being of the child may be at risk.

#### *Causes and Determinants of Child Labour*

##### *Familial Causes*

1. Poverty.
2. Parental illiteracy/ignorance.
3. Parental unemployment and death.
4. Large family.
5. Father's addiction.

##### *Child's Causes*

1. Repeated failures. In many cases, it has been observed that the child's own poor performance at education.
2. Siblings. The child may follow the path of his elder siblings who go to work.
3. Economic independency.

##### *Social Causes*

1. Poor punitive law provisions.

2. Child labour – a cheap commodity.
3. Poor educational facility.

#### *Determinants of Child Labour*

1. General fertility rate.
2. Percentage of agricultural population.
3. Percentage of houseless population and of landless households.
4. General literacy rate and school enrolment rate (age group 11-14 years).
5. Wage rate.
6. Expectation of life at birth.

**Table 1**

<b>Child Labour in Different Occupations</b>		
1. Agriculture	8. Machine	12. coir products
2. Plantations	tools, repair	13. Domestic worker
3. Mining and quarrying	shops and petrol pumps	14. Helpers in hotels,
4. Beedi-rolling	9. Zari and embroidery	15. Rag picking
5. Glass and bangles	10. Gem cutting and weaving	16. Construction
6. Handloom and carpet weaving.	11. Cashew processing	17. Hawkers, vendors, newspaper sellers
7. Match and fire works		18. Shoe-shining and
		19. Coolies

#### *Health Hazards Child Labour on Children*

##### *Health Hazards can be Divided into two Groups*

1. Hazards inherent to the working children themselves, and
  - Malnutrition
  - Physical health hazards
  - Communicable diseases
  - Effects on psychosocial development
2. Hazards related to their occupations.

*Minimum age of employment:* There is no uniformity in the matter of minimum age of employment of children. The age varies from occupation to occupation. The Indian laws provide for lower standards than those presented by the ILO conventions.

#### *Role of the Nurse in Child Labour*

1. Primary healthcare approach to provide healthcare to the children at the work place.

Occupation	Disease / Disability
1. Balloon factories	Pneumonia, bronchopneumonia, breathlessness and even heart failure.
2. Match and fire works	Breathing problems, severe burn, muscle fatigue due to lifting heavy industrial loads, deformation due to long hours of work in one position.
3. Lock industry	Tuberculosis and upper respiratory tract diseases, asthma, acute breathlessness, acid burns, acute headache.
4. Glass industry	Silicosis, burns, reduced life span by a third due to heat and dust.
5. Slate industry	Silicosis, tuberculosis.
6. Power loom industry	Byssinosis, fibrosis of lung tissue.
7. Beedi industry	Nicotine poisoning – nausea, headache, muscle fatigue, loss of eye sight.
8. Brass industry	Acid burn, Tuberculosis.
9. Zari industry	Eye diseases, postural deformities and spinal problem.
10. Domestic workers shop	Over work, physical and sexual abuse, drug addiction.
11. Carpet industry	Poisoning from colouring agents, lung diseases from fibre dust.

1. Children (Pledging of labour) Act, 1933,	9. Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment Act, 1966),
2. Employment of Children Act, 1938,	10. The Atomic Energy Act, 1962 (Radiation Protection Rule, 1971),
3. Factories Act, 1948,	11. State shops and Establishment acts,
4. Mines Act, 1952,	12. Dock Worker's Regulation and Employment Act, 1948, and
5. Plantations Labour Act, 1951,	13. Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.
6. Merchant Shipping Act, 1958,	
7. Apprentices Act, 1961,	
8. Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961,	

S. No.	Act	Indian law	ILO Recommendation
1	Factories act	14 years	15 years
2	Mines act		
	• Below ground	16 years	16 years
	• Above ground	15 years	15 years
3	Plantations Labour Act	12 years	14 years
4	Motor Transport Workers Act	15 years	15 years
5	Employment of children Act	14 years	15 years
6	Shops and other Non-industrial employment Light work	12 years	15 years
		12 years	13 years

2. Identification for 'at risk' approach should be implemented especially if the child is exposed to high risk environment at work place.
3. *Community involvement*: Teachers, voluntary agencies, social workers, politicians, women's associations, youth clubs and religious leaders must come forward to help these children from all aspects.
4. Labour unions can be persuaded to look after all the needs of the children separately.
5. Child Workers – self appraisal and care.
6. Legislation and working children.

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