



A Position of Child Labour in North 24 Parganas, with Special Reference Basirhat

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Abstract:

An important part of the worldwide movement to end child labour is helping former child workers make the transition to formal schooling. This objective is mostly pursued in India via the National Child Labour Project. There are a lot of encouraging results from the study. For example, there is evidence of sufficient education quality and availability, and there are high percentages of providing kids with both free learning materials and lunch. On the other hand, concerns were also highlighted, such as insufficient provision of free health care to children who choose to attend school instead of labour and anomalies in stipend payments to parents of child workers who send their children to school. The study uncovered certain operational shortcomings that hinder the project's efficacy by reducing the motivation and capacity of parents to send their children to school instead of working.

Keywords: Child Labour, Education, India, West Bengal, National Child Labour Project.

Introduction:

The historical roots of child work as a social, economic, and political problem may be found in the spinning mills of Manchester during the Industrial Revolution in England, or perhaps earlier. Currently, a large percentage of the workforce in the world's least developed nations consists of children. Due to their parents' inability to provide adequately, children as young as thirteen or fourteen years old are forced to labour in tiny economic units in unsanitary and deplorable circumstances for pitiful wages. Working as a child is very harmful to their health and their ability to learn. The children's right to enjoy this time and put their energy into studying and developing skills for future lucrative work is being violated. Child labour is a massive issue in developing nations, which has caught the attention of scholars, policymakers, and government officials. Nevertheless, its enormity is hard to fathom because kid and labour is not clearly defined. The Oxford Concise English Dictionary defines a "child" as a young person who has not yet reached puberty or the age of majority in their country. The Microsoft Encarta dictionary defines a kid as an individual who is between the ages of 0 and 19, inclusive.

For the purposes of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, "a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" comprises a child. Wikipedia cites this. It is possible, under certain conditions, to reduce the age of 16 as a legal notion for the purpose of defining a kid. For instance, the Vide Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 states that in cases involving a horrific crime committed by a juvenile, the current Juvenile Justice Act is reduced to 16. This change was made in response to the notorious Delhi gang rape case.

Work that is detrimental to a child's physical and mental development, as well as to their innocence, potential, and dignity, is often referred to as "child labour" by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). As a result, young people are exploited and denied the chance to live a decent life; they are subjected to unsafe labour and forced to work longer hours. It refers to work that:

- a) Harmful both psychologically and physically as well as socially and ethically to children; and
- b) Blocks their path to a better future by preventing them from going to school;
- c) Forcing them to drop out of school before their time is up; or
- d) Making them try to juggle too lengthy and strenuous job hours with attending school.
- e) In its worst manifestations, child labour entails enslavement, family separation, exposure to diseases and dangers, and/or abandonment of young children to survive on the streets of big cities.

The widespread discussion around child work has been a focal point of policy discussions in both wealthy and developing nations. Some think child work should be illegal because of the ethical concerns raised by the issue. Having said that, research shows that low-income families have no choice but to put their kids to work as farmhands. Poor migrant labourers from Bihar, for instance, sometimes bring their children to work alongside them in the brick fields, where conditions are notoriously hostile. Child labour in West Bengal's brick fields is an issue that this research aims to quantify.

Literature Review:

One of humanity's greatest blessings is its offspring. On the other hand, using children as labourers is a common way that this talent is abused. Many Indian parents also have no choice but to put their children to work due to the country's dire economic situation. Rather than considering the problem from an economic perspective, many focus on the moral and ethical dimensions of child work.

"Defining Child Labour: A Controversial Debate" by Augendra Bhukuth (Development in Practice, Volume 18, Issue 3, June 2008, pages 385–394):

The authors Basu and Van (1998) point out that there are several obstacles to defining child labour since not even those in positions of power agree on what the words 'Child' and 'work' mean.

Attempts have been made by Augendra Bhukuth (2008) to provide definitions for these terms and others, such as dangerous employment, decent work, and the many types of child labour. Child work is not a uniform problem, he said. The International Labour Organization's strictly economic definition of child employment allows for the differentiation between low-risk and high-risk occupations, but it does not include all types of child working.

Apparently, international groups don't mind kids doing light work as long as it doesn't hurt their physical or moral growth. As one grows from infancy into maturity, it could even be a positive experience. Considering the socioeconomic realities of developing nations, it is very impossible to implement a legislation that would entirely eliminate child employment, which explains why light labour is accepted. A household's level of living may be maintained and entry into the adult world is made easier with light labour. Thus, the most heinous kind of child labour is the primary target of the international groups' efforts to end child labour.

Microfinance and micro investment have a major effect on the prevalence of child employment, as shown by Sayan Chakraborty's research in *A Nexus between Child employment and Microfinance: An Empirical Investigation* (Economic studies, Vol 34, No 1-2, June 2015, 76-91). In moderately impoverished homes, micro insurance does not dictate the statistics, according to Chakraborty. There is evidence that these programs help families living close to or below the poverty line. Child labour has declined because microcredit helped these households.

Child employment in India by Sumanta Banerjee (1979) (Anti-Slavery Society): The central claim of this brief (50 pages) but insightful essay is that, in light of the present economic and social climate and the

poverty it causes, child employment cannot be eradicated. The youngsters at these brick kilns are subjected to severe health risks in addition to receiving minimal earnings, according to Banerjee's case studies.

Objective:

The objective of this study is to:

- 1) Examine the idea of child work, its meaning, and the frequency with which it occurs.
- 2) In North 24 Parganas, choose some brick fields.
- 3) Explain why it is that humans use children as labourers.
- 4) Get a feel for the office setting.
- 5) The dangers that the kids face on the job.
- 6) How the government can help end the humane practice of exploiting children for profit.

Research Methodology:

Research on the many facets of child work will always be necessary. In relation to the issues faced by India's informal workforce, several studies have examined the prevalence of child labour. Nevertheless, this concise study collects data from a few brick fields in North 24 Parganas using an analytical technique in order to comprehend the issue of child labour. Results from a survey of four brick fields in the Basirhat region of North 24 Parganas, which took place between November 2015 and January 2016, formed the basis of this research. I had the privilege of being a part of the survey crew that collected data from the brick fields as part of a socio-economic study that was being conducted by a group of senior academics. Their poll didn't have the same goal as mine, but they still pushed me to do my own research and use the results as I saw fit. With the burden of expense and my own safety (it's not a good idea to walk alone in a brick field) on their shoulders, it was a fantastic chance to collect primary data from the faraway brick fields.

Expected Out Come:

1. The proprietors have a good grasp of the laws that prohibit the use of underage workers. The owners' reluctance to address the subject in depth may be understood from this. Out of the four brickfield proprietors I surveyed, two explicitly denied using child labour, while the other two made oblique references to the reality that such workers are necessary.
2. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 lays forth certain limitations. Because the rule is not strictly enforced, however, child work is an option. The tricky part is that the brick field owner doesn't care about the workers' methods since they are paid on a piece rate and the family patriarch receives the job or contract directly. It is not his problem, one owner declared frankly, if parents exploit their children as servants. As a matter of fact, these women and children do labour in the brick field without ever being officially acknowledged for their efforts. Their eligibility for low-income welfare assistance is consequently denied.
3. The vast majority of published works on the topic imply that migrant workers are solely responsible for operating brick fields. But that's not the case. Docking, soil cutting, and, in a few instances, the use of local labourers were also discovered in my samples. In this scenario, the occurrence of child labour is quite low. However, majority of the workers involved in the moulding and following activities are Bihari migrants. As mentioned before, this is also the situation where child labour is most common.
4. According to the workers, there are several causes for the practice of child employment. To start, they are unable to leave their children alone in their own country. The second issue is that it is likewise not feasible to supply funds for their downkeep. As a result, kids end up following in their parents' footsteps and helping out around the house, which is a bad situation since parents often have limited incomes.

5. There are health risks for the youngsters that labour here, including limb abnormalities, burns, scalds, and more. One common kind of sexual exploitation is that which targets young females.

6. Sufficient healthcare facilities are not accessible.

Conclusion:

The foundational elements of India's thriving building sector are brick kilns. Nevertheless, these brick fields are really sweatshops where children and women work from the break of morning till sunset. Due to the isolated location of these brickfields, the public pays little attention to the predicament of these unfortunate individuals. The brickfield owners do not want their employees to talk about the terrible things that have happened to them with anybody outside of their family, including the police. As a result, gathering accounts of these stories is very difficult. The salaries they deserve are not paid to them. Due to their parents' extreme poverty, many children are compelled to spend their whole childhood and young adulthood working in the dusty brick fields. There are numerous moral and physical risks that these children confront as labourers. Surprisingly, child employment is not outright forbidden in India; rather, it is restricted to certain dangerous occupations. A good example of a location that forbids the use of child labour is Brickfield. Regardless, the brickfields of West Bengal are known to use child labour, both openly and surreptitiously. Serious inquiry is required on the issue of child labour in brickfields.

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