

“ An Empirical Study on Child Labour in Automobile Workshops in Kalyan and Ulhasnagar, Thane District, Maharashtra”

Submitted by,

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Abstract:

Children are the future of the nation and their adequate development is utmost priority of the country. Unfortunately, child labour engulfs children across the world. There are an estimated 186 million child labourers worldwide. The 2001 national census of India estimated prevalence of 12.6 million children engaged in hazardous occupation. Many children are “hidden workers”, working in homes or in underground economy. Child labour violates Human Rights, and is in contravention to the International Labour Organisation (Art. 32, Convention Rights of the Child). Indian population has more than 17.5 million working children in different industries and incidentally maximum are in agriculture sector, leather industries, mining and match making industries, etc.

This paper titled “An Empirical Study on Child Labour in Automobile Workshops in Kalyan and Ulhasnagar, Thane District, Maharashtra” endeavours to highlight the rampant prevalence of child labour in automobile workshops in the two cities of Kalyan and Ulhasnagar. The paper also attempts to throw light on the various forms of exploitation of child labour in the form of low wages, long hours of work, poor sanitation and hygiene, etc. The paper also suggests measures to overcome the problem of child labour.

Keywords: Child Labour (CL), Automobile Workshops, National Census.

“There can be keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children” –

Nelson Mandela

1. Introduction:

Children are future citizens of the Nation and their adequate development is utmost priority of the country. Unfortunately, child labour engulfs children across the world. The world is home to 1.2 billion individuals aged 10-19 years. However, despite its menace in various forms, the data shows variation in prevalence of child labour across the globe and the statistical figures about child labour are very alarming. There are an estimated 186 million child labourers worldwide. The 2001 national census of India estimated total number of child labour aged 5-14 to be at 12.6 million. Small-scale and community-based studies have found estimated prevalence of 12.6 million children engaged in hazardous occupations. Many children are "hidden workers" working in homes or in the underground economy. Although the Constitution of India guarantees free and compulsory education to children between the age of 6 to 14 and prohibits employment of children younger than 14 in 18 hazardous occupations, child labour is still prevalent in the informal sectors of the Indian economy. Child labour violates human rights, and is in contravention of the International Labour Organization (Article 32, Convention Rights of the Child). About one-third of children of the developing world are failing to complete even 4 years of education. Indian population has more than 17.5 million working children in different industries, and incidentally maximum are in agricultural sector, leather industry, mining and match-making industries, etc.

The term "child labour" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical-mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely

or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. The statistical figures about child workers in the world have variation because of the differences in defining categories of age group and engagement of children in formal and informal sector. Policies curbing CL exists but lack of enforcement of Labour restrictions perpetuates C L. The International Child labour Officer reports that children work the longest hours and are the worst paid of all workers. In India, the Child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 and Rules state that no child shall be employed or permitted to work in any occupations set forth in Part A of the Schedule or in any of the processes set forth in Part B of the Schedule.

The negative impact on the physiological and psychological levels of children includes specific concerns of C L and its consequences on mental health. There is high prevalence of respiratory , digestive and skin conditions as well as migraines, insomnia, irritability, enuresis and asthma.

2. Objectives:

- 1) To study whether automobile workshops employ CL.
- 2) To study reasons for the employment of CL in automobile workshops.
- 3) To study whether child labourers like their employment.
- 4) To study whether child labourers are interested to seek education.
- 5) To study the safety measures and first aid preparedness of automobile workshops employing C L.

3. Methodology:

This paper is a brief attempt to highlight the prevalence of CL in automobile workshops in the two cities of Kalyan and Ulhasnagar. The study is based on primary data collected by the author of the paper. A total of 50 workshops, spanning across Kalyan and

Ulhasnagar was surveyed. The automobile workshops surveyed were all four wheeler workshops. In total, 120 child labourers were interviewed. Almost all the child labourers were in the age group of 5- 14 years.

4. Findings:

- A) All workshops surveyed employed child labour. 60% of child labourers were from Uttar Pradesh, 20% from Andhra Pradesh and the rest were from Madhya Pradesh, Jharkand and interior parts of Maharashtra.
- B) The reasons cited for the employment of C L are
- i) Children are quick learners and hence excel in their work.
 - ii) Children are very flexible and are capable of physical movement under vehicles.
 - iii) Children do not waste time like many older workers who take frequent breaks during working hours.
 - iv) As all child labourers employed are from very poor families they are regular and punctual at work.
 - v) Again, some of the child labourers are runaway kids and therefore reside in the workshop premises itself.
 - vi) Child labourers hardly demand higher wages.
 - vii) Child labourers are unaware of any rules and regulations and hence, are made to work for very long hours and paid anywhere between Rs. 30 to Rs. 100 per day.
- C) Most of the child labourers interviewed responded that they were happy with their work and employers. In some cases, they were allowed to reside within the premises of the workshop. They were provided tea at regular intervals. For those living in the workshops the wages paid was Rs. 50 plus Rs. 30 for food per day. For the others the

wages varied between Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 per day depending upon his age and previous experience. Around 80% of the child labourers have only one meal a day which is usually dinner. Again, more than 50% of the child labourers surveyed were addicted to tobacco and its related products.

D) 30% of the child labourers surveyed responded that they had never been to a school. The remaining were school dropouts. The reasons stated were:-

- i) They did not like going to school.
- ii) They regularly failed in school exams.
- iii) Parents were not earning sufficient and therefore a supplementary income was required to support the family.
- iv) 10% of child labourers had left their homes for various socio- economic reasons, and
- v) Finally, 97% of them stated that they preferred to stay away from school.

E) 99% of the respondents stated that they were unaware of any safety standards to be maintained by the employer. In case of minor accidents/bruises/cuts they were provided first aid and or medical help at the nearest medical dispensary.

F) 85% of the workshops did not have toilet facilities within their premises. 60% of the workshops do not have a direct water connection within the premises and hence water is stored in drums from the nearby municipal tap. This water is used for both drinking and washing by all workers. Almost all child labourers surveyed stated that they use petrol/kerosene to remove grease, oil, paint, wax, polish from their person at the end of the day.

5. Suggestions:

The author of the paper recommends the following suggestions to curb the menace of CL:-

- A) Child labourers are mostly from poor families and hail from poor regions. Government efforts to achieve balanced regional development throughout the country will have to be taken on a massive and rapid footing.
- B) Various policies for generating employment and self-employment programmes of the Centre and State Governments have to reach the grass roots and people should be made aware of the various programmes available for their upliftment.
- C) CL is prohibited by the Supreme Court of India and those employing C L would be prosecuted. But these laws framed with noble intentions remain on paper. From the present study it is obvious that these laws are blatantly violated. A more responsible approach by the authorities towards implementation and monitoring of C L laws are required to curb the problem. Those found flaunting the law should be dealt with a heavy hand.
- D) Compulsory education of children, one among the Millennium Development Goals and a Constitutional Right in India(Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009), has failed in terms of C L. Unless compulsory education of children at least at the primary level is not religiously implemented, these goals would continue to remain a distant dream.
- E) The Government has taken certain initiatives to control C L. The National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme was launched in 9 districts in the country. Under the scheme, funds are given to the District Collectors for running special schools for C L. Most of these schools are run by NGO's in the district. Under this scheme these children are provided formal/informal education along with vocational training, and a stipend of Rs.100/- per month. This scheme should be extended throughout the country if CL is to be eradicated.

6. Conclusion:

Poverty is one of the important factors for the problem of C L. Eradication of C L is not an easy task, preventive strategies are more sustainable in the long run. One of the

major preventive strategies, which must feature in any national C L eradication policy , is the role of social mobilisation and community participation. It is vital to ensure that children stay at home and go to formal Government schools rather than leave home to work full time. Many NGO's like CARE India, Child Rights and You, Global March Against Child Labour, etc have been working to eradicate C L in India. C L can be stopped when knowledge is transferred into legislation and action, moving good intention and ideas into protecting the health of the child. The Ministries and Departments have different roles to play in order to ensure that children removed from work are properly rehabilitated and do not go back into the work force. This would require a strong synergy between all the concerned departments.

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Declaration:

The author hereby declares that this is a genuinely researched paper and has not been published in any book, journal, magazine or proceedings of any seminar, conference or workshop.

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