

Child Labourer's Working Conditions and Terms of Employment in Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

A Descriptive Research Design was used for conducting the study. Among the working conditions, most of the girls and boys had inadequate toilet facilities, moderate amount of drinking water and unhygienic environment. Majority of them were always exposed to dirt, smoke and extreme weather conditions while working like sun, rain and cold. Regarding the terms of employment, the tenure of employment of majority of both girls and boys was temporary, worked for 8-9 hours during day time and most of them worked for 4-6 hours additionally during night time. The mode of payment was mostly annual. Advance payment of wages and daily provision of money for toddy, showing cinema in the theatre once in one to two months were among the major incentives provided by the employers to the child labourers. A little more than 50 per cent of child labourers had periodicity of employment for 5-8 months per year. Hence, the anti poverty programmes and the interventions of non government organisations could play a pivotal role in the elimination of child labour.

Keywords : Child labourer, working condition, employment

It is not a present day feature only that children are taking part in economic activities. To a greater or lesser extent, children in every type of human society have always taken part in economic activities. In earlier times, children used to work within their family circle. Little by little, through almost unconscious observation, association and imitation children learnt the work of adults and family occupations. During the process of socialization of the children, training formed a part and children grew physically and intellectually without facing hazardous difficult tasks and ill treatment and was simultaneously prepared for adult life. The work place in these societies was an extension of home and work relationships which were informal. But with the progress of industrialization and urbanization, the traditional crafts and family based economy was destroyed; people were displaced from the land due to mechanization of agriculture. The breeding of poverty among masses started to multiply in this situation with the increasing motive of profit maximization and exploitation. The strong urge of the employers for more profit resulted in neglect of working place with poor ventilation and unhygienic conditions, long hours of work, low wages, ill treatment, which proved detrimental to the growth and development of child labour. In this backdrop, the present study was carried out to find out the child labourer's working conditions and terms of employment.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted purposively in selected Mahabubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. Descriptive research design was used to conduct the study. Out of the 64 mandals, five mandals were selected from the district through simple random sampling method. From the five selected mandals, three villages from each mandal, were selected randomly. In each village, ten child labourers comprising of five girl child labourers and five boy child labourers were selected randomly. Thus, making a total sample of 150 child labourers. A pre-tested interview schedule was used for collecting the required data through personal interview method.

Working conditions refer to the various facilities provided at the work place of child labourers and the kind of physical environment in which they are working. The working conditions comprised of six items. The responses were measured on a three point continuum of adequacy as; 'adequate', 'moderately adequate' and 'inadequate' with a scoring of three, two and one respectively. The frequencies on each of these items were obtained and percentages were calculated. Terms of employment of child labourers refer to the various terms and conditions or rules and regulations of employment. Terms of employment of

child labourers include: i) tenure of employment, ii) working hours, iii) mode of payment, iv) incentives provided by the employer and v) periodicity of employment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Working conditions of child labourers

The Table I depicts that a great majority (91.33%) of the total child labourers had inadequate toilet facilities which comprised of 89.33 per cent of girls and 93.33 per cent of boys. A considerable majority (52.00%) of girls expressed inadequacy of drinking water at their work place and majority (68.00%) of boys felt that it is moderately adequate. Inadequacy of hygienic environment was reported by 73.33 per cent of girls and 58.66 per cent of boys together forming a sizeable majority (66.00%) of the total child labourers. A little less than half of the girls (48.00%) felt that working equipment provided at the

work place was moderately adequate and majority (62.66%) of boys felt that it is adequate. Majority (70.00%) of the child labourers were always exposed to dirt, smoke etc out of whom girls were 77.33 per cent and boys form 62.66 per cent. Similar results were noticed by Bhargava (2003). Almost an equal majority (70.66%) of the total child labourers were also exposed to sun, rain and cold which comprised of 72.00 per cent and 69.33 per cent of girls and boys, respectively. The reason for this could be that most of the girls were involved as 'agricultural labourers' and boys in works like cattle rearing, agricultural labour and house construction. As many of them were working in the open fields outside the dwelling areas, where there was no accessibility for toilet facilities. Most of the child labourers expressed that the drinking water at the work place was inadequate to moderately adequate. This was because some of the child labourers were working at the employers/landlords homes who

TABLE I
Distribution of child labourers based on their working conditions

(N=150)

Working conditions	Adequate			Moderately adequate			Inadequate		
	Girls (n=75)	Boys (n=75)	Total	Girls (n=75)	Boys (n=75)	Total	Girls (n=75)	Boys (n=75)	Total
Toilet facilities	-	-	-	3 (4.00)	5 (6.66)	8 (5.33)	67 (89.33)	70 (93.33)	137 (91.33)
Drinking water	8 (10.66)	18 (24.00)	26 (17.33)	28 (37.33)	51 (68.00)	79 (52.66)	39 (52.00)	6 (8.00)	45 (30.00)
Hygienic environment	4 (5.33)	2 (2.66)	6 (4.00)	16 (21.33)	29 (38.66)	45 (30.00)	55 (73.33)	44 (58.66)	99 (66.00)
Working equipment	28 (37.33)	47 (62.66)	75 (50.00)	36 (48.00)	18 (24.00)	54 (36.00)	11 (14.66)	10 (13.33)	21 (14.00)
	Always			Sometimes			Rarely		
	Girls (n=75)	Boys (n=75)	Total	Girls (n=75)	Boys (n=75)	Total	Girls (n=75)	Boys (n=75)	Total
Exposure to dirt smoke etc.	58 (77.33)	47 (62.66)	105 (70.00)	17 (22.66)	28 (37.33)	45 (30.00)	-	-	-
Exposure to sun, rain and cold	54 (72.00)	52 (69.33)	106 (70.66)	19 (25.33)	23 (30.66)	42 (28.00)	2 (2.66)	-	2 (1.33)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

had access of drinking water as and when needed and others were not provided water at the work place. Most of the child labourers had inadequate hygienic environment as they were involved in works which are often performed in dirt and unhygienic environment such as agricultural fields, poultry farms, domestic work, house construction work, repairs etc. and were always exposed to sun, rain and cold.

Perusal of the Table II indicates that a majority (54.00%) of the total child labourers with 56.00 per cent of girls and 52.00 per cent of boys were temporary workers, whereas 44.00 per cent and 48.00 per cent of girls and boys, respectively both together figuring to 46.00 per cent were permanent workers. This is because most of them were engaged in agricultural work and as the district is drought prone, rainfall is not certain, therefore, agricultural production is also not uniform in all the seasons and years. Hence, most of the child labourers were taken on a temporary basis by the employers or landlords. The rest of the child labourers were permanent labourers due to the reason that most of the employers had cattle and a few had poultry farms, so the child labourers were permanently hired for the whole year.

Working hours

The working hours of the child labourers were categorised into 'hours of work during day time' and additional night hours of work.

TABLE II
Distribution of child labourers based on their tenure of employment (N= 150)

Category	Girls (n=75)		Boys (n=75)		Total	
	No.	per cent	No.	per cent	No.	per cent
Temporary	42	56.00	39	52.00	81	54.00
Permanent	33	44.00	36	48.00	69	46.00

The data furnished in the Table III reveals that during day time, a sizeable majority (71.33%) of the total child labourers worked for 8-9 hours during day time, among which a large majority (82.66%) were girls and 60.00 per cent were boys. As far as additional night hours of work was concerned, a considerable number (36.66%) of the total child labourers among whom 56.00 per cent of girls and 17.33 per cent of boys worked for 4-6 additional night hours of work. These results are in confirmation with those of Reddy (2007). Hence, most of the child labourers worked beyond the stipulated hours of work because of fear of termination of their job. As it is understood that children work for supplementing their inadequate family incomes, they may not want to go against the instructions of their employers. The additional night hours of work was performed at the time of harvest of the agricultural produce, for cleaning,

TABLE III
Distribution of child labourers based on their working hours (N= 150)

Category of working hours	Girls (n=75)		Boys (n=75)		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Day-hours of work						
Below 7 hours	5	6.66	-	-	5	3.33
7-8 hours	8	10.66	19	25.33	27	18.00
8-9 hours	62	82.66	45	60.00	107	71.33
Above 9 hours			11	14.66	11	7.33
Additional night hours of work						
2-4 hours	5	6.66	38	50.66	43	28.66
4-6 hours	42	56.00	13	17.33	55	36.66
6-8 hours	12	16.00	4	5.33	16	10.66

processing, storage and other operations. It was also found that most of the child labourers were working on a temporary basis, they had to work beyond the stipulated hours of work because of reasons like fear of job termination and anxiety about the continuation of the job. Children were therefore, forced to work due to these compulsive circumstances.

Mode of Payment

From the Table IV it was clear that majority (59.33%) of the total child labourers comprising of 64.00 per cent of girls and 54.67 per cent of boys were paid money annually followed by 29.33 per cent of the child labourers who were paid weekly of which a quarter number were girls (25.33%) and one third were boys (33.33%). Only 8.00 and 9.33 per cent of

TABLE IV
Distribution of child labourers according to their mode of payment
(N=150)

Category	Girls (n = 75) No. per cent		Boys (n = 75) No. per cent		Total No. per cent	
Daily	2	2.67	2	2.67	4	2.67
Weekly	19	25.33	25	33.33	44	29.33
Monthly	6	8.00	7	9.33	13	8.67
Annually	48	64.00	41	54.67	89	59.33

girls and boys, respectively together forming 8.67 per cent of the total child labourers were deriving their payment monthly. These results were in accordance with the findings of Siddiqui (2003). The child labourers were employed by their employers on an annual basis. In all the cases they were paid a fixed amount of cash for the prescribed contract period of one year. They were paid in cash and the repayment is in terms of exchange of labour. This was followed by weekly payment (29.33%) where some of the child labourers were involved in works like poultry farms, house construction works etc. Monthly payment was made by the employers of motor cycle repair shops, iron smiths, watchman, domestic servants and also by some of the poultry farm employers. Hence, mode of payment of wages varies depending upon the

contract between the employers and labourers. The mode of payment also varied primarily according to the nature of employment.

Incentives provided by the employer

From the Table V it was evident that a good majority (69.33%) of the total child labourers received advance payment of salary out of whom 64.00 per cent were girls and 74.66 per cent formed boys. A considerable majority (54.66%) of the child labourers among which a large majority (88.00%) of girls and only 21.33 per cent of boys had a provision of money for toddy which was given daily to the children. The child labourers were shown cinema in the theatre in 44.00 per cent cases which comprised of 69.33 per cent and 18.66 per cent of girls and boys, respectively. A good number of both girls (41.33%) and boys (37.33%) together making 39.33 per cent of the total child labourers had provision of annual increment in advance. Slightly more than one fifth of the total child labourers (20.66%) were shown cinema through VCP at the employer's residence which comprised of 30.66 per cent of girls and 10.66 per cent of boys. A less per cent of total child labourers (17.33%) who were only boys (34.66%) were provided accommodation, food and clothes. An equal per cent of the total child labourers were provided cooking equipment, fire wood and cooking materials (12.00%) who constitute only boys (24.00%). Providing accommodation and food at work was observed in another 12.00 per cent out of which 10.66 per cent and 13.33 per cent were girls and boys respectively. It was found that the major incentive for child labourers was 'advance payment of wages' by the employers / landlords. This was their frequent practice with the child labourers, for the reason that they would be available to work through out the year and there would be no uncertainty of getting labour whenever they needed. Provision of money for toddy, was a frequent practice as this money (Rs. 2/-) would motivate them to attend the work regularly. Most of the child labourers who were involved in agricultural work were taken to cinema in a theatre or were shown VCP once in a month or two months and most of them were given annual increment in advance as this would tempt the parents and the children to continue in the work with the same employer/landlord.

TABLE V
Distribution of child labourers based on the incentives provided by the employer (N=150)

Category of working hours	Girls (n=75)		Boys (n=75)		Total	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Below 7 hours	5	6.66	-	-	5	3.33
Advance payment of Wages	48	64.00	56	74.66	104	69.33
Provision of annual increment in the advance given	31	41.33	28	37.33	59	39.33
Showing cinema in theatre	52	69.33	14	18.66	66	44.00
Showing cinema through VCP	23	30.66	8	10.66	31	20.66
Daily provision of money for toddy	66	88.00	16	21.33	82	54.66
Providing cooking equipment, firewood and cooking materials	-	-	18	24.00	18	12.00
Providing accommodation & food at work	8	10.66	10	13.33	18	12.00
Providing food and clothes	5	6.66	9	12.00	14	9.33
Providing accommodation food & clothes	-	-	26	34.60	26	17.33
Providing Accommodation	-	-	1	1.33	1	0.66

Periodicity of employment

From the Table VI it can be seen that a little above than half of the total child labourers (53.33%) with a large majority (81.33%) of girls and a quarter number of boys (25.33%) had work for a period of '5-8 months' per year. The possible reason for this could be that most of the child labourers were working as agricultural labourers and during the lean agricultural period i.e., during summer they do not find any employment. These findings are in conformity with the findings of (Reddy and Ramesh, 2002), followed by 40.66 per cent of child labourers having very less number of girls (6.66%) and a good majority (74.66%) of boys worked for a period of '9-12 months' per year, whereas only 6.00 per cent of the total child labourers which constituted only girls (12.00%) worked for 1-4 months per year. This was followed by 40.66 per cent who were employed for a period of nine months to the whole year as they were involved in works such as poultry farms, domestic servants, cattle rearing, iron smiths and motor cycle repair in which they need to be engaged mostly for the whole year. Hence, it was clear that the periodicity of employment was affected by the type of work in which they were involved.

TABLE VI
Distribution of child labourers based on their periodicity of employment (N=150)

Category	Girls (n=75)		Boys (n=75)		Total	
	No.	per cent	No.	per cent	No.	per cent
1-4 months / year	9	12.00	-	-	9	6.00
5-8 months / year	61	81.33	19	25.33	80	53.33
9-12 months / year	5	6.66	56	74.66	61	40.66

Anti poverty programmes will be helpful in uplifting the living standards of poor families who are compelled to send their children to work as a helping hand in the family income. Families 'at-risk' should receive top priority in the allotment of funds under such anti-poverty programmes. The present anti-poverty programmes should have families of child labour as special target groups with allotment of funds and special skills-development programmes of short duration should be introduced among the families 'at-risk'. The Non Government Organizations for

independent people's organizations have very important role to play in achieving the goal of abolition of child labour. The overall programme of rehabilitation of child labour needs people's participation and co-operation from all sectors *i.e.*, from their families to the societies working for them.

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