

Nutritional and social constraints of child labourers : A study in Bhubaneswar city

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Child labour is one of the serious problems of the present society which ultimately harms the child physically, mentally, morally, educationally as well as socially. The present investigation was designed to study the socio-economic condition, problems of child labourers and nutritional status of child labourers working in Bhubaneswar city. Data on one hundred child labourers (8-14 years) were collected randomly with the help of personal interview-cum-questionnaire method. The results of the present investigation showed that majority of the respondents were male and 80 per cent respondents were ST, SC by caste. Most of the respondents belonged to nuclear family but having more than 6 family members. None of the respondents was illiterate and earning about Rs. 1000-2000 per month. Most of them were working for more than 8-10 hrs per day and 70 per cent of them were working because of poverty and parental force. Majority of them were non-vegetarian and were taking diet rich in calorie and low in other nutrients. Mean height and weight of the respondents was found to be less than ICMR standard irrespective of all age groups.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Child labourer, Nutritional status

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Child labour consisting of children below 14 years of age is defined by the International Labour organisation (ILO) - the type of work performed by children that deprives them of their childhood and their dignity which hampers their access to education and acquisition of skill and which is performed under condition harmful to their health and their development. In other words child labour is the work for children that harms them physically, mentally, morally, educationally as well as socially. Children are the greatest gift to humanity and the same gift is being misused for personal gains as child labour. They constitute 36 per cent of India's population but a large majority of children in age group of 5-14 years continue to remain in distress and turmoil. One in every five children below the age of 14 years is a laborer. The flower (child) withers before it blossoms. Even though government, many NGO's, National and International agencies are working at National and International level to eradicate child labour still than it is difficult to abolish this from the society. Number of child labour has been decreased

but not to the expected level. They are struggling a lot to get their right and their daily bread and butter. Therefore, the present investigation is designed to study the nutritional and social constraints of child labourers in Bhubaneswar city.

The objectives of the study were :

- To study the socio-economic condition of the child labourers.
- To study the cause of child labourers, working condition and wage structure etc.
- To assess the attitude of child labourers towards education, society and their future plan.
- To know the food consumption pattern of the respondents.
- To assess the nutritional status of the child labourers.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The present investigation was carried out in different

work sites of Bhubaneswar city such as construction site, industry site, hotels, house holds etc. 100 child labourers were selected randomly for collection of data. The data were collected with the help of personal interview-cum-questionnaire method. The information was collected about their family back ground, problems faced by them during work, reasons for accepting the work, etc. Twenty four hour recall method was carried out to determine the food in take of the respondents. Anthropometric measurements such as height and weight of the subjects were taken by using measuring tape and weighing machine, respectively. Clinical examination was done by observation method. Appropriate statistical measures were employed to arrive at conclusion.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study are summarized below:

Background information of the child labourers :

Usually a child working below 14 years of age is called as a child labourer. Age of the child highly influences his behaviour. Child labourers usually behave like an adult due to their early contact with the world. Due to various problems of their family, the children have to work and employees prefer them because of their innocence and unproductive behaviour.

It was observed from Table 1 (a) that majority of the female respondents belonged to the age group of 13-14 years

Table 1 (a) : Distribution of child labourers according to age and sex

Age	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
8-10	8	03	11
11-12	27	09	36
13-14	39	14	53
Total	74	26	100

Table 1 (b) : Distribution of child labourers according to age, sex and work sites

Age and sex	Worksite	8-10Yrs		11-12Yrs		13-14Yrs		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	
House keeping		08	03	08	09	08	05	41
Hotels and restaurants		–	–	19	–	18	–	37
Construction site (roads and builders)		–	–	–	–	13	09	22
Total		08	03	27	09	39	14	100

Table 1 (c) : Distribution of child labourers according to types of family and number of family members

Sr. No.	Number of family members	Joint	Nuclear	Total
1.	Less than 4	–	13	13
2.	4-6	06	35	41
3.	Above 6	28	18	46
	Total	34	66	100

Table 1 (d) : Distribution of child labourers according to education

Sr. No.	Education	Number	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	–	–
2.	Below class III	64	64
3.	Class 4 to 7	32	32
4.	Above 8	04	04
	Total	100	100

Table 1 (e) : Distribution of child labourers according to income

Sr. No.	Income (In Rupees)	Numbers	%
1.	Less than 1000	26	26
2.	1000-2000	43	43
3.	2000-3000	27	27
4.	Above 3000	04	04
	Total	100	100

i.e. 53 per cent followed by 36 per cent respondents in the age group of 11-12 years. 74 per cent respondents were male out of which 27 per cent belonged to 11-12 years age group who were working in tea stalls, hotels, and engaged in houses as maids / house keepers. 8 per cent boys belonged to the age group of 8-10 yrs were working in the houses to keep watch on their children and 13 per cent boys within the age group of 13-14 years were working in construction sites and 18 per cent were working in hotels and restaurants. It was interesting to note that most of the girls were used to work in houses whereas only 9 per cent worked in construction sites with their parents / family members (Table 1b).

Data on caste showed that 52 per cent of the respondents were ST in caste and 18 per cent were SC by caste whereas 30 per cent of the respondents were general. With regard to religion 77 per cent respondent were Hindu, 13 per cent Muslim and 10 per cent Christians.

Nuclear family system (70 %) was found to be more prevalent. But it was observed that 41 per cent respondents were having 4-6 family members whereas 46 per cent children were having above 6 family members (Table 1c). Information regarding education of the child labourers showed that 64 per cent respondents were studied up to class III whereas 32 per cent respondents have not passed Middle School education and only 4 per cent respondents studied above class VIII. Illiteracy was found to be nil among the respondents (Table 1d).

Datas on the income of the respondents showed that 43 per cent respondents were earning Rs. 1000-2000 per month, 27 per cent child labourers were earning Rs. 2000-3000/- per month whereas only 4 per cent were getting above Rs. 3000/- per month (Table 1e).

Housing condition :

Information on housing of the respondents showed that 62 per cent respondents were staying in pucca houses specially who were engaged in house keeping / construction sites whereas 38 per cent were staying in slum in Kutcha houses with their parents. 78 per cent respondents were using public water for drinking purposes whereas 22 per cent were using water from tubewell / well and 38 per cent of the respondents were using soakpit / openfield for defaecation.

Working condition :

Duration of work :

It was observed that 36 per cent respondents were working for more than one year whereas 22 per cent of them were working for more than two years. Data on distribution of working hours showed that 36 per cent of the respondents were working for 6-8 hours whereas rest of the respondents were working for more than 8-10 hrs per day.

Job satisfaction :

It was regretting to note that 86 per cent respondents

Table 2 : Distribution of child labourers according to reason for accepting the job and problems of work site			
Sr. No.	Particulars	Number	Per cent
Reason of joining work			
1.	Poverty	36	36%
2.	Hereditary involvement	18	18%
3.	Parental force	34	34%
4.	To supplement family income	12	12 %
	Total	100	100%
Problem of work site			
			%
1.	Ill-treatment of employer	18	18%
2.	Low remuneration	24	24%
3.	Accommodation/health problem	44	44%
4.	No response	14	14%
	Total	100	100%

Table 3 : Distribution of child labourers according to the feeling of negligence and reasons responsible for			
Sr. No.	You feel that you are neglected	Number	%
1.	Positive	78	78%
2.	Negative	22	24%
	Who is responsible for your condition		%
3.	Master/owner	20	20%
4.	Parents	36	36%
5.	Peers	24	24%
6.	Society	20	20%

did not like to work whereas only 14 per cent of them were satisfied with their work.

Reason for accepting job :

Reasons for accepting job revealed that 36 per cent respondents were working because of poverty, 34 per cent respondents were working because of parental force and 18 per cent were working because of hereditary involvement and 12 per cent were working to supplement their family income (Table 2).

Problem at work side :

Data regarding problems at work place showed that 18 per cent of child labourers were illtreated by their masters, 24 per cent were getting low remuneration, 44 per cent had accommodation / health problem whereas 14 per cent respondents did not respond (Table 2).

Attitude of child labourers towards education :

It was interesting to note that 78 per cent respondents wanted to study more if they would be financially supported whereas 22 per cent were not because of their family condition. They wanted to support their family financially.

Social acceptance :

It was observed that 78 per cent respondents felt neglected and inferior as compared to their peers and they thought that their condition is due to their parents (36 %), masters (20 %) peers (24 %) and society (20 %) (Table 3).

It was also noted that 74 per cent respondents had inferiority complex in comparison to other children for that they made responsible their low income (20 %), illiteracy (24 %), inferior work (36 %) and not socially accepted (20 %).

Food habit and dietary pattern :

It was observed that 82 per cent of the respondents were non-vegetarian whereas 18 per cent were purely vegetarian. Three meals per day pattern (52 %) was found to be more prevalent among the respondents. Water-rice with dry fish / green leafy vegetables, roasted potatoes / vegetables were found to be most common food among the respondents.

Nutrient content :

It was also observed that their diet was rich in calorie, low in protein, low in fat and vitamins. The respondents who were engaged in house keeping / hotels were taking nutritionally better diet in comparison to those respondents who were working in construction sites.

Nutritional status of the child labourers :

Assessment of nutritional status is an useful criterion to know the health condition of a particular group / community. Therefore, height and weight of the respondents were recorded and compared with ICMR standard to reach at a conclusion.

Weight :

It was observed from Table 4 that the mean weight of the boys and girls were less than the standards of ICMR. The

Table 4 : Mean weight (boy's and girl's) of the child labors in comparison with ICMR standard

Sr. No.	Age	Mean weight of boys (in kg.)	ICMR (in kg.)	% of deficiency	Mean weight of girls (in kg.)	ICMR (in kg.)	% of deficiency
1.	8	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	9	25.75	30.00	14.16	-	-	-
3.	10	28.51	32.29	11.73	26	33.58	22.57
4.	11	26.57	35.26	26.64	-	-	-
5.	12	26.71	38.78	31.12	28	42.97	37.74
6.	13	26.75	42.88	37.61	26.75	44.54	39.91
7.	14	28	48.26	41.98	-	-	-

Table 5 : Mean height of child labour compared with ICMR standard

Sr. No.	Age	Mean height of boys (in kg.)	ICMR (in kg.)	% of deficiency in comparison to ICMR	Mean height of girls (in kg.)	ICMR (in Kg.)	% of deficiency in comparison to ICMR
1.	8	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	9	128 ± 2.5	133.63	6.45	-	-	-
3.	10	136.12 ± 6.03	134.45	1.68	134.33 ± 2.57	138.90	3.90
4.	11	140.12 ± 3.41	143.45	2.33	-	-	-
5.	12	145.5 ± 3.25	148.91	2.62	140	150.98	7.27
6.	13	145.76 ± 8.05	154.94	5.93	144.5 ± 3.78	153.44	5.82
7.	14	149.14 ± 5.45	161.70	7.85 %	-	-	-

percentage of mean deficiency of weight varied from 11.73 to 41.98 per cent in case of boys whereas percentage of mean deficiency of weight varied from 22.6 per cent to 39.9 per cent in case of girls.

Height :

The data on mean height of girls showed that it was also less in comparison to the ICMR standard. Percentage of deficiency varied from 1.68 per cent to 7.85 per cent in case of boys whereas in case of girls it was 3.9 per cent to 7.3 per cent. So, it was observed that the girls were better in height in comparison to boys (Table 5).

Health profile of the respondents :

Results of clinical survey showed that 32 per cent respondents were normal whereas 78 per cent respondents were suffering from different nutritional, non-nutritional and infectious diseases. It was observed that 22 per cent children were suffering from cold and cough, 20 per cent respondents were having asthma, 18 per cent children skin infection and 13 per cent children were having sparse and brittle hair and 48 per cent respondents were found to be stressed and depressed due to work pressure.

Summary and Conclusion :

Child labour is a very common problem in every society. Therefore, the present investigation was designed to study the nutritional and social constraints of child labourers on their overall development. One hundred child labourers were selected by random purposive sampling method between the age range of 8-14 years in Bhubaneswar city. Majority (74 %) of the respondents were male out of which 24 per cent were working in houses and 37 per cent in hotels and restaurants. 17 per cent girls engaged in housekeeping whereas only 9 per cent girls belonged to age group of 13-14 yrs working in construction sites. 80 per cent respondents were ST and ST by caste and 77 per cent respondents were Hindu by religion. Nuclear family system was found to be more prevalent but majority of the respondents were having more than 6 family members. 64 per cent respondents were studied only up to class III and illiteracy was found to be nil among the respondents. Majority of the respondents were earning Rs.1000-2000/- per month. Housing condition of the respondent was not satisfactory. 22 per cent respondents were working for more than two years and 64 per cent of the respondents were working for more than 8-10 hours per day. Majority of the respondents did not like to work, whereas 70

per cent of them were working because of poverty and parental force. 18 per cent of the respondents were found to be ill-treated by their masters. Majority of the respondents (78 %) wanted to study and to lead a better life if they would be financially supported. 78 per cent respondents felt neglected and inferior in comparison to other children because of their low income, parents and inferior work etc.

Majority of the respondents were non-vegetarian (82 %) and three meals per day was found to be common among the respondents. Water-rice with green leafy vegetables / roasted vegetables / roasted dry fish with green chilly with garlic and onion was found to be most common among the respondents. With regard to nutrient in take, diet was found to be rich in calorie, low in protein fat and vitamins and minerals. Mean height and weight of the respondents was less than the ICMR standard irrespective of all the age groups. Most of the respondents were suffering from various types of infectious disease like cold, cough, skin allergies asthma etc.

Suggestions :

Thus, low socio-economic condition, low education of the parents, poor family back ground, hereditary involvement were the major contributory causes of child labour (Shandilya, 2003). Neither legislation nor high sounded programme can end the problems of child labour. Collective efforts by all for the proper implementation of welfare programmes for betterment of child labourers is highly desirable. Poverty alleviation and compulsory education is the only way of its complete eradication (Jain, 2000).

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