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The Impact of Education on Preventing Child Labour in India

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ABSTRACT: Child labor can be best described as work that snatches away childhood, dreams, and capability. It also results in harmful physical and mental growth. Involvement of children below 18 in some economic activities, whether it be paid or unpaid, such involvement could be mental or physical.

Reasons For Child Labor

Poverty

It refers to such a situation where a human is unable to meet the minimum standard of living, necessities due to the absence of enough financial resources. When a family goes through this phase they expect their kids to work and earn some money to support the family and feed them. Due to scarcity parents are left with no other option than to send their children for work even at a very low wage rate.

Overpopulation

According to WORLDMETER elaboration, India's population is approx 138 crore, out of which 42.75 million people in India are unemployed. India ranks at 86th position with an unemployment rate of 8.5% out of 214 countries. The population in the country is much more than the job opportunities available, which leads to a large section of the society remaining unemployed. When the adults are unemployed, this leads them to poverty, debt trap, and they also cannot educate their children which ultimately results in child labor.

Debt Trap

When a family gets stuck in the vicious cycle of debt trap it contributes to child labor. As children start working at a very tender age to make their family financially sound and act as a helping hand to bring them out of the debt trap.

Unprincipled Labour

India has one of the cheapest labors available therefore it is one of the biggest markets for outsourcing. Other countries approach India to get their work done at a very minimum rate. It is similar to that of the labor class, the labor salary in India is minimal and to increase the family income, parents are forced to let their children work and support them.

I. INTRODUCTION

Role of NGOs in Prohibiting Child Labor

- NGOs are motivating commercial enterprises in India to not hire kids for the fulfillment of their employee requirements.
- They are working hard to bring a full stop to this social evil.
- They have been also encouraging locals to make sure that they report cases of child labor at businesses to the police.

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- Children who belong to communities like scheduled tribes, scheduled caste, Muslims, and OBC are more prone to child labor even after being provided with the reservation facility.
- They have been spreading awareness about what does it mean child labor? and also they have been directly communicating with the vulnerable communities telling them about how important it is to keep children out of any form of labor.[1,2]

Position In World

- Africa has the largest number of child labor with almost 72 million children, followed by Asia with approx 62 million children involved in some sort of labor work.
- The number of children stuck in child labor has risen to 160 million worldwide. 8.5 million children are dragged into child labor during the last four years. And there is an additional risk of 9 million children getting involved as an impact of Covid 19.
- Every step to prevent child labor has stalled for the very first time in the past 20 years which will reverse the earlier downward trend that saw child labor fall by 94 million between 2000 and 2016.

Position in India

Earlier Child labor was very common in rural India where 80% of the children are trapped in child labor, but slowly with time, this graph shifted from rural to urban India. Because of the presence of big cities with more number of the job opportunity. According to a report by UNICEF, there is a 54% increase in child labor for children aged between 5 to 14. As per a campaign against child labor India has approx 12666377 child laborers. Uttar Pradesh has 1927997 child laborers. Delhi has over 1 million child laborers. Other leading states are Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.

Judicial Aspect

Courts in India have proved themselves to be the torchbearer towards this issue of child labor.

In Francis Coralie Mullin v. Union Territory Of Delhi

In the above-mentioned case courts held that article 21 includes protection of health and also empowers workers, women, and children against the abuse. According to the court, the occasion and services for children to grow and build in a healthy way and order of freedom and decorum and educational benefits.

IN SHEELA BARSE v. UNION OF INDIA

It was held that it is the responsibility of states to focus on a child's development and growth and provide better opportunities to enhance his personality. Judicial institutions have always tried to fix issues which concern society at large. And has always tried to grow and expand the law to cover all the concerns of society.

GANESH RAM v. STATE OF JHARKHAND AND ORS,

In this case, the court held that, under child labor (prohibition and regulation act, 1860), if any child below the age of 14 is appointed a penal order will be passed against the employer but the employee will be free, no penal action would be charged against him.

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Laws Against Child Labour

Factories Act of 1948

This act guides and prohibits factory owners regarding employment creation. Under this act employment of children under the age of 14 is forbidden by law. It also gave a guideline on the employment criteria of a pre-adult that is 15 to 18 years of age[3,4]

The Mines Act of 1952

Working in mines is considered one of the toughest occupations. Kids with no experience of work in this field might lead to an adverse effect. After witnessing various incidents of children losing their life while working in mines, our lawmakers came up with this act, and children working in this field was completely banned. This act talks about employment criteria in mines, it forbids children under the age of 18 to work at such a place.

The Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act of 1986

To prevent children from working at some perilous occupation, our lawmakers came up with a list for the same. Under which all the hazardous occupations were listed down and children under 14 years were strictly prohibited to work at such places. The 2016 amendment changed the title of the act from THE CHILD LABOUR (PROHIBITION AND REGULATION) ACT OF 1986 to CHILD AND ADOLESCENT (PROHIBITION AND REGULATION) ACT OF 1986. The amendment added the following features in the act:-

- No child shall be permitted to work in any occupation or process
- Nothing in sub-section(1) of the act shall apply where the child:-

(a) Helps his family or family enterprise, which is other than any hazardous occupations or processes outlined in the schedule, after his school hours or during vacations.

(b) Work as an artist in the audio-visual entertainment industry, including the advertisement, films, television serials, or any such other entertainment or sports activities except for the circus, subject to such conditions and safety measures, as may be prescribed. Provided that no such work under this clause shall affect the school education of the child.

- No adolescent shall be employed or permitted to work in any of the hazardous occupations or processes outlined in the schedule: provided that the central government may, by notification, specify the nature of the nonhazardous work to which an adolescent may be permitted to work under this act.

The Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act of 2000

It was made punishable for employers to employ a child in some hazardous work. This act provides punishment to those who act in contravention to the previous acts by employing children to work.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009

For children aged from 6 to 14 years, education was made mandatory and free. It also mandated that in every private school 25% of seats should be allocated for children who come from physically disabled groups or disadvantaged groups.

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Importance of Education Against Child Labor

- Education plays a very significant role in eliminating child labor. Every year world day against child labor is celebrated on 12th June by Education International. According to Education International, early education is very important to get children out of the labor market.
- It doesn't only help children to learn necessary skills, but also allows them to lead a decent life forward.
- Education and training are mandatory drivers of social and economic growth and democracy.
- The removal of all costs linked with education will result in a large section of society being educated.
- An approach with the mindset to educate children and drag them out of poverty will reduce the number of child labor cases we face now.
- Education is a fundamental right, over which no one has the authority to deny.
- It helps in changing people's opinions towards life and makes them better human beings.[5,6]

Effects of Child Labor

Health issues:- Industries like Bengal making, employ a lot number of children and working in such industries leads to several severe diseases such as loss of eyesight at a very young age, depression, anxiety and also pushes them towards destructive habits like smoking alcoholism and drug abuse.

Increases chances of the accident:- Children due to their lack of experience don't easily understand the consequences of their acts, which happens to increase the risk of losing their life, If in the case involved with some hazardous work. There are a lot number of cases where children made some mistake at work and had to repay with their life. Working under someone increases the chances of a kid being sexually harassed by the employer or adult co-workers.

II. DISCUSSION

Eradicating child labor is still a distant dream for India. But education can be proved as a weapon to deal with it. Our lawmakers are trying to tackle the problem but it's high time that we as a citizen of India help the government to solve the problem. Problems like poverty, Illiteracy leads to child labor, with a collective effort by all of us, will for sure help children to drag them out of the labor world and lead a better life ahead.

According to data from Census 2011, the number of child labourers in India is 10.1 million of which 5.6 million are boys and 4.5 million are girls. A total of 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are estimated to be in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide.

Despite rates of child labour declining over the last few years, children are still being used in some severe forms of child labour such as bonded labour, child soldiers, and trafficking. Across India child labourers can be found in a variety of industries: in brick kilns, carpet weaving, garment making, domestic service, food and refreshment services (such as tea stalls), agriculture, fisheries and mining. Children are also at risk of various other forms of exploitation including sexual exploitation and production of child pornography, including online.

Child labour and exploitation are the result of many factors, including poverty, social norms condoning them, lack of decent work opportunities for adults and adolescents, migration and emergencies. These factors are not only the cause but also a consequence of social inequities reinforced by discrimination.

Children belong in schools not workplaces. Child labour deprives children of their right to go to school and reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty. Child labour acts as a major barrier to education, affecting both attendance and performance in school.

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The continuing persistence of child labour and exploitation poses a threat to national economies and has severe negative short and long-term consequences for children such as denial of education and undermining physical and mental health.[7,8]

Child trafficking is also linked to child labour and it always results in child abuse. Trafficked children face all forms of abuse-physical, mental, sexual and emotional. Trafficked children are subjected to prostitution, forced into marriage or illegally adopted; they provide cheap or unpaid labour, are forced to work as house servants or beggars and may be recruited into armed groups. Trafficking exposes children to violence, sexual abuse and HIV infection.

Child labour and other forms of exploitation are preventable through integrated approaches that strengthen child protection systems as well as simultaneously addressing poverty and inequity, improve access to and quality of education and mobilize public support for respecting children's rights.

Teachers and others in the education system can be frontline supporters to protect children and can alert other stakeholders such as social workers to situations where children display signs of distress or indicate they work long hours. Getting children out of work and into school also requires broader changes in public policy to empower families to choose education over exploitative labour.

UNICEF works with government and for-profit agencies to put in place the necessary policy framework to end child labour. It works with businesses to assess the supply chains and to find sustainable options to address business practices that lead to child labour. It works with families to support the ending of labour that is a result of bonded or debt labour. UNICEF supports state governments to integrate programmes that would end child labour. We also support communities in changing their cultural acceptance of child labour, while ensuring alternative income to families, access to preschools, quality education and protection services.

Listening to children is vital to achieving success in the fight against child labour.

A key message in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is that children have a right to voice their views on matters affecting them and to have these taken into account. Children have the power to play a significant role in preventing and responding to child labour. They are key actors in child protection and can give valuable insights into how they perceive their involvement and what they expect from the government and other stakeholders.

III. RESULTS

Education is a crucial component of any effective effort to eliminate child labour. There are many interlinked explanations for child labour. No single factor can fully explain its persistence and, in some cases, growth. The way in which different causes, at different levels, interact with each other ultimately determines whether or not an individual child becomes a child labourer.

Children's participation in the labour force is endlessly varied and infinitely volatile, responding to changing market and social conditions. This context is matched by the flexibility of the large, unprotected, potential child labour force. Poverty and social exclusion, labour mobility, discrimination and lack of adequate social protection and educational opportunity all come into play in influencing child labour outcomes.

Experience shows that a combination of economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection, together with a better understanding of the needs and rights of children, can bring about a significant reduction in child labour. Child labour is a stubborn problem that, even if overcome in certain places or sectors, will seek out opportunities to reappear in new and often unanticipated ways. The response to the problem must be as versatile and adaptable as child labour itself. There is no simple, quick fix for child labour, nor a universal blueprint for action.[9,10]

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IPEC's approach to the elimination of child labour has evolved over the past decade as a result of the experience it has gained and the changing needs of its partners for assistance. The programme incorporates a wide range of categories of work against child labour, including research and statistics, technical co-operation, a monitoring and evaluation unit, advisory services and advocacy, and an education unit.

IPEC has demonstrated leadership and experience in using education to combat child labour in both formal and non-formal settings which has proved significant in the prevention of child labour and the rehabilitation of former child workers. Non-formal or transitional education has played an instrumental role in the rehabilitation of former child labourers. Vocational education and training have provided the skills needed for gainful employment, which in turn contributes to local and national development. In addition, IPEC has been providing policy advice and technical assistance to governments to ensure that educational policies pay special attention to children at risk of child labour.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

A new study by Indian-origin researchers has found that despite economic prosperity and dramatic fall in poverty levels, unequal access to education ensures hundreds of millions of children remain trapped in child labour in developing countries including India.

For the study, Jayanta Sarkar and Dipanwita Sarkar from Queensland University of Technology Business School in Australia compared levels of child labour and schooling across economic groups in India, Peru and Ethiopia. They developed an innovative overlapping generations economic model to explain how child labour stubbornly persists despite falling poverty in developing countries.

Sarkar said that, the "fixed private cost" of schooling meant the poor had less access to education relative to the rich, a key driver in child labour among the poor. "Typically schooling, even in a 'free' education system, imposes a large burden on the poor through the fixed costs of things like transportation to and from school and books and other materials," he pointed out.

The research found that income inequality may matter more than poverty in explaining why child labour continues. "The analysis shows that families below a level of relative income choose zero schooling and full time labour for their children because they simply can't afford either the fixed schooling costs, or to miss out on the small income their children generate for the household," Sarkar noted.

He added, "Instead of schooling, they invest in child health to ensure children possess physical capability to perform unskilled work." Figures from The World Bank show the number of people living on less than USD 1.25 per day decreased dramatically from half the citizens in the developing world in 1981 to 21 percent in 2010, despite a 59 percent increase in the developing world population. However, UNICEF estimates 246 million children are still engaged in child labour.[11]

"There is a clear link between income inequality and intensity of child labour. But, more income does not always reduce child labour. In fact, as wages rise child labour rises in families who find schooling too expensive," Sarkar said. "Only after income reaches a certain 'threshold' level, does schooling become affordable and child labour start to fall. The 'threshold' rises with the degree of income inequality," he said.

Sarkar said that simply banning child labour would actually end up hurting the poor as child income would dry up and as a result private investment in health would fall. He said a child labour ban had to be accompanied by an increase in access to education. "Two policies that could help eliminate child labour are targeted attempts to reduce schooling costs for the poor, and raising the efficacy of public health infrastructure," he noted.[12,13]

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