



## STUDYING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF CHILD LABOURS IN AUTOMOBILE GARAGES IN PUNE CITY

**MAHDI GOLARA**

M.A in Social Work, Social Science Department, Bharati Vidyapeeth University. Pune, India



**MAHDI GOLARA**

### ABSTRACT

The problem of child labour is not a recent phenomenon in a country like India. Children are given apprenticeship training in family based on occupations such as – crafts and trade, agriculture etc. Learning of specific skills by participating in the family trade activities has a positive effect on developing of competence without imposing constraints on their overall development.

The problem of child labour is prevalent in India in all sectors of the economy; though majority of child labours are engaged in informal sector of employment and in the traditional family run occupations. The practice of child labour is more prevalent in under developed countries which lack resources and infrastructural facilities for children, such as, educational institutions, vocational training centres etc. In many parts of the world child labour is preferred as it is cheaper and unorganized. Most of these countries are from Asia and Africa. Therefore, the problem of child labour is not a specifically one nation's problem, but it is an international problem. In India, it is also a duty of a child to work for his or her family. Being a member of a family, one has to be a part and parcel of the family and share responsibilities as they share meal together.

**Key Words:** Child Labour, India, Pune, Socio-economic

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### INTRODUCTION

Child labour is today adversely affecting 24.6 crore children in the developing countries. Out of them India has the largest child labour in the world in absolute numbers. There are so many research studies conducted on child labour, their status, working conditions, social and economic problems they have faced in different segments of child labour. The problem of child labour is today considered as a growing issue in Indian society. This problem is one of the biggest challenges being faced by the developing and under developed countries in the world, in its aspiration to be a developed

country. Its eradication is not only the means to sustainable development but also an end in itself from the point of view of human development.

The international Labour Organization (ILO) attempted to create a workable definition of child labour, but has preferred to have considerable flexibility about the issue depending upon the country's development level. The Minimum Age Convention, 1973, convention number 138 specifies that the minimum age for employment should not be less than 15 years. Less developed countries may initially specify a minimum age of 14 years. The minimum age should be 18, if the work is dangerous

to health, safety or moral of child labour. The Indian Penal Code (IPC), defines the child as being 12 years of age. Section 82 and 83 of the IPC states that a child under the age of 7 years cannot be guilty of an offence and further a child under age of 12 years is not considered to have attained sufficient maturity to have understanding of the nature of the Act and the consequences of his or her conduct. Juvenile Justice (care and protection of children) Amendment Act, 2006, defines children below 18 years of age.

There are several research studies conducted on the problem of child labour, their status, working conditions, social and economic problems they faced in different sectors and industries such as, Bidi making, carpet industry, construction, mines, service sector and many other vulnerable areas, children working in automobile garages have not been considered promptly. This area has been added as vulnerable area several years back. The socio-economic status of children working in automobile garages has not been clearly notified and considered for study by any side. This study examines the present socio economic scenario and also highlights the working condition of child labour engaged in automobile garages.

#### **Child Labour Legislations in India**

Article 24 of Indian Constitution, 1950 has prohibited the employment of child, who is below the age of 14 years; to work in any industry, mine or in any hazardous employment. Similarly, article 39(B) has ensured that health and strength of workers are not abused and children are not forced to enter into any employment which is unsuitable to their age. Working in automobile garages or workshops (welding, painting, work related to oil, diesel etc.) engine repairing and maintaining etc. are some of the activities listed as a hazardous activities for the children working in automobile garages, by Child Labour Act (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986.

The supreme court has also deliberated the matter regarding elimination of child labour. In its judgment dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1996, the court has given certain directions regarding the manner in which children working in hazardous occupations are to be withdrawn from work and rehabilitated, as also the manner in which the working conditions of

the children working in non-hazardous occupations are to be regulated and improved upon. The government policies constitute a set of legal measures that ban child labour, male and female. However, experience shows that laws banning child labour are difficult to implement especially in small organizations in informal sector such as automobile garages, shops etc. Family enterprises are too small and therefore beyond the purview of labour legislation. Implementing labour legislation in large organizations is relatively easy. However, in small enterprises and family enterprises implementation of labour legislations are quite difficult.

Therefore, though the above mentioned constitutional provisions and child labour (prohibition and regulation) act 1986 are made for the betterment of children, there is hardly any improvement in the status of child labour in India.

#### **Review of Literature**

- i) A study conducted by Rana Ejaz Ali Khan (2002), focus on socio-economic aspects of working children in automobile garages. Author has made comparisons between the conclusions of his study survey and previous ones. Author has concluded that, child labour working in auto garages is considered to to be apprentice type and getting lower wages compared other child labour. Author has also observed that due to dusty, smoky surroundings of work place and dangers of carbon monoxide exhausted from diesel engines of vehicles, children are having poor health conditions and occupational diseases. Majority of children were school dropouts.
- ii) S. Vijaya kumar, (2003), examines the existing child labour scenario and the role of social partners in addressing the problem. This study article provides scope for further debate to find practical policy solutions for certain questions that are always taking the lead in nationwide workshops on elimination of child labour. Author has further stated that, this fact have to be realized and considered while addressing the problem of child labour. Author has opined that, this sensitive social

- problem can be addressed through designing a comprehensive social policy where different stakeholders will have a participatory role.
- iii) Sanjay Mahapatra and Manusmita Dash (201110, have stated that the main reason which gives rise to child labour is widespread unemployment or underemployment among the adult poor population and also rapid growth of population. In India, majority of families are belonging to lower income group and often lack education. There is also an ignorance of parents about the importance of education and adverse impacts on the health of their children are some of the major reasons which have developed the social evil of child labour in India.
- iv) According to Lienten, (2002), the existence of child labour are poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, high fertility rate, large family size and their attitudes, high rate of school dropouts, lack of food security, migration, traditional family occupation etc. Author has also highlighted unemployment among parents and state government's expenditure policy on social services is the major factors responsible for child labour in India. Author has concluded that, social, cultural and economic poverty influence poor families and force their children into child labour markets.
- v) Weinzer M. (1991) argues that, it is well known that many poor parents bear children in order to enhance family income. Author has further stated that, children are

viewed as economic assets and not as economic liabilities. Indian policy makers accepts as the basis of policy the fact that child bearing for low-income Indians is part of their strategy for family survival and well being.

**Methodology and Survey**

- a) **Objectives:** The study is carried out with the following objectives.
- i) To ascertain the socio economic background of child labour working in the automobile garages.
- ii) To examine the working conditions in automobile garages.
- iii) To recommend some effective solution.
- b) **Sample Selection:** There are approximately 1500 automobile garages situated in various suburbs of Pune city. Out of which 50 automobile garages were randomly selected for the survey purpose. From the selected automobile garages 138 children were interviewed.
- c) **Data Collection:** A well structured interview schedule was developed with a view to collect the information regarding socio economic and working conditions in automobile garages.
- d) **Limitations of the Study:** The present study survey is confined only to Pune city, and therefore it may not be generalized for elsewhere.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The results of the study survey have been shown in the following tables.

A) Socio Economic profile of child labour: Table No. 1

Sr. No.	Description	Number of Children with percentage			
A 1	Age Classification	Less than 8 years	9 to 11 years	12 to 14 years	Total
		17 (12%)	45 (33%)	76 (55%)	138 (100%)
A 2	Educational Status	Primary	Secondary	Illiterate	
		88 (64%)	37 (27%)	44 (31%)	138 (100%)
A 3	Migration from	Out of Pune	Other State	Local	
		56 (41%)	38 (28%)	44 (31%)	138 (100%)
A 4	Family Size (No. of members)	1 to 3	4 to 6	Above 6	
		27 (19%)	44 (32%)	67 (49%)	138 (100%)
A 5	Occupation of	Agriculture	Family	Other	

	Family	Labour	Business		
A 6	Monthly Family Income (Rs.)	63 (46%) Upto 3000	30 (21%) 300 to 5000	45 (33%) Above 5000	138 (100%)
A 7	Reasons for Working in Garage	Poor financial condition of family 87 (63%)	No interest in Education 39 (28%)	Pressure of Parents to Earn Money 12 (9%)	138 (100%)

It is evident from the above table that, child labour particularly in automobile garages, increases with increase in age (A1).

The highest proportion of child labour (64%) come from primary education level and only 9 percent child labours were illiterate (A2).

It was observed that majority of children were migrated from other districts of Maharashtra (41%) such as Beed, Usmanabad, Jalana etc. These districts are drought prone regions in Maharashtra. 285 children were migrated from other states like northern Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Zarkhand, Tamil Nadu. 31% child labours were local i.e. they were residents of Pune city (A3).

The size of the family was mostly large in the survey. It was found that 495 working children belongs to the families having more than 6 members. Similarly 19% and 32% child labours belongs to the families having 1 to 3 members and 4 to 6 members respectively. The families with large number of members cannot afford the educational expenditures of all children, therefore, many children work to support financially to their parents. It may be concluded that, lack of awareness regarding family planning, can also be attributed to the existence of child labour (A4).

It was observed that, majority of child labours i.e. 46% come from the families where their parents / family heads are engaged as a agricultural labour. In India agriculture sector is depends on the

performance of monsoon. Therefore. It may be inferred that the job of agricultural labour is not secured or the source of income is not secured, that is why the parents / heads of families supply their children as labours in big cities like Pune, Mumbai etc. The small traditional family business (21%) is insufficient to support family, so such families also supplied their children as labours. 33% child labour's parents were engaged in non-agricultural work; which is also not a constant income source of income of the family. These situations lead to the decision of the family head / parents to engage their children in other type of skill acquiring as against engaging them in traditional family business or agriculture (A5).

It was observed that majority of children's financial condition of family is very poor (635) and majority of such children are migrated from drought prone districts of Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. 285 children have not completed their primary or secondary education because they don't have any interest in formal education. Therefore there is a pressure on them from their parents to earn money to support family expenditure (91%). In brief, child labour can be partly due to sheer poverty and partly due to unawareness among the parents regarding children's education.

B] Working Conditions in Automobile Garages: Table No. 2

Sr. No.	Description	Number of Children with percentage			
B 1	Monthly Income (Rs)	1000 to 3000 29 (21%)	3001 to 5000 100 (72%)	Above 5000 9 (7%)	Total 138 (100%)
B 2	Duration of Daily Work (Hours)	5 to 6 Hours 34 (25%)	7 to 8 Hours 56 (40%)	Not fixed 48 (35%)	138 (100%)
B 3	Duration of Recess	15 minutes 43 (31%)	30 minutes 76 (55%)	1 hour 19 (14%)	138 (100%)
B 4	Risks at Work Place	Lifting of Heavy Equipments	Working in Diesel Smoke,	All types of the Risks	

			Dangerous		
		23 (17%)	Chemicals	29 (21%)	86 (62%) 138 (100%)
B 5	Sickness / Health	Always	Sometimes	Never	
	Problems	77 (56%)	52 (38%)	9 (6%)	138 (100%)

The above table reveals that, very few (7%) child labours are getting their wages above Rs. 5000. Majority of child labours getting wages between Rs. 3000 and Rs. 5000, 21% v are getting wages between Rs. 1000 and Rs. 3000 monthly. Majority of child labours are getting lower wages as compare with the standards of living in Pune. It was observed that, many child labours staying in slum areas and it was also observed that some children staying in scanty and populated garages; because they cannot afford the rental place for accommodation in Pune. Child labours working in automobile garages are considered to be apprentice type. So th wages are comparatively lower than child labours working in the other sectors (B1).

The working hours that children work is critically important. It was observed that 35% of the children's working hours were not fixed. Sometimes they have to work for more than 10 hours in a day. Majority of the children were working for 7 to 8 hours, and oly 25% children were working for 5 to 6 hours in a day. It was observed that, many times these children were injured while working. Fatigue is a major cause of accidents and injuries (B2).

The duration of recess is less than one hour. In majority of automobile garages (55%) it is 30 minutes and very few garages only 14%, it is 1 hour and in 31% garages it was found that there is only 15 minutes break for lunch and rest. As stated above the child labours working in automobile garages are considered as apprentice or trainee. Four to six years are required to complete the training. Such a long period of training with a long working hours (approximately 9 to 10 hours a day) may be a cause for serious sickness of child labour and children may unable to achieve skills or unable to learn. (B3)

It was observed that, in auto garages work is related with handling heavy equipments and tools. In the present survey, 175 children have stated that

they have to handle or operate these heavy equipments or tools daily. 21% child labours have stated that they have to face the diesel smoke and other dangerous chemicals, acids for the cleaning of vehicles; which are very risky. Majority of children (62%) have stated that they are facing all types of risks while working. Working in automobile garages is associated with poorer safety, unhygienic environment, pollution etc. The diesel exhaust from vehicles contains a mixture of gases (including carbon monoxide and oxides of nitrogen) and small particles that can affect children's health. (B4)

Due to these risk factors majority of children (56%) always face sickness or health problems. 385 children state that sometimes they are facing health problems and only 6% children have state that they never face any health problems. Exposure to diesel exhaust can cause eye and upper respiratory (nose and throat) irritation and include respiratory disease and cardiovascular problems. (B5)

During the survey it is observed that, drinking water facility is available in majority of garages (96%). (C 1) In 49% garages there is no adequate lighting. These garages are situated mostly in slum areas of Pune city such as Kasarwadi, Hanuman Nagar, Janata Vasahat, Parvati etc. These garages are confined and enclosed spaces. It is also observed that, there is no proper arrangement for ventilation and exhaust of smoke. Children are working in such garages with hazardous atmosphere. (C 2). Majority of garages (83%) do not have first aid box. (C3). In majority of garages there are no washing and sanitation facilities (C4) and in 88% garages there is no adequate place for lunch and rest. Majority of children take their lunch in polluted and dusty atmosphere. (C5) Some children have to live in automobile garages occasionally due to work load; and they are provided such type of polluted and congested place to sleep.

The following table indicates the facilities available at work place.

Sr. No.	Description	Number of Children And Percentage		
		Yes	No	Total
C 1	Drinking Water	132 (96%)	06 (4%)	138 (100%)
C 2	Adequate Lighting	89 (64%)	49 (36%)	138 (100%)
C 3	First Aid Box	23 (17%)	115 (83%)	138 (100%)
C 4	Washing and Sanitation	75 (54%)	63 (46%)	138 (100%)
C 5	Place for lunch and rest	16 (12%)	122 (88%)	138 (100%)

**Recommendations**

- i) It is recommended that, for elimination of economic, social and physical exploitation of child labours, there should be stress on the provision of protection from doing work which obstructs their physical and mental development. For this purpose advocate effective laws and their enforcement.
- ii) There should be proper arrangement to identification of contraventions of the law, and to control factors which create the demand for child labour.
- iii) There is a scope for NGO's in eradication of child labour evil from the society. To overcome this evil NGOs should enhance their credibility and responsibility through self regulation. They need to target champions in the system and create a synergy.
- iv) Technology education is a significant instrument for the eradication of unpleasant, hazardous, monotonous and stigmatized works in garages. Existing child labour could be reintegrated into society with technology linked education.
- v) There should be training programmes for NGOs for design management and evaluation of child labour projects and programmes.
- vi) Some of the issues that require to be considered while planning the policy to eliminate child labour are a) empowering the poor families in rural areas, b) ensuring food security to poor families, c) addressing social exclusions, d) improving education facilities and their accessibility in rural areas, e) sensitizing society, f) concentrating on functional literacy with

vocational skills and g) strengthening legislations.

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