

# Periodic Research

## Present Scenario of Child Labour in Modern India



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### Abstract

An attempt has been made to study the magnitude and distribution of child labour in different states of the India. Labourers below the age of 14 years are called child labour. India has the largest number of child labour in the world. According to the census figures of 1991, India has 11.29 million child labourers, which constitute 1.34 per cent of the total population of our country. In 2001, the age-group (0-14) years was 308 million and 2013 it was 19.36 million. The latest estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO) 2006 put the number of working children between the ages of 5 to 17 years old at 218 Million. Child labourers are engaged in various types of work like agriculture, livestock, forestry, manufacturing and households etc. In many countries child labour is mainly an agricultural issue. Worldwide 60 percent of all child labourers in the age group 5 - 17 years work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock. This amounts to over 129 million girls and boys.

In the urban areas, children work in dhabas, eateries helpers or cleaners in trucks and as domestic servants etc. Poverty is undoubtedly a dominant factor. Children born in poor families are forced to work not only for their own survival but also for their family. Awareness of the people and Government also compels poor parents to make their children employed as laborers in agricultural forms, factories, brick kilns and as domestic servants. Though, children are not well paid, they still serve as major contributors to family income. Therefore, mere legislation can not do any good to our children and can not prevent them from becoming children labour.]

**Keywords:** Magnitude, Child labour, Rural/Urban, Age-groups, Wage

### Introduction

India has the second largest child population in the world. According to census 1991, the population of children in the age-group (0-14) years was 263 million which constituted nearly about 38.8 percent of the total population. The age-group (0-14) years would be around 308 million by the census year 2001, and the census 2011 it was 330 million of the percent child population 78% live in rural areas and the remaining 22% in urban areas. The term child labour, a convenient expression for the "labour of children" has rather a vague meaning. According to 2011 census, there were 16.39 million labours below the age of 14 years. On the basis of National Sample Survey, it was 19.36 million on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013. About 91% of the total child force works in the rural areas and rest in urban areas. Table-1, shows the sectoral distribution of child labour in India. Nearly 79% are employed in agriculture, 6% in livestock, forestry, plantation, 8% in manufacturing process and another 3% in households, other services and rest in trade, commerce and transport. The high percent of their employment in cultivation appears to be due to the respondent's bias arising out of higher prestige attached to cultivator category as compared to labourers. The agricultural labour enquiry committee reports reported their composition as earners and helpers in the ratio 11.9. It indicates that majority of child labour working in agriculture, worked for wage and smaller proportion possibly worked as family labour and helpers.

In rural areas, child labour is engaged in various types of agricultural operation such as weeding, threshing, transplanting, irrigation, harvesting, manuring, sowing, ploughing and harrowing. Apart from these agricultural operations, they are also engaged in some non-agricultural operations, such as construction work, road building, brick-load, carrying etc. They also secure some self-employment, like firewood collection low-dug collection, grass cutting, fishing etc. Some are domestic servants. It may be noted that 21% and 11% of male labour force (by weekly status) in

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the age group (5-9) and (10-14) respectively were self-employed with in agriculture in theyear 2013. The corresponding figure for the total (5 + age group) labour force is less than 6%. The other two sub-categories with in agriculture viz; regular and casual workers too, claim a larger share of total child worker compared to the that of the total workers. The incidence of child employment outside agriculture, on the other hand, is low. The only non-agricultural sub-

category where in the child workers are relatively higher than the total (male) workers is casual work, the shares of the former being 21% and 23% for the (5-9) and (10-14) age-group respectively as opposed to the figure of the only 11% for the total workers. Also as high as 30% of the total child workers are self-employed outside agriculture. This, however is not very suprising since the corresponding share for the total workers is also very high viz. 32%.

**Table 1 : Sectorial distribution of child labour in India.**

Sector	No. in thousand		% Distribution		% Share of child worker in total
	All workers	Child workers	All workers	Child workers	
1. Agriculture	167249	10977	68.37	80.75	6.56
a- Cultivator	102885	5196	42.06	38.23	5.06
b- Agri-labour	64364	5781	26.31	42.53	8.96
2. Livestock, forestry, fishing etc.	5427	771	2.22	5.67	14.21
3. Mining and quarrying	1283	30	0.52	0.22	2.34
4. Manufacturing processing etc.	26592	1974	10.87	7.90	4.04
a- Household industry	8573	493	3.50	3.63	5.75
b- Other than household industry	18019	581	7.37	4.27	3.22
5. Construction	7306	91	1.52	0.67	2.46
6. Trade and commerce	14294	265	5.84	1.95	1.85
7. Transport storage and communication	6142	35	2.51	0.26	0.57
8. Other service	19911	351	8.14	2.58	1.76
All sectors (1-8)	244606	13593	100.00	100.00	5.56

Source – Census of India 2011.

The distributional pattern for the female child workers is more or less the same as that of the male children. It is in the sub-categories with agriculture that most of the female children get absorbed.

Outside agriculture in large number of female children are engaged in casual work as in the case with their male counterpart.

**Table 2 : Percentage distribution of labour force as per current weekly status across employment categories in various age-groups 2011.**

Employment categories	Male				Female			
	5-9	10-14	60 +	All (5 +)	5-9	10-14	60 +	All (5 +)
Self-employed person								
a- Agriculture	21.1	10.6	16.7	56.0	27.9	14.2	14.3	11.5
b- Non-agriculture	29.8	28.8	52.9	32.0	22.9	23.7	36.8	24.8
Regular/Salaried workers								
a- Agriculture	3.5	2.7	0.9	0.7	3.3	3.0	0.4	0.0
b- Non-agriculture	12.3	22.0	17.5	41.4	11.5	19.9	22.0	29.8
Casual workers								
a- Agriculture	8.8	2.6	2.9	2.0	4.9	11.3	6.7	8.8
b- Non-agriculture	21.1	22.8	7.0	11.3	22.9	22.3	18.9	17.0
Unemployed person	3.5	10.3	2.0	6.7	6.6	3.5	0.9	7.0

Source- Indian Journal of labour economics vol. 36 conference issue.

The inter-category variation in the percentage distribution of labourers in different age-groups has not changed much for males an females 2011-12 self-employment both in agriculture and non-agriculture and casual employment outside agriculture claimed a large proportion of child labourers in2011-12 and 2012-2013 as in 2011. There seems to be a

shift in child employment from agriculture (Regular and casual work) to non-agricultural activities (self-employment and casual work). The trends towards self-employment outside agriculture is more pronounced in case of female children. The high figures of child employment in regular non-regular activities, particularly in the year 2012-13, should not

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be taken as an indication of their improved working conditions. These, on the other hand, suggest that in several manufacturing and tertiary activities that have

a high incidence of child employment, the conditions of the regular employees are not much better than the casual workers.

**Table 3: Percentage distribution of labour force as per current weekly status across employment categories in various age-groups 2012-13.**

Employment categories	Male				Female			
	5-9	10-14	60 +	All (5 +)	5-9	10-14	60 +	All (5 +)
Self-employed person	13.0	10.7	13.9	4.9	25.0	17.0	17.0	10.7
a- Agriculture	41.0	28.6	56.7	33.7	25.0	25.5	40.4	26.7
b- Non-agriculture								
Regular/Salaried workers	0.0	1.2	0.4	0.6	0.0	2.1	1.1	0.3
a- Agriculture	20.0	27.4	17.1	41.3	25.0	25.5	18.4	31.5
b- Non-agriculture								
Casual workers	0.0	3.6	2.9	2.3	0.0	9.6	6.9	7.4
a- Agriculture	20.0	19.0	7.1	10.6	25.0	19.0	13.3	14.5
b- Non-agriculture								
Unemployed person	0.0	10.7	1.5	6.6	0.0	4.3	3.2	9.2

Source- Indian Journal of labour economics vol. 36 conference issue.

Agriculture in urban areas, to a certain extent, draws upon the child workers, particularly the females. The percentage of self-employed person-days of child worker to the total self-employed person-days in agriculture is not very low viz. 4.7% for male

and 18.6% for female. Similarly, the share of child workers to the total person-days of casual employment in agriculture in 2.4% for male and 4.6% for female.

**Table 4: Percentage of person-days in different employment categories to all person days in these categories over different age-group 2012-13.**

Employment categories	Male			Female		
	5-9	10-14	60 +	5-9	10-14	60 +
Self-employed person	0.5	4.2	13.4	10.9	7.7	7.4
a- mAgriculture	0.1	1.5	7.9	0.4	4.2	6.6
b- Non-agriculture						
Regular/Salaried workers	-	3.9	5.4	0.0	0.0	13.7
a- Agriculture	0.0	1.2	2.0	0.3	3.4	2.5
b- Non-agriculture						
Casual workers	-	2.4	6.2	0.0	4.6	4.2
a- Agriculture	0.3	3.5	2.9	0.8	5.3	7.3
b- Non-agriculture						
Unemployed person	-	2.8	2.0	0.0	2.3	2.0
Total labour force	0.1	1.9	4.5	0.3	4.3	4.3

Only, there are very few female children engaged as regular workers in agriculture. The manufacturing and tertiary sectors also use the children but mostly as casual labourers. This can be explained in terms of the fragmented labour market and the low age-rate accepted by the children. Getting self-employment or a regular, salaried job out side agriculture, requires possession of certain capital assets and skills, that restrict the growth of children employment. However, the share fo2.0% for male children and 4.6% for female children on the total (male or female) labour time in urban areas must be considered as very high in view of the legal ban on child employment in the country. Even though the percentage is low the absolute number is high.

### Magnitude and distribution of child labour in India:

The percentage distribution of child and general workers in the thrice board sectors as indicted in the table shows the highest child workers in the primary sector followed by the secondary sector and the minimum in the tertiary sector.

**Table 5: Percentage distribution of child and general workers in the thrice board sectors : Primary, secondary and tertiary.**

Workers	Sectors			
	Primary	secondary	tertiary	All sectors
All workers	71.12	12.39	16.49	100.00
Child workers	86.64	8.57	4.79	100.00

Source – Census 2011

Table gives details of the distribution of child labour in India. It may be noted from the table that out of the total number of child labours in India 59.83% of male child labours live in rural areas, while 6.60% live

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in the urban areas. In the case of female child labours while 31.31% of the total labours live in rural areas. Only 2.26% live in urban areas. It is interesting to note that the male child labour and female child labour combined together are predominantly confined only to the rural areas of India with the only exception of Chandigarh and Delhi. In most of the regions while the total percentage of male child labours in rural and urban areas combined together accounted for a greater proportion of the total number of the child labour. In case of Himanchal Pradesh, Sikkim, Goa and Mizoram the percentage of female child labour in rural and urban areas combine together account for a greater proportion of the total number of workers.

**Table 6 : Percentage distribution of child labour (workers) by sex. rural and urban areas.**

Region	Male		Female	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
India	59.83	6.60	31.31	2.26
Andhra Pradesh	52.10	5.26	39.60	2.85
Bihar	71.34	4.19	23.63	0.84
Gujrat	61.20	8.34	88.81	1.85
Himanchal Pradesh	41.26	1.17	58.04	0.53
Haryana	74.02	6.83	18.44	0.71
J & Kashmir	68.05	10.14	27.85	2.53
Karnataka	54.87	8.36	33.11	3.66
Kerala	42.77	8.60	40.80	7.83
M.P	56.70	3.10	38.88	1.32
Maharashtra	48.83	5.62	43.28	2.27
Manipur	58.22	3.62	53.34	4.82

Meghalaya	56.54	1.68	39.89	1.59
Nagaland	41.68	2.51	54.20	1.61
Orissa	71.49	3.76	23.37	1.38
Punjab	83.36	12.18	13.68	0.78
Rajasthan	62.13	5.52	31.13	1.22
Sikkim	38.35	4.31	54.89	2.55
Tamilnadu	45.98	10.71	37.32	5.99
Tripura	69.09	2.17	25.70	3.4
Uttar Pradesh	75.67	8.82	14.72	0.79
West Bengal	73.50	8.33	14.51	3.66
Andman & Nikobar island	66.19	19.39	11.70	2.72
Arunchal Pradesh	42.88	1.19	53.36	2.57
Chandigarh	6.64	74.36	1.23	11.77
Dadar & Nagar haveli		54.93	2.38	44.27
Delhi	5.87	80.12	2.63	2.42
Goa Daman Diu	84.06	12.49	35.82	11.38
Lankshdeep	25.81	25.81	35.48	16.63
Mizoram	42.26	2.40	53.33	12.90

### Dimension of low wages :

The children are usually paid poorly any many times not directly. Some of them have to put up with two different jobs on the same day. The employers usually indulge exploitation. The occupational risks to which these children are exposed are multiple and frequent. It may be seen from table that tertiary sector reports a relatively higher wage rate for its regular salaried workers both for male and female as compared to the other sectors.

**Table 7 : Wage rate (Rs. Per day) for regular/ salaried employees in different sectors at current prices.**

Sector	Male				Female			
	Children		Adult		Children		Adult	
	5-14 age-group		15-59 age- group		5-14 age- group		15-59 age- group	
	2001	2012-13	2001	2012-13	2001	2012-13	2001	2012-13
Agriculture mining	97	110	105	125	90	105	110	120
Manufcaturing	112	118	127	146	115	118	120	128
Division. 2	90	102	110	126	118	117	141	142
Division. 3	95	118	115	142	140	128	172	114
Electricity etc	87	122	118	136	146	172	193	127
Construction	140	136	142	147	152	146	172	116
Trade	176	192	190	192	200	201	198	205
Transport other services	118	127	116	140	172	126	132	176
Division. 8	125	142	172	152	183	173	147	172
Division. 9	118	126	140	167	176	147	116	144
All	116	142	136	150	184	172	128	172

Source – The Indian Journal labour Economics

The highest wage rate is noted in the real estate, finance etc. (Division 8 of other services) community and personal services (Division 9 of other service) also report a high wage rate. The real difference between the two components of the service sector is not in terms of the wage rate but the percentage of casual workers and self-employed persons. Children got almost the same wage as

female (casual) workers, indicating their sustainability in the activities that employ them surprisingly, the wage paid to the children for regular and casual work are about the same. This is because in several urban activities the terms and conditions of work for the people (Particularly children) employed on fairly regular basis are not very different from those employed casually. Children mostly find employment

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in such activities as seen noted earlier. Accordingly to a comparative study on agricultural and industrial child labour, under taken in Kalayanpur block of district Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh state the agricultural child labours were engaged as casual labours in agricultural operation and also for tending cattle. The industrial child labours were mostly employed in small scale factories. The finding of this study brought out the sad plight of both these types of child labours. They were paid low wages per day for agricultural labour and for industrial labours; a against the prevalent wage rate of Rs. 250 to Rs. 275 for adult labours. The agricultural child labours could get employment for 260 days in a year as against 270 days for industrial child labour. The average annual per capita income of the agricultural child labour was Rs. 3216 as against the per capita income of Rs. 3072 of the industrial child labour.

### Factors contributing to child labour :

Broadly speaking, widespread poverty, illiteracy, demographic conditions and ignorance of parents are the main causes for the rampant prevalence of child labour in our country. Child labour works for their own survival and that of their families. The main cause of child labour in our country is the poverty which forces the parents to send their children to seek employment. The children for these families have got only two choices either to work or face starvation. Our country is a labour surplus economy. The unequal land distribution system in the country with nearly 50 percent of the households in ownership of only 4 percent to the total aggravates the problem to a larger extent. As many a 27.2 percent of the rural households are agricultural labourers. About one third of the metropolitan population live in slums.

S.No.	Annual rate of population growth	Density per square Km.	% of child labour census	Dependency ratio
	2000-2001	2010-11	2000-2001	2010-11
Andhra Pradesh	2.2	241	13.2	70.7
Bihar	2.1	497	3.7	80.4
Gujrat	1.9	210	4.7	70.3
Haryana	2.4	389	3.6	80.6
Karnataka	1.9	234	7.6	73.4
Keral	1.3	247	1.0	61.0
M.P.	2.2	149	7.9	79.0
Maharashtra	2.3	250	6.4	69.3
Orissa	1.8	202	5.97	82.8
Punjab	1.9	401	3.6	59.3
Rajasthan	2.5	128	2.78	31.5
Tamilnadu	1.4	428	3.0	68.7
Uttar Pradesh	2.3	472	2.6	73.4
West Bengal	2.2	766	5.6	69.2
Nagaland	4.6	73	3.0	71.4
Tripura	2.9	262	6.8	64.7
Himanchal Pradesh	1.8	92	7.9	66.3
Meghalaya	2.8	78	3.6	72.3
Manipur	2.5	82	2.9	66.7
J& Kashmir	2.6	55	10.3	72.9
All India	2.1	257	5.01	73.3

Sourc – Census 2011 (Basic statistics relating in the Indian Economy Vol. 2 Yojna)

Positive and high correlation are found between ratio of child labour (male) and ratio of general participation rate (male) and the child labour (female) and general participation of (female).

Positive correlation between child labour ratio and poverty ration is estimated ( $r = + 0.5007$ ): here also positive correlation is observed between child labour ration and rural poverty ratio ( $r = 0.305$ ) and urban poverty ration ( $r = 0.420$ ). It suggest that poverty is one of the major factor which forces child to work. The level of poverty was much higher than the average for the country. Among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other economically backwards communities both in rural as well as in urban areas. In eastern U.P. there is abysmally low literacy level. The first most populous state of India needs special attention. It was the dubious distinction of having the lowest overall literacy rate in the country i.e. 39.2 percent Bihar coming next. Out of the 80 districts in the state in 2011, 48 has a literacy level than 40% while 20 had a level between 40 to 50 percent and only 10 had a level of more than 50 percent. Eight district had a very low literacy rate i.e. 25 percent only. Most of the districts with lower level of literacy are in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The average level of female literacy in U.P. was less than 21percent in 2011. Much below all India average of 37 percent in rural areas, as many as 37 districts had a rate of less than 20 percent out of which had a rate less than 15 percent.

It is further shows the dependency ration, demography forces present in our society are playing very important role towards this problem of child labour in our country. About 71.3 percent population is dependent in India 44.85 percent of then national population in the age-group of 0-14 years and 6.5 percent in the age-group 60+, 46% of dependent population is on the population age-group 15 to 59 years. The high dependency ratio creates a skewed distribution. The skewed distribution of population in India is responsible for sending children to labour market.

Negative correlation between child labour and population densnity ( $r = 0.0096$ ) do suggest that higher population density has high level of child labour ratio. That states with high population densities have higher dependency ratio and higher economic load factor. Thus, due to poverty and illiteracy in the rural areas, parents are ignorant the various schemes, such as free education. Person with no education are at a disadvantages in the labour market. Due to these reasons eradication of child labour does not seem to be feasible. Any legislation totally prohibiting child labour ma amount to hardship in the poor parents and their children.

### Conclusion :

Child labour in India is a multi-dimensional problems. Various social, economic and demographtic forces work together to determine the magnitude to the child labour force. High fertility ratio results in a bottom heavy population structure and abundant availability of children for work. Low level of literacy in

general and failure of educational institutions and lack of institutional infra-structure to attract children to school for education and higher drop-out rate add to this problem. And lastly, due to poverty high economic value of children on our traditional society leaves no other choice for the poor parents than to send their children to the labour markets. Therefore, mere legislation can not do any good to our children and can not prevent them from becoming children labour. Till there is a continues population explosion. Poor and inadequate educational facilities and people starving. Our children will continue to become labourers and the problems will continue as usual. To check this problem of child labour, fertility check has to be assumed through adoption of family planning and proper medical facilities. Better and adequate schooling facilities have to be provided to assume free and compulsory education to all children up to at least 14 years of age and employment opportunities have to be generated to make sure that essential necessities of the people are fulfilled.

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