



Child Labour In A Tribal Village Of Kashmir A Case Study Of Village Ringzabal

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Abstract:

Child labour is a global phenomenon and a harsh reality. Child labour is both an economic and a social evil. Child labourers are found everywhere, in every sector, every industry of the society. Various social, economic, and demographic factors work together in determining the coincidence of the child labour. This study focuses on the problem of child labour in one of the tribal villages of Kashmir. The study highlights the status of child labour in terms of the reasons responsible for the same and working status of the child labourers in the village. The study is primarily an empirical one and has been conducted in one of the tribal villages “Ringzabal” of district Budgam. The present study has been carried out in line with the case study research strategy and the village has been taken as a case. Case study research design has been supplemented with the methods of interview schedule and non participant observation. In spite, of two schools in the village, large number of children are outside the schools and are engaged in child laboring. The study highlighted familial poverty, ignorance of the parents, lack of support by parents, community passivity and children’s passivity towards education as key factors responsible for child laboring in the village.

Keywords: Child, Labour, Child labour, Dropouts, Passivity.

1.Introduction

Child labour is a multi-dimensional problem. Various social, economic, and demographic factors work together in determining the coincidence of the child labour.ⁱ Child labourers are found everywhere, in every sector, every industry of the society. In the cities, we see them working as rag pickers, domestic servants, construction workers, assistants to mechanics in workshops, vegetable and magazine vendors, in factories etc. In small towns and villages they work in carpet looms, agriculture, brass factories, rearing of domestic animals etc.ⁱⁱ

A general valid definition of child labour is presently not available in the national or international context. Any definition turns upon the precise meaning we attach to two components of the term “child labour”. ‘Child’ in terms of his chronological age, and ‘labour’ in terms of its nature, quantum and income generation capacity. Child labour, however, can broadly be defined as that segment of the child population which participates in work either paid or unpaid.ⁱⁱⁱ The Child Labour (Prohibition and regulation Act, 1986) states that ‘Child is a person who has not completed his fourteen years of age’. Any work, whether manual or mental, which is undertaken by a child, who is below 14 years of age, for monetary consideration, is called child labour.^{iv} Homer Folks, the chairman of the United States National Labour Committee has defined child labour as “...any work by children that interfere with their full physical development, their opportunities for a desirable minimum of education or their needed recreation.” Although, regarding the age factor, various national and international organizations have a different view and are considering any person a child who has not completed the age of 18 years. In spite of the different opinions regarding age and other factors, Child labour is a global phenomenon and a harsh reality. Child labour is both an economic and a social evil. In assessing the nature and the extent of the social evil, it is necessary to take into account the character of the jobs on which the children are engaged, the dangers to which they are exposed and the opportunities of development which they have been denied. Thus, child labour is recognized by the sociologists, educationists, and development workers, medical professionals as hazardous and injurious to the child, both physically and mentally.^v

The present study has been carried out in a tribal village and has included all the children of the village, who have not completed the age of eighteen years and are involved in the work either paid or unpaid as child labourers. The setting of this criteria in conducting this study, regarding age and nature of work of these child labourers was also the criteria

of the Koshish organization working in this village on child rights. However, in conducting this study, researchers have divided the child labourers in two groups on the basis of age, one group meeting the age factor of below 14 years, and other group meeting the age factor of 18 years.

2.Field Setting

The present paper is based on an empirical study conducted within one of the tribal villages of the Budgam namely Ringzabal. Ringzabal is among one of the remotest tribal villages of Budgam. The total population of the village is 905, comprising of 460 males and 445 of females, based on 205 families. It comes under the Zone Hard Panzoo, Block and Tehsil Khansahab, district Budgam. It is situated on the bank of Nallah Sukhnag, in hilly areas and adjacent to the forest. It lies on the left side of the road, while moving from Tehsil headquarters to the Hard Panzoo. The village is lacking the facility of electricity, road facility. The people of the village had to travel almost one and a half kilometer on foot through the Nallah Sukhnag to reach the village. The village is almost 12 kilometers away from the Tehsil Head Quarter Khansahab and almost 25 kilometers from District Head quarters. Socio-economically village is very backward. Majority of the people of the village are illiterate and just three persons in the village are matriculate till now. One of the major problems in terms of schooling in the village is the problem of retention of the students in the schools. This in turn gives birth to huge number of children engaged in labor. In spite of having Govt. Middle and a Primary school in the village, the rate of dropouts and never admitted children is much high. Various reasons are responsible for this situation in the village in terms of education including poverty, lack of proper school infrastructure, monitoring and supervision to these schools, parental ignorance towards the education of their children. The main source of livelihood of people of the village is farming and laboring. The land available in the village is dry and mostly maize and pulses are grown on it. The area of land available to the households of the village ranges from two to five kanals. The women of the village also add to their family income by bringing firewood from the forests and then they make charcoal of it, latter it is sold in the market. Besides every household in the village is rearing the livestock and livestock rearing is mostly performed by the women and the children.

3.Methodology

The study is primarily an empirical one and the study has been conducted in one of the tribal villages of district Budgam. The criterion for selecting this particular village is to make a representative sort of analysis of the various aspects of child labourers in the tribal villages of the district Budgam. The village is also the area of intervention of a Kashmir based nongovernmental organization namely Koshish working there on the issue of child rights. Our interaction with the Koshish staff also motivated and encouraged us to study the problem of child labour in one of their intervening area, tribal village namely Ringzabal of district Budgam. The present study has been carried out in line with the case study research strategy and the village has been taken as a case for conducting this study. While following the case study research design; the researchers have used interview schedule, non participant observation, and interviews as the research methods. Interview schedule was used to collect the overall information about the every child of the village involved in the labour. In non participant observation, researchers observed various aspects related directly or indirectly with the research problem like school infrastructure of the two schools in the village, living conditions of the children, also their nature of working. Besides the teachers, community members, children of the village were interviewed regarding various aspects of the problem of child labourers and education in the village. Interviews mostly include informal interactions with the children out of school and engaged in working.

4.Findings Of The Study

4.1.Status Of Child Labourers In The Village

The total number of children in the village in age group of 6 to 18 years is 382. These children of age group 6 to 18 years comprise the school going children, as below the children of age 6 years are enrolled in ICDS centers. The children of this age group (6 to 18 years) were the focus of the study. In the village, the total number of child labourers is 66. This counts 17. 77% of the children involved in the laboring out of 382 children. Among these, 47 are below the age of 14 years, while the rest 19 are above 14 years. Among these 66 child labourers, 38 are male and 28 are female. The breakup of the child labourers in terms of age and sex in the village is given below in Table 1.

7-14 years		15 – 18 years	
Male	Female	Male	Female
27	20	11	8

Table 1: Age and Sex Structure

4.2. Educational Status Of The Child Labourers In The Village

Education of children in schools is a step towards safeguarding their rights to survival, protection, development and participation and also initiating a process of learning in the community.^{vi} If educational system and community fails to admit the children in the schools and then maintaining their retention in the schools will result in the production of child labourers. Situation in the village is like this. Regarding this aspect of the child labour problem in the village, there are both never admitted children and also drop outs. There are 34 children, who have been never admitted in the school, including 10 male children and 24 female children. While, 30 children are drop outs, among these drop outs 29 are male children and 1 female child. Just, two children are both studying and working and both are male children. While analyzing these figures, it indicates that ‘girl children’ in the village are being neglected in the education process. The problem of retention in the schools is a major concern to be addressed as rate of drop outs is high in the village. The breakup of the children involved in laboring in terms of their educational status is given below in Table 2.

Never Admitted		Dropouts						Children involved both in study and work.		Children only working	
		Pr.		Middle		High					
Male	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F	Male	Female	Male	Female
10	24	11	3	8	nil	7	1	2	nil	36	28

Table 2: Educational status of the Child Laborers.

4.3. Working Status Of The Child Laborers In The Village

Children involved in laboring in the village are engaged in different types of works. Among the total 66 child labourers in village, 23 are involved in housework, 13 are domestic servants, 10 are engaged in laboring, 14 are involved in rearing of domestic animals and 6 are engaged in carpet weaving. Children engaged in housework are all

female children and perform works in their homes including cooking of food, cleaning of houses, rearing of children etc. The children, who are servants, are working in the households of rich people outside their village as domestic servants. These children reside in the houses, where they are working and mostly are working in urban areas. The children engaged in laboring mostly work either in their own village or in adjacent villages of the village and are working as agricultural workers or construction workers. All the households in the village are rearing domestic animals and every family rear these animals on their own. In this activity children are mostly used including both male and female children. Carpet weaving is another livelihood activity of various families in the village. Few children in the village are also involved in this activity including both male and female children. The breakup of children involved in various kinds of works is given below in the Table 3.

S.No	Type of work involved	No. of children involved
1	Housework/Homework	23 (only female children)
2	Servant	13 (only male children)
3	Labour	10 (only male children)
4	Rearing of domestic animals	14(9 male children and 5 female children)
5	Carpet weaving	6 (4 male children and 2 female children)

Table 3: Child Laborers involved in type of work.

4.4. Working Hours In A Day By Child Labourers

The below table (Table 4) indicates the number of hours a child labour works in a day. There are 16 child labourers working 9-10 hours a day and 50 child labourers working 11-12 hours a day. The kind of work in whom these children are involved (as mentioned in Table 3) are of such nature that needs the service of these children at any time. For example, the children who are domestic servants are at the disposal of the household owner round the clock. Those children engaged in the housework also are engaged in domestic work throughout the clock. Same is the case with other child labourers.

1-2 hours	3- 5hours	5 -8 hours	9 -10 hours	11-12 hours
Nil	Nil	Nil	16	50

Table 4: Number of working hours a day.

5. Working Days In A Month By The Child Labourers

The below table (Table 5) indicates the number of days, these child labourers works in a month. According to this, 2 children work 11 -15 days a month, 10 children work 21-25 days a month and 56 children work 25 -31 days a month. The children involved in laboring found shortage of work, while the children involved in housework, servant, rearing of animals, carpet weaving had the work throughout all the days of month. So, the number of children working 25-31 days is more. The number of hours, number of days, a child is working has a great impact on his overall development.

Below 10 days	11 to 15 days	16 to 20 days	21 to 25 days	25 to 31 days
Nil	2	Nil	10	56

Table 5 : Number of working days in a month

6. Working Months In A Year By The Child Labourers

The below table (Table 6) mentions the number of months, these children work in a year, According to this, 10 children work for six months and 56 children work for the whole year. The children involved in laboring cannot find the work all the months throughout the year while the children involved in housework, servant, rearing of animals, carpet weaving have to work throughout the year as they are engaged in such works. That is available and to be done throughout the year.

1 m	2m	3m	4m	5m	6m	7m	8m	9m	10m	11m	12m
nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	10	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	56

Table 6: Number of working months in a year

7. Rate of wages given to child laborers

The below table (Table 7) mentions the rate of wages which are paid to these children engaged in working. Most of these child labourers in the village are unpaid; because they work for their own families, among these include domestic workers, involved in rearing

of animals. While the children working as servants, labourers and carpet weavers get paid. But the rate of their work is very low which ranges from Rs 50 to Rs 100 per day.

Below Rs 50	Rs 50 – Rs 100	Rs 100 – Rs 150	Rs 150 –Rs 200	Rs200-250	Above 250
6	23	nil	nil	nil	nil

Table 7: Rate of wages given to child laborers

8. Reasons For The Child Laboring In The Village

Family poverty, ignorance of the parents, lack of support by parents, community passivity and children's passivity towards education are the key factors responsible for child laboring in the village. Discriminating attitude of parents towards the education of the girl child is adding the number of child laborers in the village. People prefer to keep their girl children away from the education as compared to the male children. So most of the child laborers in case of never admitted is of female children. Both the never admitted and drop out children in turn get trapped into the child laboring. Parents and overall family of child has a great role in the education process of a child. In the village, where the study was conducted, the response of the parents towards education of their children is ignorant. As whole, the population in the village is illiterate. In whole of the village adult population, there is not a single graduate person. In whole of the adult population there are just three persons, one matriculate and other two passed 12th class standard. This is one among the reason for the low literacy rate in the village even in the children of 21th generation. In few cases of child labourers, personal reasons were found to be the cause of their child laboring, e.g. lack of interest in studying, mental problem etc. However, the educational set up in the village cannot be kept outside from the list of factors adding to the problem of child labour. Lack of adequate school infrastructure and lack of child centeredness school environment also is adding to the problem of child laboring. Besides, the school teachers did not track the cases of the drop outs from their schools. Any child who quits the school is not being given any consideration by the school staff, in order to find the reasons for the school leaving.

9. Few Individual Case Studies Of Child Labors In The Village For Illustration

Besides, discussing the problem of child labor in the village in various aspects above. Researchers have also documented few case studies of child labourers which highlighted the nature, causes and consequences of the problem. The study of these cases will

certainly lead to a deeper and wider sociological understanding of the phenomenon of child labour.

9.1. Case Study 1

Mushtaq Ahmad 14 years of age (name changed) has never been admitted in school. The family is supposed to be the first guardian and care taker of the children, who does not know, what is right or wrong for them. So the family members had to decide about the welfare of their children. Unfortunately, Mushtaq is a member of an illiterate family, ignorant and unknown about the values, importance of education and of the childhood. So the Mushtaq in his early childhood was given the responsibility of the domestic work including home based tasks, agriculture related work and also rearing of domestic animals. The same has happened to his other brother and a sister. It is the mindset of people of the village, regarding education of their children as the liability, so they prefer to make their children work from their childhood instead of having a Govt. Middle School and also a Non Formal School in the village.

Another reason for the child laboring of Mushtaq is the poverty of the family. Educating children seems to be burden, which adds to their poverty, so they prefer to make their children earn in order to increase family income. But their attitude has made them more poor both economically and mentally.

In Mushtaq's case, the death of his mother before some years was also responsible for his child laboring. His mother's death shackled the whole family and the family responsibilities, which his mother was fulfilling, were shared between the rest of the family members.

While, asking Mushtaq about his interest in education. He answered positively but adds who will work at my home. The important thing in accessing the education of Mushtaq, is counseling of his family members about the importance of education. It is also the responsibility of the teachers to make a friendly environment in the school, so that the children like Mushtaq will develop an interest in education.

9.2. Case Study 2

Every child has a right to education. And to provide this education to the child is the responsibilities of various agencies and the institutions. State is among one of them, which is obliged to make it compulsory the education of children below the age of 14 years in India. Shakeela, (name changed) a ten years old girl of a tribal village of district

Budgam has been deprived from her basic right of seeking education. In spite, of having a Govt. Middle school in the Shakeela's village namely Ringzabal, the rate of dropouts is high. Shakeela is among one of these dropouts. However, establishing a school, recruiting teachers is not the end of the responsibilities of the state, but it is the beginning. The state should make it mandatory for the teachers, to check the dropout rate, increasing rate of child labor and also awaking the people in a respective area about the need and importance of education.

Shakeela, just a year back was school going child with the bag on her little shoulders and was a student of 3rd standard in a Govt. Middle School, Ringzabal. But the family burden of domestic works stopped her from studying and snatched from her innocent hands pen and put in them the domestic works of her family. The family which is supposed to be the first guardian of the rights of children. But in Shakeela's case, it became the cause of depriving her from the right to education. She is the only daughter among the four sons of her parents. Being the eldest child of her parents, she became the victim of ignorance of her parents and was stopped from going to school. The reason behind leaving her study was to carry the domestic works of home and outside and also rearing her younger brothers. As her mother was unable to work during the period of her pregnancy and also after delivery. There is a norm in the village of keeping large families and giving birth after very short intervals.

The another reason behind her leaving study was the family poverty. Her father is a labor and also is adding to his family from 2 kanal of land, which he have. The reason and the rate of laboring is very less in the area. Her father is unable to feed his family of seven members. And educating his children is just a dream for him. The dream infact remained the dream in the case of his elder child, Shakeela and it may continue if any effort will not be taken. While analyzing the access of education of Shakeela. There is much need in terms of counseling the family about the importance of education and ill consequences of child labour. And also there should be revision of helping the family economically.

9.3. Case Study 3

An unfortunate child of 21st century does not saw the laps of the school. Where she can grow, play, develop and enjoy her childhood among the smiling, blooming buds. Two reasons were responsible for keeping her away from the laps of school. First, taking birth in a illiterate, ignorant, poor family of a remote tribal village of district Budgam. Second, the death of her mother, when she was 9 years old. Both the reasons were out of her

control. She had to live, she had to grow, she had to compete in such a society, in which no one can neglect the importance of education and to be illiterate in such a society is a big challenge to be faced in near future.

Tawheeda (name changed) 12 years old girl is eldest child of her father. Her father is a labor and is also adding to his family income from his small area of land. The season and rate of laboring in the area is very less and it is very difficult to fulfill the food requirements of his family based on seven members. The major task in front of her father is to feed his children not anything else like education. Thus family poverty makes the basic right to education; a dream for Tawheeda.

Tawheeda, was just a 9 years old, when her mother died during a delivery. She delivered a child on one side and on the other put all the responsibilities of her family and her small children on small and weak shoulders of her elder daughter, Tawheeda. She lost the love, care of her mother in the childhood and presently all the home work , cooking , washing , caring and rearing of her small brothers is performed by the Tawheeda.

While accessing the education of Tawheeda , it is impossible to admit her in NFE or in a formal school until she is being relieved from the burden of the family responsibilities. This can be done, if her father marries another lady. Beside, the present situation in the family can affect the education of her younger brothers too. And also there is need to help the family economically.

10. Conclusion

The discussion so far lead us to conclude that the child labour in the studied village is a concern that needs to be addressed. In spite, of having two schools in the village, large number of children are outside the schools and are engaged in child laboring. The people in the village show an attitude of passivity towards the education of their children especially of female children. In whole of the village, only few persons have passed the 12th class examinations. Dropout rate is high and children fail to continue their study. Parents prefer to engage their children in working instead of educating them. There is need to sensitize the community about the consequences of engaging their children in laboring and also sensitizing them about the role of education in the development of the child. There is need to help the people of the village economically by providing them additional income generating options, so that they can get economically uplifted in order to reduce the burden on their children. The school teachers had also to take active role in attracting the students towards the education and to make the tracking of those children,

who quit the school and there is need on the behalf of teachers to motivate and mainstream these drop outs and to check the problem at the roots and should work in areas like Ringzabal as change agents in the community. To address the problem of poor infrastructure in these schools, it is the responsibility of the state to make it commitment to provide proper infrastructure in the schools and make it mandatory for the concerned authorities to monitor these remote areas. Besides, state bodies should pay due attention to the remote areas in terms of supervising and monitoring the structural and functional aspects of the educational institutions.

11.Reference

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