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A STUDY OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF THE WORKING CHILDREN

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Abstract:

Child labour is a social evil originating in the poverty and exigencies of the circumstances of children who are quite often maltreated and exploited. Millions of children find it impossible to escape the bondage of hard and unremitting labour despite many laws and schemes. They are forced to work for very low and meager wages and are subjected to long hours of work and subhuman working conditions. They have to do repetitive, monotonous, unpromising, boring and hazardous jobs which are harmful to their physical, mental and moral development. This survey research explores the demographic characteristics, occupational mobility and households income of the child labourers in the trades and occupations such as hotels/restaurants/dhabas/tea stalls; cycle/bike and motor repairing shops; shoe, carpet, petha and marble industries of Agra District of U.P. State of India. 500 working children and their households were selected for the study. Interview Guide and Observation Schedule were used to gather primary information and facts from child labourers and their family members.

KEYWORDS:

Working Children; Child Labour; Demographic Characteristics; Occupational Mobility; Household Income.

INTRODUCTION:

Child labour is not a new phenomenon to our age. It has existed in one form or another at all historical times. Children in India have been associated with work from times immemorial. The work that they were asked to undertake used to provide them an opportunity for direct fulfillment of their natural abilities and for creative potentialities and thus was conducive to their healthy growth and development. When the structure of society was not so complicated, various occupations used to be pursued on the caste lines within the framework of joint family system in which the joys and sorrows, pleasures and pains, prosperity and poverty, business and idleness were to be shared and the needs of all family members used to be fulfilled within the available family resources. But today children are compelled by poverty and exigencies of circumstances to take up the wage jobs which are repetitive, monotonous, unpromising, boring and hazardous. They are quite often maltreated and exploited. The net effect of participation of children in work is generally negatively oriented and harmful to their physical, mental and moral development.

Cardwell (1975) pointed out that vicious circle of poverty and ill health may well be perpetuated

by the association of high fertility with child labour. A large number of children are seen by many people as one answer to the problem of poverty, where child labour is permitted, if not allowed. Family planning campaigns have had only a limited success in such situations.

Singh et.al (1978) found the economic reason to be the predominant cause of child labour. Large number of child workers are employed in the unorganised sector of the industries. There is no check on low wages that a child worker earns by toiling hard for long hours in sub-standard hygienic conditions.

Naidu (1985) emphasized that formal, legislative and organisational reforms are only part of the necessary structure to improve the health and welfare of working children. Codes of conduct may be one means of curbing any excesses that are part of industrial, particularly multinational practices, even if these are sometimes rather indirect and even if such codes have few teeth.

Srikantam (1986) analysed the 1981 Census data and observed that in rural areas, work participation among illiterate boys and girls was considerably higher when compared to that of literate boys and girls. The participation rate was 13.4 and 4.1 percent among illiterate and literate children respectively. Kambargi, R.et.al. (1986) found that ideal family size increases with child labour and decreases with child schooling and use of contraception decreases with child labour and increases with child schooling. It was also noted that highest child work participation rates were among those families who had three or more sibling, followed by those families who had two siblings and one or none.

Mehta (1987) studied statistical relationship between child labour and overall literacy (excluding 0-4 age group) in different states. She found that the correlation is negative and significant. The correlation coefficient is estimated to be -0.75, -0.71 and -0.71 in 1981, 1971 and 1961 respectively. She concluded that raising the level of literacy among the people is the only effective method to bring down the incidence of child labour.

Nangia (1987) studied the responses of parents of child workers regarding the reasons for sending their children to work. He found that 60.17 percent parents sent their children to work in early childhood due to economic compulsions as the child workers supplement the family income.

Reddy (1988) noted that most of the parents make a very definite choice between education and job. The parents feel that even if child goes to school, there is no guarantee of job at the end of it. Whereas if the child goes to work even though he may not be earning anything, he is trained for a skill that is of a definite advantage to his/her future job.

METHODOLOGY

This is a survey research which was conducted with the following objectives in view:

1. To study the socio-economic status of the sample households and supply of child labour.
2. To study the family size and age-wise distribution of population in the households of working children.
3. To study the level of education, caste, literacy and residence ownership of the households of child workers.
4. To study the occupational pattern, mobility and income of households of the working children. With the above objectives in mind, 500 children working in different trades and occupations in Agra Districts were selected through stratified sampling technique. Further, 500 households or families of these 500 selected working children were also chosen for the study. Different trades and occupations in which these children worked included hotels/restaurants/dhabas/tea stalls; cycle/bike and motor repairing shops; shoe industry; carpet industry; petha manufacturing units; and marble industry. Interview Guide and Observation Schedule were used to collect the data.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In all, 500 households from which the children are working as child labourers in various units of carpet, shoe, marble, zari, petha sectors and dhaba and cycle repairing shops were selected for detailed investigation in Agra. The demographic composition in the sample households indicates that the average family size as reflected by the sample household population (Table1) is in accordance with that for all U.P.both being 5.77 persons per household. The sex ratio (680 females per 1000 males) is recorded lower than that of U.P. State (682). Number of persons in the 18-60 age group is the highest being 40.62 percent of the total sample households whereas just 1.25 percent comprises the above 60 age group. The population of children (below 14 years) is recorded as 51.30 percent in the total population of sample households.

TABLE NO. 1: Family Size And Age-Wise Distribution Of Population In The Sample Household

AGE GROUP (YEARS)	POPULATION		TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
	MALE	FEMALE		
0-6	227	188	415	14.39
6-11	362	265	627	21.76
11-14	339	98	437	15.16
14-18	134	63	197	6.83
18-60	627	544	1171	40.62
60+	27	9	36	1.25
Total	1716	1167	2883	100.00

It is disheartening to note that the majority (67%) of the population in the sample households is illiterate. About 24 percent have been educated up to the primary level only. Literacy is higher in the 3-18 years age-group than in the age-group of 18 years and above (Table 2). Further, the literacy level of the males is much higher than that of females. Among the literate population, a large number (28.73% in case of males and 15.76% in case of females), have been educated up to the primary level. Education beyond the secondary level is negligible among the population of sample households.

Data regarding the distribution of sample households according to their caste reveals that scheduled caste households outnumber other castes in the study area. There are 239 scheduled caste households constituting 45.17 percent of the sample households (Table 3). These are followed by backward castes, minority communities (Muslims) and upper-castes with 30.35 percent, 14.62 percent and 9.66 percent households respectively. The analysis of data regarding the size of households among the different castes indicates that the household size is found large (11.11 members per family) in minority community, followed by scheduled caste families. The family size is recorded lowest among the households of upper caste.

Table NO. 2: Educational Level Of Population Age Wise And Sex Wise

	3-18	18+	Total	Per HH	% Distribution of Population According to Population
Male					
Illiterate	587	368	955	1.91	57.29
Primary	344	135	479	0.96	28.73
Up to Secondary	73	106	179	0.36	10.74
Beyond Secondary	9	45	54	0.10	3.24
Total	1013	654	1667	3.33	100.00
Female					
Illiterate	412	493	905	1.81	82.50
Primary	134	39	173	0.34	15.76
Up to Secondary	7	7	14	0.02	1.28
Beyond Secondary	-	5	5	0.01	0.46
Total	553	544	1097	2.79	100.00
Total					
Total Illiterate	999	861	1860	3.72	67.29
Primary	478	174	652	1.30	23.59
Up to Secondary	80	113	193	0.38	6.98
Beyond Secondary	9	50	59	0.11	2.14
Total	1566	1198	2764	5.53	100.00

TABLE 3: Caste Wise Distribution Of The Sample Households

SOCIAL CATEGORY	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS		POPULATION		HOUSEHOLDS SIZE
	NO.	Percentage	NO.	Percentage	
Scheduled Castes	239	47.80	1302	45.16	5.45
Backward Castes	168	33.60	875	30.35	5.21
Minority (Muslims)	38	7.60	422	14.63	11.11
Upper Castes	55	11.00	284	9.86	5.16
Total	500	100.00	2883	100.00	5.77

The educational level of the heads of households is one of the determining factors for sending their children to work. The attitude and perception of the head of the family towards children depends on the educational standard of the head of household to a great extent. Approximately 64 percent of the 500 heads of the households are found illiterate (Table 4). Of the remaining 19.60 percent of them have received primary education and below, 18.80 percent have passed secondary level and only 4.80 percent of the household heads attained education beyond secondary level.

TABLE 4: Literacy Level Of The Heads Of Households

LITERACY LEVEL	NO. OF THE HEADS	PERCENTAGE
Illiterate	319	63.80
Primary and Below	98	19.60
Secondary	59	11.80
Above Secondary	24	4.80
Total	500	100.00

The information regarding the status of residential houses of the sample households reveals that most of the households (66.40 per cent) live in their own houses, whereas 33.60 percent live in rented houses.

TABLE 5: Residential Status In The Sample Households

STATUS OF HOUSE	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENTAGE
Own house	332	66.40
Rented house	168	33.60
Others	-	-
Total	500	100.00

Of the sampled 500 households, 56.92 percent are recorded as workers engaged in sundry occupations. On an average 3.28 persons are earners in the family of 5.77 members taking all the sample households together. Data pertaining to occupational pattern among the workers in the sample households indicate that the majority (90.43 percent) of the working population depends on manufacturing and processing industries as a source of primary earnings (Table 6). Cultivators account for the second largest group of workers being 3.41 percent of the total. The workers engaged in trade and commerce are accounted at 1.77 percent. Construction has been a source of earning income for 1.34 percent workers in the total earning population. Occupations like livestock, fishery and forestry employ the smallest percentage (0.36 percent). This is because the present study was conducted in urban area. Among the workers in the sample households the working children are also included. Of the total 1641 workers, the working children constitute 38.94 percent. The traditional system is still occupying a significant place as far as occupation is concerned among the workers of different generations. Occupational mobility reflects the employment avenues and the income levels.

TABLE 6: Occupational Pattern Of The Workers In Sample Households

OCCUPATION	NO. OF WORKERS	PERCENTAGE	WORKERS PER HOUSEHOLD
Cultivator	56	3.41	0.11
Agriculture labourers	9	0.55	0.01
Livestock, forestry, fisheries	6	0.36	0.01
Manufacturing & Processing	1484	90.43	2.96
Construction	22	1.34	0.04
Transport, Storage & Communication	18	1.10	0.03
Trade & Commerce	29	1.77	0.05
Other Services	17	1.04	0.03
Total	1641	100.00	3.28

The analysis of data regarding the occupational mobility among the heads of sample households indicates that 34.20 percent of the heads) were continuing with their father's occupations. Similarly, 30.80 per cent heads have the same occupations which their grand fathers had (Table 7). A little more than 17 per cent of the heads are carrying on occupations as their mothers were pursuing. It is reflected from the data that occupational mobility among the heads has taken place at a very slow pace. The concept of child labour in the study area is not a new phenomena rather a traditional one as proved by the fact that 71.60 percent of the heads have worked as child labourers.

TABLE No. 7: Occupational Mobility Of The Family

DESCRIPTION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Total No. of heads in the sample	500	100.00
Heads continuing grandfather's Occupation	154	30.80
Heads continuing father's occupation	171	34.20
Head continuing mother's occupation	86	17.20
Children continuing father's Occupation	126	25.20
Heads worked as child labourers	358	71.60

There are as many as 77.80 percent migrant households in the sample (Table 8). The largest category (i.e.67.61percent) is of those who have migrated to the present district of residence from another district within Uttar Pradesh. A little more than 22.20 percent of the total number of households is native inhabitants of the district. About 3 percent of the households have come to Agra from outside the state.

TABLE NO. 8: Migratory Status Of The Sample Households

CATEGORY	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	PERCENTAGE
Non Migrants	111	22.20
Migrants	389	77.80
(a) Within the district	112	28.79
(b) Outside the District	263	67.61
(c) Within the state	3	0.77
(d) Outside the state	11	2.83

Data pertaining to the income level in the sample households reveal that the per household monthly income recorded is 1313 from all the sources (Table 9). In per capita terms it comes to about Rs. 228 per month. In the 500 sample households, the number of working children (below 14 years) is recorded as Rs. 639 and they are earning money by engaging themselves in different occupations. The monthly earning per working child is Rs. 259 per month overall; the income earned by the working children

contributes about 25.22 percent of total household income. The income levels of households and the magnitude of working children highlight that poverty is one of the main factors responsible for child labour.

TABLE NO. 9 Income Level of Sample Households

DESCRIPTION	INCOME IN RUPEES
Total monthly income of sample households (Rs)	6567129
Number of households in the sample	500
Per households monthly income Rs.	1313
Total population in the sample household	2883
Per Capita income (Rs)	228
Income earned by working children (Rs)	155620
Number of working children in the sample Households (below 14 years)	639
Per child monthly earnings (Rs)	259
Percentage share of income earned by working children	25.22

When data on income level in the sample households are arranged according to different ranges of income brackets, it is found that the monthly income of 39 percent of the sample households is less than Rs. 1000 (Table 10).

The households constituting 46.2 percent of the sample belong to the group with incomes ranging from Rs. 1001 to 2000 per month. The per household income was recorded more than Rs.2000 in the case of only 12.8 percent households (Table 10). Among the sample of 500 households, only 2 households have income exceeding Rs.5000 per month.

TABLE NO. 10 Level Of Monthly Income In The Sample Households

MONTHLY INCOME OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS (Rs)	SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS	
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Less than 500	11	2.2
501-1000	194	38.8
1001-2000	231	46.2
2001-3000	46	9.2
3001 -5000	16	3.2
Above 5000	2	0.4
Total	500	100.0

The income levels of sample households reveal that the economic condition of most of the households is not sound. Poverty seems to loom large amongst most of the households.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The average family size of the households supplying child labour is 5.77 persons per household. The sex ratio is 680 females per 1000 males.
2. A majority (67.29 percent) of the population in sample households is illiterate and 23.59%, 6.98% and 2.14% of them are educated upto primary, secondary and beyond secondary levels respectively. The literacy level of males (28.73%) is higher than that of females (15.75%).
3. Caste-wise distribution analysis of the sample households reveals that 45.17 percent of them belong to scheduled castes, followed by the other backward classes 30.35 percent, Muslims 14.62 percent and upper castes 9.66 percent households. The household size was 11.11 members per family in Muslims; followed by the scheduled castes 5.45; other backward classes 5.21; and upper castes 5.16 members per family.
4. Most of the households (66.40 percent) live in their own houses while 33.60 percent live in rented accommodations.
5. Occupational pattern of sample households indicates that 90.43 percent of the working population depends on manufacturing and processing industries. The workers are engaged in cultivation 3.41%, trade and commerce 1.7%, construction 1.34%, and livestock, fishing and forestry 0.36 percent.

6.34.20 percent heads of the sample households continued with their fathers' occupations and 30.80 percent heads had the same occupations which their grand parents had. 71.60 percent of heads of sample households have worked as child labourers.

7.77.80 percent of the sample households are migrant households. 67.61 percent have migrated to Agra from another district of Uttar Pradesh whereas 22.20% are the native resident of Agra. Only 3 percent of the households have migrated to Agra from outside the state of U.P.

8. The income earned by the working children contributes 25.22 percent of total income of the sample households. The income levels of households and magnitude of child labour highlight that poverty is the main cause of child labour.

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