



ANALYSIS OF CHILD LABOUR IN AIZAWL CITY, MIZORAM: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the socio-economic conditions and the economic impact of the children engaged in work within Aizawl city though there are children who are engaged in unpaid work such as domestic chores, only paid workers of children are included to get a clear picture of the incidence and dimensions of these paid child labourers. The problems and issues of exploitative child labour have received much attention but solutions remain elusive, and they are made more complicated by the fact that the extent of child labour reflects a country's level of economic development. Despite the various laws implemented, the practice of child labour is still evident. This paper analysed the socio-economic welfare of child labourers and suggest measures for policy implications.

KEYWORDS: *child labour, paid workers, economic impact.*

INTRODUCTION

Child labour is a multi-faceted issue that has been addressed at both the national and international levels. The term 'child labour' has been defined in different ways and the definition varies in accordance with the context and criteria applied to the subject.

According to ILO, child labour is a labour performed by a child who is under a certain age specified for that kind of work and is likely to impede the child's education and full development (ILO Convention 138). In India, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act sets out a comprehensive provision pertaining to the prohibition of child labour and defines a child as "a person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age" and prohibits the employment of children in certain occupations and processes listed in Schedule Parts A and B. The constitution of India has relevant provisions to secure compulsory universal primary education and for the safeguard of children. It guarantees right to equality without discrimination and empower state to make provisions relating to children. It also makes prohibition on employment of child labour in any factory or mine or in any hazardous employment.

STATEMENTS OF THE PROBLEMS:



Child labour has set deep rooted foundation in Mizoram and is increasingly affecting more and more children in various forms, especially in Aizawl city, the capital and the largest city of Mizoram. However, despite its increasing scope, there is no specific study on it to study the effects it has on the socio-economic condition of the child labourers. The study was therefore, conducted to analyse the socio economic welfare of the children and impact of child labouring in Aizawl City, Mizoram.

AREA OF THE STUDY:

Aizawl city is the capital of Mizoram which is in Aizawl district, the most populous district in Mizoram. In 2011 Census, Aizawl has a population of 293,416 out of which females constitute 50.61% of the population and males made up the remaining 49.39%. The density is 234 per sq.km. and the sex ratio is 1024 presently. The district has a literacy rate of 97.89%, in which 97.67% is female and 98.11% is male literacy. Engaging children in the informal sector is quite prevalent in Aizawl. However, there is hardly any information regarding their engagement. The study was therefore, conducted to analyse the welfare of child labourers in Aizawl city.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the educational levels of the children and to further analyse the reasons of drop out.
2. To analyse whether the income generated by the child labours suffice their daily consumption.
3. To examine the health aspects of the child labourer by taking into account their frequency of consulting doctors and vaccinations.
4. To find out whether the child labourers are aware of the existence of Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in the state which was set up to look after and protect children according to their requirements.

METHODOLOGY:

The study was based on primary data which was collected through structured questionnaires for the children and staff of Child Welfare Committee (CWC) Aizawl, who are indirectly involved. According to the record of CWC for the year 2014-15, there are 49 children recorded as child labour. Of which 24 are girls (48.98%) and 25 are boys (51.02%). Based on this recorded data, the survey was conducted by taking a sample size of 37, out of the total, 11 of them could not be located, so the study covered 75.51% of the recorded number. Published and unpublished sources like journals and other e-resources were also used for collecting necessary information. The data collected were analysed using relevant and appropriate statistical tools.

ANALYSIS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Out of the total respondents, 22 children are from 5 and below family members, 15 children are from family members of 6 to 8. Further, 4 children coming from family members below 5 have either their fathers or mothers deceased and 1 child from a 7 member's family has a deceased parents. Regarding their position in the family, 15 (40.54%) of them are the eldest child of the family, 3 (8.10%) of children are the second eldest child, 3 (8.10%) are third eldest child, 1 (2.70%) child is fourth eldest child, 1 (2.70%) child is in the middle position, 9 (24.32%) are the youngest child in the family, 1 (2.70%) is the second youngest child. While only 1 (2.70%) is the only child in the family. Unspecified positions constitute 3 (8.10%) children. Also, 34 (91.89%) children lived in a rented house while only 3 (8.10%) children are living in their own house.

Education:

Mizoram is the second highest in literacy among the states in India next only to Kerala, having a literacy of 91.81% as per Census of India 2011. Though the state literacy is high, there are still a number of dropouts which can be one of the factors for child labouring within the study area. The following table presents educational levels of the respondents.

Table 1: Educational Level

Edn. standards	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary school	9	7	16
Middle school	9	7	16

High school	2	3	5
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Source: Field Survey

Primary level is from class I to IV, middle school is from class V to VIII and high school is from class IX to X. Table 1 presents the educational level of child labourers within Aizawl city. Out of the total children surveyed, 16 child labourers have education till primary school, of which there are 9 boys and 7 girls. 16 of them have education till middle school, of which there are 9 boys and 7 girls. 2 boys and 3 girls have education till high school. Therefore, it can be concluded that maximum of the child labourers in Aizawl city drop out from school enrolment during primary and middle school.

Reasons of Drop Out:

Drop-out rate is one of the most important indicators of quality education. Drop-out rate is defined as the proportion of children that cease to remain enrolled in the school system.

The government has implemented various schemes for greater enrolment of children in schools like Mid-Day Meal scheme across the country. In fact, the schemes have great positive impacts and the number of enrolment rate also increased to a great extent. However, there are still a number of children dropping out from school. Table 2 below shows the reasons why these children within our study area dropped out from school and engaged themselves in child labouring.

Table 2: Reasons of School Drop-out

Gender	Reasons for drop-out			Total
	Family problems	No longer interested	Friends influence	
Boys	6	2	Boys	6
Girls	10	1	Girls	10

Source: Field Survey

Out of the total surveyed, 9 boys dropped out from school where 6 of them are due to family problems, 2 of them are no longer interested in studies and 1 is due to friends influence. Again out of the total drop-out children, girls constitute 11 where 10 of them are due to family problems and 1 is no longer interested. Hence, we may conclude that majority of the children engaged in work in Aizawl dropped out from school due to family problems. Only a little percentage out of the total comprised of those who are no longer interested in further studies. This shows that majority of dropout children are deprived off from their studies due to family problems.

Types of work:

The following table highlights the types of work or activities performed by the respondents.

Table 3: Types of Work

Gender	Dumping	Waiter/ Waitress	Vending	Total Nos.
Boys	11	4	5	20
Girls	8	5	4	17

Source: Field Survey

The main activities of child labour in Aizawl city are dumping of garbage, waiter/waitress in restaurants and vending. Dumping activity mainly involves collecting saleable items from the garbage of households, hospitals, institutions, commercial centres etc. waiter/waitress activities in restaurants mainly involves serving, cleaning the tables and washing dishes. Vending such as ice-creams, cotton candies, vegetables, fruits etc. are performed by child labourer in Aizawl city.

As seen in Table 3, out of the 20 boys surveyed, 11 are engaged in dumping, 4 as waiter and 5 as vendors. Out of the total girls surveyed, 8 are engaged in dumping, 5 as waitress and 4 as vendors. Therefore, it can be seen that the main activity in which child labourers within the study area generate their income is through dumping. The items which they collected from garbage are sold to the collectors of condemned iron, plastics, papers etc. Also, there is more number of girls than boys working in restaurants. At the same time, as vendor's boys are more than girls. From this analysis, it can be concluded that of all the activities of child labourers, dumping is the main activity which is followed by both vending and working in restaurants.

LEVEL OF INCOME:

The most obvious economic impact of child labour at the family level in the short run is to increase household income. Their contribution is most of the time critical since children are sent to work when parents' earnings are insufficient to guarantee the survival of the family or are insecure so that child labour is used as a mean of minimizing the impact of possible job loss, failed harvest and other shocks on the family's income stream. In these circumstances, the survival of the family depends on child labour irrespective of whether it is carried out in hazardous or non-hazardous activities. The level of income of the children surveyed also contributed extensively to their household incomes and the following table presents the daily level of income generated by the child labourers within the study area.

Table 4: Daily Income

Gender	Income (in Rs)					Total
	0-100	100-200	200-300	300-400	400-500	
Boys	5	13	1	-	1	20
Girls	2	12	3	-	-	17

Source: Field Survey

As seen in Table 4, the daily incomes of children involved in work are not as meagre as compare with other regions of child workers. From the table, 5 boys earned a daily income below Rs 100 while there are only 2 girls. Bulk of the children are concentrated in the income group ranging between Rs 100-200 having 13 boys and 12 girls. Further 1 boy earns a daily income ranging between Rs 200-300 while there are 3 children in this category. Interestingly, there are no children in income ranging between Rs 300-400, while there is 1 boy earning Rs 400-500 as his daily income. Therefore, it can be concluded that the income generated by the child labourers ranged from Rs.100.00 to Rs.200.00, which is sufficient for their survival in the short run. But what the family should perceive is the long run negative implications of the child labour for their own family. These children who are sent to work do not accumulate (or under-accumulate) human capital, missing the opportunity to enhance their productivity and future earnings capacity, increases the probability of their offspring being sent to work. Hence, subsidies for poor families with children in school become crucial importance for the effectiveness of child labour reduction programme.

Health Aspect:

Improvements in health enhance human capital and contribute significantly to productivity and economic growth, thereby enhancing human welfare. In this context, good nutrition plays an important role. Bad health and under-nourishment adversely affect the quality of manpower, as seen in underdeveloped countries. Moreover, due to lack of medical facilities, diseases are very common that impair the efficiency of the work force. In order to improve the quality of manpower, provision of adequate food and nourishment, better arrangement of public sanitation, better extension of medical facilities etc are necessary. Health facilities and services improve the life expectancy, strength and utility of the people; which are all part of human capital. The following table shows the health issues of the respondents.

Table 5: Medical Care

Gender	Frequency of doctor visit		Whether vaccinated or not		
	Never	Once a year	Yes	No	No idea
Boys	8	11	16	4	-
Girls	6	12	16	-	1
Total	14	23	32	4	1

Source: Field Survey

As seen from Table 5, majority of the children engaged in labouring visited doctors only once a year, they are 62.16% of the total, i.e, 23 children. While 14 children never visit doctors or have medical check-up i.e, 37.84% of the total. Since the health issues of children in a family are usually taken up by the adult members of the family, it can be concluded here that the family of the respondents are not health conscious enough in realizing the importance of consulting doctors on health issues. Also, in today's world where children's health matter is given priority, it is surprising that 37.84% did not visit doctors even once a year.

Table 5 also highlights that majority of the children i.e, 32 of them are vaccinated making 86.49% of the total. Out of which there are 16 boys and 16 girls. On the other hand, 4 children who are not vaccinated constituted only boys alone. And finally, there is only one girl who was not sure whether she is vaccinated or not. Therefore, we may conclude that majority of parents are aware of their child's health while they are below 2 year of age. Also, those who are vaccinated have lesser complain about their health which was observed through interviews conducted during the field survey.

Awareness on the Existence of Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

Child Welfare Committee (CWC) was set up under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 to look after and protect children according to their needs and requirements. CWC is being functioning in every district. Article 24 of the Constitution of India prohibits employment of children age below 14 in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment. In this empirical study, children are asked to whether they are aware of the existence of CWC and the prohibition of child labour. The following table presents children's awareness on the existence of CWC and the prohibition of child labour.

Table 6: Children's Awareness

Gender	Existence of CWC		Total	Prohibition of child labour		Total
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
Boys	1	19	20	2	18	20
Girls	2	15	17	4	13	17

Source: Field Survey

It is surprising to learn that maximum of the children i.e., 34 of them are not even aware of the existence of CWC in Aizawl city. Since the main objective of setting up of this committee was to look after children in need and to make arrangements for them not to fall within the child labour domain. As seen in the above table, out of the total child labourers 31 of them did not even know that engaging children below the age of 14 in any form of hazardous employment is prohibited by the Constitution of India. This finding clearly points out the need to spread awareness of this prohibition among households in Aizawl city and also that the CWC should be more vigilant in identifying these child labourers within the city. Mention may be made here that at some point, it is the decision of the parents to engage their children in paid and unpaid jobs. In this light it is suggested here that the CWC must be more active in spreading awareness of the prohibition of engaging children below the age of 14 years in such kind of work.

FINDINGS:

1. The average income generated by the child labourers ranged from Rs.100.00 to Rs.200.00 daily, this is quite a sufficient amount to sustain a child per day, keeping in mind the average market price level in Aizawl city. Also, this is a much larger sum comparing to the daily income generated by child labourers in other states.
2. Of all the activities of child labourers, dumping is the main activity which is followed by both vending and working in restaurants.
3. Maximum of the child labours within Aizawl city are educated up to Middle school. They drop-out of school during and after middle school. The main reason for drop-out of students in Aizawl is due to family problem. Only a little percentage comprised of those who are no longer interested in further studies.
4. The children directly involved in child labouring are not aware of the existence of CWC, this clearly shows that the existing child labour laws are not properly implemented in Aizawl city.
5. Out of the total child labourers 31 of them did not know that engaging children below the age of 14 in any form of hazardous employment is prohibited by the Constitution of India.
6. Majority of the children (62.16%) engaged in labouring visit doctors only once a year and 37.84% of the children did not visit doctors even once a year.
7. Majority of child workers in Aizawl city stated that they do not have health problems. This might be true in the short run, but if they continue to perform these kinds of work it is very likely that they will acquire some illnesses in the long run which will eventually reduce their capacity to produce.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on this empirical evidence, some important suggestions may be made in order to minimize the number of child labour and subsequently make recommendations to the Government and institutions for the better implementation of policies and programmes to effectively eliminate child labour in Aizawl city.

1. The government should encourage NGOs or social welfare workers to take more actions in order to withdraw child labour from the labour market. The government should designate/appoint a children labour prohibition officer from the concerned department who will check the issue and effectively implement the existing Child Labour Prohibition Act (CLPA).
2. In order to identify child labourers, hotels, canteens, dumping ground etc should be monitored regularly. Also, it is suggested here that there should be economic rehabilitation centres for families. Child labour acts and the existing laws related to children should be more effective and reaching every nook and corners of the state. It is also suggested that the government should set up informal educational institutions for children engaged in work so that these children who wish to work are carefully monitored according to the rules and regulations.
3. One empirical suggestion that can be drawn from this analysis is that in order to cover all the children within the public health system like vaccination, the department concern should conduct a home visit in

every locality, keeping in mind the Government of India's vaccination scheme for all children in which home visit is mandatory.

CONCLUSION:

An analysis of the economic implications of child labour shows that elimination of child labour can be accomplished only through the eradication of extreme poverty and income instability. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that child labour takes place along with the process of economic development; therefore its impact on economic variables is likely to change over the process of development. The study is hoped to have some policy implications for the policy makers for the eradication of child labouring not only in the study area but also in India as a whole.

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