



Civil society's campaign against child labor and its socio-cultural determinants:

A Sociological Investigation

Bhavna Wal, Research Scholar

Department: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University name: Shri Ramswarup Memorial University and address of university : Lucknow-Deva Road, Uttar Pradesh, email: bhavna.wal@gmail.com

Dr Amar Pal Singh, Associate professor

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University name: Shri Ramswarup Memorial University and address of university : Lucknow-Deva Road, Uttar Pradesh

ABSTRACT

The practice of child labor is a global phenomenon and one inhuman practice that violates the natural rights of a child. Many studies have been written on the subject including causes, consequences and how the problem should be combated. Despite covering myriad aspects of the issue, the studies have not successfully highlighted how NGOs are tackling the problem at the grassroots by looking at the issue in its entirety and have set roadmaps to fight the problem. So, therefore, this aspect of assessing NGOs' efforts becomes an area of study. The current study uses descriptive design to find out how NGOs looking at the issue of child labor, have in fact, launched unique campaigns and initiatives that look at the problem holistically and their attempts at combating the problem have shown results in the communities they work so much so they have set a road map for these marginalized communities to follow. Some NGOs are doing such exemplary work in this field that they have gained international recognition and are a role model for other NGOs working in the field to emulate. These NGOs while looking at the problem holistically have initiated efforts to look at the socio-cultural factors that give birth to and breed the problem of child labor. The efforts launched by these NGOs have successfully attempted to tackle the socio-cultural factors of these child labor afflicted communities so much so that these communities are now gradually becoming self reliant and focusing on educating their children rather than sending them to work.

Keywords: ILO, socio-cultural factors, ethics, patriarchal society

Introduction

One of the best ways to combat child labor is to provide fair wages and safe working conditions for parents so that they can provide for their families without being forced to depend on their children. To fight against child labor is to fight against global poverty--Matt Berg

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines child labor as any work which deprives children of their childhood, their potential and dignity, and that which is mentally, physically, socially and morally dangerous for the child and also interferes with his schooling. This work can deprive the child of an opportunity to attend school or oblige him to leave school prematurely or requires to combine school with excessively long and heavy work.

The ILO adds it is also important to consider the developmental aspects of childhood. As children are still growing, they have special characteristics and needs, and in determining workplace hazards and risks their effect on children's physical, cognitive (thought/learning) and behavioral development and emotional growth must be taken into consideration.

This assessment holds water theoretically, but when it comes to a child's survival and their families' dependence on a child's earnings, it is an entire different gambit. Family poverty forces children into the labor market because this income earned by a child is vital not only for his survival but also for his household. Then such considerations as a child's behavioral development and emotional growth take a backseat for parents. This is due to the fact as socio-cultural factors



compel poverty stricken families to send their children to work too, then it is but natural that family's adults' only consideration is to earn money to help themselves subsist. These families cannot afford to be altruistic towards their children and thus children's welfare is not on the priority list at all. Things can take such an ugly turn within households that unscrupulous parents/guardians take advantage of children's vulnerability and defencelessness forcefully sending them to work as laborers. Education for the child is not considered important. The child in this situation is hardly able to grasp the facts and is convinced that he is here to only help the family and meet their needs for survival.

As if this were not enough, the ongoing Covid-19 has exacerbated the problem of child labor. ILO states, "The COVID-19 health pandemic and the resulting economic and labor market shock are having a huge impact on people's lives and livelihoods. Unfortunately, children are often the first to suffer. The crisis can push millions of vulnerable children into child labor. Already, there are an estimated 152 million children in child labor, 72 million of which are in hazardous work. These children are now at even greater risk of facing circumstances that are even more difficult and working longer hours." [1] In fact this year the motto for World Day Against Child Labor is 'Covid-19: Protect children from child labor, now more than ever!'. The universal ratification of Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor by all 187 ILO member States reflects a global commitment to protect children all around the world. With COVID-19 threatening to reverse 20 years of progress, implementation of the Convention is needed more than ever.

As for India, the 2011 census shows that 10.1 million or 3.9 per cent of the total child population is working, that is as child labor. Of this 5.6 million are boys and 4.5 million are girls. The total child population in India in the age group 5 to 14 years is 259.6 million. And this number of child laborers is all set to increase due to Covid-19. What has accelerated this development is that the 'the coronavirus pandemic is forcing India's children out of school and into farms and factories to work, worsening a child-labor problem that was already one of the most dire in the world'. [2]

It has been projected that globally 60 million people are expected to fall into poverty this year alone, and that inevitably is driving families to send children out to work. A joint report by the ILO and United Nations Children's Fund estimates 'that a 1 percentage point rise in poverty leads to at least a 0.7 percentage point increase in child labor'.

Although Covid-19 is a recent phenomenon in breeding and enhancing the problem of child labor due to deterioration in socio-cultural factors, historically, it was the industrial revolution in Europe that highlighted how socio-cultural factors bred and multiplied the problem of child labor as an evil practice. With rapid industrialization in the 19th century, the industrial revolution gave rise to two prominent classes in society, the capitalists and the proletariats. This class demarcation not only broke up the existing social equations, but reduced the proletariats or the working class to such a state of penury that they had to involve their children to earn wages to help the family subsist. This historical need imposed by the proletarian class struggle formed an ideology pertaining to their social structure that exists till today. In fact it would be pertinent to mention here French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser. Althusser believes that a society is a complete superstructure comprising individuals with all their beliefs, desires, preferences and judgements all intertwined to form an ideology. He writes 'all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects'. What he means is that practices and beliefs inherent to ideology produce a sense of identity. The philosopher advances two theses on ideologies: 'Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence and 'ideology has a material existence..'. He contends that ideology has a material existence because an 'ideology always exists in an apparatus and its practice or practices'.

And this is truly applicable to the existing socio-cultural factors which reflect an ideology where the marginalized sections of society have succumbed to the whims of the established order. It is in the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labor power.

As child labor practice mushroomed in an industrialized Europe, progressive legislations were enacted in Europe and India, then a British colony, to clamp down this inhuman practice.

Despite these legal measures, child labor as a practice is still continuing unabated in India. Experts opine despite laws, there has to be a willingness on part of all multistake actors to tackle this evil menace. Saswati Das in a paper titled 'Incidence of Child Labor and Child Schooling in India: Pattern and Determinants' says, "The pattern of child



employment in a range of industries confirms the malfunctioning of lawful steps to save child laborers from mischief of occupational vulnerability.”

PAST LITERATURE REVIEWS ON CHILD LABOR

Myriad studies and researches have been done on child labor in the past. These researches while pertaining to problems and issues of child labor have covered many aspects of the issue. The aspects highlighted include causes, consequences, domestic child laborers, children working in hazardous professions, child ragpickers, child beggars, girl child laborers, child laborers in urban areas etc.

(i) Studies on causes of child labor: A study carried out by Pramod Kumar Agarwal and Dr. Anil Chandra Pathak, titled ‘A socio – economic analysis of child labor in India’, analyzes in detail what are the basic causes of child labor and its exploitation in India. The writers have emphasized child labor cannot be totally eradicated by legislation alone, unless supplemented by socio-economic and educational uplift of the underprivileged section of the society. Jennie Johansson in study titled, ‘Causes of Child Labor – A case study in Babati town, Tanzania’ says causes of child labor can be looked at from both the child laborer’s and researcher’s perspectives. The study states even if poverty was, from the researcher’s perspective, found to be the primary underlying cause behind child labor, the study also found poverty on its own insufficient to explain the prevalence of child labor. It adds causes of child labor are much too complex to explain with only one causal factor especially when the social context is taken into account. K Devi and Gautam Roy in study, ‘Study of Child Labor Among School Children in Urban and Rural Areas of Pondicherry’ say irrespective of the region, educational level of the mother, crowding in the family, families being in debt, presence of a handicapped or alcoholic member in the family, gender and religion were significantly associated with the working child. The study adds a community-based cross-sectional study among school children in Pondicherry found the prevalence of child labor to be 15% among school children. Faraaz Siddiqi Harry Anthony Patrinos in a study titled ‘Child Labor: Issues, causes and Interventions’ say children work for many reasons. The most important is poverty. Children work to ensure the survival of their family and themselves. Though children are not well paid, they still serve as major contributors to family income in developing countries. The authors add that the role of children differs in developed and developing countries. At certain levels of poverty in developing countries, child labor may play an instrumental role in economic survival which augments national economic development.

(ii) Studies on consequences of child labor: Gharaibeh M and Hoeman S in study ‘Health hazards and risks for abuse among child labor in Jordan’ say child laborers have been exposed to health hazards such as inhaling chemicals and physical injuries. They add physical, verbal, and sexual abuse are also present among these affected children. The findings from this study say that child labor creates an unhealthy environment for socially disadvantaged children. In another study, titled, ‘The Forbidden Social Crime Of Child Labor: A Case Study of Its Existence in the City Of Kolkata, West Bengal’ Anandita Dawn says among the consequences of child labor, it is an issue contrary to human development, it affects the sound development of a child and leads to grave social consequences, it hampers the overall physical and psychological development of the child, and the toiling children often suffer from various physical and mental tortures and exploitation at their work places which affects their personality development. Sarita Bharti and Dr Shalini Agarwal in a study ‘Physical and Psychological Hazards faced by Child Labor-A Review Article’ say child laborers who are in risky job fields have no opportunity to build their natural psychosocial health. The authors say long working hours breed their feeling of frustration and inadequacy. Their involvement in risky work resists eventually in building their emotional cognitive skills and they become withdrawn, introvert and uncommunicative. Joseph J. Amon, Jane Buchanan, Jane Cohen, and Juliane Kippenberg, Human Rights Watch, New York City, and Human Rights Watch, Berlin, in their research article, ‘Child labor and environmental health: Government obligations and human rights’ say human rights-based advocacy is important to raise attention and help ensure that children are protected from any inevitable harm. The study finds how children are exposed to environmental hazards with scant regard to their welfare and human rights of the child.

(iii) Studies on child rag pickers: Pyali Chatterjee in research study, ‘Child Ragpickers in India and Violation of Their



Human Rights' talks about how health becomes an important issue for child rag pickers. The author says study findings reveal that while collecting rags sometimes children are subjected to chemical poisons and infections. The rag pickers are very prone to diseases like tuberculosis and cancer due to their exposure to hazardous materials. The children sometime while collecting rags from the garbage dumps come in contact with rags which are toxic, corrosive, flammable and explosive, the study finds. Shabnam Parveen in study, 'Child Ragpickers in Aligarh City' says the children who work as rag pickers experience absolutely unhygienic and hazardous working and living conditions. Children work long hours from early dawn to late night without rest and recreation. They are unhealthy because they live in unhygienic environment and are unable to get good food. Rag picking teaches these children to get into a life of abuse, alcohol and crime. Bhosale Savita G. and Korishetti Vijaya B in a study titled, 'Problems of Child Ragpickers' say as India urbanizes, problem of waste management gets more pronounced and is becoming a critical issue. Child ragpickers are subject not only to harassment by authorities, they also suffer from physical and psychological problems. The authors state the environment these child ragpickers operate in teaches them violence, abuse and maltreatment, which may drive them to indulge in delinquent and anti-social behavior.

(iv) Studies on domestic child labor workers: Muhammad Abdullah Avais, Hakim Ali Mahesar, Ghulam Akbar Mahesar and Hamida Narijo in a study titled, 'Commercial Domestic Child Labor: A Study of Rohri City, Sindh' say child laborers working as commercial domestic child labor experience long working hours and stay at third party house leads to serious undeniable effects on their mental as well as physical health. Furthermore, these working children may be pressurized or harassed to hide the miserable circumstances they face at workplace. In a study funded by Save the Children-UK and titled, 'Domestic Child Labor in Morocco An Analysis of the Parties involved in relationships to 'Petites Bonnes', the study says preventive and ameliorative interventions can be directed toward both employers and parents of petites bonnes or young maids, and toward younger and older bonnes themselves. Anna-Clara Vamborg in a study titled, 'Child Domestic Workers Protected workers or forgotten children?' says the international instruments offer good protection for domestic workers but that there is room for improvement. There is however a problem on the national level where domestic work still often is exempted from national minimum age regulations and child labor laws. This study was carried out on the Philippines and Haiti, two countries where the issue of domestic child labor is widespread.

The aforementioned studies and other researches on child labor till date have covered various aspects of child labor practice right from the historical perspective to its prevalence levels in various countries, causes, consequences and other facets related to the trade. However, these researches have not paid intensive attention to corrective measures in general and the role of NGOs and civil society movements launched in tackling this issue in particular. Researches and studies till date have covered in fine detail about many aspects of child labor issue, but what they have not taken into account is how NGOs, civil society and non-profits are working committedly in tackling the issue in a holistic manner. NGOs are doing similar work to that of the government in combating the issue at its grassroots.

Some NGOs are doing such brilliant work and are working so committedly in tackling the issue of child labor at its grassroots that they have come out with such overwhelming success in their initiatives against child labor so much so they have gained international reputation. There is no doubt in saying that NGOs are 'advocates, educators, catalysts, monitors, whistle blowers, mediators, lobbyists, activists, mobilizers (of both men and resources), protectors of human rights, conscientizers, animators and conciliators'. It can be said that the strongest functional aspect of NGOs is their capacity to be trailblazers and pioneers of new untried development approaches.

The current research paper attempts to find out despite socio-cultural factors in society giving birth to and breeding child labor practice, certain NGOs globally, in general, and specific in Indian context, have addressed the issue of child labor. The paper has made efforts to study how deeply socio-cultural factors impact child labor practice and how certain NGOs have made laudable efforts to combat these prevailing factors so that this evil is eliminated at the grassroots.

Objectives



- (i) To find out the influence of parental motivation on child labor practice.
- (ii) To assess the role of education in general and education of the child to make a child a laborer.
- (iii) To probe cultural traditions and ethics in determining the problem of child labor.
- (iv) To investigate the efforts of NGOs in special reference to address the socio-cultural factors.

Research Methodology

The study is a sociological investigation based on descriptive research design. The rationale behind using this design was to get exact and complete information about socio-cultural factors affecting child laborers, child labor practice and work of non-government organizations in combating this evil menace. Therefore to get results and arrive at conclusions, NGOs Pratham and BBA were selected for the study. These NGOs were preferred because of their unique approaches and initiatives launched by them to combat in entirety the socio-cultural factors leading to child labor practice.

Both primary and secondary sources of data collection have been used. In primary source, interview schedule, observation method and focused interview tools were used. The interview schedule consisted of both qualitative and quantitative questions. Secondary sources consisted of already published and unpublished articles from books, journals, magazines and online resources.

The researcher interviewed 300 respondents. These included 63 working child laborers, 62 rehabilitated child laborers, 125 parents/guardians and 50 employers. Interviews took place in Lucknow, Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh and Bal Ashram at Virat Nagar, Jaipur (Rajasthan). The data was analyzed using Microsoft Word.

This research paper is part of the current PhD thesis fieldwork.

Data Analysis

To find out about the influence of parental motivation on child labor practice, following questions were put forth to the respondents.

Table-1

Distribution of responses on was child’s survival at stake if he/she did not contribute to family income and hence became a child laborer which are being shown in the table below.

	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardians	Employers	
Strongly Agree	11 17.7%	32 51.6%	15 24.2%	4 6.5%	62 20.7%
Agree	8 12.1%	5 7.6%	32 48.5%	21 31.8%	66 22.0%
Undecided	3 20.0%	2 13.3%	7 46.7%	3 20.0%	15 5.0%
Disagree	34 32.4%	15 14.3%	41 39.0%	15 14.3%	105 35.0%
Strongly Disagree	7 13.5%	8 15.4%	30 57.7%	7 13.5%	52 17.3%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

Data in the above table shows that of the total respondents, 35% disagreed. 51.6% rehabilitated child laborers strongly agreed while 48.5% parents/guardians agreed. Employers agreed 31.8%.

Secondary data shows that a child’s survival is at stake if he does not contribute to family income.

Rossana Galli in a study titled ‘The Economic Impact of Child Labor’ says experts studying the phenomenon of child labor practice agree that poverty is the main determinant of child labor supply and that child labor significantly increases



the income and the probability of survival of the family. Subsequently, families send their children to work as their survival depends on them. The author adds studies have shown that incomes earned by children contribute ‘between 10% and 20% to total household income’. This 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 labor is used as a mean of minimizing the impact of possible job loss, failed harvest and other shocks on the family’s income stream. The author adds that since evidence shows clearly that poverty is the main determinant of child labor, any effort to reduce child labor should take into account that poor families will not survive without the children’s earnings and should take actions to make up for the missing income [3]

There is another aspect to this situation. Irrespective of the child’s age, socio-economic conditions of the family are so prevailing that the child has to work knowing very well that he might be exploited by his family or the employer. It only shows that if the family is poor, the child needs to work to earn for his and family’s survival. When the child has to work for his survival, he is not in a bargaining position, he has to compromise with whatever job and income he gets. (4)

Table-2

Distribution of responses on did the family want the child to acquire any skills by working as a child laborer which are being shown in the table below.

	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardians	Employers	
Yes	39 24.4%	25 15.6%	76 47.5%	20 12.5%	160 53.3%
No	24 17.1%	37 26.4%	49 35.0%	30 21.4%	140 46.7%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

Data in the above table shows that 26.4% of rehabilitated child laborers said no while 21.4% employers also said no. 47.5% of parents/guardians said that they wanted their children to work as child laborers so that the child could acquire a skill.

The present research reveals that due to illiteracy of parents/guardians, children cannot be given a good future and are pushed into the labor market to help family subsist. From the parental perspective it is clear that if a child were to get a professional training or a skill, then doors for jobs will open up for the child and family’s income will increase. Education then does not matter.

It was also revealed that wherever parents/guardians had some education, they did not rule out education for the child. However, child’s education could only be pursued if family had money to spare for that. Since they were economically deprived, children’s contribution to the family was a priority and not education.

Secondary data reveals the International Labor Organization states it has been seen that adults consider that work is ‘good for the character-building and skill development of children’. Traditionally speaking, it has been observed children are expected to follow in their parents’ footsteps in a certain trade and practicing for it should start at a young age.

Table-3

Distribution of responses on to state reasons if families wanted them to acquire skills or not by working as a child laborer are given in the table below.

Table -3a

Distribution of responses if the answers were yes which are being shown in the table below.



	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardian	Employers	
Had to pursue family occupation/	12 31.6%	7 18.4%	17 44.7%	2 5.3%	38 23.8%
Had to learn a skill to help increase family income	11 18.3%	6 10.0%	27 45.0%	16 26.7%	60 37.5%
Had to become self-employed	16 25.8%	12 19.4%	32 51.6%	2 3.2%	62 38.8%
Total	39 24.4%	25 15.6%	76 47.5%	20 12.5%	160 100.0%

Data in the above table shows that 45% of parents/guardians wanted their children to enter the labor market so that they could learn a skill and add to family income. 25.8% of working child laborers and 51.6% parents/guardians said they became child laborers as it was imperative they become self employed.

The present research reveals parental illiteracy and family’s financial poverty have contributed to a child not realizing the immense and long-term benefits of education. Subsequently, the child does not have a leaning towards education and is more inclined towards waywardness or non-interest in studies and he becomes a liability on the family’s meager resources. So families prefer that the child should enter the labor force, get a skill and become financially independent so that his survival and their survival is ensured. It is also revealed that of the money the child earns, he sends home three-quarters of it to help the family and keeps a quarter as pocket money.

Table - 3b

Distribution of responses if the answers were no which are being shown in the table below.

	Category				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardians	Employers	
They wanted me to work only because employer gives food	6 9.7%	15 24.2%	26 41.9%	15 24.2%	62 44.3%
Had to earn money to help family	14 33.3%	8 19.0%	13 31.0%	7 16.7%	42 30.0%
Due to incapability	4 11.1%	14 38.9%	10 27.8%	8 22.2%	36 25.7%
Total	24 17.1%	37 26.4%	49 35.0%	30 21.4%	140 100.0%

Data in the above table shows 41.9% parents/guardians said as employers would feed the children they hired as child laborers, they wanted their children to enter the workforce so that at least the child could get two square meals a day and not be affected by family deprivation. 33.3% working child laborers said they were pushed into the labor market by their families as it was necessary for them to help in adding to family income.

Present research shows rehabilitated child laborers under BBA care at Bal Ashram said sending children into the workforce was just a means to an end of earning income for the family. Children said one reason why parents/guardians sent their children to work was due to pressure by society too that the children acquire a skill. They said if families could send their children to work in the labor market, they could send their children to school for education too.

Employers opined that even child laborers looked forward to acquiring skills at the workplace because it would help children earn money to help their families and themselves.

Table-4



Distribution of responses on was becoming or making a child laborer a forced or voluntary decision which are being shown in the table below.

	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardians	Employers	
Voluntary	51 25.0%	20 9.8%	91 44.6%	42 20.6%	204 68.0%
Forced	12 12.5%	42 43.8%	34 35.4%	8 8.3%	96 32.0%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

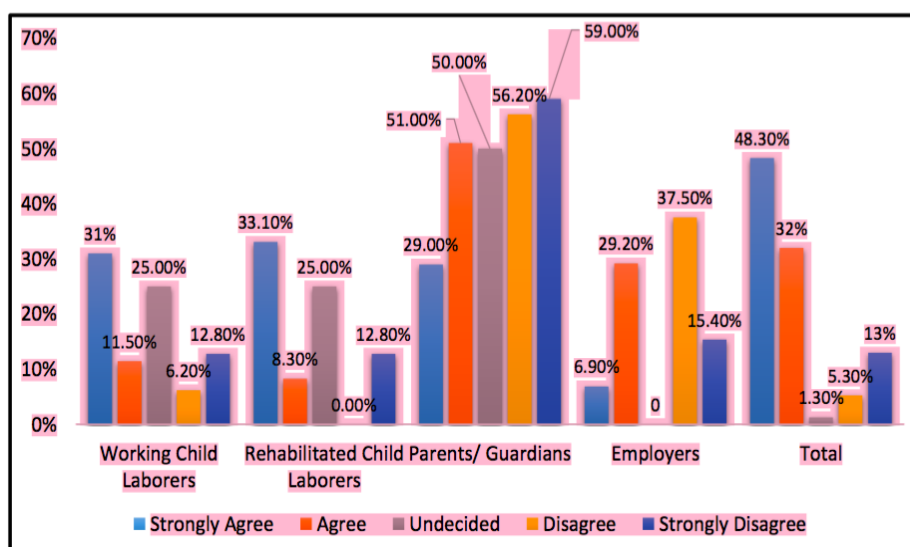
Data in the above table shows that 43.8% rehabilitated child laborers said the decision to work as a child laborer was a forced one. 44.6% parents/guardians and 20.6% employers said it was voluntary.

Secondary data reveals that child labor is most prominent in developing countries particularly in rural areas where ‘extreme poverty, lack of job opportunities for adults, and poor access to schools perpetuate the need for families to send children to work. Gender, caste and ethnicity are also factors that make child labor more common among certain population groups, as entrenched discrimination on these grounds determines education and employment opportunities’. (5)

While looking at how socio-cultural factors reproduce the practice of child labor, it is worthwhile to assess the role of education and education of the child in making a child a laborer. Therefore to understand this, the following questions were asked.

Table-5

Distribution of responses on was parental illiteracy responsible to send or hire a child as a laborer to add to family income which are being shown in the graph below.



Data in above graph shows that of the total respondents, 48.3% strongly agreed. 59% parents/guardians strongly disagreed while 33.1% rehabilitated child laborers and 31% working child laborers strongly agreed that parental illiteracy gave birth to and bred child labor problem.

The present research reveals independent working child laborers interviewed at Nathupura village in Barabanki district of



Uttar Pradesh stressed that child labor practice thrives in this region mainly due to parental illiteracy or low level literacy of parents/guardians. It was revealed that as parents/guardians were illiterate or had little education, they did not realize the importance of education for their child and therefore were not aspirational. Due to this, children were also brought up in the same environment. Thus children had a bleak view of life and had no aim in life. As family poverty and hunger were overwhelming, working to earn money to support their families and themselves then became a necessity as it was the sole option for them.

Secondary data reveals in a study by Adekunle Victor Owoyomi titled ‘Parental Educational Status and Child Labor: Implication for Sustainable Child Development in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria’ says, “Participation of children in paid employment is high where the level of education of their parent is low and the rate of participation reduces as the educational status of the parent improves.” (6)

It is also seen that ability of parents to assess the personal and social value of education depends on information they have available with them. If their reference group, that is the community in which they live, does not have any knowledge of the advantages of education, then parents’ information will also be limited.

Table-6

Distribution of responses on as there is a cause and effect of relation between education and child labor, so how far education will play a role in not making a child work as a laborer which are being shown in the table below.

	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardians	Employers	
Strongly Agree	42 39.3%	29 27.1%	33 30.8%	3 2.8%	107 35.7%
Agree	11 9.9%	8 7.2%	57 51.4%	35 31.5%	111 37.0%
Undecided	2 66.7%	0 0.0%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%	3 1.0%
Disagree	6 10.0%	20 33.3%	24 40.0%	10 16.7%	60 20.0%
Strongly Disagree	2 10.5%	5 26.3%	10 52.6%	2 10.5%	19 6.3%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

Data in the above table shows of total respondents, 37% agreed that education plays a role in not making a child work as a laborer. 51.4% parents/guardians agreed. Rehabilitated child laborers were so aware of the existing facts that they were sure to agree or disagree, but none was undecided. 66.7% of working child laborers were undecided while 39.3% strongly agreed that lack of education did make a child work. Even employers agreed or disagreed but none was undecided.

The present research reveals rehabilitated child laborers under both Pratham and BBA care said it was after the NGOs took them under their care, they were made aware that it was only the medium of education that could eliminate child labor practice at the grassroots level. It was the efforts of these NGOs in making these former child laborers realize that it was only education that would alleviate their lives.

Secondary data shows that child labor and education achievement are negatively related.

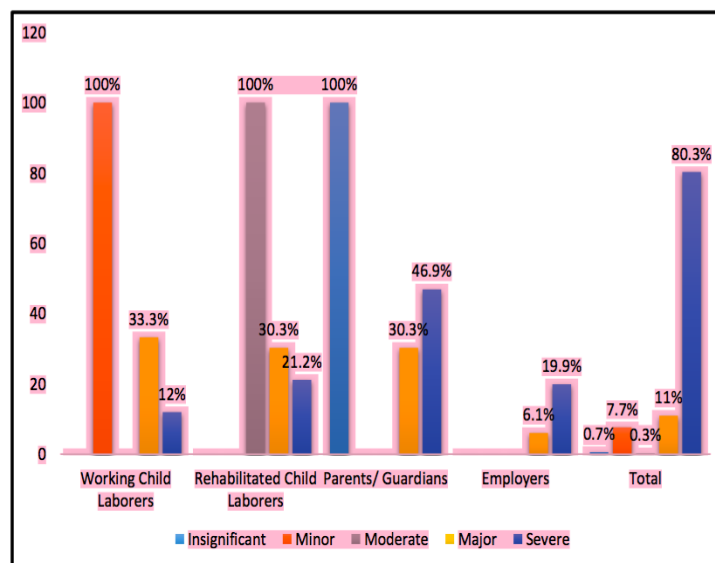
Samir Ranjan Nath and Abdullahel Hadi in a study titled ‘Role of Education in reducing child labor: Evidence from rural Bangladesh’ say children’s enrolment in schools is not sufficient to end child labor. It has to ensure that children attend school regularly and how much time in a day they are devoting to education. They say it should be ensured that parents are motivated to keep their children in school and not in the workforce. They add factors like school proximity, good environment for education in school will reduce dropout rate of children and prevent them from entering the labor market. [7]



In a news article written by this researcher in Hindustan Times newspaper while talking about a survey done by National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), it says quoting institute’s director SA Khan, ‘The survey is a sad commentary on our socio-economic set-up, as in 40% of cases, parents and kin encourage kids to win their bread instead of sending them to school.’ (Hindustan Times, Lucknow edition, Pg 3 lead April 19, 2001).

Table-7

Distribution of responses on if non-formal schooling or school facilities were provided within the community, would it alleviate child labor which are being shown in the graph below.



Data in the above graph shows that of total respondents, 80.3% said if non-formal schooling or school facilities would be provided within the community, it would help in alleviating child labor problem. 46.9% parents/guardians in severe category and 33.3% working child laborers in major category favored it.

The present research reveals as part of non-formal schooling, Pratham sets up multiple activity centers (MACs) or colloquially called Pratham centers. At MAC children between 3-6 years are prepared ‘through learn with fun’ for admission to primary classes either in private or government schools. Senior children out of school are educated in Hindi, Math, GK, and other subjects taught in schools so that they adjust when enrolled formally in private or government run schools. MAC also focuses on skill development for both boys and girls.

Secondary data sources show that IPEC’s non-formal or transitional education programs have helped former child laborers to be at par with their peers who began their schooling at the appropriate age. Also, IPEC supports the fact that there should be a strong link between such rehabilitation programs and the formal education system, since basic



education is the key over a long term of time.

Realizing that formal schooling was not in reach for many poor families and their children, Indian government launched a non-formal education program in 1979-1980. The launch of this program also signaled from the government that eradicating child labor was not a mean task. It required to take into account lives and livelihoods of the poor. The program was so designed that children could work and still get an education. Within the program, classes happen after regular hours so working children can attend them after finishing their work. They are paid some remuneration to compensate for the loss of a few hours of work. The aim is to gradually mainstream these children over a period of time. The program helps those students who are school drop-outs, working children and children from areas without easy access to schools.

Table-8

Distribution of responses on did parents want the child/him to follow in their footsteps and work as a laborer which are being shown in the table below.

	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardians	Employers	
Yes	14 38.9%	2 5.6%	13 36.1%	7 19.4%	36 12.0%
No	49 18.6%	60 22.7%	112 42.4%	43 16.3%	264 88.0%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

Data in the above table shows of the total respondents, 88% said they did not want the child to follow in their footsteps and become a laborer. 18.6% of working child laborers and 42.4% of parents/guardians said no.

The present research reveals that Pratham initiated efforts to interact with parents and influenced them to change their mindsets regarding their children and their education. Motivated by the NGO’s persevering efforts in the community, parents/guardians decided to a large extent to send their children to school for education rather than follow in their footsteps and join the workforce.

To investigate the cultural traditions and ethics in determining the problem of child labor, the following questions were put across.

Table-9

Distribution of responses on should girl child be educated and not made a child laborer as has been the tradition which are being shown in the table below.

	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardians	Employers	
Yes	58 32.4%	57 31.8%	61 34.1%	3 1.7%	179 59.7%
No	5 4.1%	5 4.1%	64 52.9%	47 38.8%	121 40.3%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

Data in the above table shows that of the total respondents, 59.7% said yes. 32.4% working child laborers and 31.8%



rehabilitated child laborers also said yes. 52.9% parents/guardians said no.

The present research shows that Pratham has academic sponsorships for vulnerable girls belonging to disadvantage communities. In fact, it does regular follow-up of girls through a government supported scheme of the Women and child welfare department of UP Government.

Rehabilitated child laborers under BBA care said gender sensitization towards girls was very important. They said until the time they worked as laborers, they were not aware about gender sensitization. But after BBA had entered their lives, they understood the importance of gender sensitization. They said efforts should be made to wean away girls from child labor market. They added efforts had been initiated by BBA and also in collaboration with government to help girl child laborers.

Secondary sources data highlight as per an ILO report titled ‘Give Girls a Chance Tackling Child Labor, a key to the future’ explains how education of girls can avoid child labor problem in future. It says educating girls is a successful way of tackling poverty. When educated, girls will earn more as adults, marry later in life, and have few and healthy children. As they have will have a decision-making power within the household, they will ensure that their children will receive education and thereby avoid future child laborers. The report agrees that there is discrimination between boys and girls where education is concerned. This emanates from the perception that boys will have better labor market opportunities while girls will assume domestic responsibilities. In fact, if girls lack basic education and engage in child labor at an early age they may be condemned to a future of poverty.

Table-10

Distribution of responses on is the mindset of ‘more children more working hands’ or a large family with many children the reason to send/ hire children as laborers which are being shown in the table below.

	Category of Respondents				Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardian	Employers	
Strongly Agree	29 23.8%	49 40.2%	40 32.8%	4 3.3%	122 40.7%
Agree	11 11.0%	4 4.0%	50 50.0%	35 35.0%	100 33.3%
Undecided	7 43.8%	0 0.0%	7 43.8%	2 12.5%	16 5.3%
Disagree	13 29.5%	7 15.9%	17 38.6%	7 15.9%	44 14.7%
Strongly Disagree	3 16.7%	2 11.1%	11 61.1%	2 11.1%	18 6.0%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

Data in above table shows that of the total respondents 40.7% strongly agreed. 40.2% rehabilitated child laborers also strongly agreed while 35% employers agreed.

Secondary data suggests as per an article titled ‘ Why do the Poor Have Large Families’ [8] states there are many socio-cultural, religious and economic reasons that contribute to poor families having many children. Among the reasons stated are high rate of child mortality so parents intentionally have more children looking at the poor survival rate of children. Other reasons are early marriage and gender roles, religious factors poor access to contraception and need for extra labor. As most families are rural based and deeply affected by poverty, families depend on labor-intensive agri activities to subsist. In these communities, there can be a cultural expectation to have big families to combat their need for extra labor.



Table-11

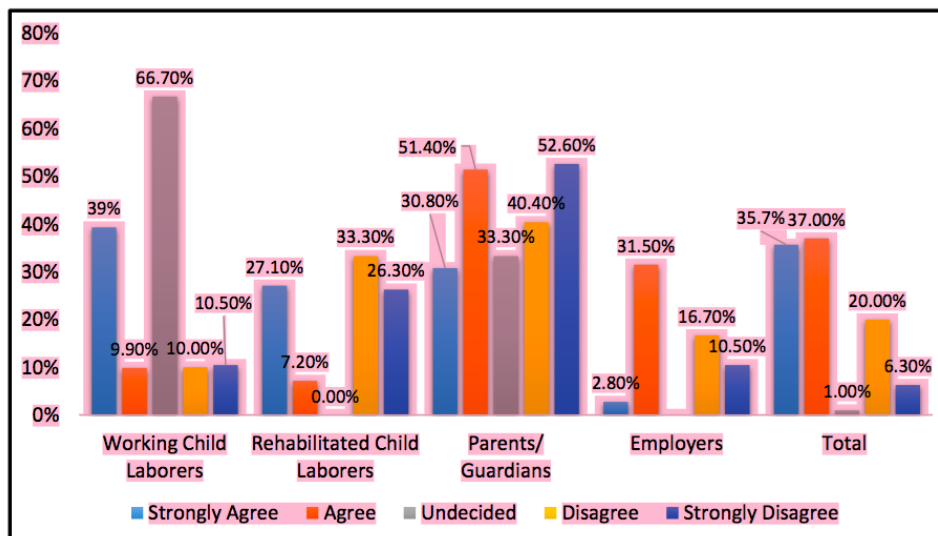
Distribution of responses on did respondents think family planning would help break their ‘circle of poverty’ and not make children work as child laborers which are being shown in the table below.

Category of Respondents					Total
	Working Child Laborers	Rehabilitated Child Laborers	Parents/ Guardian	Employers	
Yes	61 22.6%	57 21.1%	110 40.7%	42 15.6%	270 90.0%
No	2 6.7%	5 16.7%	15 50.0%	8 26.7%	30 10.0%
Total	63 21.0%	62 20.7%	125 41.7%	50 16.7%	300 100.0%

Data in the above table shows that of the total respondents, 90% said yes. 22.6% working child laborers also said yes while 21.1% rehabilitated child laborers also said yes that family planning would help in breaking the circle of poverty and not make children work as child laborers.

Table-12

Distribution of responses on did respondents think a male child of the family was preferred over girl child to follow the traditional family occupation or skills which are being shown in graph below.



Data in the above table shows 51.4% parents/guardians agreed that there was discrimination between boys and girls of the family in carrying out domestic work and family occupation. Although 66.7% working child laborers were undecided, 39.3% still strongly agreed while 27.1% rehabilitated child laborers strongly agreed.

Secondary data reveals in India, as society is mainly patriarchal, gender segregation is deeply internalized and is intergenerational. Dr PG Sunanda Bhagvathy and P Saranya in a paper titled ‘Review of Gender Discrimination in Society’ say society has a preference for boys and worth of being invested in. In childhood and early life, there is clear-cut gender segregation within the household. The authors say, “Boys are given very little work like going out for fetching essentials, maintain the garden, building painting, supervising works, while girls are given domestic chores like cooking, cleaning utensils, washing clothes and cleaning the house like sweeping swapping.” [9]



Reeta Sonawat in a paper ‘Understanding Families in India: A Reflection of Societal Changes’ says the Indian family is by and large patriarchal in structure. “In a patriarchal family set up, all male members, that is, husband, elder brother and father, perform duties like decision making for the rest of the family, and their physical and moral protection. Even in matrilineal and matrilocal cultures patriarchy seems to be prevalent in the form of power held by the brother and not by the woman herself.” She adds patriarchal structure roles, responsibility, control, and distribution of resources within the family are strictly determined by age, gender and generation. The establishment of the family system is believed to be mainly for the fulfillment of religious obligations like ancestor worship, begetting a male child and passing social religious traditions to the next generation. [10]

Tin-chi Lin and Alicia Adsera in a study titled ‘Son Preference and Children’s Housework: The Case of India’ say it is first essential to know why children are involved in family business in India. The authors say in many Indian households, it is customary that children help with farming or the family business, or engage in domestic chores (such as cooking and fetching water) for three main reasons. Firstly, over two-thirds of the population lives in rural areas and many households lack sufficient infrastructure. So as families need to spend additional time to maintain the basic functioning of daily life, and as children have appropriate physical strength become involved in many of these chores as they grow up. Secondly, the Indian workforce remains largely agricultural, and is labor intensive so children become natural helpers when farming requires more labor input. Thirdly, due to unequal income distribution, many Indians are still poor and therefore children are needed to engage in economic activities to help family subsist. And within this framework, there is preference for sons mainly because they are favored over daughters for a variety of social, economic, and religious reasons. Culturally and religiously, in these patriarchal societies sons are needed to continue family lineage and cremate the family dead specially among Hindus and Sikhs. And among castes, those who have achieved high ritual status usually conform to male preference with regard to dowry, and marriage, among other things. The second reason is related to the socio-economic consequences of male dominance where it is perceived that sons may have higher earning potential and may be perceived as better providers of old-age support to parents than daughters. In agricultural societies, sons are an important source of labor for family farming. [11]

Data Interpretation

It is evident from tables 1 and 4 that as family poverty is the main determinant of child labor supply in the labor market, parents/guardians have no option but to send their children to work to earn money so that the family can subsist. The parental motivation is that the family has to survive first and the child’s survival also depends on that. In majority of cases, under the garb of telling the child that his labor is required to help the family survive, parents manipulate the child and push him into the labor market. The child is under the impression that he is voluntarily helping the family while the truth is that he is forced into that work which is mentally, physically and emotionally exhausting and is keeping him out of school.

According to a study ‘The Economic Impact of Child Labor’ by Rossana Galli, secondary data shows extreme poverty, lack of jobs for adults, poor access to schools all contribute to family’s need for children to send them to work. In fact, it is seen as children’s earnings contribute anything between 10% and 20% of total household income, it becomes imperative that children earn as parents’ earnings are inadequate to guarantee the family’s survival.

However, rehabilitated child laborers who have been under the care of NGOs Pratham and BBA have been made so much aware about how parents unscrupulously manipulate children to make them work that now they have become aware that by working there is no physical and mental growth for the child.

The efforts initiated by these NGOs show that they have taken looked at the problem in a holistic manner. The NGOs have probed the core areas of the problems and then subsequently initiated various advocacy campaigns to help the children realize what are the problems that lead to a child becoming a laborer.

As tables 2, 3a and 3b show, that these rehabilitated children under the NGOs’ care are aware of the fact that what they earlier considered acquiring skill by working as a child laborer turned out to be that their families had manipulated them and were using them as money earners only. These respondents are aware that at this age education is more important for



a child and not skill development. From the parents perspective it is clear that if a child were to get a professional training or a skill, then doors for jobs will open up for the child and family's income will increase. Education then does not matter. For many respondents, it is also seen that if the employer is providing the basic necessities of life to the child, then there is no harm in the child working and getting a skill at the same time.

This non-altruistic behavior on part of parents can be attributed to the fact that parental illiteracy is majorly responsible for not cherishing their children. As is evident from graph 5 and table 6, respondents agree that education is must for children and helps in not making a child a laborer while uneducated parents are not able to realize the importance of education for their child. And if the community to which they belong is also largely uneducated, then it adds to the problem of child labor. For illiterate parents, the prospect of a job which gives money in return is a better prospect than hours spent in school by a child getting educated. As parents are uneducated, they pass on the legacy of illiteracy to their children, who have no aspirations. Illiteracy cannot guarantee high wage job which in turn breeds low income and poverty for the family so children have to be sent out to work. This process then becomes intergenerational thereby contributing to child labor practice.

As is evident from graph 7 and table 8, NGOs Pratham and BBA have initiated efforts to tackle the issue of lack of education in communities. They are providing non-formal schooling within the communities and thereby equipping children to mainstream with formal education system. These efforts of NGOs have also gone a long way in changing the perceptions of families and creating the awareness about the fact that education is extremely important for a child and not working to earn money.

Secondary data shows that IPEC's non-formal or transitional education programs have helped former child laborers to be at par with their peers who began their schooling at the appropriate age.

Non-formal schooling, in fact, has a wider reach and better prospects to help children of marginalized communities get access to education and thereby tackling the problem of child labor at the grassroots.

Tables 9, 10, 11, and graph 12 show that socio-cultural traditions and ethics determine the practice of child labor.

Conventions determine that boys have a better future than girls in mainly patriarchal society as they are seen as breadwinners of the family and carrying on the family name under the pretext of socio, cultural and religious reasons.

Girls are expected to do mainly household chores and carry out domestic duties before and after marriage. Tradition also leads many illiterate marginalized poor families to believe that having many children will be a boon as there will be more working hands to help the family survive.

It can be said in conclusion that marginalized communities are affected intensely by financial poverty and to help themselves subsist, they send their children into the labor market to earn thereby perpetuating child labor practice.

The combination of socio-cultural factors not only determines a child to be a child laborer but also reproduces the problem of child labor in society.

Efforts initiated by NGOs show that they consider both precautionary and curative measures to tackle the socio-cultural factors to combat the problem of child labor at the grassroots.

Findings

(i) Parents have a major influencing role in breeding the problem of child labor practice. It is parents who as children's guardians are the first to decide that whether their child will be a laborer or not. It can be seen that parental motivation is determined by various other socio-cultural factors namely ethos, traditions, values, ideology and ethics.

(ii) NGOs have addressed the core issues that affect the problem of child labor. The precautionary and curative initiatives launched by NGOs on education determine how through education child labor practice can be combated at the grassroots level.

(iii) Even as cultural traditions and ethics determine the problem of child labor, initiatives launched by certain NGOs take a holistic view of the socio-cultural factors affecting child labor practice so that it can be eliminated in its entirety.

In conclusion it can be said that certain NGOs working to eradicate the child labor practice take a holistic view of the whole problem. By looking at both precautionary and curative measures, these NGOs initiate innovative efforts to combat the problem in its entirety and they come out with flying colors. The approaches introduced by these certain NGOs are also a roadmap for NGO-government and multistake holders collaboration wherein laudatory efforts can be made to tackle the evil practice at its grassroots.



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