

## **Child labour in the city of Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir**

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### **Abstract**

This Research Paper has been undertaken among child labourers in the city of the Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir (2015), in order to establish the phenomenon of child labour in its proper perspective. The objectives of the study have been fulfilled by projecting appropriate variables in the process of data analysis and discussion. Any social problem as an empirical reality has various aspects, such as demographic, economic, geographic, psychological and social. This study has tried to highlight the social aspect of the problem of the working children using techniques of data collection accepted by sociologists and presenting it in terms and concepts used in sociological writings. A wider range of aspects such as family, economic status, parental perception, education, gender discrimination, middle men dimension and exploitation, relations of production, cultural acceptance and issues of health and recreation etc. have been covered. The study also examines existing rules and regulations and pin points the loopholes in the laws which the employers exploit while engaging children in their business units. This framework was applied to generate data on family structure, poverty and its indexes including level of education, occupation and health, as parameters of understanding the life of these children. Infact, the careful statistical analysis of many different aspects of child labourers in Srinagar city of Kashmir, with focus on more qualitative indexes gives a sense of the relations between city and country, between tourism and political environments, between commerce, consumption and human rights.

**Keywords:** Child labour, Srinagar

### **Introduction**

Children are the greatest gift to humanity and childhood is an important and impressionable stage of human development as it holds the potential to the future development of any society. Children who are brought up in an environment, which is conducive to their intellectual, physical and social health, grow up to be responsible and productive members of society. Every nation links its future income earning capabilities, either by shrinking their future external choice set or by reducing their own future individual productive capabilities. Under extreme economic distress, children are forced to forego educational opportunities and take up jobs which are mostly exploitative as they are usually underpaid and engaged in hazardous conditions. Parents decide to send their child for engaging in a job as a desperate measure due to poor economic conditions. It is, therefore, no wonder that the poor households predominantly send their children to work in early ages of their life. One of the disconcerting aspects of child labour is that children are sent to work at the expense of education. There is a strong effect of child labour on school attendance rates and the length of a child's workday is negatively associated with his or her capacity to attend school. Child labour forms an intrinsic part of pre-industrial economies. In pre-industrial societies, there is rarely a concept of childhood in the modern sense. Children often begin to actively participate activities such as child rearing, hunting and farming as soon as they are competent. In many societies, children as young as 13 are seen as adults and engage in the same activities as adults.

### **Jammu and Kashmir in Focus**

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is economically backward. In 1995-96, the per capita income of Jammu and Kashmir was

RS 6,181. It was far less than some of the better developed states (Harayana- Rs. 13,518, Maharashtra- Rs. 15,557, Punjab –Rs.16044). 25% of the population was found living below poverty line in 1993-94. The number of "POOR PERSONS HAS REMAINED" almost the same between 1973-74 and 1993-94. With an estimated population of 7.7million in 1991, j&k ranks 16th among Indian states in terms of population. Various sources for socio-demographic indicators reflect a population density of 176 persq.km, sex ratio of 923, rural and urban population distribution as 77%and 23%respectively, 2.2 milliion children enrolled of a child population of 3.1million, 35%drop-out at middle level entry, a literacy rate of 59%(NSSO,1997), IMR of 66 underweight children 44.55%, and 41%with stunted growth.

Violence since 1989 in J&K has brought unprecedented sufferings to people. The conflict has disturbed the social fabric, damaged the economy, disturbed the source of livelihood of thousands of families and in many cases deprived the family of its breadwinner. Children and women of the Kashmir valley have gone through a grueling trauma over recent times because of the armed conflict situation. The most disturbing fallout of it has been the phenomenal increase in destitution manifest in the number of orphans, widows, the invalid and the disabled.

### **Existing Programmes for Rehabilitation of Child Labor Legal Framework**

1. As per Article 24 of the constitution, no child below the age of 14 years is to be employed in any factory, mine or any hazardous employment. Further, Article 39
2. The Himachal Pradesh story has been well documented by Anuradha De, Claire Noronha and Meera Samson in "primary Education in Himachal Pradesh: Examining a

success story” in R.Govinda (edited) (2002) India Education Report, op.cited, pp.297-311.

3. This section draws extensively from Neera Burra (2007) *born un free. Child labor, Education and the state in India*, oxford university press, New Delhi requires the states to direct its policy towards ensuring that the tender age of children is not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength. Recently, with the insertion of Article 21A, the state has been entrusted with the task of providing free and compulsory education to all the children in age group of 6-14 years. Consistent with the constitutional provisions, child labour (prohibition and Regulation) Act was enacted in 1986, which seeks to prohibit employment of children below 14 years in hazardous occupations and processes and regulates the working conditions in other employments. In the last 5 years, the number of hazardous processes listed in the schedule of Act has increased from 18-47 and occupations from 7-13.

### **National Child Labour Programme**

A national policy on child labor was announced in 1987 which emphasized the need for strict enforcement measures in areas of high child labor concentration. In order to translate the above policy into action, the government of India initiated the National child labor project scheme in 1988 to rehabilitate the working children starting with 12 child labor endemic districts of the country. Under the scheme, working children are identified through child labor survey, withdrawn from work and put into the special schools, so as to provide them with enabling environment to join main stream education system. In these special schools, besides formal education, they are provided stipend @ Rs.100/- per month, nutrition, vocational training and regular health checkups. In addition, efforts are also made to target the families of these children so as to cover them under various developmental and income/ employment generations programmes of the Government. The scheme also envisages awareness generations campaigns against the evils of child labor and enforcement of child labor laws.

### **Review of Literature**

The child labor (prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 prohibits the child labor in certain occupations and processes alone and their conditions of work are regulated in the rest. The law doesn't prohibit child labor if rendered for one's own family in those areas of occupation that has been considered as hazardous. Likewise, it has no purview over regulating the conditions of work if children are engaged to work by family. The law has also completely left out children working in agriculture. The first step is to clearly enunciate a policy that 'no child must work-and every child attends a full time formal school is not negotiable and that it is a goal that is possible to achieve.

**Conceptual and Definitional Framework** The phrase 'Child Labour' today is a pejorative term that differs from the broader and less value-laden 'child work'. Definitions of child labour vary. In general 'Child Labour' refers to children under 14 years (in India) old who work in both the formal and informal sectors, in conditions that are harmful or potentially harmful to the child. The term child labour is conceptually and operationally restricted to mean the employment of children in

gainful occupations who are the age group of five to fourteen and who are also working either exclusively or in combination with studies. This includes the children working either in agriculture or in industries or 25 also as domestic workers, the significant aspects being the impact of labour on the development of the child (Sudha and Tewari, 1985). Pointing to the close links between child labour and education, the proponents of the viewpoint argues that all children who are out of school should be considered as child labourer's. An out-of-school child is inevitably drawn into supplementing family labour, either on a full time basis, to help in family occupation or manage family assets or simply engage in different 'adult-releasing' activities.

The M. S. Gurupadaswamy Committee, (1979) cited that chronic poverty is the strongest factor for the prevalence and perpetuation of child labour. Similarly, Singh *et al* (1980), Hussain (1988) Singh (1990), Sinha (1991), Usha (1991), Sekar (1998), Sharma (2001) and Ghosh & Sekar (2002) has also found a strong correlation between child labour and poverty. Nadkarni (1976) study on 'over population and rural poor' revealed that poverty compels million of rural families to sell the labour of their children along adults to eke out a bare subsistence. Among small land owners, children are the main source of support for their family agriculture operations because some agricultural operations can be performed by them. Similar study is also remarked by Nag *et al.* (1978). Similarly, a study conducted by Mendelievich (1980) showed that the driving force behind every case of child labour is generally poverty but the basic cause is the interplay of some of the above factors. A child goes to work in order to contribute to the family income.

Bhatty (1998) cites a variety of studies on Indian child labour in support of the view that 'income and related variables do not seem to have any direct significant effect on children's work input. Children are often put to work as a deterrent to idling rather than as an economic necessity. Ray (2000b) also 31 provides evidence that shows that household poverty has an insignificant impact on the child's labour market participation in Peru and Pakistan. Swaminathan (1998) explains the observed weak relation between incidence of child labour and incidence of poverty by suggesting that at 'the micro-level, poverty ensures a supply of child labour. It is the structure of demand, however, that determines the use of child labour'. Chandrasekhar's (1997) Study in Indian context also finds no correlation between Poverty and child labour stated that five states i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra have more number of child labour in comparison to poor states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. Similarly the study on working children in Malaysia infers that the family income affects neither child labour nor working hours for any age group of children.

The main problem of working children is hours of work. A study conducted by Singh (1980) in Bombay city presents the working conditions of both self-employed and employed children. The child workers found to be working for 10 hours a day who earned around Rs. 82 per month on an average. The children engaged in construction work, arts and crafts and production received higher wages than those in households and restaurants. The study further showed that out of the total sample, 5.10 percent working children had no fixed rest interval. Similarly, 35 percent of the children did not get an off-day during the week. Nearly 33 percent of the parents did

not visit the work places of their children. Sharma (1982)'s study on the working children to examine the extent of exploitation and socio-economic background of child labour found that 56 percent 44 respondents had to work for 15 to 18 hours per day for earnings their livelihood and 44 percent for 10-15 hours per day. The average daily working hours were 16 hours. Maximum child workers responded that they are working to support their families to augment family income.

**Research Methodology**

Once the research need was established, consultations were made to

- a) Identify most hazardous and exploitative industries where high concentration of child labour is found
  - b) The districts where these industries were located.
- Relevant secondary sources were identified and reviewed. The secondary sources were very limited and old. Given the inadequate size of the secondary sources, a base line survey was necessitated. Baseline pilot study was designed and conducted in following areas of district Srinagar:
- i. Khanyar,
  - ii. Babledem,
  - iii. Lalchowk,
  - iv. Batmaloo.

Basic information was collected from the concerned district authorities about the magnitude of child labor and their location

The research design was further strengthened with information from the base line. Respondents were identified and a detailed sampling strategy was worked out. Research tools were discussed and a set of interview schedules, PLA exercises, observations, case studies were planned. Interview schedules were field tested and finalized. Systems were set up for data collection, processing and analysis compilation and tabulation of data helped in identification of issues and their analysis formats.

**Research Tools**

The set of tools and techniques comprised of the following:

- a) Review of existing secondary sources: An effort was made to locate and review all possible sources including those of the government studies by the academic institutions and students, and other reports.
- b) Pilot study an initial was conducted in Batamaloo area which included meeting with various children working as bus conductors and some fruit sellers and the children working in automobiles.

- c) Interview schedules: schedules used in interviewing:
  - Children working in the automobile sector
  - Parents of Child Labour, and employers of Child Labours
  - Breadsellers (bread makers)
  - Vegetable sellers
  - Fruit sellers).
- d) Observations: informal observations formed a part of the research process.
- e) Case studies: ten such documentations of individual children were undertaken to understand their lives on a more direct basis.

**Respondents**

Children: Children were further disaggregated by their Gender income group, age-group and Non-school going status. Research into automobiles sector was focused on boys since no girls are found in this occupation. In the automobile sector, the research focused more on boy children since they form the majority. Three sets of age groups were defined: 8-11 years, 12-14 years, and 15-18 years.

- A total of 16 children (aged 11-18) working in the transport sector working as conductors were the respondents in the study.
- A total of 10 respondents (aged15-18) working in the carpenter sector.
- A total of 10 respondents (aged 14-17) working in the bakery sector.
- A total of 10 fruit sellers aged (12-18) working in the fruit selling sector.
- A total of 10 respondents aged (14-16) working in hotels.
- A total of 10 children (aged 17) working in the labour sector.
- A total of 11 children (aged10- 17) working in the automobile sector and nine boys (aged 14 -18) in selling clothes.

**Results and Discussion**

As discussed in the Introduction, an encompassing understanding of the roots of child labor can only be obtained if the relevant factors at different levels are studied simultaneously:

- a) Socio-Demographic & Economic background
- b) Different factors responsible for children's labour
- c) The impact on the health, education, life style and future propoooooooooooo

**Socio demographic educational & economic**

**Table 4.1:** Conductors

S. No	Age 11-18 Yr	No. of Siblings	Education	Father's Occupation	Health	Monthly income of respondent	Any Other Willingness towards Job
1.	18	5	9 <sup>th</sup>	Suffering from illness	Good	6000/-	Want to leave
2.	17	4	12 <sup>th</sup> Studying	Mason	Good		Want to leave
3.	16	4	Illiterate	Labor	Good	6000/-	Not Satisfied
4.	14	3	7 <sup>th</sup>	Fruit seller	Good	6,000/-	Satisfied
5.	15	3	7 <sup>th</sup> Studying	Dead	Good	5000/-	Satisfied
6.	18	1	9 <sup>th</sup>	Dead	Good	5000/-	Satisfied
7.	15	3	8 <sup>th</sup>	Dead	Drug Addicted, Head ache	6500/-	Satisfied
8.	15	2	6 <sup>th</sup>	Labor	Good	6000-7000	Not Satisfied
9.	15	1	9 <sup>th</sup>	Field worker	Not Healthy	6000/-	Not Satisfied
10.	16	3	8 <sup>th</sup>	Mason	Good	3000/-	Not Satisfied

11.	17	1	7 <sup>th</sup>	Driver	Good	5000/-	Satisfied
12.	17	3	Illiterate	Fruit seller	Drug Addicted	6500/-	Not Satisfied
13.	16	4	Illiterate	Mason	Good	6000/-	Satisfied
14.	16	4	Illiterate	Driver	Not Good	6000/-	Satisfied
15.	16	4	Illiterate	Ill	Good	4000/-	Not Satisfied
16.	16	4	Illiterate	Dead	Not Good	6000/-	Satisfied
17.	16	4	Illiterate	Mason	Not Good	7000/-	Satisfied
18.	16	4	Illiterate	Driver	Not Good	4500/-	Not Satisfied
19.	16	4	Illiterate	Driver	Good	5400/-	Satisfied
20.	16	4	Illiterate	Autodriver	Good	3500/-	Satisfied

During the analysis it was found that Age at which children start working in Transport sector ranges from the age of 14-18 years. This job is only constituted by boys. No child was found below 14 years as this sort of job needs hard skill and labor. Maximum children in this job were found Illiterate and rest children studied upto primarily level. In this sector nature of the job of their parents were found as Drivers, fruitseller

and some were found as dead. Economically. Families of these children vary at a great extent because of their jobs of having monthly salary not more than sixty five hundred. Most of the children working in this sector complain of a big health issue most of the children suffer chest diseases. Lower back problems respiratory infections and some children were found as drug addicted.

**Table 4.2: Carpenter**

S. No	Age 11-18 yr	No. of Siblings	Education	Father's Occupation	Health	Total Income of Respondent	Any Other Willingness towards Job
1.	15	4	5 <sup>th</sup>	Labor	Not Good	5000/-	Not Satisfied
2.	17	2	10 <sup>th</sup>	Ill	Good	7000/-	Satisfied
3.	18	2	11 <sup>th</sup>	Mason	Not Good	6000-	Not Satisfied
4.	17	2	9 <sup>th</sup>	Labor	Good	7000-	Satisfied
5.	17	2	9 <sup>th</sup>	Carpenter	Not Good	6000-	Satisfied
6.	18	2	8 <sup>th</sup>	Labor	Not Good	6000-	Satisfied
7.	16	2	5 <sup>th</sup>	Mason	Not Good	4000-	Not Satisfied
8.	16	2	9 <sup>th</sup>	Carpenter	Not Good	4500-	Satisfied
9.	18	2	9 <sup>th</sup>	Ill	Good	5600-	Satisfied
10.	19	2	9 <sup>th</sup>	Labor	Good	5500-	Not Satisfied

During the analysis it was found that Age at which children start working in carpenter sector ranges from the age of 15-18 years. This job is only constituted by boys. No child was found below 15 years as this sort of job needs hard skill and labor. Maximum children in this job were found educated in which two were matriculates and rest children studied up to primarily level. In this sector nature of the job of their parents

were found as carpenter, labour, and some were found as Ill. Economically, families of these children vary at a great extent because of their jobs of having monthly salary not more than seven thousand. Most of the children working in this sector complain of a big health issue most of the children suffer chest diseases lower back problems respiratory infections

**Table 4.4: Fruit Seller**

S. No	Age 11-18 yr	No. of Siblings	Gender	Edu	Father's Occupation	Nature of work	Health	Salary	Any Other
1.	12	2	Male	6 <sup>th</sup>	Shawl Business	Fruit Sellar	Good	6000/-	Satisfied
2.	18	2	Male	6 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Fruit Sellar	Good	5500/-	Not Satisfied
3.	18	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Mechanic	Fruit Sellar	Good	3000/-	Satisfied
4.	18	2	Male	5 <sup>th</sup>	Father died	Fruit Sellar	Good	5500/-	Not Satisfied
5.	14	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Labour	Fruit Sellar	Good	4500/-	Satisfied
6.	18	2	Male	9 <sup>th</sup>	Business	Fruit Sellar	Good	5000/-	Satisfied
7.	15	2	Male	9 <sup>th</sup>	Shawl Business	Fruit Sellar	Good	3500/-	Satisfied
8.	18	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Fruit Sellar	Good	4000/-	Not Satisfied
9.	13	2	Male	10 <sup>th</sup>	Mechanic	Fruit Sellar	Good	5000/-	Satisfied
10.	18	2	Male	11 <sup>th</sup>	Father died	Fruit Sellar	Good	4600/-	Not Satisfied

During the analysis it was found that Age at which children start working in Fruit selling sector ranges from the age of 15-18 years. This job is only constituted by boys. No child was found below 15 years as this sort of job needs hard skill and labor. Maximum children in this job were found educated in which two were matriculates and above matriculates and rest children studied up to primarily level. In this sector nature of the job of their parents were found as shopkeepers, Labors Mechanics some had shawl business, and some were found as

dead, these children don't get the salary more than 6,000. Most of the children working in this sector complain of a big health issue most of the children suffer chest diseases. lower back problems respiratory infections because all the day they have to carry their job standing and they are not supposed to sit even a single time they do this job mostly standing on and carrying their pushcarts and carrying vegetables and fruits on them.

**Table 4.6:** Labour

S. No	Age 11-18 yr	No. of Siblings	Gender	Edu	Father's Occupation	Nature of work	Health	Salary	Any Other Willingness towards Job
1.	18	2	Male	11 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Labour	Good	4000/-	Satisfied
2.	11	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Mechanic	Labour	Good	3500/-	Not Satisfied
3.	12	2	Male	10 <sup>th</sup>	Father died	Labour	Good	3500/-	Satisfied
4.	18	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Labour	Labour	Good	3000/-	Satisfied
5.	17	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Labour	Labour	Good	3000/-	Satisfied
6.	18	2	Male	9 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Labour	Good	4000/-	Not Satisfied
7.	18	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Mechanic	Labour	Good	3000/-	Satisfied
8.	16	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	Father died	Labour	Good	5000/-	Satisfied
9.	18	2	Male	12 <sup>th</sup>	Labour	Labour	Good	6000/-	Not Satisfied
10.	15	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Ill	Labour	Good	3000/-	Satisfied

During the analysis it was found that Age at which children start working in labour sector ranges from the age of 11-18 years. This job is only constituted by boys. No child was found below 11 years as this sort of job needs hard skill and labor. In this sector nature of the job of their parents were found as Mechanics, shopkeepers, and some were found as Ill.

some children were found as Orphans. Economically, families of these children vary at a great extent because of their jobs of having monthly salary not more than six thousand. Most of the children working in this sector complain of health issues like chest diseases lower back problems respiratory.

**Table 4.7:** Automobile Mechanics

S. No	Age 11-18 yr	No. of Siblings	Gender	Edu	Father's Occupation	Nature of work	Health	Salary	Any Other Willingness towards Job
1.	17	2	Male	9 <sup>th</sup>	Labour	Mechanic	Good	2700/-	Hectic
2.	17	2	Male	10 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Mechanic	Not Good	7000/-	Satisfied
3.	18	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	labour	Mechanic	Not Good	6500/-	Satisfied
4.	11	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	Cloth Sellar	Mechanic	Good	4000/-	Not Satisfied
5.	18	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	Wholesaler	Mechanic	Not Good	4000/-	Satisfied
6.	14	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	Cloth Sellar	Mechanic	Not Good	7000/-	Satisfied
7.	18	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	labour	Mechanic	Not Good	4000/-	Satisfied
8.	15	2	Male	6 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Mechanic	Good	6000/-	Not Satisfied
9.	18	2	Male	5 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Mechanic	Good	5600/-	Satisfied
10.	16	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Mechanic	Good	4000/-	Satisfied
11.	18	2	Male	4 <sup>th</sup>	labour	Mechanic	Not Good	4000/-	Not Satisfied
12.	12	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	shopkeeper	Mechanic	Good	4000/-	Not Satisfied
13.	11	2	Male	5 <sup>th</sup>	Mechanic	Mechanic	Not Good	3500/-	Satisfied
14.	18	2	Male	7 <sup>th</sup>	Father died	Mechanic	Not Good	4000/-	Satisfied
15.	18	2	Male	9 <sup>th</sup>	labour	Mechanic	Not Good	4000/-	Satisfied
16.	15	2	Male	10 <sup>th</sup>	labour	Mechanic	Not Good	4000/-	Not Satisfied
17.	18	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Father died	Mechanic	Not Good	5000/-	Satisfied
18.	18	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	Father died	Mechanic	Not Good	4600/-	Satisfied
19.	12	2	Male	8 <sup>th</sup>	labour	Mechanic	Good	4000/-	Satisfied
20.	11	2	Male	3 <sup>rd</sup>	labour	Mechanic	Good	4500/-	Not Satisfied

Children working in garages and workshops are found below the age of 18 as early as 11 years Srinagar, which is more urban, offers more jobs in when automobiles sector is concerned. Keeping in trend with the larger India, urban areas in Kashmir have seen a tremendous rise in the number of motor vehicles and therefore a need for more mechanical jobs. During survey I found children working in this sector not below the age of 11 so, approximately children working in automobile range maximum from 18 years and minimum at age of 11 years. Majority of children were literates majority were found matriculates and few only up to primary and none children are school going. These are the highest among those children who complaint of very big health issues like asthma, Traumatic tears and cataracts are two significant health hazards for children working in automobile sector. Children working in automobile face two types of health hazards with immediate and long term implications. The former includes accidents and burns and cuts, which should be dealt with

immediately with first aid provided at the earliest. The later category includes respiratory and ENT problems. Exposure to smoke and fumes of heavy vehicles causes respiratory infection (including chronic bronchitis, bacterial endocarditic), chest pain, cough, and dysphasia. Smoke produced by vehicles causes chronic bronchitis because of toxic fumes like sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide. Exposure to certain inorganic dust particles in the automobile work also cause chronic bronchitis. Laryngitis lining gets loose because of toxic fumes and start bleeding.

### Conclusion

All the categories of children whether they are working as part of family labor, working in hazardous conditions or working as bonded labor is in one form or the other child labor. But it is important to make categorizations and distinctions because there are differences in the degrees of exploitation. This necessitates a need for further research covering all the

occupations in which children are involved in all the districts of the Kashmir valley.

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