

# Magnitude of Child Labours in India and it's Socio-Economic Impact: With Special Reference To Manipur

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**Abstract:** *The present study highlighted the magnitude of child labour in India with special reference to Manipur State. The problem of child labour is one the serious challenges of state of Manipur as well as in the nation. Government has been taking various proactive measures to tackle this problem. However, considering the magnitude and extent of the problem and that it is essentially a socio-economic problem inextricably linked to other social problems like poverty and illiteracy, it requires concerted efforts from all sections of the society to make a dent in the problem. According to the ILO report there are 15 million working children in the age group of 5-14 as compared to the total child population of 31 million (ILO, 2022). As per survey conducted by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 2004-05, the number of working children is estimated to be at 2.17 million out of total 31 million. As per 2021 Census, the number of working children in the age group of 5-14 years has further reduced to 1.5 million. It shows that the efforts of the Government have borne the desired fruits. **Objectives of the Research Work:** 1) To highlight the economic, social, psychological and physical damage caused to child labourers. 2) To examine the efforts taken up by the government to solve the problem of child labourer in Manipur. 3) To assist the policy makers in framing policies and progress to promote welfare of the children highlight the good relatives of the problem of child labour in the state. 4) To promote proper understanding of the concept, forms, nature, magnitude and causes of child labour. **Research Methodology:** The proposed research is designed to be a descriptive, exploratory as well as an analytical one Interview Schedule, observations, etc. are used during surveys in order to collect the necessary information for the present research work. And, the study used all the available published and unpublished material regarding to the present topic.*

**Keywords:** Magnitude, Child labours, child rights, culture, domestic labour etc.

## 1. Introduction

Child labour is a Universal phenomenon. The magnitude of child labour in India is increasing day by day. While there is no accurate accounting of how many of the world's children contribute to their families, or their own economic support, the number of working children is surely in the hundreds of million's globally. Studies in some countries suggest that the number of street children is growing, just as the use of child labour continues to expand, often in hazardous and damaging conditions. Working children are frequently exposed to jobs that are morally or psychologically damaging, hours that are excessive, conditions that are unsafe, or employment contracts that are exploitative. Also, the activities in which child workers are concentrated-agriculture, domestic service, and urban informal sector-place them at high risk of maltreatment, denial of basic human rights, and lack access to those who could help them. According to recent experimental surveys carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Bureau of Statistics, world over, there are at least 120 million children between the age of 5 and 14 who are fully at work, and more than twice as many of those whom work is a secondary activity. Of these 61 percent are found in Asia, 32 percent in Africa and 7 percent in Latin America. India has the largest number of child labour in the world. According to a recent statement issued by the labour Minister, the number of child labour in India is about 12.6 million. The state with the highest child labour population in the country is Andhra Pradesh which has 1.66 million working children as per

1991 census. Other states where the child labour population is more than one million are Madhya Pradesh: Utter Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The problem of child labour continues to pose a challenge before the nation. Government has been taking various proactive measures to tackle this problem. However, considering the magnitude and extent of the problem and that it is essentially a socio-economic problem inextricably linked to poverty and illiteracy, it requires concerted efforts from all sections of the society to make a dent in the problem. According to the Census 2001 figures there are 15 million working children in the age group of 5-14 as compared to the total child population of 31 million (2022). As per survey conducted by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 2004-05, the number of working children is estimated at 90.75 lakh. As per Census 2011, the number of working children in the age group of 5-14 years has further reduced to 43.53 lakh. It shows that the efforts of the Government have borne the desired fruits.

Way back in 1979, Government formed the first committee called Gurupadswamy Committee to study the issue of child labour and to suggest measures to tackle it. The Committee examined the problem in detail and made some far-reaching recommendations. It observed that as long as poverty continued, it would be difficult to totally eliminate child labour and hence, any attempt to abolish it through legal recourse would not be a practical proposition. The Committee felt that in the circumstances, the only alternative

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left was to ban child labour in hazardous areas and to regulate and ameliorate the conditions of work in other areas. It recommended that a multiple policy approach was required in dealing with the problems of working children.

Based on the recommendations of Gurupadaswamy Committee, the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act was enacted in 1986. As per the Act, employment of children was prohibited in certain specified hazardous occupations and processes and regulates the working conditions in others. The list of hazardous occupations and processes is progressively being expanded on the recommendation of Child Labour Technical Advisory Committee constituted under the Act. Subsequently the act was amended in 2016 with the enactment of the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 prohibiting the employment of Children below 14 years in all employment and also with the provisions for prohibition on employment of adolescents (14-18 Years) in the scheduled hazardous occupations and processes.

The term "Child Labour" is often used synonymously with "Employed child" or "Working child". In this sense it is coextensive with any work done by child for gainful purpose. But more commonly it suggests something which is hateful and exploitative. Thus Homer Folks, chairman of the United States National Labour Commission, defined child labour as "any work by children that interfere with their full Physical development and their opportunities for a desirable minimum level of education or their needed recreation." According to the International Labour Organisation, "Child labour includes children permanently leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, they are frequently deprived of meaningful educational and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future." 'Child labour' is defined as having an element of economic compulsion associated with it and involves a time and energy commitment which affects children's ability to participate in leisure, play and educational activities. Child labour is "work" which impairs the health and development of children. The "Operation Research Group" based in Baroda, defines child labour in the following ways: "A child is one who was enumerated during the survey a child falling within the 5 to 15 age bracket and who I at remunerative work, many be paid or unpaid, and busy in any hour of the day within or outside the family." It follows from the above definition that two major indicators, (a) exploitation and (b) age have been used to define child labour.

V. V. Giri has delineated two different senses of child labour. Firstly, it is an economic practice and secondly, it is a social evil. In the first context, it emphasizes employment of children in gainful occupations with a view to addition of income to their families and in the second context, it denotes the possible exploitation in the hands of their employers. This also includes the nature of the jobs of the child, the dangers to which he is exposed and the obstacles in the possible opportunities for the growth and development of his personality. The dimension of the child labour not only deprives the children of getting education but also gradually

depressed the productive ability and thereby paves a way for a depressed and degraded life.

#### **Socio-Economic Impact of Child Labour:**

Child labour is almost invisible to all the section of the society, but child workers are legion in the world. Sold or exchanged as merchandise, many children cannot escape bonded labour or prostitution. Others suffer, and many only barely the long hours of work, the heavy burden, the dangerous tools, the poisonous chemicals. The strongest will go on, forever bearing the physical and emotional scares of premature labour. At a time when they should be at school preparing for a productive adulthood, young boys and girls are losing their childhood and, with it the promise for a better future.

The problem of child labour involves various far-reaching socio-economic consequences. It deprives the children of the opportunity for education, play and recreation, stunts their physical growth, the normal development of their personality and thwarts their preparation for adult responsibility. It results in lowering of adult wages and increases adult unemployment. The age of a child worker, many a times, makes a job hazardous which is not so for adults. This includes occupation like domestic work, working in "Dhabas" (eating places on the roadside), selling newspaper etc., where children are at the mercy of employers and consequently in a hazardous situation. The employer often pushes children beyond their physical capacity. This exploitation includes sexual abuse which has great ill-effect on the psychology of these children. When children work, besides health, their education also suffers. The future of a working child is endangered as he/she cannot go to school, or is bound to leave school before time, or is unable coordinate the two activities. In most cases a working child lacks fundamental general and professional knowledge, which is required for normal mental and intellectual development and to prosper in the social and occupational fields. Certain social implications follow from the economic effects of child labour. The adult unemployment leads to iniquitous distribution of income, which in turn leads to labour displacement, migration, the brake-up of family and kinship bonds and competition for survival. In the external works and jobs accomplished in the streets, the child is exposed to social perils and even crime, such as drugs and prostitution.

#### **Concept of child labour:**

It is very difficult to define precisely both 'child' and 'labour' components of child labour. De la Luz Silva defines a 'Child' as "someone who needs adult protection for physical psychological and intellectual development until able to become independently integrated into the adult world". The universally accepted method of dividing age-cohorts is grouping them in intervals of 5 years i. e, 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and so on. Thus, it is easier for numerical and comparative measures to define a child upto the age of 14 years and an adolescent from 15 to 19 years of age.

In consonance with the above approach, a National Policy on Child Labour, formulated in 1987, seeks to adopt a gradual & sequential approach with a focus on rehabilitation

of children and Adolescent. The Action Plan outlined in the Policy for tackling this problem is as follows:

- Legislative Action Plan for strict enforcement of The Child & Adolescent Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986.
- Project based action plan in areas of high concentration of Child & Adolescent Labour-National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Schemes.
- Focuses on general developmental programmes for the benefit of the families of children

Government has accordingly been taking proactive steps to tackle this problem through strict enforcement of legislative provisions along with simultaneous rehabilitative measures. State Governments, which are the appropriate implementing authorities, have been conducting regular inspections and raids to detect cases of violations. Since poverty is the root cause of this problem, and enforcement alone cannot help solve it, Government has been laying a lot of emphasis on the rehabilitation of these children and on improving the economic conditions of their families.

### 1) Rights of the Child (International Convents):

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which India ratified in 1992 lists the following as the Rights of the Child:

#### The Rights to Survival:

According to the Convention on the "Rights to Survival includes the right of life, the attainable standard of health, nutrition and an adequate standard of living. It also includes the right to a name and nationality". These rights seek to ensure that children have nutritious food, potable drinking water, a secure home and access to health facilities.

#### The Right to Protection:

According to the Convention, this right includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abuse and inhuman or degrading treatment. This includes the right to special protection in situations of emergency and armed conflict. The aim is simple, to protect vulnerable children from those who would take advantage of them and to safeguard their minds and bodies.

#### The Right to Development:

This right includes the right to be educated, to receive support for development and care during early childhood and to social security. It also includes the right to leisure, to recreation and to cultural activities. This right seeks to ensure that children can study and play with whomever they want, practice their own religion and culture and accept their own uniqueness of other cultures and religion.

#### The right to Participation:

According to the Convention, the Right to participation accords the child access to appropriate information and the freedom of thought and expression, conscience and religion. In addition to this, one ought to respect the views of the child. The aim here is to see that children are able to develop their own set of values and principles and that have the opportunity to express themselves and their own opinions.

### Idea of Child Labour in India:

In India, the meaning of a child has changed from time to time. Earlier, according to the child Marriage Restrain Act, 1929, a child means a person who if a male, has not completed normally on 21 year of age, and if a female has not completed 18 years of age. The factories Act 1948 stipulated that no child who has not completed his 14 years shall be required or allowed to in any factories. The plantation Labour Act 1951 defined a child as a person who has not completed 14 years. The Child labour "Prohibition and Regulation Act," 1986 also defined child as person who has not completed 14 years of age. The census of India also treats persons above the age of fourteen as "children".

India has the largest number of child labour in the world. However, the estimates of the number of child worker vary in India because of the difference in the methodology used to estimate child labour and also because of the conceptual difference regarding the definition of child, child labour and work itself. The state with the highest child labour population in the country is Andhra Pradesh which has 1.66 million working children as per 1991 census. It is also the state with the maximum number of drop-outs. Other states where the child labour population is more than one million are Madhya Pradesh, Utter Pradesh and Maharashtra.

### Rights of the child in Indian constitution:

Article 14-Equality before law:

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15 (3)-Prohibition of Discrimination:

Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

Article 21-Protection of life and personal liberty:

No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Article 23-Prohibition of traffic in human being and forced labour:

Traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 24 – Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc:

No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.

Article 39 (e): That the health and strength of workers, men women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizen are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength.

Article 39 (f): That children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and childhood and youth are protected

against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Article 45: Provision for free and compulsory education for children-

The state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Article 46: Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections\_-The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 47: Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and improve public health – The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and drugs which injures to health.

#### Child Labour in Manipur:

Now a day there is high percentage of child labour in Manipur e. g. boys and girls of the age of 0 to 14years old. There is high percentage of child labours in Manipur to compare to other state of India. According to the reports of Manipur, within the year of 1996 to 2022 there are many child labours in different sectors of total number of child labours are found nearly 955 in numbers. They work as hotel boys, domestic helper, Dukan helper, Bakery helper, Farm helper, Mat making, Scooter workshop, Book binding, Press helper, Electronic helper, Candle making, Iron work etc. Most of the children who are workers in the Imphal areas come from rural areas. The main causes of their working are economic problems. Their parents decided the economy is more important than educating their children. They are mostly non-hazardous. They work 10 to 12 hrs. in a day. According to Report on May 2020, total number of labours in hotels is 450. It is both Manipuri and non Manipuri. In the Municipality area there are 104 hotel boys only. Some people say there is no child labour in Manipur. But still the children are working in the Municipality areas. However, these unfortunate children engaged in child labour have not received the due attention from politicians, decision makers, bureaucrats, civil society organizations etc. In fact, the former MP during Congress Government from the Inner Parliamentary Constituency Dr. T. Meinya Singh said that there is no child labour in Manipur. This is indeed a very unfortunate statement.

A recent survey conducted on 10 August, 2006, in Khwairamband Bazaar area reveals many interesting things. It was sort of a preliminary survey conducts as a pilot survey ahead of the proposed research.

It was carried out in about 30 hotels. About 50 children were met in course of the survey. It was found that most of them

were non-Manipuri's coming from state like Bihar, Assam, etc. This is mainly because of the fact that the surveyed hotels were run by non-Manipuri's. Many of them were also tribal's, mainly from Churachandpur District. But there were only 3 Meitei's. It was found that some of the hotel owners have stopped engaging minor as a result of a recent Government of India's press note warning the hotel owners of punitive fines if they do so.

## 2. Conclusions

Children constitute the nation's valuable human resources. The future well being of the nation depends on how its children grow, socialize, and develop. The great poet Milton said "*Child shows the man as morning shows the day*". So it is the duty of the society to look after every child with a view to assuring full development of its personality. Children are the future custodians and torch bearers of any type of Society: they are the messengers of our knowledge, culture, cultural heritage, ideologies and philosophies. Children are really future components in the form of great teachers, scientists, judges, rulers, doctors, planners, engineers, politicians, philosopher, and, social architectures, to whom the entire society founded or to be prepared. Unfortunately millions of children are deprived of their childhood and right to education and thereby they are subjected to exploitation and abuse. So, it may be concluded that the society should always try to protect and save the children from any kind of exploitation.

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