

Child Labour in Newspaper distribution in Mumbai: A Case study of Chedda Nagar, Chembur

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Abstract: *It is a case study of five newspaper distributing boys of Chedda Nagar, Chembur. The researcher empirically examines to find out the struggle of these child labourers, how much struggle they have to undertake at their school going age to get a meagre salary for supplementing their family income. The present study examines in details their age level, family background, living environment, educational level, nature of work including wages, number of hours of work, health, employer, employee relations etc. The researcher's study creates not only awareness of the problems of these newspaper distributing children face in their daily life but also provides wealth of knowledge to social workers and administrators to improve the situation.*

Key Words: *Child labour, Chembur, Chedda Nagar, Newspaper, Slums.*

I. Introduction

Child labour is a global concern because it damages, spoils and destroys the future of children. It is a great economic and social problem. Children are the hope and future of a nation. Yet, there are millions of deprived children in our country who have never known a normal, carefree childhood. Child labour is raising its ugly head day by day. With the growing trend of rural-urban migration and rapid industrial development the urban centers in developing societies now have become the centers of working children. Child labour has been practiced in India for over a long period under economic compulsion and the prevailing culture of poverty among the lower strata. Besides these factors, there is a cluster of other factors like adult unemployment, low income, lack of scope of education for different segments of population, broken home conditions, failure of welfare schemes of the government and lack of clarity in laws and their implementation which contribute to the genesis, growth and persistence of child labour in India. The little children are subjected to inhuman nature of exploitation as they have no alternative to survive except being constrained to offer themselves to join the labour force.

The law in Indian soil says that any child below the age of fourteen cannot be employed either in office, factory or restaurant. Despite certain constructive efforts undertaken by the International Organisations – UNO, ILO, UNICEF and UNESCO as also NGOs and many welfare agencies to eliminate child labour, the problem still persists, thus effecting the lives of millions of tender age children, particularly in unorganized sector of economy. The laws made so far to eradicate child labour in India do not seem to be effective. The legal provisions prohibiting child labour have not yet produced any satisfactory result. An Analysis of the Census data by Child Rights and You (CRY) has revealed that child labour has been decreasing at a mere 2.2% per year over the last decade, contrary to popular perception of its substantial reduction. At this rate, it would take over a century for India to end child labour, the report said. The analysis also points to a dangerous trend- while over a Crore children continue to be a part of the country's workforce, child labour in urban areas has increased by 53% during 2001-2011 (Mumbai Mirror, 16th June 2015).

II. Methodology

The data required for the study were collected from the respondents through Interview method as a principal tool of data collection.

III. Significance of the Study

Significance of this study lies in the fact that it brings out empirical information of the problems of these newspaper distributing children in following their vocation. The research empirically studies the reasons for these children to take up this job, and also to know their literacy level, employer- employee relationship, wage structure, working hours, incentives, health aspects and their routine schedule etc. The researcher's study contributes not only to create a general awareness of the problems of these child labourers but this study also have utility value as it provides wealth of knowledge to social workers and administrators.

IV. Findings Of The Study

The present study is entirely based on the empirical data collected from part-time working boys of Chedda nagar, Chembur, who are involved in newspaper distribution. It is a case study of five child labourers distributing newspapers in different houses in Pestom Sagar, Garodia Nagar and Chedda Nagar. The researcher could locate only five boys in this area below the age of fourteen working with newspaper agencies.

1.1 Social profile

Of the total respondents three are of thirteen years old and have been working for the last one year and two are of fourteen years old and have been working for the last two years. All these respondents work under different agencies. Four out of five respondents belong to scheduled castes who are hailing from interior parts of Maharashtra such as Satara, Ratnagiri and Nasik. One of them belongs to OBC, hailing from Andhra Pradesh. All these respondents' parents migrated to Mumbai in search of job some 15-20 years back. These children were born and brought up in Mumbai. Four of them live in nuclear family and one in a joint family. One of the respondent's Mother gives tuition to primary student. Remaining four of the respondents' mothers work as housemaids. Three of their fathers are working in different unorganized sectors and the fathers of the remaining two are seriously ill. These respondents or their parents do not have their own shelters. They all live in rented slums called Nagevadi located at Chedda Nagar, Chembur. The rent they pay varies from Rs. 2,500 to 3000 per month; and the electricity bill is around Rs. 500/- per month; and they have to pay Rs. 250 per month for water supply. Deposit varies from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000 depending upon the size and facilities of their rented dwelling places. The respondent said that the size of their rooms are very small which are hardly 120 sq. feet each with insufficient ventilation.

1.2 Education Level

The researcher was surprised to know that the educational level of these respondents are higher than that of other child labourers. Two of them study in seventh std. and three are in the eighth std. Four of them study in Municipality school at Tilak Nagar, Chembur. Their parents are illiterate. One of the respondents studies in English medium Karnataka high school at Chembur and the educational levels of the parents of this child are better. Mother has passed her XIIth std. and father failed in Xth std. When the researcher asked about his ambition- he replied that he wanted to become a Software Engineer but he is not sure of which subject he has to offer at the lower level for the fulfillment of his wish. He said further, he would study commerce subject. The rest of the four respondents wanted to work in the office. The researcher concluded from their talk that these five boys are hardworking, sincere, honest and determined to come up in their life for which they are sure of achieving certain basic qualifications.

When the researcher asked these children the reasons for taking up this job, they said since their parents income is not sufficient to lead a normal standard of life, repayment of family debt and other family obligations pushed these five respondents into this part-time newspaper distribution job. These working children have siblings too, younger to them pursuing education at different levels, such as from primary school to secondary school. These boys want their siblings to go for higher education.

These five respondents go to school in the afternoon and go to their workplaces to collect and distribute the newspapers in various houses, in the morning. They wake up early in the morning at 4 a.m. to reach the workplace at 4.30 a.m. The number of hours these children put in their jobs is 4 to 5 hours in the morning. When the researcher asked them what is the usual nature of work, they responded that newspapers are brought in a van in bundles and these respondents with the help of their employers carry these newspapers in their respective employers' shops. These children should keep the supplements such as Mumbai Mirror and Bombay Times etc. in the main papers. These children with the help of their employers sort out number of papers to be distributed in various houses. Each one of the respondents have to distribute 35 to 90 papers at different houses. They carry these newspapers in bicycles provided by their employers. Since the weight of the newspapers is very heavy they fall down quite often along with the bicycle and the newspapers and they get injured and these children have shown the wounds on their knees and bruises on their hands to the researcher. The weight of the newspaper is heavier on certain days such as Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays due to extra supplements.

As there are no lift facility available in many of the old buildings these young boys have to climb up even up to the fourth floor. They said they get leg pain and breathless quite often. They keep their bicycles in the building compounds or on the road when they go to the building to drop their newspapers. So they have to be alert that the papers and the bicycles should not be taken away by somebody. These respondents face more

problems during rainy season. They have to be careful about not getting the newspapers wet. They get wet quiet often and suffer from cold and fever. They try their level best to be present in the duty even if they are ill. These respondents take leave only when they are seriously ill. In such a situation the employer himself go for distributing the newspapers.

1.3 Employer-Employee relationship, Leave and Wage structure

When the researcher asked about their employers' attitude towards them, their salary and leave etc.; the respondents said, they scold in a polite way when they come late for the work. No other incidences of harassment and abuses they have faced with. The salary is decided according to the number of newspaper each one of them distributes. Each of them gets Rs. 1000/- per month except one respondent who distributes only 35 papers and he gets Rs. 600/- per month as salary. They do not get any weekly off. They also said that they would handover their entire salary to their parents but parents give them some pocket money as and when they need.

Every day each one of them is provided with a cup of tea by their employers to start with. They are also provided with a T-Shirt during the Diwali Festival and they are not entitled to get bonus or other incentives. These respondents and the members of their families are aware of the ban on Child labour. The researcher observed that they were initially hesitating to reply to her especially when she asked about their age. However, they revealed their real age. Further they said that their employers told them to say that they are sons of the employers sisters if anybody asks them about their age.

One of the respondents revealed his experience, narrating that there is a police chowki in between Chedda nagar and Pestom Sagar. He crosses the road to go to Chedda nagar to distribute the newspapers by a bicycle. A police man always advises him to be careful while crossing the road. The police constable takes a Marathi newspaper from him daily, he reads and returns the same when he returns after distributing newspaper in Chedda nagar. The researcher asked this respondent whether the police constable asked about the respondent's age at any time, the boy replied 'no'. The researcher concluded from this incident that the police constables/government agencies are not interested in asking the age of such children as they are not committed to implement successfully the various acts which were passed in the parliament.

When the researcher asked when they would return home and what they would do after the distribution of newspapers, the respondents stated that they would return from the workplaces ,around 9 a.m. take bath, take breakfast, take a little rest and get ready to go to schools. They further said, they do not get time enough to play as they get exhausted when they come from their workplaces and schools. It clearly shows that their tender age do not permit them to do such strenuous job.

V. Suggestions

The child labour is a complex, socio-economic-demographic phenomenon which can be reduced and eliminated by multiplicity of actions, both by government and public, at social as well as individual levels. The progressive elimination of this problem is possible through improvement in the income distribution and social awakening. These newspaper distributing boys should get higher wages from their employers and should be encouraged with incentives to go for higher education.

VI. Conclusion

Apart from Poverty, the low educational and occupational status of the parents, and inadequacy of the legislative system, as well as, its insufficient enforcement are the major reasons for the persistence of child labour. Though, there are some advantages of child labour the negative effects outweigh the positive ones. It is clear from the revelation of these respondents that they have to shoulder such hardships at their young age for a meagre payment to support their families and for them to come up in life, as their parents incomes are insufficient.

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