



OPINION OF PARENTS ABOUT CHILD LABOUR AND THEIR EDUCATION – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Much research has been done about the determinants of child labour, both at the national and international level but unfortunately very less research has been done about parents' opinion on child labour and their education. In order to fill this gap we have done a household survey in Kashmir valley and have identified 88 parents whose young blood is working for the fortitude of their family. Our study found that adverse social and economic conditions force parents to engage their children in the labour market, notwithstanding their altruistic attitude towards their children for a while. We also observed that parents expect that it is the government that should play a pivotal role in the education of working children.

Keywords: Child labour, Education, Parents, Work, Family.

Contribution/ Originality

The paper is first of its kind where we have tried to investigate various issues of child labour from the main actors who are actually taking the decision of their children whether they should work or join the school. We find even though majority of parents are altruistic towards their children but due to certain socio economic circumstances they are forced to engage their young blood in the labour market. If these families will be financially supported equal to what their children are earning from labour market they are ready to enrol their wards in schools and in this way the child labour problem in the study area will be reduced.

1. INTRODUCTION

In India 21.9 percent population is below poverty line (Poverty estimates 2011-12, Govt. of India). It persists in every state of the country, though its concentration is more in certain states and casts. Ideally child labour is an anathema, outrageous to human conscience and dignity. Its abolition is advocated on moral and ethical grounds, but the reality of the situation is otherwise. As long as

poverty exists in all its nakedness, child labour is bound to exist in either open or disguised form (Kehily, 2008). What ultimately would matter is not the sentiments of the elites and managers of society, but the perception of those who are directly involved as actors in the phenomenon of child labour. It would, therefore, be expedient and useful in formulating realistic policies, if we could ascertain the views of parents, on various aspects of child labour.

2. OBJECTIVES: THE PRESENT STUDY AIMS TO ANALYSE THE PARENT'S OPINION REGARDING

1. Suggestion for Education of Child Labour
2. Normative Age to Start Work/Earnings
3. Preference to Work and/or Education
4. Abolition of Child Labour
5. Effects of Abolition of Child Labour

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on primary data. With the help of interview schedules, Data has been collected from four districts of Kashmir valley based on snow ball sampling. Only those households were selected where there was atleast one child labour in the age group of 6-14 years. Total sample of 88 parents were found during the field survey, so the analysis of the present study is based on these 88 parents.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

What is the level of education will be clear if we go through the statistics of literacy in our country. Even after various educational programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), adult education, etc, only 74.04 percent populations is found to be literate in India and 67.16 percent in Jammu and Kashmir State according to census 2011. If parents perceive the importance of children's education, they may think of some alternative ways to educate them. The parents were therefore asked whether they considered education necessary for children. Out of 88 sampled parents majority (86.36 %) replied in positive and only 12 (13.64 %) in the negative. Out of 76 respondents (parents) who replied that education was required for their children, 54 percent expressed that they should be educated up to 12th standard, 30 percent said up to college level and the rest did not suggest any level of education.

4.1. Suggestion for Education of Child Labour

The government has been thinking to educate the child workers and it has formulated various schemes for it. We know regular schooling of such children is not possible. Here an attempt has been made to elicit suggestions of the parents regarding education of such children. When parents were asked to suggest some measures for the education of the child workers without disturbing their work, they suggested certain measures which are presented in the table 1.1

Table-1.1. Suggestions for Education of the Child Workers without any Disturbance of Work

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
Evening class during free time	72	81.82
Class for one hour during work hour	11	12.5
No response	5	5.68
Total	88	100.00

Source: Field Study

The table 1.1 shows that majority (81.82 %) of the parents wanted that evening classes could be held during their leisure time, 12.5 percent wanted teaching for one hour during the period of work, where as 5.68 percent did not suggest anything. Similarly when they were asked to suggest what should be the government’s role in the education of children so that family members instead of forcing them to seek employment could educate their children. They suggested different roles for the government which are presented in figure 1.1.

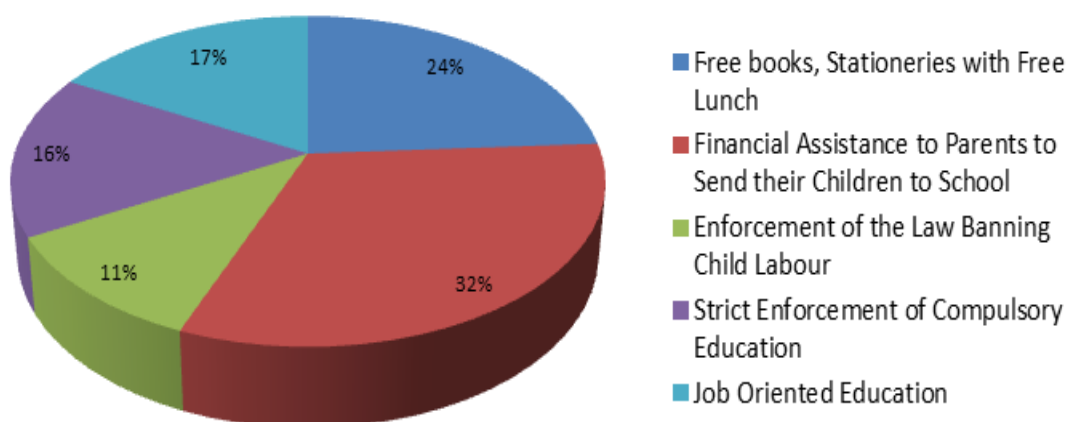


Fig-1.1. Suggestions for Sending Children to School

Source: Field Study

The above figure reveals that a little less than 1/3rd (32 %) were in favour of providing financial assistance to parents of the poor children, 24 percent to provide free books, stationeries with lunch, 17 percent pleaded for job oriented education, 16 percent suggested for compulsory education and 11 percent favour for strict enforcement of child labour laws. In fact, these suggestions are in keeping with government policies. Thus the observed figures clearly indicate that parents expect that it is the government that should play a pivotal role in the education of working children.

4.2. Normative Age to Start Work/Earnings

When the parents were asked to indicate the age at which the children should start earning. They expressed their views which are presented in figure 1.2.

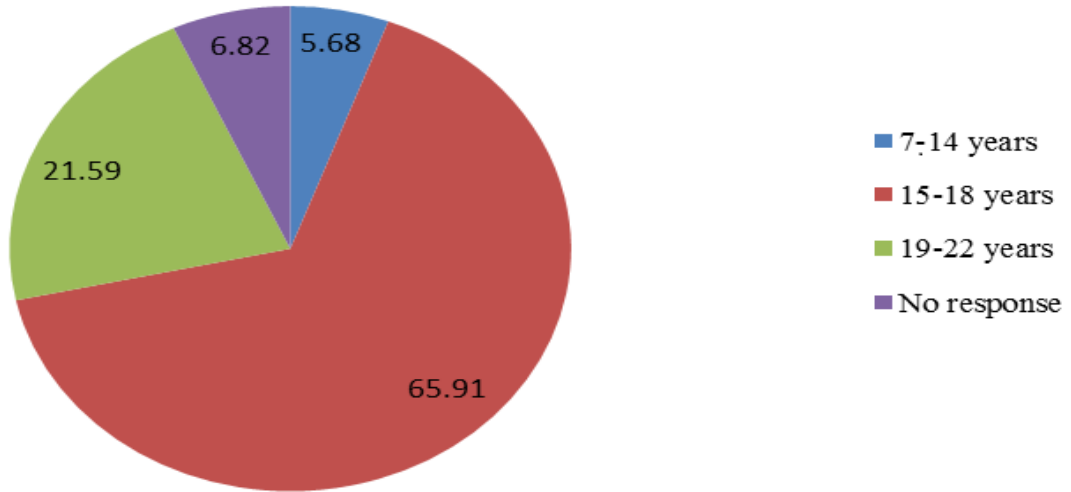


Fig-1.2. Suggestions for Minimum Age of Joining Work by Parents (%)

Source: Field Survey

As shown in figure 1.2 majority of the parents (65.91 %) stated that the working age of the child should be between 15-18 years, 21.59 percent said that it should be over 18 years. Only 5.68 percent favored proper age of work for child up to 14 years and 6.82 percent gave no response. Therefore though 87.5 percent of the parents want the children to work in the age group of above 14 years, yet most of them send their children to work below this age reflecting the fact that it is poverty, lack of income earning opportunities and other social conditions that force them to send their children to work (Nengroo et al., 2012).

4.3. Preference to Work and/or Education

To know the attitude of parents towards their children, parents were asked whether they consider children’s education more important than work in their future development. Their responses are given in table 1.2 and 1.3.

Table-1.2. Parents Opinion indicating whether they Chose Education or Work in the Interest of Child

Preference	Frequency	Percentage
Education	56	63.64
Work	24	27.27
No response	8	9.09
Total	88	100.00

Source: Field study

Table-1.3. Parents Opinion indicating whether they Choose Education or Work in the Interest of Family

Preferences	Frequency	Percentage
Education	52	59.09
Work	28	31.82
No response	8	9.09
Total	88	100.00

Source: Field study.

The table 1.2 shows that most (63.64 %) of the parents consider education more important than work and 27.27 percent preferred work to education for bright future of the child, where as 9.09 percent of the respondents does not give any response. When the same question was asked in the context of family interest, more than half (59.09 %) of the parents favored education and 31.82 percent favored work for family interest (table 1.3). These facts indicate that parents by and large consider education more important than work both for the future of the child as well as in the interest of the family. Thus despite their favorable attitude towards education, the trade-off between work and education seems to be loaded in favour of the former because of reasons mentioned in relation to their responses with regard to suitable age for work.

4.4. Abolition of Child Labour

Most of the people vehemently opposed employment of child in any sort of job. Child labour is a shameful scar on the nation (Sanon, 1998). According to them these children are denied their childhood care, comfort, play, training and education.

Child is a contradictory term, since children are not supposed to work so it should be abolished altogether. Others are of the opinion that in the present Indian context, total abolition of child labour is not possible at all. According to them abolition of child labour will throw millions of destitute children to destruction. They have proposed some measures by which their working conditions may be improved. In this connection parents were asked to furnish their views about the abolition of child labor, which are presented in figure 1.3.

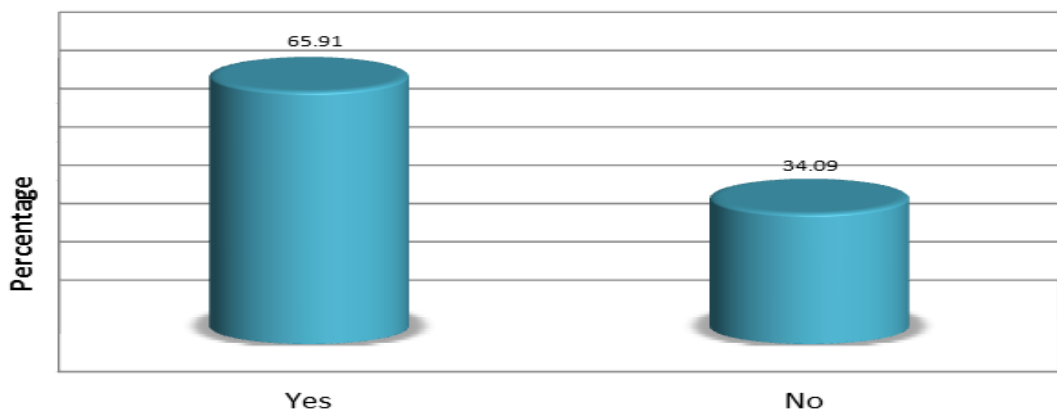


Fig-1.3. Opinion Indicating Responses of Parents about Abolition of Child Labour

Source: Field Survey

The analysis of figure 1.3 shows that about 2/3rd (65.91) of the parents were in favour of the abolition of child labour; where as 34.09 percent was not. It clearly shows that because of their socio-economic conditions they are compelled to engage their children in the carpet weaving and if they will be provided any kind of financial support they may definitely send their children to schools.

4.5. Effects of Abolition of Child Labour

Government of India has enacted a number of legislations (Like Factories Act 1948, Mines Act 1952, Child Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970 etc.), which prohibits and regulate the employment and working conditions of the child labour in various occupations and vocations. Majority of respondents interviewed were not aware of any such legislation. In order to know the effects of abolition of child labour on the child vis-à-vis the family, the opinion of the parents were sought. These are shown in figure 1.4 and 1.5

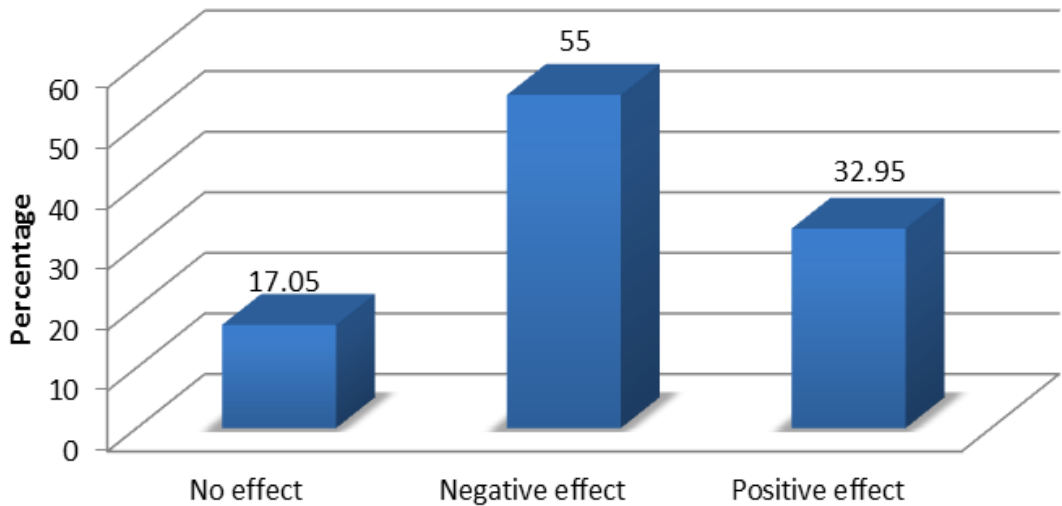


Fig-1.4. Parents Opinion Regarding The Effects Of Abolition Of Child Labour On Child

Source: Field study

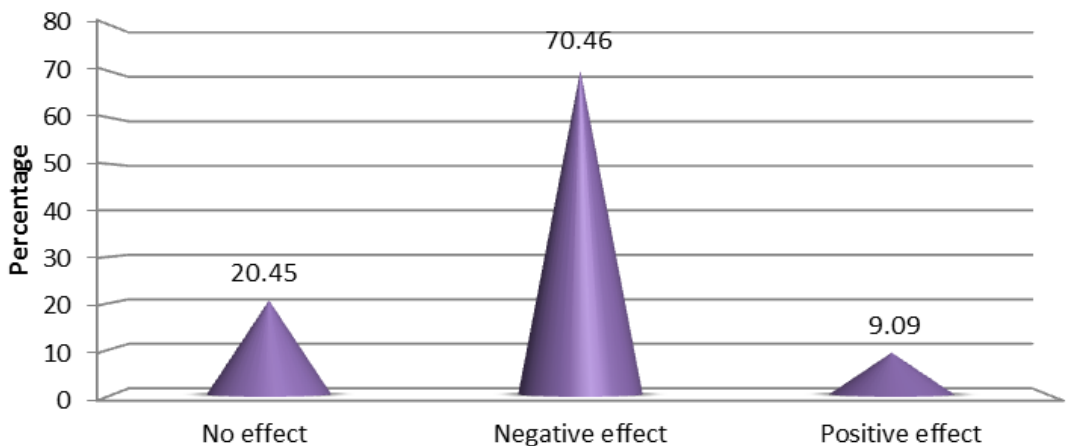


Fig-1.5. Parents Opinion Regarding The Effects Of Abolition Of Child Labour On Family

Source: Field Survey

The figure 1.4 shows that more than half of the parents (55 %) responded that abolition of child labour will have a negative impact on the child, 32.95 percent said it has positive effect on the child and the rest 17.05 percent were of the view that it would not have any effect on the child. With regard to negative effect on child labour majority of the parents said that the children would become vagabond, delinquent and pick up bad habits. Regarding positive effects the parents expressed that the child would be saved from exploitation. Regarding the consequences of legal abolition of child labour for the families of the children, 70.46 percent parents maintained negative effects on the families as indicated in figure 1.5 Majority of them stated that economic support from the child to the family would not be available. This would create a number of problems e.g. the family would starve and might resort to begging or get involved in criminal activities like smuggling etc. (see [Nengroo et al. \(2011\)](#))

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude we can say that even though parents are altruistic towards their children but due to certain socio economic circumstances they are forced to engage their budding flowers in the labour market.

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