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## **Child labour in the informal sector: A study in urban industrial centers of Guntur district**

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### **Abstract**

Child labour is the practice of involving children in some economic activities which is very harmful to the physical and mental development of the children. In developing countries, the rate of the child labour is high. The study focused on socio economic conditions, causes for child labour and working status of child Labour in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. This study makes use of primary and secondary sources, primary data collected through structured questionnaires by interview schedule with random sampling. The study found that majority of the Child Labour belongs to socially backward communities and confirmed that poverty was the main reason. The study takes the stand that “while regulation can be the immediate strategy, total eradication should be the ultimate objective”.

**Keywords:** Child Labour, informal sector, urban industrial centers, Guntur district

### **1. Introduction**

The destiny of the Nation rests on the shoulders of the future citizens. Hence the employment of children in various jobs is not only a blow to the individual, the family or society but also curtails the development of a Nation economically, politically and socially. Worldwide 218 million children between 5 and 17 years are in employment. Among them, 152 million are victims of child labour. As per 2011 census data India has 43,53,247 child labor and Andhra Pradesh has 1,51,437 child labor approximately. Some of the primary causes of child labour are poverty, lack of facilities for proper schooling, growth of informal economy, etc. The urban, informal sector of industrial centers giving greater scope for the employment of children. In the review of literature it is observed that not many studies have been done in this area. Hence, the study focused on the child labor in urban informal sector of Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh state of India

### **2. Definition of Child Labour**

Various definitions have been given to the term 'child labour'. Two major indicators i.e exploitation and age have been used as parameters to define child labour. Right from the Constitution of India to various labour legislations, there is no uniformity in the age of child labour. The UN Convention on the Child Rights (1989) <sup>[1]</sup> and the ILO Convention 182 on Worst Forms of child labour have defined a child as a person who has not completed the age of 18. In the context of exploitation, UNICEF has given a comprehensive formulation at defining child labour. The explanation of the term 'child labour' is engagement of children in work for long hours, at low wages, in unhealthy and dangerous conditions thus depriving them of education and resulting in excessive physical, social and psychological strains. Government of Andhra Pradesh defines child labour as “Such work does not facilitate the psychological and social development of the child and on the whole, inhibits the child's self esteem. All Children out of school are Child Labour.” According to this definition those children out of school is treated as child labour. This comprehensive explanation of the term 'child labour' by UNICEF and Government of Andhra Pradesh is accepted for the purpose of this study.

### **3. Concept of Informal Sector**

Similarly, there are many attempts to define the concept of informal sector. Several scholars used different terms like 'unorganized sector', 'unremunerated sector', 'unregulated',

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'unprotected', 'sweated', traditional sector, etc. because of its diversified definitions in the dichotomous model of the modern economy. Sethuraman defined the informal sector as "all enterprises which employ labour at a relatively low wage". On the other hand, Harold Lubell defined the informal sector as the residual market of last resort into which persons enter as staff employed, low income producers of marginal goods and services for lack of any other means of earning as livelihood. Thus the concept of informal sector has been defined by Harold Lubell from the point of view of employers/ entrepreneurs while Sethuraman defined the term from the workers view who finds employment in these sectors at low wages.

#### 4. Objectives

In order to provide a definite direction to the study certain objectives are specifically highlighted as follows:

- to make an exploratory and analytical survey of social, physical and economic conditions of child labour in the informal sectors of urban, industrial centres of Guntur district;
- to study and analyse the social, economic, political and ethical factors which compel the child labour to accept employment at an early age;
- to observe the working conditions and the extent of exploitation by the employers ;
- to examine the possible remedial actions in tackling the problems of child labour

#### 5. Hypotheses

The industrial, urban, informal sector has such features which are conducive to the employment of child labour;

1. The Industrial, urban, informal sector has such features which are conducive to the employment of child labour;
2. The socio-economic conditions of child labour are as miserable as their conditions of work and employment although there is a push and pull factor facilitating the employment of child labour
3. Poverty is the main reason for children taking up economic activity

#### 6. The area of the study

Guntur district is located in Andhra Pradesh, India. The district is located along the east coast of the Bay of Bengal. Guntur is one of the important cities in India. The district is a major centre for education and learning. The total area of the district is 11,391 kilo meters (4,398 square miles). According to 2011 census the population of the district is 48, 87, 813. Guntur district is predominantly an agricultural district having few industrial pockets with an urban culture. Guntur district has four revenue divisions. One urban centre in each division has been selected for the study. The industrial centres selected for the study are Guntur, Tenali, Mangalagiri, Bapatla, Narasaraopet and Machala.

#### 7. Research Methodology

The methods used for data collection in this study are Case study method, survey method, empirical research methods like participant observation are combined in the methodology. The present study has been based on field as well as documentary sources. Field sources constituted child workers, their parents and employers. The published material available on the subject in the form of books,

journals, reports, newspapers, etc., have been used as documentary source.

The study utilised mainly the primary data collected personally from 400 child labour and their families belonging to the informal sectors of urban, industrial centres of Guntur district. This sampled universe has been selected on random. These units include manufacturing units, construction works, mining and quarrying, hotels and restaurants, bakeries and biscuit making units, rag picking, community, social and personal services including repair shops, super bazaars and jewelry shops. These units possess the features of informal sectors like small size of operations, family ownership of enterprise, production techniques, highly competitive and unprotected product market which is highly conducive for the employment of child labour.

#### 8. Child Labour in Urban Informal Sector of Guntur District

**Table 1:** Age and Sex distribution of the working Children

Age	No of respondents		Total
	Boys	Girls	
Below 6 years	1(0.41%)	1(0.68%)	2 (0.5%)
7-10	21(8.3%)	19 (12.83%)	40 (10%)
11-14	103(40.88%)	61(41.22%)	164(41%)
15 - 17	127(50.41%)	67(45.27%)	194(48.5%)
Total	252(63%)	148(37%)	400(100%)

**Source:** Compiled from the data collected

The socio-economic background of the respondents in the present study has revealed that out of the total sampled working children (400), 63 percent were boys (males) while 37 percent were girls (females). The detailed break-up is given in table-1.

**Table 2:** Distribution of the child labour in various fields

S. No	Feild	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Construcion	26 (10.32%)	14(9.46%)	40(10%)
2	Manufacturing	18(7.14%)	20(13.51%)	38 (9.5%)
3	Mining & Quaring	18(7.14%)	-	18(4.5%)
4	Repair shops	25(9.92%)	-	25(6.25%)
5	Hotels/Dabhas	33 (13.1%)	15(10.14%)	48(12%)
6	Bakery/Biscuit	46(18.25%)	46(31.08%)	92(23%)
7	Rag picking	21(8.33%)	11(8%)	32(8%)
8	Sellers/Vendors	36(14.29%)	22(14.5%)	58(14.5%)
9	Others	29(11.51%)	20(12.25%)	49(12.25%)
	Total	252 (63%)	148 (37%)	400 (100%)

**Source:** Compiled from the data collected

As such, the survey revealed that 23 percent of the working children were engaged in the bakeries and biscuit making units. Hotels and restaurants were another important industrial category which employed 12 percent of the total number of working children. Of the total sample Sellers and vendors occupied 14.5 percent. 10 percent working in the construction field, 9 percent working in Manufacturing field, 8 percent in the field of rag picking, 6.25 percent working in automobile and repair shops, 4.5 percent working in Mining and quarrying, 12.25 percent working in various other fields. It is observed that in repair shops and mining fields' only boys are engaged due to hard nature of work. The girls are usually found to be engaged in bakery and biscuit (31.08 percent) and in manufacturing units (13.51 percent) worked in shops as sellers (14.5 percent). On the other hand, 18.25 percent of the male respondents

are found to be engaged in bakeries and biscuit making units, while 13.1 percent are engaged in hotels for serving tea, drinks, water, etc, and for cleaning tables and utensils.

### Educational level of child laborers

With regard to the educational level of child laborers, 23 percent of the working children were found to be totally illiterates. 15 percent of them had studied up-to primary classes (Table 4.4a), 20 percent completed their secondary

school education, 41.25 percent had high school education ie 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> classes and only 0.75 percent had above high school education, which shows that the educational status of the working children is unsatisfactory. Only 12.7 percent of boys had studied up to primary classes; while around 20 percent had studied up to middle standard. Below 1 percent of boys were continuing their studies after high school besides working for their livelihoods.

**Table 3:** Community distribution of working children

S. No	Sex	OBC	SC	ST	OC	Total
1	Boys	87(61.7%)	64 (63.37%)	28(53.85)	72(67.92)	252(63%)
2	Girls	54 (38.3%)	37(36.63%)	24(46.15%)	34(32.08)	148(37%)
3	Total	141(35.25%)	101(25.25%)	52(13%)	106(26.5%)	400(100%)

The scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward castes combined to constitute 73.5 percent of the working children. SC, ST, BC and OC Children's constitute 25.25 percent, 13 percent, 35.25 percentage and 26.5 percent respectively to the total as shown in table 3. Religious classification has revealed that 83.25 percent of the respondents in the study are Hindus. 8.75 percent belong to Muslims and 8 percent belongs to Christians

**Table 4:** Educational status of the Parents

S. No	Level of education	Father	Mother	Total
1	No education	87 (24.6%)	165 (42.42%)	252 (33.96%)
2	Primary school	88 (25%)	118 (30.33%)	206 (27.76%)
3	Secondary school	104 (29.5%)	57 (14.65%)	161(21.7%)
4	High school	62 (17.5%)	47 (12.08%)	109(14.7%)
5	College	12 (3.4%)	2 (0.52%)	14 (1.88%)
	Total	353	389	742 (100%)

**Source:** Compiled from the data collected

Table 4 explained the educational status of the Parents, father and mother separately of children working in the industrial centres of Guntur district. The survey revealed that one third of the parents of the child labour are illiterates and 1.8 percent only has higher education. 25percent of the educated fathers of the working children had studied primary school. 29.5 percent completed secondary school, whereas 17.5 percent of the total educated fathers studied up to high school level. Even a small percent of 3.4 has studied beyond high school level. 24.6 percent had no education. On the other hand, 30.33 percent of the educated mothers of the working children had studied primary school 14.65 percent completed secondary school, whereas 12.08 percent of the total educated mothers of the children studied up to high

school level. Even a small percent of 0.5 has studied beyond high school level. 42.42 percent had no education, which shows poor education level of the parents of the working children.

**Table 5:** Occupation of the Head of the Family

S. No	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1	Govt. Employee	0	-
2	Employee in Private organizations	60	15%
3	Agriculture Labour	29	7.25%
4	Daily labour(kooli)	132	33%
5	Hawker	18	4.5%
6	Driver	42	10.5%
7	mechanic	30	7.5%
8	Vegetable vendor	18	4.5%
9	unemployed	12	3%
10	Others	59	14.75%

**Source:** Compiled from the data collected

The survey revealed that though the occupation of the head of the household varied, yet the most common occupation was that of daily labour/Kooly (33 %), factory workers and other private employees (15%), Drivers (10.50%); Mechanics (7.5%) Agriculture labours (7.25%) Hawkers (4.5%) Vegetable vendors (4.5%) while 3 percent are remained as unemployed. No head of the family is engaged in Government Service. Most of the heads of household are employed in occupations requiring little or no skill. Most of them work in unorganized sectors. There is also no security of employment or assurance of a stable income in these occupations. Under such circumstances parents have little choice but to send their children to work.

**Table 6:** Child labour- Reasons for getting employment

Age group/ Reason	To supplement the family income	Living for the family	Forced by Parents	Lack of interest in education	Other reasons	Total
Below 6	2					2 (0.5%)
7-10	15	8	9	4	4	40 (10%)
11-14	88	31	20	18	7	164(41%)
15 < 18	98	61	24	6	5	194 (48.55)
Total	203 (50.75%)	100 (25%)	53 (13.25%)	28 (7%)	16 (4%)	400 (100%)

Child employment is a consequence of economic Compulsions confronted by poor families and the economic advantages the employer finds in hiring children. The data also reveals that the economic compulsion of the family is the major reason for child labour. The most common reason

in case of 50.75 percent of the child labour is the need to supplement the family income or the need for an additional income; 25 percent of the Child workers had to seek employment to earn a livelihood for their families.

**Table 7:** Working hours of the respondent child labour

S. No	Working hours/day	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 4 hours	19	4.75%
2	4-6 hours	84	21%
3	6-8 hours	252	63%
4	Above 8 hours	45	11.25%
	Total	400	100%

Source: Compiled from the data collected

Majority of the children (63 percent) work for 6-8 hours per day. Most of the respondents (81 percent) were found to be full-time workers.

### 9. Major Findings of the Study

- From the study, it was revealed that child employment is a consequence of economic compulsions confronted by poor families and the economic advantages the employer finds in hiring children. The maximum percentage (63) of child workers earn less than Rs. 200 per day; which shows that economic compulsion is one of the major causes of child labour.
- Illiteracy and ignorance of the parents is another major cause of child labour. This leads to a lack of appreciation of education on the part of the parents, and also limits the outlook towards life. They become economically and psychologically dependent and socially backward. Viewing the disadvantaged position of the families of the child labour, the employers, on the other hand try to extract the maximum work from the child labour for very low wages. The family pushes away the child and the informal sector pulls in the child.
- The poor educational background of the child labour imply that they have to devote most of their time to work and are hardly left with anytime for their studies. The relatively poor educational background of the girls shows that the poor families do not give much importance to the education of girls.
- The incidence of child labour is higher among the lower castes. The lower castes in general are engaged in manual jobs which require no skill and Qualifications. They are backward both economically and socially which compel them to take up odd jobs for survival. Their poor economic status or conditions compel them to send their children to work rather than to schools, as they are unable to bear the expenses of schooling.
- The study reveals that the statutes are not being implemented to regulate the provisions meant for the child labour. As a result, they are put to long hours of work and work almost equal to or more than the adults for very low wages under poor working conditions.
- The girl workers were found to be more satisfied with their jobs (69.6 percent) than their male counterparts (54.37 percent).
- Various child labour projects of the Government are working in some areas. The NCLP schools are working but they cater only to a segment of the total population of child labour. Though a noble attempt, the immediate financial requirements of the family are not met as the child labour is driven out of work into schools. It is given to understand that for most of the children the mid day meal is more lucrative offer to attend school than the learning experience.

### 10. Suggestions

- To stop child labour, we will have to first change our own thinking. We have to ensure that first of all, we do not keep any child at work in our own home or office. We have to remember that we are not doing any favour to children of tender age by paying them money in exchange of their labour, but we are rather playing with their future. We can dial 100 to register a complaint against child labour. We can also dial the telephone service number 1098 started by the government to register complaints against child labour.
- Abolition of child trafficking, elimination of poverty, free and compulsory education, strict implementation of labour laws and basic standards of living can reduce the problem to a great extent. Spreading literacy and education is a potent weapon against the practice of child labour in India, because illiterate persons do not understand the implications of child labour.

### 11. Conclusion

Child labour existing from times immemorial. The complete eradication and abolition of child labour is not possible immediately. The causes of child labour directly related to the problems of the Nation. Poverty being the major cause, only the economic progress and distribution of gains among the masses of the Nation can, to some extent check child labour. It requires the attention of parents, employers, in fact the nation itself. The process of eradication of child labour is a gradual process. The immediate step that can be taken is empowerment of child labour. The Government, Media and NGO's should unite together to play a very important role in this holistic task, we can contribute our best, then only the child labour problem can be completely solved and the coming generation shall be free from this curse.

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