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Child Labour in Aligarh Lock Industry

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Abstract

Child labour is a major social problem in the developing countries like India. Millions of Child labour not only removes of all joy of childhood but also crush the right to normal physical and mental development. Child labour is the most mistreated labour class in India. Child labour in unorganised sector is unsecured and backward physically, socio-economically, educationally and in other aspects. Child labour is mostly concentrated in Asia and Africa, which together account for more than 90 % of the total child employment. Asia is led by India which has more than 44 million child labourers and the largest child workforce in the world. Children work to help their families in ways that are harmful and exploitative. This paper focuses on the working, economic, health, problems and vulnerabilities of child labours in Aligarh lock industry. Child labour hampers the normal physical, intellectual, emotional and moral development of a child. Children who are in the growing process can permanently distort or disable their bodies when they carry heavy loads or are forced to adopt unnatural positions at work for long hours. Occupational diseases are mainly caused due to improper management of the occupational health of the workers. The study is mainly based on primary data collected through field surveys. Questionnaire based interviews of child workers household have taken from different wards of the city. Various information of 1000 child workers has been gathered from extensive survey of field investigation. Analysis shows that the conditions of child labour are poor and they are facing many problems, such as low wages, long working hours, abuse, beating and health problems ,etc.

Key word: Child Labour, Working Hours, Wages

Introduction

Children are compelled to work on a regular basis to earn a living for themselves and their families. They work longer hours and paid low wages. In Aligarh city child labour working in informal sector as domestic labourer, washer men, tailor, embroidery worker, lock labourer, petty retail traders, construction worker and rag pickers etc. The informal sector which is characterized by low earnings, irregular employment and unsafe working conditions and as a result child labours are disadvantaged educationally and socially; they work in conditions that are exploitative and damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development. Mostly child labours are illiterate. They have no alternative employment opportunities. Millions of children are forced to work in developing countries, like India. The country has the dubious distinction of being home to the largest child labour force in the world, with an estimated 30 per cent of the world's working children living here. They miss their school and are denied a decent and civilized future. A large number of child labourers belong to the backward caste. These child labourers are forced to work to help their poor families, but this robs them of their right to childhood and all its associated joys. They are unorganised and can not fight for their rights. Child labour also denied their right to normal physical and mental development, to education and thus to a healthy and prosperous life. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to trace out the problems associated with child labour participation in the informal sector in Aligarh city. The objectives of the study are to examine the socio-economic conditions of child labour in Aligarh. It has also been tried to examine the general nature of working conditions of child labour and how they combine wage work with domestic responsibilities. Child labours are

mostly unskilled, semi-skilled and illiterate. So, they are exploiting in several ways, they work longer hours, paid low wages, irregular payments, misbehave of the employer, etc.

Literature Review

Child labour is the most neglected labour class in India. Child labour in unorganised/informal sector is unsecured and backward physically, socio-economically, educationally and in other aspects. Child labour is an abuse of their fundamental human rights. Child labour is mostly concentrated in Asia and Africa, which together account for more than 90 % of the total child employment. Asia is led by India which has more than 44 million child labourers and the largest child workforce in the world (Siddiqi F. and Patrinos, H. A., Retrieved from, <http://storage.globalcitizen.net>).

Children need a nurturing household and social environment in order to grow into economically active, productive adults with the ability to participate effectively in the social cultural and political activities in society. In a nurturing household, a child receives not only adequate and nutritious food for normal and healthy physical growth, but also appropriate health care affection and intellectual stimulation. A nurturing and caring society would ensure that each child receives education at least up to the primary level and has opportunities for healthy social interaction (IAPC, 2010).

Child labour in India emphasises on vital aspects of child labour and its evil consequences. The study also focuses the root causes of child labour in India are large families, poverty, unemployment, absence of family allowances and compulsory education. Besides, inadequate legislation with inefficient enforcement is also responsible for the continuation of child labour (Kulshrestha, J. C., 1978).

Chronic poverty is the largest factors responsible for the prevalence and perpetuation of child labour. Poverty forces parents to send their children to seek employment. Diseases and other contingencies may need extra-money and the employment of children is resorted to as an easily accessible method to bring in that money (Pati, R. N., 1991). Iffat Faridi's study on lock manufacturing industry in Aligarh had been one of the earliest studies focussing on numerous lock manufacturing process and types of labourers employed in the manufacturing units. The study observes that the factory owners do not face shortage of labour as it is available in abundance, especially the availability of women and children to work in the home-based units. The study also highlights the exploitation of children in the home based manufacturing. According to him, children form 24% of the total workforce. The author blames the prevalence of primitive technology for the existence of child labour (<http://www.vvgnli.org/sites/default>).

A study of problems of working children in lock making Industry, by Bimal Kumar and Gita Biswas looked into the processes in which children are predominantly employed. Though the study made a passing reference that to avoid applications of labour law, the manufacturers deliberately divided their factories into small manufacturing units, it has not looked at the issue of child labour in this context and missed the integral relationship of working children with family, their productive relation with wider employment and industrial scenario (<http://www.vvgnli.org/sites/default>).

Neera Burra lists the hazards of processes such as polishing, electroplating and spray painting and stresses the need for shifting the home based units carrying out the hazardous jobs to an area like industrial estate where the working conditions can be supervised and laws be implemented. Highlighting the vulnerability of small entrepreneurs and their need to deploy cheap labour in order to survive the study forcefully point out, that implementation of law without ensuring 'adequate' income of the parents would result in worsened working conditions and reduced wages of the child workers (Burra, N., 1987).

The residential structure and quality of life of Aligarh basically focuses on the occupational status of the people of Aligarh leading to the economic, political and educational inequalities. The study reveals the impoverished condition of the families from where child labour hails from (<http://www.vvgnli.org/sites/default>).

According to the International labour organisation, child labour includes children permanently leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful educational and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future.

Study Area

Aligarh city is located in between 27° 29' latitude and 78° 36' east longitude and lies at a distance of 130 km to the south east of Delhi on Delhi-Kolkata railway line and Grand Trunk Road. According to census 2011, the total area of Aligarh city is about 40 sq. km. with a total population of 8, 72, 575 persons of which 4, 63,123 are males and 4, 09, 452 females. Of the total population 70.36 % are literates, of the total literates 75.50 % are males and 64.55% are females. The city is divided into 70 wards. Which spread over two distinct parts-the old city and the civil lines.

Objectives : 1.To study the family structure of child labour 2.To examine the educational status of child labour 3. To analyse the working and economic conditions of child labour and 4. To investigate the causes and problems of child labour.

Data base and Methodology

The study is mainly based on primary data collected through the field surveys. Household level survey is conducted in May 2015. One thousand child labour households are selected by using stratified random sampling procedure. Data is collected through the questionnaire based interviews with the residents of different wards of Aligarh city.

Child Labour in Aligarh Lock Industry: In 1887 Hira Lal Jha started manufacturing Locks in a small scale in the form of cottage industry. Later Nabi Bakshi and Kareem Ilahi who not only started manufacturing units but also started training people in the art of lock smithy picked up the trade. At the turn of the 20th century nearly 2000 skilled artisans were engaged in this industry. Certain events like expansion of post and telegraph department and First World War created a favourable climate for the growth of this industry. During the First World War the demand for locks increased to a larger extent resulting in exorbitant profit to the manufacturers and thus entry of a large number of new entrepreneurs in the industry. The expansion of market especially due to Government purchases and an improvement in design and manufacturing techniques got under way after First World War. Specialised techniques like galvanising the iron sheet-work was introduced in 1923. In 1926 Government metalworking school was established to improve the small and cottage industries of the district. In 1934 the work of die punchlocks was introduced and later the power press to cut the plates for the pad locks and polishing machines were introduced.

Aligarh city has high density of small industrial units in upper fort, old city area. Educational and recreational facilities are not found here (Mann, E., 1992).

Aligarh produces a variety of goods ranging from whistles to vegetable oil. At the time of arrival of British cotton weaving industry was flourishing. Metal articles like scales, locks, letter boxes, badges, belts, scissors, seals, knives, lamps, lanterns, mail carts and bags were made (Singh, B., 1987).

After independence a spate of industries developed in the Aligarh city as well as the district. There were over 3400 industrial establishments in the district, employing over 21,000 workers. Most of the establishments and workforce was in the city. Distribution of industrial establishments exhibits two types of locational pattern. Locational pattern in the old city is characterized by dispersed pattern. Almost throughout the old city, in different mohallas, small and not so large establishments are located. They are commonly located in residential houses in the outer rooms, opening on lanes. The buildings in which these household factories are located, they are functionally misfit for them and are dark and damp (Aziz, A., 1989).

The lock industry began in Aligarh in the 19th century catering to the demands of the postal department. Aligarh postal workshop was set up in Aligarh town in 1842. It was meant to supply the postal department all over the country numerous articles like scales, locks, letter boxes, badges, belts, seals, knives, scissors, lamps, lanterns, mail carts, mailbags, etc. The workers after knowing the techniques left the workshop and established their own firms (Hasan, N., 1991).

The Aligarh lock industry is mainly a small-scale industry, where manual labour and hand work is predominant. It is one of the biggest industries of the country employing 70,000-80,000 workers and earning crores of foreign exchange (Singh, B.,1987).

The industries in Aligarh city have increased since 1971. Small scale industries increased more than the large scale industries. The small scale industries were lock industry, cotton textile, flour, edible oil, glass wares, sugar, handloom, brick kilns, dairy and embroidery etc. These small scale industries attracted the people of villages to urban area. These industries provided employment to a large number of people. These industries provided jobs to the unskilled to skilled child and women labour. This industrial development is the main cause for the migration and for the population increase in Aligarh city. Majority of the immigrants were from labour class. They come from the nearby towns and villages in search of better and regular employment but most of them do not come with their whole family. They come with their nuclear family so, they live in the rental houses in pitiable and deplorable conditions in Aligarh.

The given Table: 1 clearly shows the no. of small scale units in 1971, 1981, 1991 and in 2001.

Table: 1
Development of Industry in Aligarh City

Year	Small Scale Industries	
	No. of Industries	No. of Workers
1971	95	585
1981	439	2851
1991	3316	9641
2001	5650	34132

Source: Compiled from Industrial Directory, DIC Aligarh (2008).

Aligarh lock Industry is a famous home based industry of India, employed larger number of child workers. The home-based production is defined as production that is carried out in small scale units and houses. These small scale units are not registered under the Factories Act. Aligarh lock industry is labour intensive. The payments in home-based units are largely made on a piece-rate basis. The main objective of the present study is to see the causes and problems of children working in the lock industry.

Child labour is a serious and controversial issue throughout the developing countries like India. India is the world's second-fastest growing major economy, has millions of child labours working in poorer conditions. Despite child labour legislation enforced in the country, millions of children are exploiting.

About 10,000 to 40,000 child labourers are working in Aligarh lock industry. They are engaged in working on hand presses, polishing or buffing machines, in electroplating and spray painting units, for filling components, making springs and assembling and packing of locks. All these children are under 14 years of age; some are as young as 5 or 6 years of age. These children work according to their age and skill. All these children are toiling hard just to contribute the family income. Child labourers engaged in various types of work such as:

Power Press: The lock case/plate, lid, flat keys and other parts are cut from MSA sheets on power press.

Hand Press: In the hand press the components are smothered, holes are punched on keys and the lock cases.

Polishing: The components of the locks, which are bound to get rusted, are polished through the processes called drum polishing or polishing in buffing machines. Drum polishing is done on parts that are not visible from outside and parts such as the handle cover or keys are polished on buffing machines.

Electroplating: In this process the polished metal pieces are tied on copper wires, which are then strung on rods and submerged in acid and alkaline baths.

Spray Painting: The components of locks are arranged in a tray and carried to the painting table. With the help of spray gun, the spray painting is made over the component of locks. The paint and paint thinner is used in this process

Assembling: Components of the locks are assembled together to make the complete locks. A complete lock requires a series of assembling of different pieces. Under this process, each worker does a particular job and passes the same to the other.

Packing: Packing is the last step in the process of Lock making. A number of locks are packed in a carton for marketing to the dealers (<http://www.vvgnli.org/sites/default>).

The given Table clearly highlights the percentage of child lock labourer is present in various types of work.

Table: 2
Percentage of Children Engaged in Various Types of Work in Aligarh Lock Industry

Types of Work	No. of Child Labour	Percentage of Child Labour
Power Press	180	18%
Hand Press	141	14.1%
Polishing	132	13.2%
Electroplating	126	12.6%
Spray Painting	121	12.1%
Assembling	145	14.5%
Packing	155	15.5%

The given table clearly shows that 18 per cent children work on power press, which is very hazardous and dangerous for these small children, 14.1 per cent children work on hand press, it is also dangerous for the children because any carelessness during the work on hand press lead to accidents with fingers. Some of the children said that their finger tips getting cut or smashed by the hand press, 13.2 per cent children work polishing on locks and lock parts. On the other hand, 12.6 per cent children work electroplating which is very dangerous and hazardous for their health because various types of dangerous chemicals are used in electroplating Children dip parts of locks and hard wares in the acids with bare hands and bare feet, they also inhale these dangerous chemicals, 12.1 per cent children work spray printing on the parts of locks, 14.5 per cent children work assembling of lock parts to make a complete lock and 15.5 per cent children work packaging of locks.

Family Structure of Child Labour: Family structure is the way that a household or family is set up with. The traditional family is the one living jointly and inclusive of members from different generations. An extended family is one, where married sons and brothers live together and they continue to have joint property and share income. The nuclear type of family is the one, in which the group consists of a male, his wife and their children (Bahadur, A. and Dhawan, N., (2008). The Table 3 demonstrates the family type of child labour in Aligarh city. About 6 per cent child labours have single parent family, whereas nearly 30.2 per cent child labours have nuclear family, 28.4 per cent have extended nuclear family, about 24 per cent have joint family and about 11.4 per cent child labours have extended joint family.

Age of the Child Labour: The given Table 3 illustrates the age structure of child labourers in Aligarh city. About 19.6 per cent child labours have 5-7 years age, nearly 35.8 per cent child labours have 9-11 years age, about 44.6 per cent child labours have 12- 14 years age.

Educational Status of Child Labour: Education always plays a vital role in the socio-economic and cultural development of any society. Hence there exists a high positive co-relation between the level of educational attainment and the socio-economic standards of community life (Shandily T. K. and Khan S. A., 2006). Education is one of the key solutions in the elimination of child labour. Children with no access to education have little alternative but to enter the labour market, often performing work that is dangerous and exploitative. In India, poverty is the main reason of children's increasing workforce to supplement their family income.

Educational status of child labour in Aligarh city is given in table 3, this table shows that out of total child labours about 32.3 per cent are literate and remaining 67.7 per cent are illiterate. Out of total literate children 28.4 per cent are educated up to primary level, 3.9 per cent are educated up to junior secondary level. The literacy rate is very low among child labourers. The main cause behind the illiteracy is poverty.

Average Income of Child labour: Child labour earns less than an adult labour for equal and same type of work. Unorganised sector provide employment to the under 14 children. Households often depend on child labour to supplement income. So, far as the working condition at the work place is concerned, it is far from satisfactory. Low income child workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in the Indian economy such as longer working hours, irregular payment, poor wages, lack of social security and no advance at the time of emergency etc. The wage structure in the lock industry varies from unit to unit. They get wages according to their age and skill. Average wages of child labour in Aligarh city is given in Table 3. The table is showing that about 5 per cent child labour receive less than 500 rupees per month, about 13.5 per cent child labour receive 501-800 rupees per month, 21.8 per cent child labour receive 801-1100 rupees per month, about 17.3 per cent child labour receive 1101-1400 rupees per month and nearly 42.4 per cent child labour receive more than 1400 rupees per month.

Average Hours of Work: Average number of working hours of child labour is high in comparison to their age and capacity. It is observed that the children of up to 14 years age, working 10-14 hours a day. These innocent children work to support their family income. The employers are exploited them by longer working hours and meagre wages. These children work longer hours in small, dark, unventilated and dusty units (rooms) without rest interval, which make them vulnerable to various types of diseases. Table 3 shows that 6.7 per cent child labour work less than 4 hours, nearly 13.2 per cent child labour work 4 to 6 hours, about 20.7 per cent child labour work 7 to 9 hours, nearly 49.4 per cent child labour work 10 to 12 hours and 10 per cent child labour work more than 12 hours per day. After the long and lethargic working day they do not have any proper rest and recreation facility at home except Television. The social conditions at home are not so good. They live in single, small, dark, unventilated room without proper facility of kitchen, bathroom and toilet facility. Cooking is done in the living room with traditional cooking fuels such as cow dung, fuel wood, kerosene oil etc.

Table: 3**Child Labour Households in Aligarh City**

Variables		No. of Child Labour	Percentage of Child Labour
Family Type of Child Labour	Single Parent Family	60	6%
	Nuclear Family	302	30.2%
	Extended Nuclear Family	284	28.4%
	Joint Family	240	24%
	Extended Joint family	114	11.4%
Age Structure	5-7 Years Age Child	196	19.6%
	9-11 Years Age Child	358	35.8%
	12-14 Years Age Child	446	44.6%
Education	Primary	284	28.4%
	Junior Secondary	39	3.9%
Income	<500 Rupees	50	5%
	501-800 Rupees	135	13.5%
	801-1100 Rupees	218	21.8%
	1101-1400 Rupees	173	17.3%
	>1400 Rupees	424	42.4%
Working Hours	<4 Hours	67	6.7%
	4 – 6 Hours	132	13.2%
	7 – 9 Hours	207	20.7%
	10 – 12 Hours	494	49.4%
	>12 Hours	100	10%

Source: Based on Primary Data Generated through Field Survey.

Working children are not only exposed to physical but also exposed to intellectual and emotional damage. The number of hours they have to work is normally more than permitted by law. Children are not only insecure in employment but are also discriminated in wage payments.

Table: 4**Types of Diseases Affect the Health of Child Labour**

Types of Diseases	Number of Child Labour Affected	Percentage of Child Labour Affected
Fever and Malaria	325	32.5%
Weakness	299	29.9%
Back/Head Pain	156	15.6%
Allergy	35	3.5%
Cold and Cough	155	15.5%
Eye Irritation	30	3%

Types of Diseases Affect the Health of Child Labour: Child labour hampers the normal physical, intellectual, emotional and moral development of a child. Children who are in the growing process can permanently distort or disable their bodies when they carry heavy loads or are forced to adopt unnatural positions at work for long hours. Children are more vulnerable because they are less resistant to diseases and suffer more readily from vulnerable conditions. Occupational diseases are mainly caused due to improper management of the occupational health of the workers. The Table 4 shows the percentage child labours are affecting from various types of diseases. The average percentage of fever and malaria by which, child labour suffer is 32.5 per cent in Aligarh city. Further, the average percentage of weakness and tiredness by which, child labour suffer is 29.9 per cent, the percentage of back pain and head pain by which, child labour suffer is 15.6 per cent, the percentage of allergy by which, child labour suffer is 3.5 per cent, the percentage of cold and cough by which, child labour suffer is 15.5 per cent and the percentage of eye irritation by which, child labour suffer is 3 per cent.

The Indian Constitution enshrines Child Labour:No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or in any hazardous employment (Article 24).

Childhood and growth are to be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment (Article 39 (f)).

The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the constitution free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years (Article 45).

Conclusion and Suggestions

The findings reveal that the problem of child labour is deep rooted in our society. Tremendous growth in population accompanied by poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, insufficient income and unemployment of parents, large family etc. are the causes responsible for the child labour but poverty is the main cause which forces innocent children to work in the worse conditions of informal sector for their own and family survival.

They are the deprived, indigent, unfortunate and underprivileged section of the society, live in the pathetic and pitiable conditions. They have more responsibilities, stress and tensions in their lives. The child respondents reported that they are getting low wages by working longer hours and their employers always give him late payments and sometimes abuse and beat for any minor mistake. They do not have medical benefits and social security. They are not only insecure in employment but are also discriminated in wage payments.

1. Law should be enacted for the regulation of hours of work, conditions of work and identification of areas of employment where child labour would be prohibited.
2. Providing vocational skills training to the children according to their age group.
3. Provide financial support, employment opportunities and education opportunities to the parents of child labour or to the poor.
4. Government should eliminate child labour by enforce law of free and compulsory education for 14 years age children.
5. Government should provide mid-day meal to the child labour.

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