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A Brief Survey of Literature on Child Labour

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ABSTRACT

Working of children in these poor countries, in general, are subject to a process of implacable exploitation, characterized by low wages, long hours of work, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions and more importantly deprivation from education, which hamper their intellectual development. Apart from its short-term ill effects on health and welfare, child labour impedes children's human capital accumulation and prevents them from becoming productive adults. Lower human capital levels are likely to affect future economic development adversely, which in turn, reinforce the child labour problem itself. It is commonly believed that child labour is fundamentally a by-product of abject poverty; and therefore policies should focus on economic development and increasing income. A good deal of research has already focused on the inextricable connection between poverty and child labour. Unitary models of parental decision making (Becker 1964) usually based, on the assumption that parents are moved by purely altruistic motivations (Becker-Barro Approach). Those who maintain that poverty is the main driving force behind child labour and children are the family's only means of survival, start with the assumption of parental altruism

Keywords: Child Labour, Development, Economic, Income, Poverty, Education, Human Capital.

I. Introduction

Child labour is a phenomenon pervasive mainly in the transitional societies of the developing countries. Working of children in these poor countries, in general, are subject to a process of implacable exploitation, characterized by low wages, long hours of work, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions and more importantly deprivation from education, which hamper their intellectual development. Apart from its short-term ill effects on health and welfare, child labour impedes children's human capital accumulation and prevents them from becoming productive adults. Lower human capital levels are likely to affect future economic development adversely, which in turn, reinforce the child labour problem itself. Trapped within a vicious circle of underdevelopment, child labour reproduces generations of less educated and less skilled workers.

II. Historical Perspective

Though the awareness about and concern for working children has increased recently, the problem itself is not new. It has been in existence from time immemorial. It existed in earlier ages in agricultural societies¹, but during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century in Great Britain it was especially conspicuous and began to be opposed.² In the pre-industrialisation period, children primarily worked alongside their parents, learning to gather food, bunt, collect fire wood, tend the cattle, cultivate crops -planting seeds, pulling weeds, picking the ripe crop, and helping in the household. The incidence of child labour was significantly widespread, though the children did not work in factories at that time. Since the experience of working in farms, alongside their parents, is less harmful than working in factories, according to some researchers, child labour did not appear as an issue before industrialization.

III. Data on Child Labour

Child labour reemerged as an issue of public concern during the last two decades with increasing integration of the world economy. It has assumed central importance in the social policy discussions and statutory provisions and efforts have been concerted towards its prevention and eradication. Child labour is a sensitive subject and numbers on its magnitude play an important role in global policy-making and advocacy efforts. Unfortunately, an accurate measure of working children is difficult to obtain since there is no single, clear-cut definition of child labour under international law.⁵ Countries not only have different minimum age work restrictions, but also have varying regulations based on the type of labour. The ILO's Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age Convention, 1973) specifies fifteen years as the minimum age for admission to any type of employment or work in normal circumstances.⁶ Taking a cue from here, usually most of the empirical surveys classify children under 15 years of age, who work on a regular basis for which they are paid or that results in output destined for the market, as 'child labour'. Clearly, household works performed in parental homes are not counted as child labour



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