

Deprivation as a Causal Factor for Child Labour : A Case Study from Sikkim

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Abstract

Poverty is well recognized as an important supply side factor on the child labour issue. The paper explored this relationship in a situation where a household is compelled to send their children to work because of the concern of the parents for household survival. Instead of measuring poverty in a traditional way, which is exclusively interpreted in monetary terms, this study explained the link between child labour and poverty in a more expanded and meaningful way in the form of deprivation. With a particular empirical focus on Sikkim, which is one of the most neglected and untouched areas with regard to child labour research in spite of being ranked first in terms of work participation rate of children in 2001 Census, the paper tried to answer the question of whether the attainment of basic capabilities reduces child labour. With this purpose in mind, poverty was measured in a multi-dimensional approach, where a human deprivation index was constructed on the basis of the lack of basic infrastructural facilities in three respects, that is, education, health, and standard of living. In the latter part of the paper, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used as a measure of the degree of association between deprivation and child labour hours. As expected, child labour is treated as an increasing function of human deprivation. The study also showed the intensity of child labourers across different income classes in Sikkim by using the goodness of fit test. In case of the low income classes, the number of children in the labour force is likely to be higher up.

Keywords : child labour, poverty, capability deprivation, deprivation index

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According to International Labour Organization (ILO), the term “child labour” is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development ("What is child labour," n.d.).

It refers to work that:

- ↳ is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- ↳ interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
- ↳ obliges them to leave school prematurely; or
- ↳ requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Whether or not particular forms of work can be called child labour depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed, and the objectives pursued by individual countries. Hence, the answer varies from country to country.

In India, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in 16 occupations and 65 processes that are hazardous to the lives and health of children. In 2009, India enacted the Right to Education Act, which envisages free and compulsory education to all children

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below the age of 14 years. This ensures all the children between six to 14 years are in schools rather than at workplaces. Besides, India is also a founder member of the ILO. However, India has not ratified Convention 182 stated by the ILO, which prohibits the employment of children below 18 years in hazardous occupations & processes, because in India, persons above 14 years can work (Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2013). In October 2006, the government included children working in the domestic sector as well as in roadside eateries and motels under the prohibited list of hazardous occupations.

Causal Factors Behind Child Labour

Child labour is a socioeconomic phenomenon. The socioeconomic backwardness followed by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, demographic expansion, deep social prejudices, and above all, government apathy are commonly considered as the most prominent causative factors for large-scale employment of children.

The causes can be broadly classified into two factors, that is, push and pull factors.

(i) Supply-side/push factors refer to the conditions under which families are engaging children in work. Such factors include poverty, low level of parental education, bad quality of schooling, large number of siblings, and so forth.

(ii) Demand-side/pull factors refer to the preference of employers for children as employees. On the pull side, there is a demand for children because they are a source of cheap labour. Increasing levels of competitiveness, rising production costs, increasing adult wages, and so forth lead many small enterprises to resort to child labour. Employers - whether in farms, households, or industries employ children mainly because they are underpaid as compared to current market wages. The non-economic factors like long working hours, performing monotonous tasks, willing to take orders without any complaint, and inability to join trade unions are also important reasons for the preference for child workers (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2005).

Poverty is well recognized as an important supply side factor on the child labour issue. Basu and Van (1998) asserted that child labour as a mass phenomenon occurs not because of parental selfishness but because of parents' concern for the survival of family members. They model the supply of child labour under the 'luxury' axiom which asserted that households send their children to work only when driven to do so by poverty. Grootaert and Kanbur (1995) also identified poverty and a low level of education of parents among the most important determinants of child labour. According to them, child labour is correlated with low-income households, and a reduction in household poverty leads to a reduction in child labour. A sequential probit model was used by Sakellariou and Lall (2000) to analyze the socioeconomic determinants of child labour from the supply side. This study also pointed to poverty and low education of parents as the main cause of child labour. The probability of child labour increases if a single working mother heads the household ; hence, the findings highlight specific population that should be targeted for working towards elimination of child labour.

There are many studies, which reject the poverty explanation of child labour. Ray (2000) econometrically tested the Luxury and Substitution hypotheses to analyze child labour participation and its key determinants. Here, the luxury hypothesis is that a family sends children to the labour market only if the family's income from non-child labour sources drops very low, while the substitution hypothesis is that child labour and adult labour are substitutes. The notion that poor parents send their children to work was rejected on the basis of evidence from Pakistan, though weak support existed for Peruvian data. Hence, the study found that income and related considerations do not have much of an effect on the work done by children.

A remarkable observation is that children of land-rich households are often more likely to work than the children of land-poor households. The vast majority of working children in developing economies are in

agricultural work, predominantly on farms operated by their families. This wealth paradox is explained by Bhalotra and Heady (2003). This is a critique of poverty-based explanation of child labour, because a larger landholding would typically mean greater wealth. This seems to suggest that greater poverty does not lead to greater child labour.

A research paper supported by World Bank (Holzmann & Jørgensen, 2000) explained the risk theory of child labour: “All individuals, households and communities are vulnerable to multiple risks from different sources, whether they are natural (such as earthquakes, flooding, and illness) or man-made (such as unemployment, environmental degradation, and war). These shocks hit mostly in an unpredictable manner or cannot be prevented, and therefore, these individuals become vulnerable and deepen poverty” (p. 3). Hence, the possibility of supply of child labour can be a risk-mitigating instrument by the poor.

Child labour is the result of poverty, and this link between the two is explained in a more expanded and meaningful way by Jayaraj and Subramanian (2002, 2007) in the form of 'deprivation' or 'capability failure'. Rather than measuring poverty in a traditional way, which is exclusively interpreted as an income shortfall from some specified 'income poverty line,' it is suggested that poverty can be measured in terms of a multi-dimensional approach where a capability failure index is constructed arising out of the lack of basic infrastructural facilities.

In a paper by Swain (2008), it was found that children who work long hours for little pay sacrificing their health are typically from the deprived community of the two villages of India. The children in these villages are nutritionally deprived not because of lack of natural blessings and efforts from their parents, but because of lack of material and non-material assets.

Child labour is directly linked to the lack of access to education. Out-of-school children and child labourers are actually the two sides of the same coin. Hence, child labourers are defined as educationally deprived children by Venkatanarayana (2004, 2005). Nambissan (2003) also pointed to the fact that non-availability of adequate schools and poor quality of education results in the educational deprivation of poor children, which, in turn, leads to the perpetuation of child labour. The paper by Majumdar (2001) stated that non-availability of schooling and work of children reflects not only parental income constraints but also, more importantly, the paucity of publicly provided educational opportunities and the deficiencies in public policy and social institutions. Hence, to combat child labour, the educational system should be reformed as well as expanded.

Therefore, it is probable that phenomenon of child labour is an increasing function of educational deprivation, health deprivation, and also other forms of deprivation resulting from the lack of basic infrastructural amenities.

Statement of the Problem

According to ILO, about one-tenth of the world's total child population, that is, 168 million children aged 5-17 years were involved in child labour in 2012. Child labour is recognized as a serious and enormously complex social problem in India, which is the home to the largest number of child workers in the world with 12% of children (29 million children) working as child labourers [1].

In the case of Sikkim, the Census data given in Table 1 shows that there were about 2,704 child labourers in 2011 as compared to 16,457 in 2001. Though the figure is minimal, most of the child labourers in Sikkim are hard-to-reach, invisible, and excluded, as they work largely in the unorganized sector, mainly as domestic helps and thus remain uncoun- ted. District-wise, East and South have the highest numbers.

The main source of child labourers in Sikkim are the sick tea-gardens in the Terai-Dooars region of North

[1] State of the World's Children, UNICEF (2013).

[2] Explained by Risk theory of child labour (Holzmann & Steen, 2000) which states that as the households are hit by an unpredictable shock, they become vulnerable and in order to avert risk they send their children to work.

Table 1. District-Wise Number of Child Labourers in Sikkim (Census, 2001)

State/UTs/District	Total Number of Child Labourers
Sikkim	16457
North	1587
West	2413
South	5938
East	6519

Source: State wise details of working children in the age group of 5-14 years as per Census 2001 and Census 2011 are as under. (n.d.)

Bengal. The immediate upshot of sickness and closure of tea gardens fell directly on the workers, their family members, and particularly children belonging to socially and economically marginalized families. Poverty, hunger, unemployment along with problems of illiteracy and drop-out made these sections more vulnerable, and thus contributed to trafficking of children in large proportions [2]. The jobless family's children are being trafficked and pushed into slave-type domestic labours, and in Sikkim, the search for cheap labour means that these children are exploited as domestic helps, cooks, and waiters in homes as well as in roadside eateries and hotels (Chakraborty, 2013 ; Ghosh, 2013).

In Sikkim, the main demand of child labour is in the domestic sector. Due to poverty and unavailability of quality schools and other forms of deprivation in rural Sikkim, some of the families send their children to work in the homes of a kin or family friends, or of employers seeking only the cheapest possible domestic labour, so that they can bring some amount of income as well as stay there and continue their studies.

When children live with their employers, there is no division between the place of work and the place of rest. Child domestic workers are forced to work long hours, leaving little or no time for leisure and study. Often, these children are required to attend school along with long and heavy work.

Research Gap and Justification of the Study

The literature on child labour is enormous but there are certain gaps mentioned below which the present study intends to fulfill.

Firstly, a lot of work has been done on causes of child labour, poverty being the main one. However, poverty is mostly interpreted in monetary terms rather than in a 'multi-dimensional' sense. Since, there is a dearth of studies on the relationship between child labour and the expanded definition of poverty known as human deprivation, this area has scope for further research.

Secondly, it is observed that there is a lack of empirical literature on domestic child labour as the focus is mostly concentrated on more harmful forms of child labour case studies in industries. The reason behind this is that domestic child workers remain invisible and are accepted as a safe form of employment by the society. Moreover, it was banned only in October 2006 in India. Therefore, this study will be focusing on child labourers working in domestic sectors in Sikkim.

Lastly, Sikkim remains one of the most neglected and untouched areas with regard to child labour research. Such negligence basically emerges from the assumptions that it is economically affluent and educationally better off. However, contrary to these views, there are hundreds of examples of the opposite. Almost every well-to-do family in search of cheap labour has illegally trafficked young *adivasi* girls and boys from the neighbouring states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, as well as the neighbouring country of Nepal and are exploiting them as domestic helps. Tourism is one of the flourishing industries, which handsomely contributes to the economy of Sikkim. The tourism industry is primarily a service oriented and includes hotels, restaurants, dhabas, tea-shops, and so forth.

These are considered to be the most potential hotspots where large numbers of children are engaged as waiters, helpers, cooks, and so forth in hazardous conditions. In this context, Sikkim is ranked first with respect to work participation rate of children. As per the 2001 Census, it was 12.04%. Therefore, a study on the problem of child labour in Sikkim will be beneficial.

Objectives of the Study

Keeping in mind the importance of the study and in order to fulfil the above mentioned research gaps, the present study aims at achieving the following objectives :

- (1) To explore the relationship between the working hours of children and occurrence of human capability deprivation in Sikkim.
- (2) To examine the intensity of child labour across different income classes in Sikkim.

Database and Methodology

(1) Coverage and Data Collection : The proposed study is based on primary data. Primary survey was carried out in different parts of East Sikkim between July and August 2015, where the respondents were chosen on the basis of purposive and convenience sampling. The sampled observations mostly covered the age group of 5-14 years and the total sample size was 60 respondents across three different places in East Sikkim, namely, Gangtok, Ranipool, and Samdur.

Gangtok is a municipality, the capital and the largest town of Sikkim. It is also the headquarters of the East Sikkim district. The town's population of 100,000 belongs to different ethnicities such as Nepali, Lepcha, and Bhutia. The hospitality industry is the largest industry in Gangtok as the city is the main base for Sikkim tourism. Many of Gangtok's residents are employed directly and indirectly in the tourism industry, with many residents owning hotels and restaurants or working in them.

Ranipool is a small suburban town located near Gangtok in East Sikkim district. It has three roads which lead to Singtam, Pakyong, and Gangtok. The main Gangtok town is about 12 km from Ranipool. The semi-urban town is dominated by Bihari people and Marwaries on the economic front and its population is a mixture of all communities. Samdur, on the other hand, is a small village at a distance of 8 km from the Gangtok main town.

The relevant information was elicited from child labourers with the help of a structured questionnaire designed for the purpose ; 20 child labourers were surveyed from each of Gangtok, Ranipool, and Samdur, which was a proper mix of urban, semi urban, and rural areas.

(2) Data Analysis : The analytical tools for the study consist of the following components :

[1] To test for the existence of a relationship between child labour and human deprivation in the dimensions of education, health, and living standard, a generalized measure of deprivation index [3] was constructed. The index is composed of three dimensions made up of seven indicators, which are as follows :

(1) Education - Access to Knowledge :

$D_1 = 1$ if the child is deprived if schools are not available;

[3] The Index was constructed using the similar method used for computing the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by Santos and Alkire (2011).

= 0, otherwise;

(2) Health - Access to Healthcare Facilities:

$D_2 = 1$ if deprived if hospitals or health centres are not available;
= 0, otherwise;

(3) Standard of Living :

(i) Adequate Shelter:

$D_3^a = 1$ if deprived, that is, if the family has no proper and own house;
= 0, otherwise;

(ii) Access to Electricity:

$D_3^b = 1$ if deprived, that is, if household has no electricity;
= 0, otherwise;

(iii) Access to Fuel for Cooking:

$D_3^c = 1$ if deprived, that is, if household cooks with dung cake, charcoal, or wood etc. for cooking;
= 0, if it uses clean fuel (gas) for cooking;

(iv) Mobility:

$D_3^d = 1$ if deprived, that is, if there is non-availability of pucca road near the house or bus facility or if service vehicles are not available;
= 0, otherwise;

(v) Access to Potable Water:

$D_3^e = 1$ if deprived, that is, if tap water is not available and members of the household have to fetch water from far off places.
= 0, otherwise.

Equal weights were given to all three dimensions, so each of them receives 1/3 weight. The indicators within each dimension are also equally weighted. Thus, each indicator within education and health dimension receives 1/3 weight and each indicator within the standard of living dimension receives a 1/15 weight ($1/3 \div 5$).

$$D = \frac{D_1}{3} + \frac{D_2}{3} + \frac{D_3^a}{15} + \frac{D_3^b}{15} + \frac{D_3^c}{15} + \frac{D_3^d}{15} + \frac{D_3^e}{15}$$

$$D = (1/3) \sum_{i=1}^3 D_i$$

Later, Pearson correlation coefficient was used as a measure of degree of association between deprivation and child labour hours. Child labour (CL) is expected to be an increasing function of human deprivation (D).

(II) Frequency-Chi Square Test : In order to examine the intensity of child labour across different income classes,

the chi-square test of independence is used. As the test of independence is based on two attributes, the data is grouped into different income classes, namely:

- (i) Low per-capita income ($Y \leq 1000$),
- (ii) Average per-capita income ($1000 < Y \leq 1500$), and
- (iii) High per-capita income ($1500 < Y$)

The intensity of child labour is defined using the hours of work of the child in a day, that is,

- (i) High intensity ($8 < CL$),
- (ii) Average intensity ($4 < CL \leq 8$) and,
- (iii) Low intensity ($CL \leq 4$)

After grouping, the observed frequencies are displayed in an observed contingency table and expected frequencies are calculated using the formula below:

$$\text{Expected Frequency for any Cell} = \frac{\text{Column Total} \times \text{Row Total}}{\text{Total frequency}}$$

$$e_{ij} = \frac{o_{i.} o_{.j}}{o_{..}}$$

The chi-square statistic is then calculated as:

$$\text{Chi Square Statistic} = \sum_{i=1}^a \sum_{j=1}^b \frac{(\text{observed frequency} - \text{expected frequency})^2}{(\text{Expected frequency})}$$

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^a \sum_{j=1}^b \frac{(o_{ij} - e_{ij})^2}{e_{ij}}$$

The null hypothesis in the following study is that the income classes and intensity of child labour are independent of each other.

Results and Discussion

(1) Descriptive Statistics : From the Table 2, it is apparent that the minimum age of the child labour from the given sample was 8 years old, while the maximum age was 14 years old. The average age of the child worker was about 12 years old. The child worked for almost 1 hour up to 12 hours in a day, and on an average, the children

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Child Labour

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Age	8.00	14.00	12.3667
Hours in Work	1.00	12.00	6.9417
Age at which started work	6.00	13.00	10.1833
Number of Siblings	0.00	7.00	3.0667
PCI	667.00	2000.00	1218.2222

Table 3. Religion-Wise and Caste-Wise Distribution of Child Labour

Religion	Caste				
	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Buddhist	13	21.7	General	10	16.7
Christian	6	10.0	OBC	16	26.7
Hindu	37	61.7	SC	17	28.3
Muslim	4	6.7	ST	17	28.3
Total	60	100.0	Total	60	100.0

Table 4. Characteristics of the Child Labour

Sex of Child	Stay with Family	Place of Stay	Go to School	Gender of Household Head	Work of Household Head	Type of work
Female - 65%	No - 75%	Other - 48%	No - 53%	Female - 25%	No- 22%	Domestic - 73%
Male - 35%	Yes - 25%	Sikkim - 52%	Yes - 47%	Male - 75%	Yes - 78%	Restaurant - 27%

worked for about 10 hours a day. The minimum age at which the children started to work was just 6 years old. It is also seen that the maximum number of siblings that the child labourers had was seven. It is also clear that the minimum and maximum per capita income of the child's family was ₹ 667 and ₹ 2000, respectively and the average income was about ₹ 1218 per person.

Again, from the Table 3, it can be seen that on the basis of religion, the number of child labourers is maximum among the Hindus with about 62 % followed by Buddhists and Christians. From the viewpoint of caste, the number of child labourers among SC and ST is the highest followed by other backward classes.

The Table 4 depicts the characteristics of the child labour in the study area. It is clear that most of the child labourers were girls, with a 65% share ; while only 35% of the boys acted as child labourers. Almost 75% of them stayed in owners' or relatives' house rather than that of their family. The percentage of labourers who migrated from other Indian states or Nepal is almost equal to that of natives of Sikkim. It is also observed that more than half of the child labourers did not attend school and only 47% gained formal education ; all of the sample children went to government schools ; 73 % of the children in the sample worked as domestic helpers in other's houses, and 27 % of them worked in restaurants as cooks and waiters. Coming to their households, 25 % of the child labourers did not have a father and 22% of the household heads were not working.

(2) Relation Between Child Labour and Deprivation : It is expected that child labour should be positively correlated with poverty. In the present study, poverty is measured in a more meaningful and expanded form, that is, deprivation in terms of education, health, and standard of living. Similarly, child labour is measured in the terms of number of hours the child has to work in a day. The Table 5 depicts the relation between child working hours and deprivation in terms of all seven indicators as stated above as well as with the Deprivation Index which was calculated.

The Table 5 suggests that all the seven indicators of deprivation as well as the generalized deprivation index (D) are positively correlated with child working hours (CL). The results are similar to the study conducted by Jayaraj and Subramanian (2007). It is also seen that in all the cases, except deprivation in water (D_3^a), the correlation coefficients are statistically significant. It is apparent that deprivation in health (D_2) as captured by unavailability of health centers is the most important determinant of child labour. Access to clean fuel (D_3^b) and availability of electricity (D_3^c) followed by availability of proper shelter (D_3^e) also play a major role. As pointed out by Nambissan (2003), poor quality of education and non-availability of schools results in child labour which substantiates our results.

Table 5. Pair-Wise Correlation Between Deprivations and Child Working Hours

	Education (D_1)	Health (D_2)	Electricity (D_3^a)	Fuel (D_3^b)	House (D_3^c)	Mobility (D_3^d)	Water (D_3^e)	Deprivation Index (D)
Education (D_1)	1							
Health (D_2)	.309**	1						
Electricity (D_3^a)	.21	.107	1					
Fuel (D_3^b)	-.111	.079	.206	1				
House (D_3^c)	.376**	.115	.228*	.410***	1			
Mobility (D_3^d)	.242*	.071	.253*	.279**	.000	1		
Water (D_3^e)	-.108	-.129	.230*	.044	.025	.213	1	
Deprivation Index (D)	.747***	.721***	.208	.138	.078	.432***	.045	1
Working Hours (CL)	.264**	.660***	.405***	.436***	.404***	.274**	.074	.606***

Note: *, **, and *** denotes that correlation is significant at the 0.10, 0.05, and 0.01 level (2-tailed), respectively.

It should also be noted that most of the indicators are also positively correlated with each other. In particular, there is a strong link for deprivation in terms of education with health and proper house. It could probably mean that places where there are no proper houses did not have access to schools and healthcare facilities as well. Similarly, it was also observed that households which did not have access to *pucca* roads were also deprived of electricity and did not have clean fuel for cooking. The results indicate that basic infrastructures are complementary to each other.

Lack of schools along with lack of transport facility forces a child to work, and the time used for collecting wood and water reduces the time spent in school. Finally, the correlation coefficient between generalized deprivation index (D) and child working hours (CL) is 0.606, which is quite high, and it is significant at the 1% level. This means that there is a high positive correlation between child working hours and capability deprivation.

(3) Intensity of Child Labour Across Different Income Classes : From the Table 7, it is clear that the calculated chi-square value (11.98) is more than the tabulated chi-square value (9.48) at the 5% level of significance; hence, it falls in the rejection region. Since the p - value is also less than 0.05, we may reject our null hypothesis. This means that income level and working hours of children (which is used as a proxy for the measurement of child labour) are related to one another. Thus, income has an influence on the occurrence of child labour. The Table 6 and Figure 1 also indicate that in case of low income classes, the number of child labourers in high intensity group is higher up. As income increases, the number of children in high intensity labour decreases. Basu and Van (1998) also validated that poverty and child labour is positively related as seen from the results.

Table 6. Observed Frequency of Number of Children with Respect to Income level and Work Intensity

			Hours of Child Work (Intensity of Child Labour)			Row Total ($O_{.j}$)
			High Intensity	Average Intensity	Low Intensity	
			8 < CL	4 < CL ≤ 8	CL ≤ 4	
Per	Low Income	$Y \leq 1000$	17 (11.266)	5 (6.066)	4 (8.666)	26
Capita	Average Income	$1000 < Y \leq 1500$	5 (6.933)	5 (3.733)	6 (5.333)	16
Income	High Income	$1500 < Y$	4 (7.8)	4 (4.2)	10 (6)	18
Column total ($O_{.j}$)			26	14	20	$O_{..} = 60$

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate expected frequencies

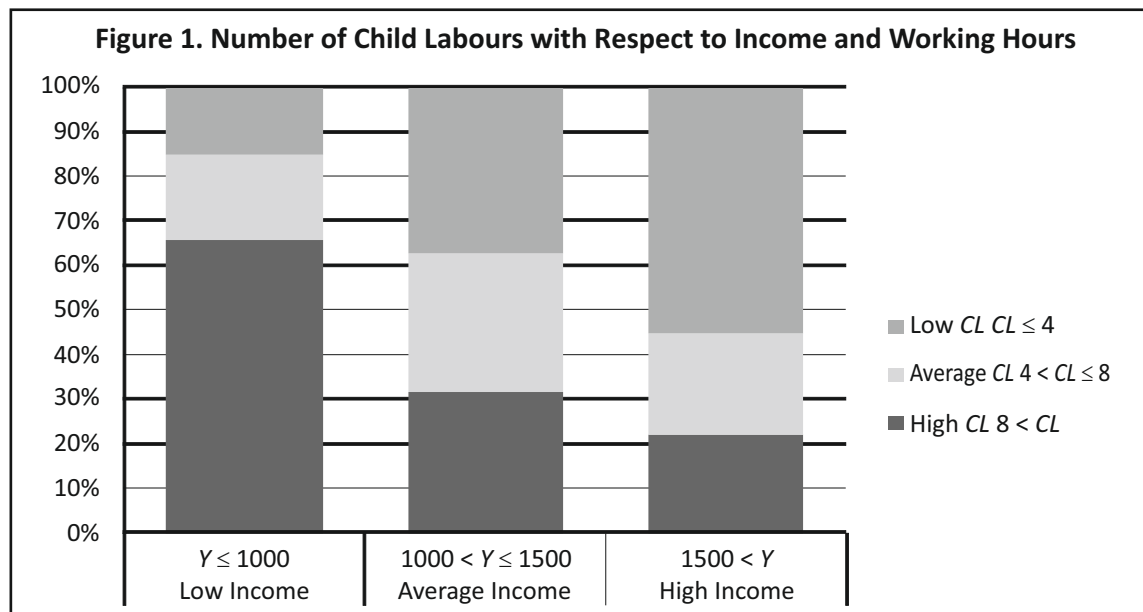


Table 7. Results of Chi-Square Test for Evaluating the Intensity of Child Labour Across Different Income Classes

	Calculated Value	Tabulated Value	Degrees of freedom	<i>p</i> - value (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.98	9.488	4	.024
No. of Observation	60	(at 0.05 significance level)		

The value of Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.316, which is significant at 5% level, also signifies that there exists a negative relation between income level and child labour intensity. As income decreases, the intensity of child labour increases.

Concluding Observations

Child labour has become one of the serious concerns of the modern world as the number of children in the labour force continues to increase in several fields of employment, especially in the unorganized sector. The situations leading to perpetuation of child labour arise out of sustained poverty where parents are forced to send their children to work for subsistence of the family.

In the descriptive analysis, the distribution of child labour revealed that a disproportionate burden was borne by girls relative to boys. The results also show that when viewed through the caste prism, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC and ST) children are more prone to enter into the labour market as compared to non-SC or ST children.

The findings of the study contribute to the economic literature on the relation between deprivation and child labour. It is observed that all the three dimensions of deprivation, that is, education, health, and standard of living had a positive relation with the working hours of the child. This means that as deprivation increases, the intensity of child labour is likely to increase. Child labour grows in places where there is lack of infrastructure.

As poverty is seen to be the main cause of child labour, the study also examined the intensity of child labour across different income classes and revealed that as income increases, the number of child labourers in the high-

intensity group decreases. This result substantiates the readings from literature that poorer children are forced to enter into the labour market and work for long hours.

Research and Policy Implications

The findings point to poverty as the main cause of child labour. Hence, economic growth will help in alleviating the problem. However, it will take a long time for economic growth to significantly reduce child labour; therefore, the intervention of the government is necessary. Employment opportunities for the adults should be improved so that the income of the family is increased and thus, children do not have to work to support the family.

Child labour has been banned, but the enforcement of the law is inadequate. Furthermore, children working in unorganized sectors, especially domestic workers are invisible and are left unprotected. Anti-child labour policy is there in the state, but it does not address the underlying causes of child labour. Along with the government and police, individuals should be made aware of existing child laws, and punishment should be given to those who break them. NGOs should also be more active and reach out to children in need.

Besides enforcing the existing laws on child labour, the policies should focus on improving the school infrastructures as well as on improving the quality of education provided in government schools, as due to the poor quality of education in these schools, children lose interest and drop-out. Schools need to be more accessible for rural children. The government should also take steps for raising the standard of living of people by creating more employment as low per capita income is the major reason for the family to send children to work.

The lack of basic amenities in many remote areas, like proper roads and lack of potable drinking water also keeps children out of school and forces them into work. Thus, the infrastructural facilities like providing safe and clean drinking water; providing clean fuel at subsidized rates; electricity in every house; building hospitals and health centres, building roads and providing public transport facilities in rural areas are necessary for eradication of child labour.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The research does not cover every aspect of child labour and only focuses on children working as domestic helps at homes and restaurants. The sample of the study has only been collected from the East district of Sikkim, and thus, the findings cannot be generalized for the whole population. Another limitation is that the children surveyed are of invisible nature, and it is difficult to gain access to children in their situation of work so the methodology for collecting data is of convenience sampling. Furthermore, research on child labour should be undertaken in order to have up-to-date information on child labour. The research only deals with nature and causes of child labour, so the research on consequences of child labour can be done. Research on different aspects of the child labour problem should be taken up in the future as well.

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