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Child Labour in Brick Kiln Industry: A Case Study of Dhubri District of Assam

Prince Zakir Abdullah¹

Abstract

Childhood is an important stage of human development. In this way, the future of every society depends on the current situation of its children. Child labor is mostly used in the informal sector, where a large number of children do hazardous work in various industries. The definition of child labor has been established by many legislators, sociologists, economists and labor experts. Child labor can be defined when children engage in work that interferes with their childhood, thinking ability and general development, mental and physical development. The problem of child labor is deep rooted in developing and underdeveloped countries and if we look at the problem of child labor in India, Dhubri district of Assam is not an exception. This paper will understand the socio-economic condition of the Child working in a Brick Fields of Dhubri. The paper summarizes some of the authors' recommendations on how to eliminate these problems, drawn from academia and policy and planning documents.

Keywords:

Brick kiln; child labour; Dhubri; Socio-Economic condition

Introduction

Children in all societies have always been considered the greatest gift of humanity. Childhood is an important stage of human development because it has potential for the future development of any society. Children who grow up

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Chilarai College, Golakganj, ASSAM E.Mail ID: prince.abdullah00@gmail.com
Mob: 08638278557

in an environment conducive to their intellectual, physical and social development will later become responsible and productive members of society. If we must employ children too young to perform this task, we unnecessarily reduce their present well-being or their future earning power, either by limiting their future choices or by reducing their future individual productivity. It is generally said that economic hardship forces children to forego educational and other developmental opportunities and engage in work that often exploits them, because they are often underpaid and work in hazardous conditions. . Desperate parents send their children to work in because of the bad economic situation. Therefore, it is not surprising that poor households account for the largest share of child labor.

Brick making is a significant activity in dhubri district of Assam. The brick kilns of Dhubri are expanding rapidly as it is the primary construction material. Therefore the demand for bricks has been rising over the past few decades. Brick kilns are situated both in urban and rural areas of Dhubri, where a large number of workers, including men and women and even children work in the kiln on a temporary contract and low wages.

Review of Literature

There is a huge amount of research on child labor in the form of case studies, journal articles, children's rights and child labor related books. Zutshi, Bupinder (2002) "In the Name of Child Labour: Eradication and Evaluation programme" cites evidence that magnitude of child labour in India is under-estimated due to inadequate and unreliable data. A. K. Kanth and Anupama Sahay (2004) "Globalization, Vulnerability and Child Labour: Indian Context" (Journal of V.V.Giri, National Institute, New Delhi,) held the opinion that the micro level poverty within the family is the major factor behind the prevalence of child labour. K.devi and Gautam Roy. (2008) "Study of Child Labour among School children in Urban and Rural Areas of Pondicherry". This article deals with very specific case studies on Child labour. Reddy (2012) "Child labour in Hotel Industry: A Case Study of Tirupati and Tirumala" found that the children

working in hotels and its first and foremost reason is poverty and other reasons are the lack of protective child labour legislation and the evasion of existing laws for the protection of child labour, keeping the child labour going and getting protected. Mrs. Shitala Shreekant Gavand, Dr. Smita Karve , (April 2015) “Human Rights of Children in India”, Centum (Multi-Disciplinary Bi-Annual Research Journal) In this Article the Author has explained that for better future of our country it is everyone’s duty to strive for welfare of children and child education. S.K.Mangal (2007) “Educating Exceptional Children-An Introduction to Special Education” In this book, author has explained causes and effects of poverty, illiteracy and how behavior of parents affects children.

Objectives

- To study how Children are engaged in brick industries.
- To understand the socio-economic situation of child laborers in the brick kiln industry.
- To understand the effectiveness of various government policies to eliminate the problem of child labor.
- To study the problem face by Child workers in brick industries and to find out solution.

Selection of the study area and population

Brick making industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in Dhubri, where a large number of workers, including men and women and even children work in the kiln on a temporary contract and low wages. In the present study, Gauripur and Dhubri brick field area under Dhubri district of Assam had been identified as the study area where 4 brick kilns were selected. These are Madhusoulmari Brick Field (MBF), AC Barua & Co.(ACC), Assam Bricks Company (ABC) and Rumana Brick Field (RBF). In this study, population consisted of the Child workers in the brick kilns.

Sampling technique and sample size

Sample size was determined randomly from the respondents who are available during the survey. A semi-structured survey was served as the main data collection method for this study. A total 40 child respondents have been

interviewed from the 4 different brick kilns of Dhubri district. The survey is the main data collection method of this study.

Data Collection & Analysis of Data

A semi structured survey was conducted to collect necessary primary data from the target population. For conducting a survey, a semi structured questionnaire was used.

Construction of the questionnaire

15 questionnaires were conducted to find out the vulnerability and present condition of workers in the study area based on socio economic conditions and health hazard risks of brick field workers. The questionnaire is finally drafted based on a compromise between the requirement and the ability of the respondents to furnish the data, while designing the questionnaire certain statistical and operational factors among which the terms of data sought, the method of collection, the respondent's units processing and tabulating requirement also considered. All the questionnaires were conducted by face to face interview.

Analysis of Data

The current study will investigate the socioeconomic conditions of child labourers working in the brick kiln industry in Dhubri, as well as the reasons and causes that push parents to bring their children into the maze of child labour. The researcher surveyed four kilns in the current study, and the total sample size of the study is fifty (40) child respondents. Kiln owners were also interviewed in order to obtain precise information about the kilns. Table 1 depicts the age distribution of the children employed in various brick kilns.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age. (n=40)

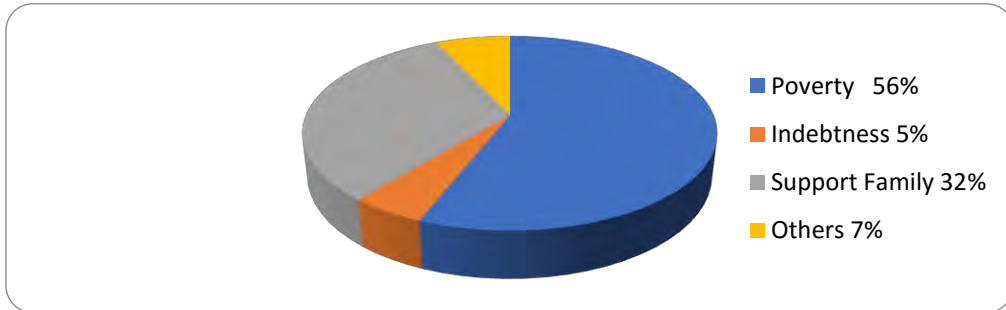
Age- Years	Number of Working Child	
	Frequency	Percentage
05-10	10	25%
11-14	21	52.5%

15-17	09	22.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

From the table above it was revealed that most of the children are from the age group of 11-14 years because it constitutes 52.5% of all the children working in the brick kilns. 25% of the children are from the age group of 05-10 years and the remaining 22.5% of the children are from the age group of 15-17-year of total population. Children started working in the brick kiln at a very young age to support and care for their families, poverty being one of the main reasons why children work in the kiln.

Figure.1 showing the reason behind Child labour in Brick Kiln Industry



Source: Field Survey 2022

There are various reasons to join the brick kiln industry. The above Figure shows that 56% of children stated poverty is a major reason for working in the brick kiln industry. About 32% of the children working in the brick kiln said that they came here to support the family's expenses precisely because of the large family. Around 5% of the children stated that they entered the labour force because they were in debt. Their parents usually borrow money from contractors or employers, and because they are unable to repay the loan, they end up working as bondage labourers. In such cases, they are forced to employ their children as child labourers in the brick kilns. The remaining children have stated that they wanted to be self-sufficient, which is why they came to the brick kiln.

Table 2: Educational qualification of children working in brick kilns.
(n=40)

Educational Qualification		
Schooling	Frequency	Percentage
Lower Primary (Age 6-10 years)	11	27.5%
Upper Primary (Age 11-12 years)	19	47.5%
Have not seen school	10	25 %
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

From table no.2, we can see that 47.5% respondents between the age group 11 to 12 years have gone to Upper Primary level of school and between the age group 6 to 10 years they have gone to the lower level of primary school. 25% of the children they have no education at all. Hard reality is that though the government has introduced Right to education Act, 2009 but many of the schemes under the Act have been compared to the previous schemes on education such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and have been plagued with corruption charges and inefficiency. The Parents bring their children with them to the brick fields so some of the children left schools and join with their parents as a worker in the brick kilns.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by religion (n=40)

Community Background (Social Background)	Frequency	Percentage
Hindu	06	15%
Muslim	33	82.5%
Other	01	2.5%
Total	40	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

From the table no 3 it shows that 82.5% population of the study is from Muslim Community where 15% represents Hindu Community and 2.5% represents Other Community.

Children working in the brick kiln industries in Dhubri are also in very poor health. Very few children suffer from cough and pain from daily exposure to smoke and dust from ovens and long working hours. There are no mandatory

amenities such as proper housing, clean water, and healthcare facilities available near the brick kiln industrial zones. People largely depend on hand pumps as a source of water. The researchers' observations during field work are that they have very little access to these resources and their general health is poor. Only certain emergency medical resources are available.

Therefore, starting from the above data analysis, the researchers would like to first mention the causes of child labor in the study area and make some suggestions about them.

Causes for the Child Labour

1. Poverty
2. Lack of education
3. Economic uncertainties
4. Indebtedness
5. Employment (or lack of employment)
6. Landlessness at rural areas for majority of the population
7. Weak policy of legal framework
8. Weak social awareness

Suggestions

1. To universalize and accelerate school enrolment, attendance and retention so that children are prevented from being employed as labour.
2. There should be involvements of committed voluntary organizations at the district level regarding the issue of child labour
3. Country-wide survey to establish the survival, occurrence and scenery of child labour in both the organized and UN-organized sectors.
4. To take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate child labour and to provide for the rehabilitation and social integration of the rescued children.
5. There should be recognition of the special situation of migrant child labourers. These could be children who have run away from home or children who migrate

seasonally with their families. Given the extent of intra-state migration, educational centers have to be strengthened and the involvement of the local NGOs has to be done.

Conclusion

The author argues that the government and all members of society must work towards the complete abolition of child labor especially since it has a direct effect on the economy. And for any economy to truly thrive and thrive tomorrow, today's children need a good education, an environment and opportunities to thrive.

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