

Child Labors In Ganjam District of Odisha: Exploring Livelihood

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Abstract:

Child labor is a critical and sensitive issue globally. In India the percentage of labour force constitutes 'child labor' is very high. Serious attention is given to contentious issue of child labour by the Government, social activists and voluntary organizations. The Indian Constitution also guarantees protection of the rights of children. Regardless of several stringent dealings, in India the problem of child labor is gloomier and constantly increasing. Child labour cannot end overnight because its roots are very deep. Laws should be strictly implemented to prevent child labor. The intent of the current study was to learn the socio-economic condition of families whose children were engaged as child labors in major blocks in Ganjam district of Odisha. Poverty, parent unemployment, limited education resources, social backwardness and lure of cheap labor have been explored as driving factors for child labor creation. The study also assessed the working conditions and environment of child laborers and to determine their morbidity pattern if any. The child laborers were interviewed in their work places using a predesigned and pre-tested questionnaire. Data were collected and analyzed a total of 254 child laborers who participated in the study from selected blocks of the Ganjam district. As a consequence, the study can be a good example for law makers to devise better policies uplift the socio-economic lives of the children engaged as labors in the rural sectors nationwide.

Keywords: Child Labour, socio-economic, education, poverty, unemployment, questionnaire

1. Introduction:

The transformation of children into matured and responsible citizens of a nation necessitates a collective support system of family and society. Comparatively as a social problem child labor has greater magnitude in most underdeveloped and developing countries. Undeniably, several provisions of national and international laws entail compulsion upon the state agencies to safeguard and promote their human rights. Nevertheless, regardless of such stringent measures, the basic rights of the children in many developing and underdeveloped nations are often neglected if not palpably debased. Such scenario also prevails in India as well. Although the meaning of child labor varies broadly basing on socio-economic, environmental or physical theories, the child labor is that section of the child population of a nation engaged in paid or unpaid employment. [1]

Reports claim thousands of children working in hazardous conditions. Reportedly children are engaged in agriculture sector, mines, textile industries, glass, footwear and cracker factories, being constantly

exposed to dangerous chemicals and heavy machineries [2]. Children are also seen as rag pickers, vendors and domestic servants. As per stats, 57% and 34% of children aged between 5-14 years of age work in agricultural and industrial sectors in a developing country like India [3]. According to National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 2004-05, the count of child labor was estimated at 90 lakhs all over India. The Census 2011, however reported the number of working children in the age group of 5-14 years has further reduced to 43 lakhs. Despite of stringent measures taken by administration in curbing the practices of child labor, a major section of child population continuous to work under the banner of child labor [4]

Several causes have been explained for the practice of child labor. Unemployment, illiteracy, low wages of parents, unproductive land, huge family debts and lack of proper fooding, are some of the driving forces compelling the children of such families to undertake labor works [5-10]. Cheaper wage rates in comparison to adult workers is a major reason for increase in hiring of children as labors [11]. Agriculture is the major income source in the rural areas in India. Slow rate of industrialization, higher land revenue, exploitation of poor pheasants by money lenders, callous attitude of administration and ineffective implementation of policies have also contributed to growth in child labor. Decrepitating rural economy and disorganized family structures have also compelled a large chunk of rural children to migrate to urban areas for seeking jobs [12]. As per stats from Odisha Government (Directorate of labor and employment), the major portion of child labor force emerges from rural areas. The slums in cities and towns also contribute towards increase in the child labor numbers. Such stats are only trends and do not give the exact figure of child labor proportion. There are limited or no such mathematical data of children working all time of day and night as domestic servants. Exploitation, exposure to harmful works and abuse has darkened the childhood of such poor lives in every aspect.

In the current study we investigated the chief causes of child labor in Ganjam district of Odisha, India. We visited specific blocks in the Ganjam district where the percentage of child labor was higher. We examined the socio-economic background of the child labors. As many as 254 children in the age group between 5-14 years were interrogated via pre-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to study the various forms of child labor existed in the sample blocks visited. Basic data regarding the working conditions, wages, nature of work and health hazards were retrieved. The study clearly indicated the causes of child labor which can be broadly divided into two aspects. First is the failure in implementing of government policies to curb practice of child labor and secondly, poor economic conditions of the families of such children working as child labors. The children were deprived from getting education from a tender age or force to discontinue their education and are often compelled to work to support their families financially.

2. Methodology

The study relied upon collection of primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected by interviewing children engaged as labors in different forms of work using qualitative tools. Secondary data was collected from official reports, journals and newspaper articles.

2.1 Structured Interview

Interview with specifically designed questionnaire was the basic qualitative tool employed to gather data from the child labors. The designed questionnaire consisted of 50 questions. The child labors were personally approached and interrogated with designed questionnaire. Data regarding their age, gender,

social background, starting age as worker, reasons, educational status, health status, working and living status, working hours, family status, family size, migration, basic amenities, family educational and occupational status were gathered. The designed questionnaire is provided in appendix 1 for reference.

2.2 Sampling

A total of 12 blocks (appendix 2) of Ganjam district, Odisha was selected for surveying. 254 individual interviews were conducted. Children were randomly selected where they represented the cluster of laborers for personal interview. It was taken care that all age groups of children working were surveyed. The sampling representation for interview was considered with a minimum of 10 per cent of the available working children in the area of the survey.

Table 1 Block wise survey of child laborers

3. Study results

3.1 Child labors engaged in different occupations

The field survey explored that majority of the children worked (figure 1) in hotels, garages, cashew processing units, sugarcane processing units and rice mills. Some children were also engaged in hazardous works like welding and cracker making. Mostly young girls were found to work as housemaids and farming fields.

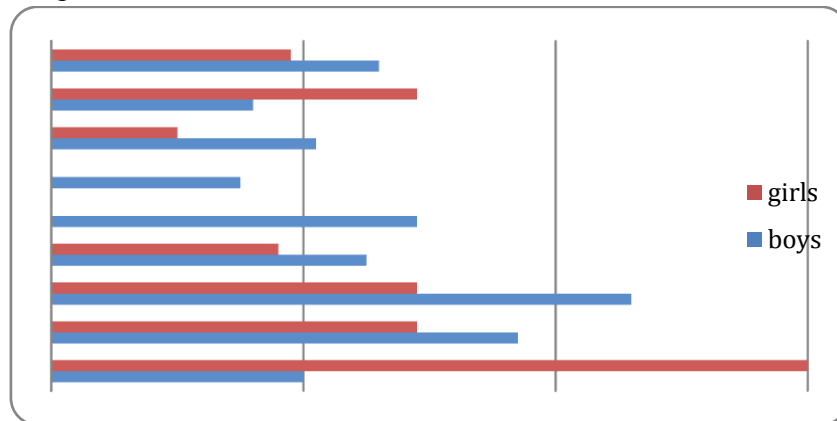


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of children engaged in different occupation

3.2 Age distribution

About 67% of the interviewed children were under 15 years and 20% below 11 years (Table 2).. Facts evidently depict that they are either school dropouts or engaged in work during their primary education.

Table 2 Percentage distribution of children by age

Age group	Boys	Girls	Average	Cumulative percentage
5-7	2.6	3.7	3.15	3.1
8-9	13.8	16.9	15.3	18.4
10-11	21.7	16.2	19.1	37.5
12-13	30.9	25.7	28.5	66
14-16	30.9	37.3	34.0	100
Total	100	100	100	-
N	143	111	254	

N = Total number of respondents

3.2 Ethnicity

Almost 60-70 percent of child labors belonged to scheduled caste. Social discrimination and poor economic status of their families often force the children of such families to drop out education at a very tender age and work to financially support their families. 10-12 percent child labors belonged to other religious minorities (figure 2). The children belonging to scheduled caste can be broadly grouped under Bauri, Chamar, Harijans, Dandasi and Dhoba communities. About 15% of child labors belonged to scheduled tribes (Sabar, Saura, Kondha), while rest belonged to other backward classes.

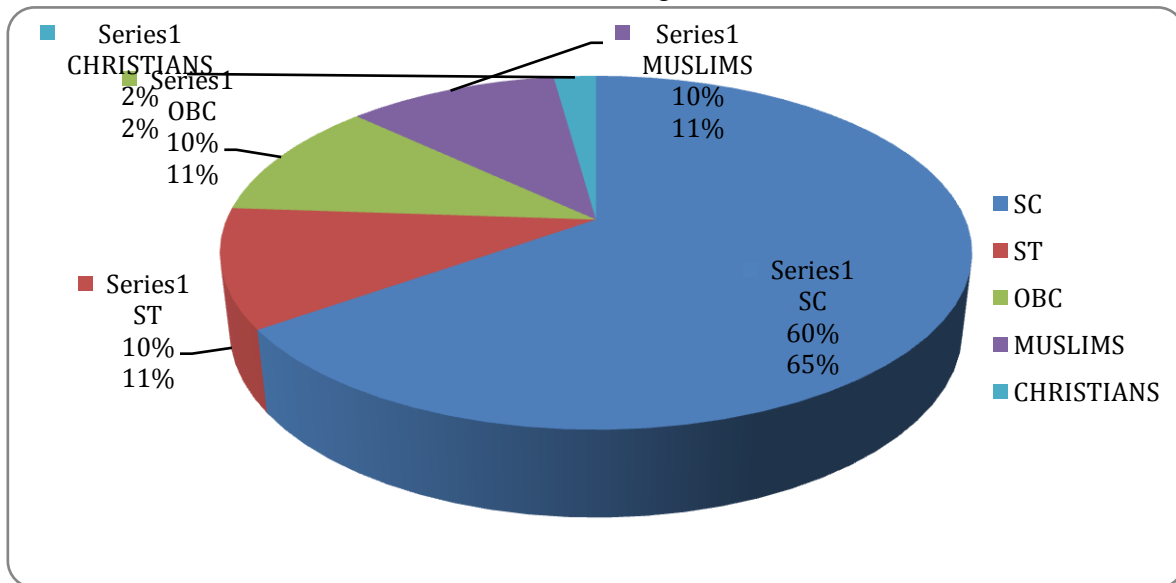


Figure 2. Caste of surveyed child labors

3.3 Educational status

According to reports about 85 % of child labors were attending school while school dropout rate was high among 55-60% of working children (table 3). Parents and teachers say that many kids go to school through the third grade. Rates of dropping out go up as grades go up. Most current students are not regulars, so even those technically enrolled in school are at risk of dropping out. Most of the kids who work as workers are still in school. Their high dropout rates may be because their families are poor or their parents don't know how to read or write.

Table 3 Literacy status of interviewed child labors

Sex	Literate %	Illiterate %	Number of respondents	Percentage of school going children	Percentage of children having school dropout
Boys	86%	13.2%	143	47%	53%
Girls	83%	16.7%	111	45%	54%
Total	85%	14.9%	254	46%	55%

Almost 79 per cent of child laborers admitted that they were in schools just before involving in this kind of work or are still at school Other (16%) have started their work as unpaid domestic labour initially, but later on started working at mines while the rest have come to mines after working for wages or others. Greater percentage among girls than boys come to mines from unpaid household work (20% vs. 13%), which is expected as girls usually help mothers at household chores.

3.4 Effect on economic status of family

The survey explored that the parents of the child laborers were also engaged in different full time paid works. Men were predominantly engaged in farming, construction works, street vending, hotels, newspaper hawking, brick producing units, welding works and glass factories. Women are majorly engaged as laborers in construction works, agriculture fields and domestic helps. The average annual income of such families were explored to be Rs 25,000-Rs 50,000. The survey discovered that the contribution of wages of the working children quite improved the average annual income of the households (figure 3).

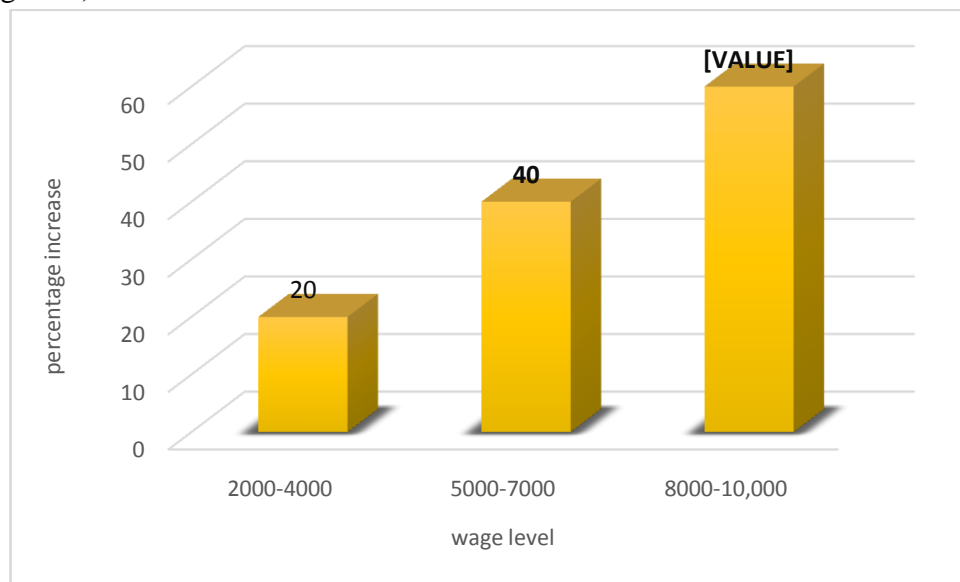


Figure 3 Percentage increase in annual household income vs contribution of child labor wage

3.5 Working hours

Child workers do not have set working hours. It differs depending on the employment. As a result, the hours of employment of economically active kids vary greatly, ranging from four to twelve hours each day. They usually go to work in the morning until lunchtime, or from the afternoon until the evening, depending on the nature of their profession. Some children forced into labor, such as those who are employed in hotels and restaurants, toil from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day, and sometimes even later, until 9 p.m. About 54% of the children in jobs are put in shifts lasting 9-12 hours each. Sometimes they work from dawn to night, although 28 percent work 5 to 8 hours and 18 percent work 4 hours (figure 5). Only some of the kids who work in garages and bike repair shops get access to the facilities during their weekly offs. In reality, children who work for themselves may also use this service. The principle of "no work, no pay" primarily governs them.

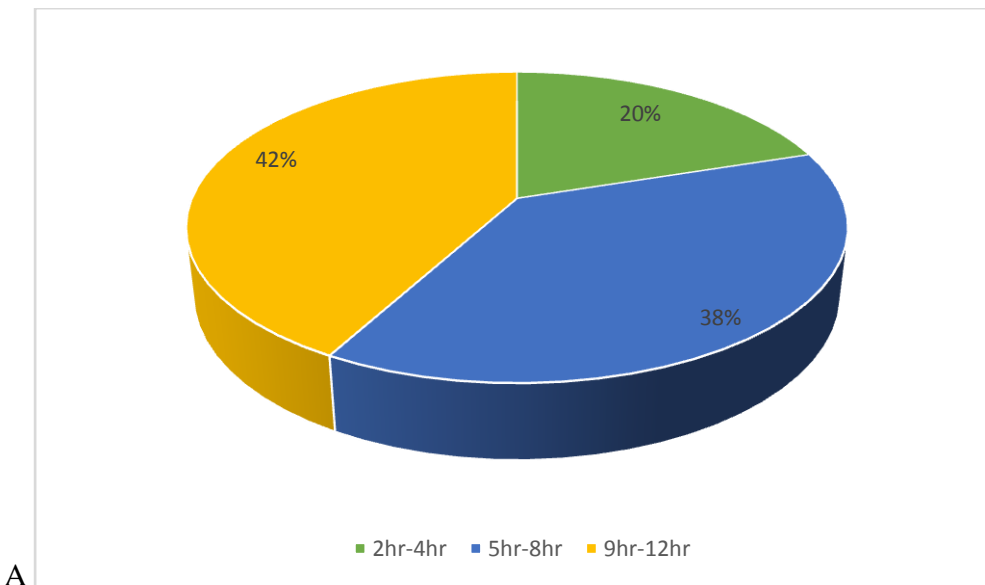


Figure 5 Percentage distribution of child labor with respect to working hours

3.6 Other occupational information

They often have transitory or informal employment since they frequently switch between jobs. Certain occupations, including home assignments, are contractual. There is a deal between the owner and the child workers or between the owner and the parents of the child workers. Like merchants, some employees only work certain seasons. These child workers' earnings are low, even for their subsistence. Most of them get between Rs. 40 and 60 daily. Few people get more than Rs. 60. On holidays, people don't go anywhere because "no work, no pay." Approximately 75% of these juvenile employees are dissatisfied with their jobs. Their employers take advantage of them, sometimes resulting in physical violence. Festival seasons like Dusshera and Baliyatra, among others, are often their highest revenue times as their employers experience more revenue and business. In the absence of such, they are paid less and have few options when their job is slow. Children are not physically mature enough for demanding job. Consequently, they get sick when they do heavy or demanding tasks. Heavy lifting and extended hours of labour have a negative effect on child employees. They experience a variety of illnesses as a result. The majority of kids report that 72% of them feel cold, have bodily aches, and have back problems. children with asthma account for 10% of the population, whereas 8% of children have chest discomfort. Almost none of them received free preventative shots throughout their infancy. They typically don't get checked up by medical professionals, not even once a year. But despite their frequent illnesses, they continue to work.

4 Discussion

Regarding the determinants of child labour, it has been found that poverty or low income is the major factor. 52 percent child labour indicated that poverty is the main cause of their work. 76 percent child labourers are found in the age group 9-14 and rest 24 percent are in the age group 6-8. 70 percent child labourers have never been to school. A higher proportion of boys 40 percent and 30 percent of girls are illiterate. Only 8 percent of boys and 2 percent of girls have education up to secondary school. 52 percent of the childlabour parents have income up to Rs 18,000. Only 16 percent parents have annual income above Rs. 25,000 and 32 percent have income between Rs. 18,001- Rs. 25, 000 per annum. So, it

is quite obvious that, they send their children to work to supplement the family's income. Due to low income of the family, children are deprived of the educational and other facilities which are essential for the proper growth and development. Regarding the nature of work of child labour, it is observed that 32 percent are found working in Hotel and Restaurants. The second highest, which stands at 28 percent, child labourers are found in household works in which maximum are girl child workers. In the activities of hotel & restaurants, garage & motor services, cycle repairing and shoe shining, mostly boys are engaged. Girls are mostly employed in household work. In other categories, hawkers, vendors, decorative gas light carriers in function etc. are included. Child labourers do not enjoy fixed working hours. It varies from one occupation to another. Therefore, a great variation is found in the hours of work of the economically active children, which spread over from four hours to 12 hours a day. Generally they go for work in the morning time up to lunch hours or from the afternoon to the evening according to the need of their work. Survey shows that most of the child workers, as many as 54 percent, work for 9 to 12 hours a day. Sometimes they are found working from the early hours of morning till evening, where as only 28 percent work for 5 to 8 hours a day and 18 percent work for 4 hours a day. As far as weekly offs are concerned, only some of the children working in garages and cycle repairing shops and some self employed children get the facilities. Mostly they work as temporary or casual workers, as they keep on changing from one job to another. Some jobs are contractual like household work. There occurs an agreement between the employer and child workers or between the employer and parents of the child labour. Some workers are seasonal in nature like vendors. The earning of these child labourers is very less even for their own livelihood. Maximum of them get Rs 40 to Rs. 60 per day. Very few get more than Rs 60. On holidays, they remain at home on the basis of „no work no pay“. Around 75 percent of these child labourers are not satisfied with their jobs. Child labour income plays a significant role in the family income. The contribution clearly indicates a positive impact on the annual income of the households of the child labourers. It is found that about 58 percent of the child labourers earn an annual income of Rs 4,001 to Rs. 7,000. 28 percent child labourers earn Rs. 7,001 to Rs. 10,000 annually and rest 14 percent earn income only up to Rs. 4,000 per year. So it is observed that the income level of the child labourers is very low and it is not sufficient even for the basic standard of living. They are under paid and, in some cases, they work only with two meals and no cash payment. It is also found that an educated child earns more than an illiterate child labour. In some cases, children are forced to work in hotels or pick wastes from the roadside. But nobody seems to care. Nobody takes a step forward. More than 20 percent of child labourers are forced to work at hazardous place. They also do over duties with no incentives. If they raise their voice, they are beaten and tortured by the employers. Girls do the same work as boys do but they are paid less. 40 percent of child labourers have the view that they had worked 3-4 months without any wage after which their employer kicked them out without any reason, as there was no agreement between them. 25 percent of the girl child labourers are working in restaurants and hotels, where they have been getting good meals but most of the girl children were physically abused over there. Usually, festival season like are the peak season of income for the child labourers as their employers get better business and profit. Otherwise, they work with less payment and they hardly get any alternative in dry season of their work. Most of the children say 72 percent are suffering from back pain, body pain and cold. About 10 percent suffering from asthma and 8 percent child labourers suffering from chest pain. Usually they don't go for any medical check up even not once in a year. But they fall sick often and even in sickness they go for work.

5 Suggestions And Conclusion

There are usually five kids in each household. One of the main causes of child work is the absence of parental education, which is followed by an inappropriate environment, a bad upbringing, and a lack of interest in school among children. Poverty is the root of all evils. They encourage more and more children to work in household tasks, the collecting of wood, tin, and plastics, automotive workshops, bike maintenance, shoe shining, and hotel and restaurant jobs because they see children as a source of income. Girl child workers labour 10–12 hours a day doing domestic chores for minimal pay and no vacations or other fun. Thus, a child laborer's existence in Ganjam district is characterised by low education, subpar living circumstances, terrible working conditions, unstable employment, little wages, lengthy workdays, etc. They often come from big, impoverished households that are compelled to work to support their families. To sum up, the development of children and the end of child labor depend on a robust public-private partnership, the right government policies, and programs to get rid of poverty and unemployment, free essential services, public awareness, the active participation of citizens and local bodies, and giving education to the inferior, especially women.

Acknowledgement

The authors sincerely thank Department of Political Science, Rama Krishna Dharmarth Foundation, University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India for carrying out the study.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Questionnaire Design for the surveyed child labourers

1.	Age in Years	
2.	Sex	1.Male 2.Female
3.	Ethnic Group (Caste)	
4.	Age you started working as a child labourer	
5.	What did you do before working as a labourer?	1.Attended School 2.Unpaid/Household work in 3.farm,herding, domestic etc. 4.Worked for wages 5.Others
6.	Do your parents know where you are at present?	1.Yes 2.No
6.	Why are you working as a child Labourer?	1.No food/Money at home 2.Forced by parents 3.Run away from home and to support oneself 4.Others (Specify).....
7.	Who brought you to work here?	1.Self

		2.Parent 3.Siblings (Brothers/Sisters) 4.Relative 5.Friends 6.Broker 7.Other (Specify).....
8.	Can you read write in English?	1.NO 2.Read only 3.Read write
9.	Are you currently attending school?	1.Yes 2.No
10.	If you ever were in school, What grade level have you completed?	1.No money 2.No Interest 3.Parent’s didn’t send 4.Too much work at home 5.Others
11.	How far is the nearest school?	
12.	How far is the nearest health post/Hospital?	
13.	When you get sick do you go to the Health center?	1.Yes 2.No
14.	If no, Why?	1.Parents don’t sent 2.Too expensive 3.See local Witchdoctors 4.Others.....
15.	Do you like the services given by the health centers	1.Yes 2.No 3.Somewhat
16.	How often do you get injured while working?	1.Very frequently(Weekly) 2.Frequently(Monthly) 3.Occasionally(Bi-trimonthly) 4.Rarely(Half yearly/Yearly) 5.Never been injured
17.	How many hours in a day do you work?	
18.	What time do you start?	
19.	What time do you end work?	
20.	How many days per week do you work?	
21.	How many months per year do you work?	
22.	Is the job hazardous or non-hazardous?	1.Yes 2.No
23.	How much do you get as salary in your	

	present job?	
24.	Do your seniors behave properly with you?	1.Yes 2.No
25.	Are you satisfied with your present job?	1.Yes 2.No
26.	Do you get any training for your job role?	1.Yes 2.No
27.	Can you work independently?	1.Yes 2.No
28.	Do you get time for playing and recreation?	1.Yes 2.No
29.	Do you face any physical or mental torture?	1.Yes 2.No
30.	Have you tried to raise voice against it?	1.Yes 2.No
31.	Has there been any raid by police or labour officials in your job place?	1.Yes 2.No
32.	What did they question you?	
33.	Do you want to continue doing job?	1.Yes (specify.....) 2.No (specify.....)
33.	Do you want to continue your education again?	1.Yes 2.No
34.	How many members live in your family?	
35.	How many brothers and sisters do you have?	
36.	Is this your native place?	1.Yes 2.No
37.	Have you migrated from other places?	1.Yes 2.No
38.	If migrated, where are originally from?	Specify state/district/village/ward
39.	What type of housing do you have?	1.Plastic / Temporary tent 2.Khar / Paral roofed house 3.Tin roofed house 4.Concrete house
40.	Does your family have farm land?	1.Yes 2.No
41.	Does the family have any livestock?	1.Yes 2.No
42.	Does the house have access to tap water?	1.Yes 2.No
43.	Do you want to continue your education again?	1.Yes 2.No
44.	Don't you like mid-day meals and other	1.Yes

	facilities provided in school?	2.No
45.	Do you like special residential schools?	1.Yes 2.No
46.	How do you like to spend your free time?	
47.	Do you think education is important for you?	1.Yes 2.No
48.	Is your family is completely dependent on your salary?	1.Yes 2.No
49.	For what purpose your wage is being spent by your family?	1.Yes 2.No
50.	Are you getting any special food treatment at your house?	1.Yes 2.No

Appendix 2

Table: block wise survey of child labourers

Block	Gram Panchayat	Village	Observed Child Labour	Child Interviewed
Rangeilunda	Jhadankuli	Jhadankuli	48	12
		Satakutuni	32	10
	Randha	Randha	47	15
		Panchama	23	10
		Badakushasthali	34	15
	Luhajhar	Sitalapalli	29	7
Chatrapur	Narendrapur	Narendrapur	37	11
Purushottampur	Jagannathpur	Jagannathpur	27	16
Sheragada	Narendrapur	BisoyeNuapalli	21	9
Hinjilicut	Burupada	Burupada	30	11
Kukudakhandi	Gurunthi	Gurunthi	43	10
Ganjam	Karapada	Aliabad	26	9
Purushottampur	Sikula	Sikula	34	18

Khallikote	Kairasi	Kandigaon	24	9
	Langaleswar	Bhejiput	36	10
Beguniapada	Phasi	Phasi	45	12
	Angargaon	Angargaon	32	15
Kabisurya Nagar	Athagadapatna	Badaagula	20	07
Aska	Gangapur	Gangapur	45	16
	Bhetnai	Bhetnai	35	19
Total - 12	17	20	697	254

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