

Exploring the Psychological Impact of Child Labour on Emotional Well-being and Self-identity in India

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Abstract

Child labour remains a persistent social and developmental concern in many developing countries, particularly in India, where millions of children are deprived of education, safety, and opportunities for healthy psychological development. Exposure to exploitative labour conditions during childhood has significant implications for emotional well-being, mental health, and the formation of self-identity. The present study aims to explore the psychological impact of child labour on children's emotional well-being and self-concept through a secondary data analysis of existing literature. Data were collected from published research articles, review papers, and qualitative studies focusing on child labour and its psychosocial consequences. The analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns across studies. Six major themes emerged from the analysis: the current prevalence of child labour, mental health outcomes among child labourers, psychological effects on self-esteem and identity, gender differences, socio-economic causes of child labour, and the effectiveness of government policies and interventions. Findings indicate that child labour is strongly associated with adverse psychological outcomes including anxiety, depression, trauma-related symptoms, and diminished self-worth. The study highlights the urgent need for stronger policy implementation, improved access to education and healthcare, and psychosocial support systems to protect vulnerable children and promote their overall development.

Keywords: Child labour, emotional well-being, self-identity, mental health, thematic analysis, India

1. Introduction

"The greatest burden a child must bear is the un-lived life of the parents."

~Carl Gustav Jung

Childhood represents one of the most crucial phases of human development, forming the foundation for an individual's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. During this stage, children develop essential psychological capacities such as identity formation, emotional regulation, and social competence, which significantly influence their wellbeing throughout the lifespan (Putnick & Bornstein, 2021; UNICEF, 2023). Families play a fundamental role in this process by providing children with care, safety, emotional support, and opportunities for learning and exploration. When these developmental needs are adequately met, children are able to grow within supportive environments that foster healthy psychological and social functioning (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; Morrow & Boyden, 2018).

However, millions of children across the world are deprived of such opportunities due to adverse socio-economic conditions. Child labour remains one of the most persistent global social problems, disproportionately affecting children from economically disadvantaged families and marginalized communities (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; Walk Free Foundation, 2023). According to recent global estimates, approximately 160 million children worldwide are engaged in child labour, with a large proportion of them working in hazardous environments that threaten their health, safety, and overall development (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021). These children are often denied access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, and protection, which significantly undermines their developmental outcomes and future life opportunities (UNICEF, 2023; Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020).

India continues to face significant challenges in addressing the issue of child labour despite various legislative and policy interventions. Studies indicate that millions of children in India remain engaged in informal and unregulated labour sectors where they are exposed to exploitative working conditions, physical and emotional abuse, and long working hours (Nagar & Roy, 2016; Pandey et al., 2020). Many of these children are compelled to assume adult responsibilities at an early age, often working as domestic workers, industrial labourers, street vendors, or agricultural workers in order to contribute to their family's income (Bharat et al., 2024; Parvathamma, 2015). At a stage of life that should ideally involve education, play, and social development, these children instead carry the burden of economic survival, often sacrificing their own wellbeing and developmental needs. Beyond its socio-economic implications, child labour also has profound psychological consequences. Exposure to exploitative labour conditions has been linked with increased levels of psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, trauma-related symptoms, and emotional dysregulation among children and adolescents (Jayawardana et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2022; Pandey et al., 2020). Prolonged exposure to harsh working environments, neglect, and abuse can significantly disrupt normal developmental processes, affecting children's self-esteem, identity formation, and long-term mental health outcomes (Libório & Ungar, 2010; Putnick & Bornstein, 2021). These experiences may create long-lasting psychological vulnerabilities that extend into adulthood, thereby perpetuating cycles of social disadvantage and marginalization.

Given the multidimensional impact of child labour on children's psychological and social wellbeing, there is an urgent need to examine its broader developmental consequences through a comprehensive review of existing literature. The present study therefore aims to explore the psychological effects of child labour in India by analyzing existing secondary data sources and identifying key themes related to mental health, identity development, and socio-economic determinants of child labour. By synthesizing findings from previous research, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how child labour shapes the developmental trajectories of affected children and to highlight the importance of stronger social and policy interventions to address this persistent social issue.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Child Labour: Prevalence and Socio-economic Determinants

Child labour continues to be a widespread social issue affecting millions of children across the world, particularly in developing countries. According to global estimates, approximately 160 million children are engaged in child labour worldwide, with a large proportion concentrated in Asia and the Pacific regions (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). In India, millions of children are involved in various forms of labour including agriculture, domestic work, small-scale industries, and informal economic

sectors, often under hazardous and exploitative conditions (Parvathamma, 2015). These working conditions deprive children of education, healthcare, and opportunities for healthy psychological development.

Research consistently identifies poverty as the primary determinant of child labour. Families facing economic hardship often rely on children as a source of additional income to sustain household survival (Nagar & Roy, 2016). Migration from rural to urban areas in search of employment opportunities further increases the likelihood of child labour, as families struggling with unemployment and financial instability often depend on children's work contributions. Naidu and Ramaiah (2006) also highlighted that factors such as low household income, population growth, limited access to quality education, and lack of awareness among economically disadvantaged families contribute significantly to the persistence of child labour in India.

International research also emphasizes the role of structural and socio-economic inequalities in perpetuating child labour. UNICEF (2020) reported that children from marginalized communities and economically vulnerable households are significantly more likely to engage in labour activities compared to their peers. These systemic inequalities create conditions where children are compelled to contribute economically rather than participate in educational and developmental activities. Studies have further argued that the absence of effective social protection systems and limited access to educational opportunities can reinforce cycles of poverty and child labour across generations (Bourdillon et al., 2009).

2.2 Psychological Impact of Child Labour on Mental Health

Beyond its economic and social implications, child labour has profound psychological consequences. Research suggests that children engaged in labour often experience higher levels of emotional distress, trauma, and mental health difficulties compared to non-working children. Pandey et al. (2020) examined childhood maltreatment among 132 Indian adolescents with a history of child work and found that physical abuse, emotional neglect, and parental substance abuse were common experiences among child labourers. The study reported that approximately 83% of the adolescents exhibited significant psychiatric symptoms, including specific phobia, conduct disorder, social phobia, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use.

Longitudinal evidence further indicates that the psychological effects of child labour can persist into later stages of development. Jayawardana et al. (2023), using data from the Indonesia Family Life Survey, found that children involved in labour were more likely to develop mental health problems during adolescence. Interestingly, the study also observed that the negative psychological impact appeared to be more pronounced among boys compared to girls.

Recent research also highlights how economic crises can exacerbate the prevalence and consequences of child labour. During the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability and loss of livelihood significantly increased the risk of children entering the workforce. Kaur et al. (2022) reported that children engaged in labour during this period were exposed to harsh working environments, exploitation, and limited emotional support, which contributed to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and trauma-related symptoms.

Qualitative research further supports these findings. Bharat et al. (2024), through semi-structured interviews and observational methods among child labourers in Punjab, found that children reported experiences of emotional stress, physical exhaustion, and social exclusion. These findings indicate that labour during childhood can significantly disrupt emotional development and overall psychological well-being.

2.3 Self-esteem and Identity Development among Child Labourers

Child labour can also have significant implications for children's self-concept, identity formation, and self-esteem. During childhood and adolescence, individuals develop their sense of competence, personal worth, and social identity through educational experiences, peer interactions, and supportive family environments. However, children engaged in labour often miss these developmental opportunities.

Sharma and Kiran (2017) examined self-esteem levels among child labourers in India and found that children working in industrial and automobile sectors exhibited significantly lower levels of self-esteem compared to other groups. The study also revealed that school-going children demonstrated significantly higher levels of confidence and psychological well-being compared to non-school-going children. Gender differences were also observed, with boys more frequently involved in wage labour while girls were more commonly engaged in domestic work.

Similarly, international studies have suggested that child labour may influence how children perceive their social roles and personal value. Morrow and Boyden (2018) emphasized that working children often internalize social inequalities and may develop feelings of inferiority or marginalization within society. The absence of educational opportunities and social recognition may therefore hinder the development of a positive self-identity.

2.4 Resilience and Coping among Working Children

While most research highlights the negative consequences of child labour, some studies have explored the possibility of resilience among working children. Libório and Ungar (2010) examined children's perspectives on their economic activities and suggested that in some contexts, participation in work may contribute to the development of coping skills, responsibility, and adaptability. However, the authors emphasize that such resilience should not be interpreted as justification for child labour. Instead, resilience often emerges as an adaptive response to adversity rather than a desirable developmental condition.

Other researchers have similarly argued that although children may develop coping strategies in difficult environments, the risks associated with exploitative labour conditions continue to outweigh potential benefits (Bourdillon et al., 2009). Ensuring supportive social environments, educational opportunities, and protective policies is therefore essential for promoting healthy development among vulnerable children.

3. Research Gap

Although existing research has extensively examined the socio-economic causes and general consequences of child labour, relatively fewer studies have specifically focused on how child labour influences children's emotional well-being and self-identity from a psychological perspective, particularly within the Indian context. Much of the literature focuses on economic, legal, or policy aspects of child labour, while the deeper psychological experiences of children involved in labour remain underexplored. Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by synthesizing existing research to examine the psychological impact of child labour on emotional well-being and self-identity through a thematic secondary analysis.

4. Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to examine the psychological consequences of child labour through a thematic analysis of existing literature. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the impact of child labour on children's emotional well-being and mental health.
2. To examine how child labour influences self-esteem and identity development among children.

3. To identify the socio-economic factors contributing to child labour.
4. To analyze gender differences in the experiences of child labour.
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of policies and interventions addressing child labour.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The present study employed a qualitative secondary data analysis design to examine the psychological impact of child labour on children's emotional well-being and self-identity. Secondary data analysis involves the systematic review and interpretation of already published research in order to identify patterns, relationships, and conceptual insights related to a particular phenomenon. This design was considered appropriate because it allows for the synthesis of existing research findings on child labour and its psychological consequences without the need for direct primary data collection. By examining multiple studies together, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the mental health and developmental implications associated with child labour.

5.2 Data Sources and Literature Search

The data for the study were obtained from existing academic literature, including empirical research articles, literature reviews, and qualitative studies examining child labour and its psychological consequences. Relevant studies were identified through academic search engines such as Google Scholar and other scholarly databases using key search terms including child labour, mental health of child labourers, self-esteem among child workers, psychological impact of child labour, and child labour in India.

The search focused primarily on studies conducted within the Indian context, while a limited number of international studies were included to provide broader comparative insights. The final selection of studies consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles that specifically examined the psychosocial, emotional, and developmental outcomes associated with child labour.

5.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies included in the analysis met the following criteria:

1. Research that specifically examined child labour and its psychological, emotional, or developmental effects.
2. Studies discussing mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, trauma, self-esteem, or identity development among child labourers.
3. Peer-reviewed journal articles, qualitative studies, and literature reviews published in English.
4. Studies focusing on developing countries, particularly India, where child labour remains a significant social concern.

Studies that focused exclusively on economic or policy-related aspects of child labour without addressing psychological outcomes were excluded from the analysis.

5.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The selected literature was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, which provides a systematic approach to identifying patterns within qualitative data. The analysis was conducted through the following steps:

1. Familiarization with the data: All selected articles were carefully read multiple times in order to gain a thorough understanding of their findings and key arguments related to child labour and psychological well-being.

2. Generating initial codes: Key concepts and recurring ideas across the studies were identified and coded. These included issues such as mental health problems, emotional distress, self-esteem, resilience, socio-economic factors, and gender differences.
3. Searching for themes: The initial codes were then organized into broader thematic categories that reflected common patterns across the literature.
4. Reviewing themes: The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the findings of the selected studies and were consistent with the objectives of the research.
5. Defining and naming themes: Each theme was clearly defined and labelled in order to capture its central idea and relevance to the psychological impact of child labour.
6. Producing the final thematic narrative: The themes were then integrated into a structured analysis that highlights the major psychological consequences of child labour and the broader socio-cultural factors contributing to the issue.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

Since the study relied entirely on secondary data obtained from publicly available academic sources, no direct involvement of human participants was required. All sources have been appropriately acknowledged and cited in accordance with academic research standards to maintain ethical integrity and avoid plagiarism.

5.6 Thematic Analysis

The secondary data in this study was derived from published sources such as research studies, review papers, exploratory studies, interviews, observation reports, and surveys. The analysis follows the six-step framework for thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which provides a systematic approach for identifying and analyzing patterns within qualitative data. This framework has been widely used in social science and psychological research to explore recurring themes within qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Morrow & Boyden, 2018). Based on the reviewed literature, codes and key themes related to child labour and its psychological implications were identified and categorized.

Theme 1: Current Census

Child labour has consistently been described as a serious social problem affecting millions of children worldwide (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; UNICEF, 2023). Global estimates suggest that Asia continues to have one of the largest concentrations of child labourers, accounting for a significant proportion of the global total, with many children involved in hazardous forms of work (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; Walk Free Foundation, 2023). In India alone, millions of children are deprived of access to education, healthcare, adequate nutrition, and social security due to their participation in the informal labour economy (Nagar & Roy, 2016; Naidu & Ramaiah, 2006). These children are often exposed to unsafe working environments and are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, including physical abuse, emotional neglect, and economic exploitation (Pandey et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2022).

Theme 2: Mental Health and Wellbeing among Child Labourers

Child labour has been widely recognized as a form of exploitation that can negatively impact children's mental and emotional wellbeing (Kaur et al., 2022; Jayawardana et al., 2023). The harsh working conditions and experiences of neglect or abuse that many working children encounter often contribute to psychological distress and emotional instability (Pandey et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2022). Studies have reported that children involved in labour frequently exhibit symptoms such as anxiety, depression, sadness, hopelessness, and trauma-related disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

(Jayawardana et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2022). Research further indicates that prolonged exposure to exploitative labour environments can increase the likelihood of long-term psychiatric disorders in adolescence and adulthood (Pandey et al., 2020; Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020). In several studies, a significant proportion of working adolescents have been found to experience symptoms associated with specific phobia, conduct disorder, social anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic attacks, substance abuse, and depressive symptoms (Kaur et al., 2022; Pandey et al., 2020).

Theme 3: Psychological Effects of Child Labour

The psychological consequences of child labour have been widely documented in the literature, particularly in relation to children's self-concept, emotional development, and identity formation (Sharma & Kiran, 2017; Libório & Ungar, 2010). Many children engaged in labour are forced to assume adult responsibilities at a very young age, working in roles such as domestic servants, industrial labourers, agricultural workers, or street vendors (Bharat et al., 2024). These experiences can significantly influence children's perceptions of self-worth and their understanding of social roles (Sharma & Kiran, 2017). Research comparing working and non-working children has demonstrated that child labourers often report lower levels of self-esteem, particularly among children who are not attending school or who are engaged in physically demanding occupations (Sharma & Kiran, 2017; Putnick & Bornstein, 2021). Some studies have also highlighted that children exposed to difficult working conditions may develop coping mechanisms or resilience; however, such resilience often emerges in response to adversity rather than healthy developmental support (Libório & Ungar, 2010; Morrow & Boyden, 2018).

Theme 4: Gender Differences

Gender differences in child labour patterns have also been frequently discussed in the literature. Studies suggest that boys are more commonly involved in hazardous labour such as industrial work, construction, or agricultural labour, while girls are more likely to be engaged in domestic labour or unpaid household work (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; UNICEF, 2023). In many cases, girls' labour remains underreported because domestic work within households is not always recognized as formal employment (Walk Free Foundation, 2023). Global reports indicate that although the number of girls involved in child labour has declined significantly in recent decades, gender disparities in the type and visibility of labour continue to persist (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021). Research has also suggested that female child labourers may experience lower levels of self-esteem and higher emotional vulnerability compared to male child labourers (Sharma & Kiran, 2017; Pandey et al., 2020).

Theme 5: Causes of Child Labour

Across the literature, poverty has been consistently identified as one of the most significant drivers of child labour (Nagar & Roy, 2016; Bharat et al., 2024). Families living in economically disadvantaged conditions often migrate from rural to urban areas in search of employment opportunities, but frequently face unemployment, unstable wages, and limited economic resources (Parvathamma, 2015). Under such circumstances, children are often compelled to contribute to family income as a means of economic survival (Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020). Other contributing factors include lack of access to quality education, weak enforcement of labour laws, and limited awareness among economically marginalized communities (Parvathamma, 2015; Morrow & Boyden, 2018). Without adequate educational opportunities and skill development, children involved in labour are more likely to remain trapped in cycles of poverty and low-skilled employment in adulthood (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021).

Theme 6: Government Policies and Effective Intervention

Over the past two decades, global initiatives and national policies have contributed to a gradual reduction in the prevalence of child labour (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021). However, despite these efforts, significant numbers of children continue to be engaged in labour, particularly in rural and economically marginalized regions (UNICEF, 2023). Governments have implemented rehabilitation programs, educational schemes, and social welfare initiatives aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of affected families and reintegrating children into educational systems (Naidu & Ramaiah, 2006). Nevertheless, scholars argue that legislation alone cannot effectively eliminate child labour without addressing the underlying socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education (Parvathamma, 2015). Effective interventions therefore require a multi-dimensional approach that includes access to healthcare services, psychological support, social protection programs, and skill development opportunities for affected children (Libório & Ungar, 2010; Kaur et al., 2022). Long-term policy implementation and sustained social awareness are essential in protecting children's rights and ensuring their healthy development.

6. Discussion and Critical Analysis

The present study sought to explore the psychological implications of child labour in India through a thematic analysis of existing literature. The findings highlight the persistent prevalence of child labour and its profound consequences on children's mental health, identity formation, and overall development. The themes identified in this study reveal that child labour remains deeply embedded within broader socio-economic structures, particularly poverty, limited access to education, and structural inequalities within developing societies (Nagar & Roy, 2016; Bharat et al., 2024).

The analysis demonstrates that despite global efforts to reduce child labour, millions of children continue to be engaged in labour-intensive and hazardous occupations. Global reports indicate that developing regions continue to account for the majority of child labour cases, with Asia and Africa contributing significantly to global estimates (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; UNICEF, 2023). The persistence of child labour despite policy interventions suggests that legislative frameworks alone are insufficient to address the problem. Structural issues such as poverty, migration, unemployment, and lack of access to quality education continue to drive families to rely on children as contributors to household income (Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020; Parvathamma, 2015).

One of the most significant findings emerging from the thematic analysis is the severe impact of child labour on mental health and emotional wellbeing. The reviewed literature consistently reports higher levels of psychological distress among child labourers compared to non-working children. Exposure to harsh working environments, neglect, and abuse has been linked to symptoms of anxiety, depression, trauma-related disorders, and behavioural difficulties (Pandey et al., 2020; Jayawardana et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with broader psychological research which suggests that early exposure to chronic stress and adversity can disrupt normal developmental processes and increase vulnerability to mental health disorders later in life (Kaur et al., 2022; Putnick & Bornstein, 2021).

Another key aspect highlighted in this study is the influence of child labour on children's self-concept and identity development. Childhood represents a critical period for the formation of self-esteem and personal identity, yet children involved in labour are often deprived of experiences that support healthy psychological growth. Studies have reported that child labourers, particularly those who are not attending school, often demonstrate lower self-esteem and poorer emotional adjustment compared to their peers

(Sharma & Kiran, 2017). In many cases, children are compelled to assume adult roles and responsibilities prematurely, which may distort their perceptions of self-worth and limit opportunities for normal psychosocial development (Libório & Ungar, 2010).

The analysis also highlights gender differences in the experiences of child labour. While boys are more frequently involved in hazardous labour sectors, girls often engage in unpaid domestic work that remains largely invisible within official statistics (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021). This gendered division of labour reflects broader socio-cultural norms that shape children's roles within families and communities. Additionally, research suggests that female child labourers may experience higher levels of psychological vulnerability due to increased exposure to domestic exploitation and limited access to education (Pandey et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2023).

While the literature highlights numerous negative outcomes associated with child labour, some studies have also suggested that children may develop coping strategies or resilience in response to difficult circumstances. For instance, Libório and Ungar (2010) note that some working children demonstrate adaptive coping mechanisms that enable them to navigate adverse environments. However, it is important to recognize that such resilience often emerges as a survival response to hardship rather than as an indicator of healthy developmental conditions. The normalization of resilience in exploitative contexts risks overlooking the structural inequalities that perpetuate child labour.

From a policy perspective, the findings indicate that effective intervention strategies must extend beyond legal prohibition of child labour. Although governments have introduced several policies aimed at reducing child labour and rehabilitating affected children, the persistence of the problem suggests that enforcement mechanisms remain insufficient (Naidu & Ramaiah, 2006). Addressing the root causes of child labour requires comprehensive socio-economic reforms, including poverty alleviation programs, improved access to education, social protection systems, and community awareness initiatives (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; UNICEF, 2023).

Overall, the findings of this study emphasize that child labour is not merely an economic issue but a complex social and psychological phenomenon that affects children's development, wellbeing, and future life opportunities. Addressing this issue requires coordinated efforts from governments, international organizations, communities, and researchers to ensure that children are provided with safe environments that support their healthy development and protect their fundamental rights.

7. Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have important implications for policymakers, mental health professionals, educators, and social workers. Understanding the psychological consequences of child labour highlights the need for stronger child protection policies and rehabilitation programs that address not only economic issues but also emotional and psychological wellbeing. Mental health services and trauma-informed care should be integrated into rehabilitation programs for rescued child labourers. Additionally, improving access to education and strengthening community awareness programs may help prevent children from entering labour at an early age.

8. Conclusion

Child labour continues to remain a significant social and developmental concern that affects millions of children worldwide, particularly in developing countries such as India. The present study examined the psychological implications of child labour through a thematic analysis of secondary literature. The

findings highlight that child labour is not only an economic issue but also a serious developmental and psychological concern that can have long-term consequences for children's mental health, identity formation, and overall wellbeing (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021; UNICEF, 2023). The analysis revealed that children engaged in labour are often exposed to exploitative working conditions that deprive them of essential developmental opportunities such as education, social interaction, and emotional support. Such experiences may lead to increased psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, trauma-related symptoms, and reduced self-esteem (Pandey et al., 2020; Jayawardana et al., 2023). The findings further indicate that early exposure to labour can disrupt normal developmental processes and negatively influence children's perceptions of self-worth and personal identity (Sharma & Kiran, 2017; Libório & Ungar, 2010).

The study also identified poverty, lack of access to education, and socio-economic inequalities as major factors contributing to the persistence of child labour. These structural issues continue to compel families to rely on their children as sources of income for survival, particularly in economically marginalized communities (Nagar & Roy, 2016; Bharat et al., 2024). While policy interventions and legislative measures have contributed to a gradual reduction in global child labour rates, the findings suggest that enforcement alone is insufficient without addressing the underlying socio-economic determinants of the problem (International Labour Organization & UNICEF, 2021).

Overall, the findings emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive and multi-dimensional approaches to address child labour effectively. Efforts should focus not only on eliminating exploitative labour practices but also on improving access to education, strengthening social protection systems, and providing psychological support and rehabilitation for affected children. Ensuring safe and supportive environments for children is essential for promoting their healthy development and safeguarding their fundamental rights.

In conclusion, addressing the issue of child labour requires sustained collaboration between governments, international organizations, communities, and researchers. By prioritizing child protection and developmental wellbeing, societies can work toward creating environments where children are free from exploitation and are able to reach their full potential.

9. Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research relies solely on secondary data obtained from previously published studies, which limits the ability to directly examine the lived experiences of child labourers. Second, the availability of research focusing specifically on psychological outcomes within the Indian context remains limited, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Finally, variations in research methodologies across the reviewed studies may influence the consistency of reported outcomes.

10. Future Research Directions

Future studies may benefit from conducting primary qualitative research with children who have experienced labour in order to gain deeper insight into their psychological experiences and coping mechanisms. Longitudinal studies could also help understand the long-term mental health outcomes associated with early exposure to labour. Additionally, research examining the effectiveness of rehabilitation and psychological intervention programs for former child labourers may provide valuable insights for improving policy and support systems.

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