



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF CHILD LABOUR FAMILIES IN CARPET INDUSTRY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Yawar Hamid

Research Scholar, Dept. of Economics, Punjabi University, Patiala, India.

Abstract

Socioeconomic status (SES) is an economic and sociological measure of a person's work experience and of an individual or family's economic and social position in relation to income, education, and occupation. While going through the literature on child labour, most of the researchers have emphasized on illiteracy, unemployment and poverty of parents as the main factors responsible for child labour. In the present study an attempt has been made to understand the socio-economic background of child labourers, therefore the age, education, occupation, economic status and the living conditions, etc of the parent, as well as child labourers are illustrated in this chapter.

Introduction

Home is the place where physical, mental and emotional needs of a child are fulfilled. Due to long illness, desertion divorce, imprisonment and death of the parents or adult members of the family, sometimes a child moves away from his home. It is therefore always advisable to place them in an environment which is like a home. The United States Children's Bureau (1939) found broken homes as causes of destitution in 36 percent of boys and 50 percent in girls, disposed of in sixty-four juvenile courts in 1936. Similarly in India, the two follow up studies in Maharashtra by the Indian Council of Social Welfare (A.N. Singh, 1990) revealed that out of 229 and 305 non-delinquents traced and interviewed, 55 percent and 61 percent respectively belong to broken homes. Therefore a child requires proper food, clothing, education, recreation, love, affection and guidance regarding his physical, mental and emotional development, which is not possible if the parents of the children are not alive.

The death of the Head of the family or an adult earning member is one among the most important causes of child labour. In some cases even the disability of the parents, particularly of the family Head due to reasons like ill health, disability etc, becomes an important cause for children to work. Out of the sample of 200 children it has been found that 17 have lost their father and 12 lost their mother.

Table No. 1: Status (Dead/Alive) of the Parents of Child Labourers

Parents Status	Father		Mother		Both	
	Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.
Not Alive	17	8.5	12	6	4	2
Alive	183	91.5	188	94	171	85.5

Source: Field Survey

Out of these 17 children (Table No.1) who have lost their father, 4 lost them as early as below the age of 3 years, 6 when they were between 4 and 6 years, 2 between 7 and 9, and 5 between 10 and 12 years of age. Because of the death of their father who is expected to be main earner in the family the children are compelled to work for their survival and for the survival of the family. The other responsible person for the survival of the family is the mother. Perception of the data collected (Table No.1) reveals that 12 children lost their mother. 4 children lost their mother and father both. The remaining 171 children have both their parents alive.

Table No.2: Distribution of Child Labourers According to the Age at which they lost their Father

Age	Frequency
0-3 Years	4
4-6 Years	6
7-9 Years	2
10-12 Years	5

Source: Field Survey

The study conducted by A. Gani and M.A Shah (1998) reveals that apart from being poor, many of the children have been forced in to economic activity because they have lost one or both of their parents at an early age. In many families where death or accident has debilitated the family members, the earnings of the child are mainstay for the family's survival.



Table No.2 makes it clear that death of parents is an important cause for the children to get employed at a tender age.

Father's Age

The parent's age as well as age of earning members has an important role to play in family income. If the parents are too old, unhealthy and unable to work hard, naturally the children's are burdened with the economic responsibilities of the family. It is evident from Table No.3 that the fathers of 128 workers (64 percent) are young enough to work, since they belong to the age groups below 30 and 30-45, 51 child labourers (25.5 percent) have fathers between 46 and 60 years and only in case of 4 child labourers (2 percent) the fathers are above 61 years of age. The remaining 17 child labourers have lost their father.

Table No.3: Distribution of Child Labourers According to Age of their Fathers

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30 Years	47	23.5
30-45 Years	81	40.5
46-60 Years	51	25.5
Above 61 Years	4	02
Not alive	17	8.5

Source: Field Survey

Gania and M.A Shah (1998) in their study reveal that large scale unemployment in Kashmir valley has inculcated a strong notion among majority of parents that there is no reinforcement after the completion of education and as such they are tempted to direct their children to various trades which yield them immediate results.

A close look at Table No. 3 reveals that a large majority of fathers of child labourers are not too old to work and support their family, but unfortunately still they send their children to work. An attempt has been made to find out the factors which persuade the children to join the labour force inspite of the fact that their parents are not too old to work and support their family. The other factors shown in the proceeding Tables are poverty, low family income, unemployment of parents, indebtedness, bad habits, low level of education, ignorance of parents and so on.

Bad Habits

The habits of parents also play a vital role in the education and economic life of the children. The data collected from the primary survey reveals that most of the male members have one or other bad habits such as chewing naste/gutka , smoking, etc. The sample indicates that out of 183 fathers, 156 were the victims of one or other bad habit. The data given in Table No. 4 gives a detailed picture of bad habits of the fathers of child labour working in carpet industry of Jammu and Kashmir.

Table No.4: Distribution of Child Labourers as per the Habit of their Fathers

Habit of Fathers	Frequency	Percentage
No bad habit	27	13.5
Gutka/Nasti	25	12.5
Smoking	79	39.5
Drinking	09	4.5
Gambling	20	10
Both Smoking and Gutka/Nasti	10	05
Both Smoking and Drinking	06	03
Both Smoking and Gambling	09	4.5
All the above	00	00
Not applicable	17	8.5

Source: Field Survey

Note: The details of the habits of dead fathers not collected is shown in the last column (Not applicable).

Table No. 4 shows that fathers of 79 (39.5 percent) child labourers are in the habit of smoking, 25 (12.5 percent) disclose the habit of gutka/nasti, 09 (4.5percent) habit of drinking, and 20 (10 percent) are in the habit of gambling. On the whole there is no doubt that most of child labourers sacrificed their blowing child hood due to bad habit of their fathers. In other words 156 fathers,(78percent) waste their money on one or other type of bad habit. Moreover the parents with gambling, drinking, and other bad habits do not give proper attention or care to their children. This reason compels children to join the work which is detrimental to their well being and safety.



Educational Status of Parents

Undoubtedly, education plays an important role in the development of an individual, society or the nation. Education is considered to be an investment for developing desirable qualities in human beings. It is an important ingredient of social development. Education makes a man capable of living a socially acceptable life and enables him to become fit to survive in the society. The educated parents plan their families, provide best possible education and recreational facilities to their children. Educated parents are cautious about the nutritional and health requirements of their children and give them love and affection essential for their growth, development and preparation of their future life.

Table No.5: Distribution of Child Labour as per the Level of Education of their Parents

Level of Education	Father	Percentage	Mother	Percentage	Child Labour	Percentage
Illiterate	80	40	90	45	68	34
Up to Primary	50	25	60	30	87	43.5
Above Primary to middle	40	20	32	16	37	18.5
Above Middle to matriculation	10	05	06	03	08	04
Above Matriculation to 12th	03	1.5	00	00	-	-
Joined college or completed Graduation	00	00	00	00	-	-
Any other (Vocational/ Technical)	00	00	00	00	-	-
Not applicable*	17	8.5	12	06	00	00

Source: Field Survey

Note: The details of the education of dead fathers/ mothers not collected is shown in the last column (Not applicable).

The study indicates that 80 (40 percent) fathers were illiterate, 50 (25 percent) have studied up to the primary level, 40(20 percent) up to middle, and 10 (5 percent) have passed middle. The remaining 3 (1.5 percent) have passed matriculation or studied up to 12th. Not a single father of the child labour was a Graduate or joined the college. It has been found that 51.5 percent of fathers and 49 percent of the mothers were literate or having education up to or above primary level. A clear picture of the educational qualifications of the parents is shown in Table No.5.

The literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir is 67.16% as per 2011 Census. This study also reveals that a significant number of fathers (40 percent) and mothers (45 percent) were illiterate, where as only 64(34 percent) of child labourers were found deprived of education. This shows the efforts of the government are on the way to reduce the illiteracy rate in the country when the education of parents is compared with their children. Table No. 5 further reveals that even the educated parents send their children to work at an early age though the number of such persons is not significant. This goes to the support of layman's argue that poverty is the main cause of child labour. A good number of child labourers are working in the carpet industry because of the availability of carpet looms near to their homes or feasibility to work in carpet looms due to cold climate.

Occupational Status of Parents

Parental occupation along with the property owned by the family is the main factor which determines the economic conditions of families of child labourers. It has been observed from the literature available on the said topic that in rural areas that children inherit their family occupations {Nisar Ali (1987), Prabhati Pati(1998)}. A detailed picture of the occupation of parents of sampled child labourers is presented in Table No.6.

Table No. 6: Distribution of Child Labour According to Occupation of Their Parents

Occupation	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployed/ Housewife	12	06	110	55
Agricultural Labour	48	24	20	10
Farmer	13	6.5	00	00
Non agricultural Labour	40	20	16	08
Government service	07	3.5	00	00
Business	20	10	00	00
Carpet Work	35	17.5	30	15
Any other	08	04	12	06
Not Applicable	17	8.5	12	06

Source: Field Survey

Note: The occupational details of dead fathers/ mothers not collected is shown in the last column (Not applicable).



Table No.6 reveals that a smaller proportion of government service class i.e.3.5 percent of fathers and 00 percent of mothers. Further the proportion of unemployed parents is not insignificant, it is 6 percent of fathers and 55 percent mothers who are housewives. Very small number of fathers have adopted small and petty business as their profession i.e. 10 percent of fathers and none among the mothers are engaged in small and petty business. The data presented in the Table No. 6 highlights that the 17.5 percent of fathers are involved in carpet weaving, 24 percent as agricultural labourers, and 20 percent as non agricultural labourers. It is clear from Table No.6 that the parents which are employed in government service do not send their children to work at an early age because they are aware about the ill effects of child work. The study further reveals that 7(3.5 percent) parents were employed in government service, but most of them were working as casual labourers and daily wagers with a very low salary. Further the old tradition of adopting the occupation of parents is getting changed and new occupations are being undertaken by the people of new generation.

Monthly Income of the Family

Family income is an important determinant of standard of life for each and every member of the family and children are no exception to it. High income gives acceleration to the health, education, emotional and psychological behaviour of the children. The children of high income families have an easy access to social network, computer games and other recreational facilities making them social and active both physically and mentally. In contrast the blooming flowers of low income families are being picked from the gardens and forced to forget their fragrance in the carpet looms of Jammu and Kashmir. The monthly family income of parents of child labourers is divided in different groups and is presented in Table No. 7.

Table No. 7: Monthly Income of Child Labour Families

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Up to Rs 2000	22	11
Rs 2000-4000	75	37.5
Rs 4000-6000	70	35
Rs 6000-8000	23	11.5
Rs 8000 and above	10	05

Source: Field Survey

The above Table (Table No.7) reveals that around 97 (48.5 percent) of child labourers have monthly family income of less than Rs 4000, while the remaining 103 (51.5 percent) disclosed their family income per month which varied between Rs 4000 to above 8000. Further the Table 7 reveals that only 23 (11.5 percent) of child labourers monthly family income ranges between Rs 6000-8000 and 35 percent families whose monthly income ranges between Rs 4000-6000. This indicates that due to low income of the family, children were deprived of the facilities which were essential for proper growth and development and on the contrary, they were made to work to supplement their family income. As the parents of child labourers are engaged in the activities which result in very low remunerations and it becomes difficult for them to survive without sending their children to work.

The above results are in line with majority of studies conducted in different parts of the World, India and in its states. The study conducted by Ali, N. (1987) reveals that about 80 percent of the child labourers come from the families having income which ranges between Rs 300-700 per month. The cost of living being higher in the valley than other cities, the level of subsistence is therefore much higher. Over and above there are certain traditions, customs and rituals which embody high costs. This forces the parents to send their children into carpet weaving.

Generally, caste plays a significant role in deciding the social status of families in Indian society. The Indian population presents a very complex structure which is divided into various castes and other sub castes. The caste based social order is classical example of deprived opportunities and privileges.

Table No.8: Caste-Wise Distribution of Child Labour

Caste Composition	Frequency	Percentage
Scheduled Tribes	82	41
Scheduled Castes	03	1.5
Other Backward Classes	40	20
General	75	37.5
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey



Economic Status

Economic status comprises of salary or wages, property owned, savings, indebtedness, etc which is illustrated in detail in the proceeding tables.

Table No.9: Distribution of Child Labourers on the Basis of Property Owned by their Parents

Property Owned	Frequency	Percentage
Land	165	82.5
House	200	100
Vehicle	08	04
Any other	25	12.5

Source: Field Survey

In this study even half an acre of land or a small house, small mud house is also considered as property. The average size of operational holdings in India is 1.6 hectares i.e. 3.95 acres and 0.62 hectares i.e. 1.53 acres in Jammu and Kashmir (Agricultural Census, 2010-11). As per the data collected 100 percent of families of the child workers have owned one or other type of property like land, house, building or some other asset. A close look at Table No. 10 reveals that the actual income they get from property is insignificant. The land and house owned by 90 percent of them does not contribute any thing to their income because the houses are just used for their own dwelling and are too small to fetch any income. Moreover most of them grow the grains essential for their own use rather than for sale. The trend of diverting land to the apple cultivation is also prevalent in the child labour families, but due to infancy nature of apple trees, it contributes very low or negligible income to the families of child labourers. Altogether only 4% of the families have their own vehicle (two wheeler or three wheeler).

Table No.10: Contribution of Property to Monthly Family Income of Child Labourers

Income	Frequency	Percentage
Nil	98	49
Less than Rs 500	40	20
Rs 500-1000	36	18
Rs 1000-1500	18	09
Above Rs 1500	08	04

Source: Field Survey

100 percent of families have one or other property. Table No.7.10 indicates that 49 percent families do not get any income from their property and 20 percent get income of less than Rs 500 per month from the property. The remaining 31 percent of the families of child labourers get Rs 1500 or more from the property.

Almost all the families of child laborers live in their own houses. The field survey reports no cases in which the families of child labourers live in rented houses.

Table No.11: Distribution of Child Labourers on the Basis of House Ownership

House Ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Owned	200	100
Rented	00	00

Source: Field Survey

Savings

It is quite natural that parents of working children whose income is low can not save or they save very little. But 40 percent of child labourer families who are conscious enough and think for their future save little from their income. The data presented in Table No. 7.12 gives the picture of the savings. Out of the sample of 200 child labour families 120 (60 percent) do not save any thing, 26.5 percent families have savings of less than Rs 1000 and among them 25 percent families have savings of less than Rs 500 per month . A very small number have savings above Rs 1500 per month.

Table No.12: Distribution of Child Labourers as per Monthly Savings of their Family

Monthly saving in Rupees	Frequency	Percentage
Nil	120	60
Less than Rs 500	30	15



Rs 500-1000	23	11.5
Rs 1000-1500	15	7.5
Above Rs 1500	12	06

Source: Field Survey

Indebtedness

The most serious problem of rural economy of India is indebtedness, and the child labour families are not an exemption to it. Some of the child labourers gave the reason of reducing the burden of loan of their parents the main reason to join the workforce. The data collected from the study area reveals that a large number of child labour families have debt in one or some other form.

The monthly income, saving or indebtedness of parents are the indicators of the economic condition of their families. It is therefore necessary to know the gross root picture of their indebtedness.

In the present sample of 200 child labourer families, 70 percent of the families have taken loan in one or some other form, 30 percent of families have not taken loan. Out of 70 percent households 61 percent have taken loan up to the extent of Rs 10,000, and 9 percent households have taken above Rs 10000. Further Table No.13 reveals that 10 percent have taken loan below Rs 2000, 23.5 percent below Rs 3000, and 51 percent below Rs 5000. Households who have taken the loan in the range of Rs 5000-10000 are 10 percent. It was also found that 41.5 percent of respondents have borrowed money from their employers which is the easiest available source and they repay it from the wages of their working children which is a contentious process (Table No.14). The traditional system of social security in the villages i.e. help from the relatives and friends provided loan to 30 (15 percent) as per their needs, 4.5 percent have taken loans from money lenders which they repay with varying rates of interest. It was surprising to know that only 09 percent of households have taken loan from banks which can be attributed to the reason of low banking habits, time taken in completing the formalities, lengthy procedures and other mortgage related issues. It was observed that employers were also interested that child workers should continue in their own carpet weaving looms and as such introduced the system of distributing loans at lower or negligible rates of interest. Thus, employers could get the opportunity to oblige the parents of child workers and also find way to exploit them by making work for long hours and achieve maximum production at cheaper rates. It was also reported that the working children who were in debt were bound to work in their employers carpet looms until the payment of debt was cleared.

Table No.13: Distribution of Child Labour Families According to Extent of Loan

Extent of Loan	Frequency	Percentage
Nil	60	30
Less than Rs 2000	20	10
Rs 2001-3000	27	13.5
Rs 3001-4000	30	15
Rs 4001-5000	25	12.5
Above Rs 5000 and below Rs 10000	20	10
Above Rs 10000	18	09

Source: Field Survey

Table No.14: Distribution of Child Labour Families According to Source of Loan

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Friends and relatives	30	15
Employers	83	41.5
Money lenders	09	4.5
Banks	18	09
Not applicable	60	30

Source: Field Survey

Purpose of Loan

Information gathered from the parents regarding the purpose for which loan was taken is presented in Table No.15. The data presented in Table No.15 indicates that 24 (12) percent took loan for marriage purposes. The households in order to maintain their status spend more and more on such occasions, another 70 (35 percent) had taken it in order to meet daily expenses such as purchase of grains, clothes, and maintenance of houses. Whereas 14 (07 percent) gave the reason of illness or hospital expenses of family members for indebtedness. A good number of respondents specify the option of "some other reason" which they were not willing to disclose. It is evident from the Table No.15 that none of the household took any loan to start any productive work like starting his own carpet loom, establishment of small business, etc.



Table No.15: Purpose of Loan

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
To meet day to day expenses	70	35
Sickness /Hospital expenses	14	07
Marriage	24	12
Business establishment/	18	09
Other reasons	14	07
Not applicable	60	30

Source: Field Survey

Conclusion

The Indian constitution in 2009 makes a land mark decision of making Right to Education as fundamental right of every citizen which fulfills liabilities of the nation laid down in Article 21 A of the Constitution. By making it a right, India ranks 135th country of the world in terms of free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years, but still the government is not in a position to encourage poor parents to send their children to schools. It is evident from Census 2011 that India has more than one Crore child labourers. Most child labourers start working at a very young age, are malnourished, and work long hours in hazardous occupations which can harm not only their physical development but also spiritual and mental development. From various exploitative forms of child labour, carpet work is one of the most abusive forms of child labour. In Employment of Children Act, 1938 this particular occupation was considered hazardous and a prohibited activity for the children below 14 years. Still the children are being largely employed in the carpet looms. Later child labour in this particular activity was also prohibited by Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. In spite of this, a large number of children can be found working in carpet looms even today. They are considered obedient and cheaper as compared to the adult workers.

To conclude, we can say that working children in the carpet industry of Kashmir came from economically weak as well as socially backward families. The economic conditions of these families are so bad that even the earnings of these young are used for the repaying of loan or to maintain the livelihood of adult members.

References

1. Ali, N.(1987), “ Child Labour in Carpet industry of Kashmir” in Gupta, M. (ed.), Young Hands at Work: Child Labour in India, Atma Ram and Sons, Dehli.
2. Burra, N, (1995), Born to Work: Child Labour in India, Oxford University Press, Calcutta.
3. Cain, M, (1977), “The Economic Activities of Children in a Village in Bangladesh”, Population and Development Review, Vol. 3, No. 3.
4. Chambarbagwala , R. (2008) “ Regional Returns to Education, Child Labour and Schooling in India” Journal of Development Studies, Vol.44, NO. 2.
5. Chatterjee, P. K. And Arun K. Nandi (2001), “Child Labour: Inter-State Variations in Rural India”, in K. P. Kanan (ed.), Economics of Child Labour, Deep & Deep Publication, New Delhi.
6. Chattopadhaya, K.,(1969), Carpet and Floor Covering in India, Taraporevala, Bombay.
7. Das, S. And D. Mukherjee, (2007) “Role Of Women In Schooling And Child Labour Decision: The Case Of Urban Boys In India”, Social Indicator Research, Vol. 82, No. 3.
9. Delap, E.(2001), “Economic and Cultural Forces in the Child Labour Debate: Evidence from Urban Bangladesh” Journal of Development Studies, Vol.37, No.4.
10. Dennis, M. J, (1999), “The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor” The American Journal of International Law, Vol. 93, No. 4 .
11. Dey, R. And Aklash, K. (2008), “Study on Factors Leading to Socio Economic issues of Weavers in Handmade Carpet Industry in Nowgam Payeen and Zalpora villages of Bandipora District of Jammu & Kashmir” , (A Report of Indo-Global Social Service Society)
12. Dhar, S. (1999), Jammu and Kashmir, National Book Trust, Delhi.
13. Dhillion, S.S. and A. Arora, (2001), “Child Labour in Prosperous State: A case Study of Socio-Economic and Working Cconditions in the Knitting Industry in Amritsar”, in K. P. Kanan (eds.), Economics of Child Labour, Deep & Deep Publication, New Delhi.
14. Erasdo, L. (2005), “Child Labour and Schooling Decisions in Urban and Rural Areas: Comparative evidence from Nepal, Peru and Zimbabwe”, World Development, Vol.33, No.3.
15. Gaini, A. And M.A. Shah, (1998), “Child Labour in Carpet industry of Kashmir” Indian Journal Of Industrial Releations, Vol.33, No.3.
16. Gangrade, K.D. (1982) “Child and the Law”, NIPCCD, New Delhi.