

Foundation Course
Semester 1
UNIT 6
GROWING SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN INDIA

Child Labour and Child Abuse

Child labour is done by any working child who is under the age specified by law. The word, “work” means full time commercial work to sustain self or add to the family income. Child labour is a hazard to a Child’s mental, physical, social, educational, emotional and spiritual development. Broadly any child who is employed in activities to feed self and family is being subjected to “child labour”.

It is obligatory for all countries to set a minimum age for employment according to the rules of ILO written in Convention 138(C.138). The stipulated age for employment should not be below the age for finishing compulsory schooling that is not below the age of 15. Developing countries are allowed to set the minimum age at 14 years in accordance with their socio- economic circumstances.

The issue of Child labour is a world phenomenon which is considered exploitative and inhuman. Child labour is widely prevalent in some form or the other, all over the world. The term is used for domestic work, factory work, agriculture, mining, quarrying, having own work or business’ like selling food etc, helping parent’s business and doing odd jobs. Children are regularly employed to guide tourists, sometimes doubling up as a marketing force to bring in business for shop owners and other business establishment. In some industries children are forced to do repetitive and tedious work like weaving carpets, assembling boxes, polishing shoes, cleaning and arranging shops goods. It is seen that children are found working more in the informal sectors compared to factories and commercial registered organizations. Little children are often

seen selling in the streets or working as domestic servants within the high walls of homes – hidden away from the eyes of the outside

world. The children are used for military purpose and child prostitution. The most appalling form of child labour is prostitution and modelling for child pornography. Some children are even sold to fiefs by their parents for money.

According to the statistics given by International Labour Organization there are about 218 million children between the age of 5 and 17 working all over the world. The figure excludes domestic labour. The fact that vulnerable children are being exploited and forced into work, which is not fit for their age, is a human rights concern now. India and other developed and developing countries are really plagued by the problem of child employment in organized and unorganized sectors.

Child labour is a human rights issue of immense sensitivity.

Child labour is considered exploitative by the United Nations and International Labour Organization. The article 32 of the UN speaks about child labour as follows-“States parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

In India, Mizoram has the highest share of workers aged between 5 and 14 years in total population. Lakshwadeep has the lowest share of workers aged between 5 and 14 years in total population. The most inhuman and onerous form of child exploitation is the age old practice of bonded labour in India. In this, the child is sold to the loaner like a commodity for a certain period of time. His labour is treated like security or collateral security and cunning rich men procure them for small sums at exorbitant interest rates. The practice of bonded child labour is prevalent in many parts of rural India, but is very conspicuously in the Vellore district of Tamil Nadu. Here the bonded child is allowed to reside with his parents, if he presents himself for work at 8 a.m. every day. The practice of child bonded labour persists like a scourge to humanity in spite of many laws against it. These laws although stringent and providing for imprisonment and imposition of huge fines on those who are found guilty are literally non- functional in terms of implementation.

CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

The following are the major causes of child labour in India:

Poverty : Parents are forced to send little children into hazardous jobs for reasons of survival, even when they know it is wrong. Monetary constraints and the need for food, shelter and clothing drives their children in the trap of premature labour.

Illiteracy of Parents : It is yet another important cause of concern that the parents take their children to the work site to teach them work. They think that more hands for work will bring more income in the family. Hence illiterate parents are the main cause of child labour.

Unemployment: The parents feel that even educated people remain unemployed. Hence there is no need to waste money in providing education to the child. It would be better if the children remain unemployed. This kind of feeling leads to child labour in the country.

Over Population : Over population in some regions creates paucity of resources. When there are limited means and more

EFFECTS OF CHILD LABOUR

The following is the effect of child labour on the child and on the society:

Health Effects: Child Labour at a fairly age creates problem for children in the future with respect to health. Children are forced to perform strenuous work which affects their physical and mental growth at a young age.

Denying of education: The poor families deny education to their child because they send their children to work. The poor child will support the family and earn bread and butter at a very tender age. The uneducated parents deny even basic education to their children.

Effects on personality: The child labourers suffer from health problems. They remain illiterate and they do not get any parental care. The unbounded exploitation and hardships at

work adversely affects their personality development.

Poor image of the country: It is said that India has the largest number of child labourers in the world. It gives a poor image of the country and also portrays the government badly.

Effects on HRD: HRD is the acronym of Human Resource Development. Human Resource is the most important resource of a country. If you want the country to develop then you should have a strong human resource in the country. The HRD is possible only through proper education, training etc. Child Labour has a negative effect on the development of human resources.

Effects on the society: The children who are employed at a very young age falls victims to various social evils like smoking, drinking, gambling and smuggling. They start earning at a very young age and since they have money, they spent a good chunk of the money on these evils. In the later part of their life they become addict and this addiction affects their family and the society.

Increase in Juvenile delinquency: Most of the child labourers in Mumbai and other cities are runaway children. Due to exploitation from their family and their employers they run away to other cities. Most of the time they remain unemployed in the cities. This compels them to get involved in crimes like pick pocketing and they turn juvenile delinquents. Juvenile delinquency means crimes committed by persons who are below the age of 17 years.

Encroachment of Human Rights: The child labourers are not treated properly and they are exploited beyond the limits of their human rights. They are scolded and beaten up by their employers. Hence their growth as a child stops. They forget their childhood and become mature at a very young age. They have to live under considerable amount of stress.

MEASURES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF CHILD LABOUR

Poverty Alleviation: Poverty is one of the root cause of child labour. The government should start various poverty

alleviation programmes and implement them in reality. Infact the government has started various poverty alleviation programmes but due to problems like corruption these programmes remain only on paper. They do not reach to the poor man at all.

Free Education: The poor and the orphaned children should be provided with facilities like free education along with free clothing, housing and also their need for food should be looked after. These facilities should be provided at the taluka and the district levels.

Generation of interest in education: The drop-out rates in India are extremely high especially in the rural areas. In order to reduce this drop-out rates it is extremely important to develop interest of children in their study. If they are regular in school, then they would not fail in the exams and they will not move towards employment.

Availability of jobs: The poor children should be provided with jobs along with education through schemes like 'Earn and Learn'. This scheme should be implemented everywhere in the country. The school education should be based on vocational guidance itself. This will help to develop a kind of self respect amongst the child labourers.

Adult Education: Illiterate parents are the cause of child labour. Hence adult education should be provided to the poor illiterate parents. This will help them to understand the importance of education and they will encourage their children too to take education.

Social Awareness: This is the need of the hour today. The social workers should visit the slums in the cities and the rural areas and generate awareness about the importance of education in children and how child labour is harmful for the child. They should make the people aware about the future of the child and they should try to develop trust amongst the parents.

Freedom from bonded labour: The laws related to bonded labour system should be made more stringent and should be strictly implemented. Children should be made free from bonded labour.

Change in the survey method: When the employers come to know that the government has started taking child labour census or survey, they give leave to the child labourers from work. Hence we do not have proper statistics of child labourers in India. For this, the survey method itself should be changed. If this work is done by the National Social Service institutes or the Post Graduate level students then the real statistics will be known to all.

Efforts taken by the government:

Child Labour Cell: It was set up by the government and it performs the following functions like :

- Formulating and implementing policies and programmes for solving the problem of child labour.
- To monitor projects like the NCLP(National Child Labour Projects).
- To render financial assistance to voluntary organizations for taking up action oriented projects for child labour.
- To monitor and enforce the Child Labour (Protection and Regulation)Act, 1986.
- To organize various workshops and seminars for generating awareness about child labour.

National Child Labour Project: It was set up in the areas of high concentration of child labour for their identification, withdrawal and elimination. The package of benefits to child labour for their rehabilitation includes formal or non-formal education, vocational training, nutrition, health care, stipend. About 500 such projects are taken up in the country to identify and rehabilitate child workers.

Indo-US Dollar Matching Grant: This is a joint project undertaken by US Ministry of Labour and the Indian Ministry of Labour in 2000 to completely eliminate child labour from identified hazardous industries in identified districts. It was launched in 2004. Under this project the US Government would provide 20 million US Dollars and an equal amount has contributed by the Government of India.

Role of NGO's: A number of non-governmental organizations are working for the benefit of the child labourers. CRY(Child Relief and You), SEVA, ANKUR, PRABHA-TARA, ICCW,

BUTTERFLIES etc are some of the NGO's working in this direction. They organize various plans and programmes to eliminate the problem of child labour.

CHILD-ABUSE EFFECT AND WAY TO PREVENT

Child abuse refers to the intended ,unintended and perceived maltreatment of the child ,whether habitual or not, including any of the following: Psychological and physical abuse, neglect ,cruelty, sexual and emotional maltreatment. Any act, deed or word which debases, degrades or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child as a human being. Unreasonable deprivation of his/her basic needs for survival such as food and shelter, or failure to give timely medical treatment to an injured child resulting in serious impairment of his/her growth and development or in his/her permanent incapacity or death.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is inflicting physical injury upon a child. This may include hitting ,shaking ,kicking beating ,or otherwise harming a child physically.

Emotional abuse (also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse and psychological maltreatment) cognitive, emotional, or mental distress/trauma caused to the child.

Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behaviour with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals ,making the child fondle an adult's genitals ,sexual assault exhibitionism and pornography.

Neglect involves physical, educational, emotional or psychological neglect. Unreasonable deprivation of his or her basic needs for survival such as food, clothing and shelter or failure to get timely medical attention or provision of basic needs of education.

Exploitation refers to child prostitution and child labour. To be considered as child abuse, these acts have to be committed by a person responsible for the care of a child or related to the child (for example a baby-sitter or a parent, neighbour, relatives extended family member, peer, older child, friend, stranger or a

day-care provider).

According to WHO, "Physical abuse is the inflicting of physical injury upon a child. This may include burning hitting punching shaking, kicking beating or otherwise harming a child. The parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child. It may however be the result of over-discipline or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age."

Everyone knows that childhood never comes back. The childhood days are the days of enjoyment. However, today the life of most of the children has become terrible. The over competitive world, the demands of globalized world, the ignorant parents, ignorant society, all have made the life of a child miserable. The child, whether a girl or a boy, is used and abused.

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE IN INDIA

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE IN INDIA

Nineteen percent of the world's children live in India.

According to the 2001 Census ,some 440 million people in the country today are aged below eighteen years and constitute 42 percent of India's total population i.e. ,four out of every ten persons is a child. This is an enormous number of children that the country has to take care of.

The National Policy for Children, 1974 ,declared children to be a supreme national asset. It pledges measures to secure and safeguard all their needs and declares that this could be done by making wise use of available national resources. Unfortunately the ten successive Five Year Plans have not allocated adequate resources to meet the needs of children.

Ministry of Women and Child Development revealed that total expenditure on children in 2005-2006 in health, education, development and protection together amounted to a mere 3.86%, rising to 4.91% in2006-07.

Almost every day the newspaper in India is filled with the news of a child exploited in open field or a child physically tortured by parents especially for a girl child right from her birth life is like a bag of sorrows and tortures.

CAUSES OF CHILD ABUSE

The following are the various causes of child abuse:

Disobedience: The moral value of obeying parents, teachers and elders is taught to the child but it is not necessary that whatever is taught the child will follow. If the child disobeys his parents and elders then the parents may scold him or may beat him severely, if his disobedience has made them to lose their honour in front of others. At school his disobedience towards teachers may lead to severe corporal punishment.

Quarrels: The quarrels between the parents and children may lead to abuse. The child may develop negativity about his parents and he may dislike his parents. If the parents feel that the child has crossed his limits then they will beat the child and harm him physically and mentally.

Dislike of Studies: If the child is not interested in studies at all then it is hard to develop interest of studies in him. The child will bunk the class and may be regularly absent from the school. The dislike of studies will earn him poor grades and the parents may beat him black and blue over this and will live permanent scars on his mind. This will do nothing but will harden his dislike towards studies. Most of the times it happens that the parents ask the child to leave their home. The child really leaves the home and then other problems like prostitution, beggary, addictions are generated.

Bad Habits: The bad habits of child like telling lies, bullying, stealing will lead to his abuse by his parents, elders and teachers. Naturally the parents will scold the child for his bad habits but sometimes the scolding crosses its limits and leads to physical and mental abuse of the child.

Complaints: The regular complaints from school teachers will be insulting to the parents. The parents in turn may beat up the child for this.

Loss of items: Many children have the habit to loose various items like pen, pencils, rubbers, sharpners, money, umbrella, school books, water bottle etc. But if the parents decide to teah the child a lesson so that he will not loose the things in

future then the child is beaten and harmed by the parents.

Poverty: The financially poor parents make their children to work. If the child refuses to work then he is tortured and abused till he says 'yes' to work.

Frustrated Parents: The parents who are not doing well financially or who are regularly ill-treated by their boss or who do not have good social relations with their colleagues are frustrated. They try to remove their frustrating by misbehaving with their spouse and children. The children are innocent victims of their torture and abuse.

Neglected Parents: The parents who were neglected in their childhood will try to remove their guilt over their children. Such parents may go to the extent of physical and mental abuse of their child.

Addicted Parents: The parents who are chain smokers, alcoholic, drug addicts may harm the child when they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Such parents do not abuse the child intentionally but their intoxication leads to physical and mental abuse of the child.

New Parents: New Parents means step father or step mother of the child who are totally new for the child. The child will have problems of adjustment with such parents and the child may not obey them or may curse them or misbehave with them. Then these new parents with their new colors start abusing the child physically and mentally. In very rare of the rarest case, we find that the new parents are able to create trust in the child.

Working Parents: Generally the child abuse of working parents is more than that of the non-working parents. If both the parents are working then they have to keep the child in day care or in the custody of elders or relatives. Such children are then exploited sexually by the care takers.

There are multi-faceted effects of child abuse as follows:

Low Self Esteem: When the parents fail to provide the much needed love and affection to their child, then the child

experiences low self esteem. The child starts feeling guilty for whatever happens in the family. This affects the mental well being of the child.

Those children who are sexually abused may have extreme form of low self esteem which may develop suicidal tendency in the mind of the child.

Feeling of Alienation: An abused child expresses feeling of alienation. He may have family problems, such as divorced parents, poverty etc. Due to inferiority complex, the child may not be able to develop healthy social contacts with others. The child may not trust anyone and he may detach himself from family and society.

Severed relationships: An abused child builds poor inter-personal relationships with the members of the society as well as with his family. The child becomes aggressive and withdraws himself from the society.

Poor Academic Performance: An abused child has no interest in studies. Hence his academic results are affected. He may be a slow learner and he may be a bully in the class. The child may be poorly dressed in the class and he may be careful about his appearance.

Smoking: Child abuse may develop the habit of smoking in the child. An abused child may tend to smoke more when anxious and frustrated. Smoking may give a sense of relaxation to the child and for sometimes he may forget the torture through which he has gone.

Alcoholism: An abused child may resort to alcoholism. His addiction to alcohol would be a kind of defense mechanism to hide his guilt, his inability to protest the abuser and his poor self image. Poor parent-child relationship, conflicts with siblings, undue comparisons etc may lead to addiction of alcohol.

Drug Addiction: Child abuse may lead to drug addiction to the victim. Due to depression or lack of interest, a child may take drugs. The child feels that by taking drugs, he may seek pleasurable experiences.

Prostitution: The child who is abused may engage in prostitution either to satisfy his physical needs or to gratify his social needs or to regenerate his low self esteem.

Juvenile Delinquency: An abused child most of the time is

seen to be developing criminal tendencies. He may become a juvenile delinquent and he may resort to crimes like pick pocketing, kidnapping, murdering, looting, smuggling, robbery etc. By doing so the child may take a revenge on the society which gave him insult and abuse.

Poverty: Naturally if the child has poor academic performance and if he develops habits like smoking, drinking and drug addiction then he would not be able to develop his career. Due to this he will have low income or no income at all. This ultimately will lead to poverty.

PREVENTION

In India the children are the silent sufferers. They do not speak out and if they speak no one trusts them.

Harmful traditional practices like child marriage ,caste system, discrimination against the girl child ,child labour and Devadasi tradition impact negatively on children and increase their vulnerability to abuse and neglect. Lack of adequate nutrition , poor access to medical and educational facilities ,migration from rural to urban areas leading to rise in urban poverty ,children on the streets and child beggars ,all result in breakdown of families. This increases the vulnerability of children and exposes them to situations of abuse and exploitation.

The child abuse should be prevented at three levels:

At the primary level, the parents should be made aware of the rights of the child and the long term effects of the abuse on the personality development of the child.

At the secondary level, there should be early detection of causes of child abuse, quick intervention and provision of a supportive environment in schools and families.

At the tertiary level, there should be involvement of the police, courts, counselors, doctors and social workers.

Awareness and Education: Proper education helps in creating awareness of the dangers of child abuse. Education on child abuse should be integrated in school and college curriculum. The mass media should provide enough publicity to the news of child abuse and try to generate a mass

discussion on this topic.

Family Support: The family members of the child should understand that a healthy environment at home leads to a healthy child. A good parent-child relationship at home helps to create an environment where the child is confident, wanted, secured and where he can share all his feelings, his joys and sorrows. The parents should understand the intellectual limits of their child and they should keep their expectations from the child accordingly. The parents should not involve in useless comparison of their child with the other children. This will definitely create a positive impact on the personality development of the child.

Counselling Centres: The counseling centres may have helpline numbers for easy accessibility for the child to seek help. They may help the child to cope with traumatic situations. They help to improve the child's ability to perform better. They also helps to improve te inter-personal relations and help to develop self-confidence.

Role of the NGO's: The NGO's should take active steps in preventing child abuse. They may work in areas like sexual abuse of child, street children , child labour etc.

Government Measures: **The government should organize** anti-child abuse campaigns. It should heavily fine and lay strict punishments to the offenders of child abuse. The government should gather support from the NGOs, the Police to find incidences of child abuse and should punish the abusers. The government should enact laws against child abuse. Infact in March 2011, the government has passed THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFECNCES BILL to protect the children from sexual abuse, sexual harassmt and child pornography.