

An Analytical Study on Problems and Preventive Strategies for Child Labor in India

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Abstract- In India, child labor is a major problem since early childhood labor market participation entails skipping out on a suitable education, which limits future opportunities for better living. Basically, child labor is a complicated issue that has its roots mostly in poverty. The country is presently suffering because of this social disease. In India, the percentage of the labor force under the age of fourteen is 3.6 per cent. Approximately 85 per cent work in the traditional agricultural industry, 9 per cent are employed in manufacturing, services, and repairs, and 0.8 per cent work in factories. Using kids as domestic helpers in cities is an increasing trend. Children labor under utterly unregulated conditions, frequently without access to food and for pitiful pay that is akin to slavery. There are instances of child domestic servants being abused physically, sexually, or emotionally. In India, the abolition of child labor is a top priority that is being carried out by the Government. Along with national and international institutions, many non-governmental and volunteer organizations are active in this process. The government is regularly concerned about the issues of child labour and implements strict laws against child labour. The present study tried to highlight the necessary steps taken by the government to resolve the problem of child labour in India.

Keywords: Child Labour, Poverty, Society, Slavery, Child education, Children's rights.

INTRODUCTION

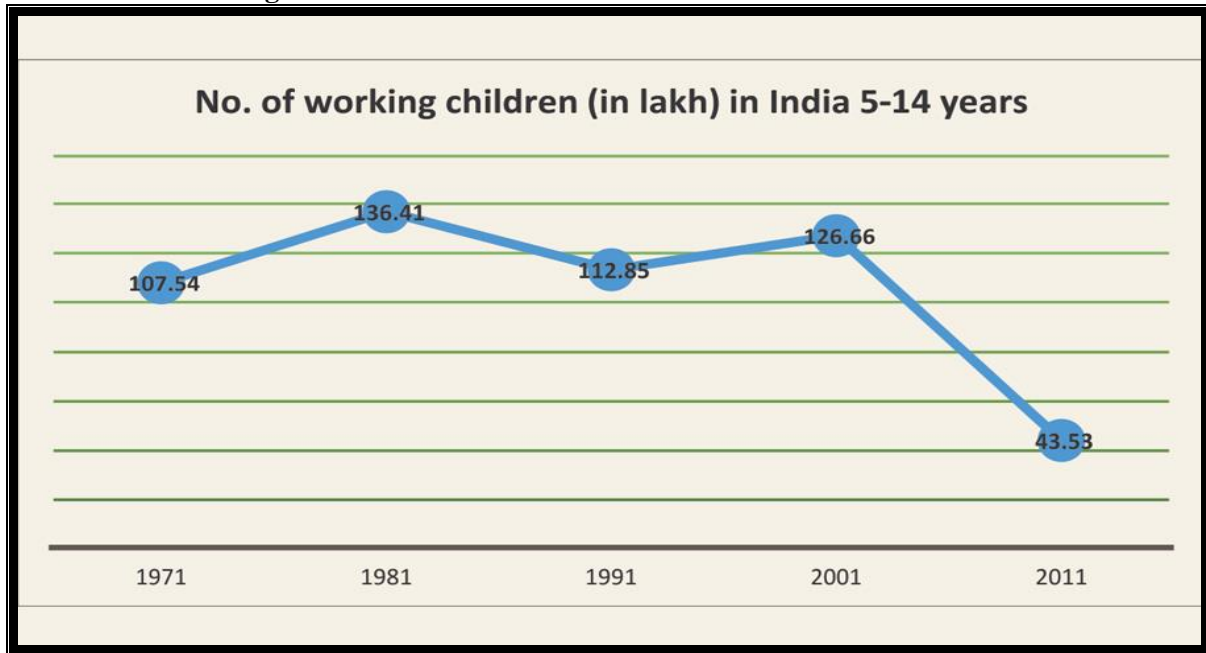
"Bestow blessing on those little innocent lives bloomed on earth who have who have brought the message of joy from heavenly garden."

Rabindra Nath Tagore

A child is a nation's greatest asset and its greatest future asset. Rapid industrialization is occurring in the globalized period, which is generating more jobs in India. In this related situation, child labor becomes the most influential factor due to its accessibility and low cost. A careful examination of the underlying reasons of child labor is necessary in the current context. The high rate of school dropouts in India can be attributed to the pervasiveness of child labor in the community. Numerous social and economic discriminations are present in the community, which contribute to widespread poverty, illiteracy, backwardness, social prejudice, and unemployment. These factors are the main reasons why child labor is so common in India. This study applies both qualitative and quantitative analysis to the topic of child labor throughout a wide latitude range. This study aims to present a situation in which child labor is brought up and elaborate on the several issues that have arisen as a result of this specific problem. The necessary steps to address these problems with child labor are suggested. In conclusion, this article suggests that the solutions suggested could be valuable in resolving the issues that have arisen as a result of child labor (Bhagwan P. et al, 2008).

These days, a sizable portion of children engage in the most horrifying forms of juvenile labor, which include child prostitution, child trafficking, child slavery, and child soldiers. In the modern era of technological and artistic advancement, children are actually brutally abused in almost every nation. 13 million youths labor worldwide, according to official statistics. In any case, the actual figure is much greater. Of the estimated 250 million financially influential youngsters between the ages of 5 and 14, between 50 and 60 million are estimated to be engaged in intolerable forms of employment. Among the 10 to 14 year-old youths the working rate is 41.3 per cent in Kenya, 31.4 per cent in Senegal, 30.1 per cent in Bangladesh, 25.8 per cent in Nigeria, 24 per cent in Turkey, 17.7 per cent in Pakistan, 16.1 per cent in Brazil, 14.4 per cent in India, 11.6 per cent in China (Lal B. Suresh & B. Bichu, 2016).

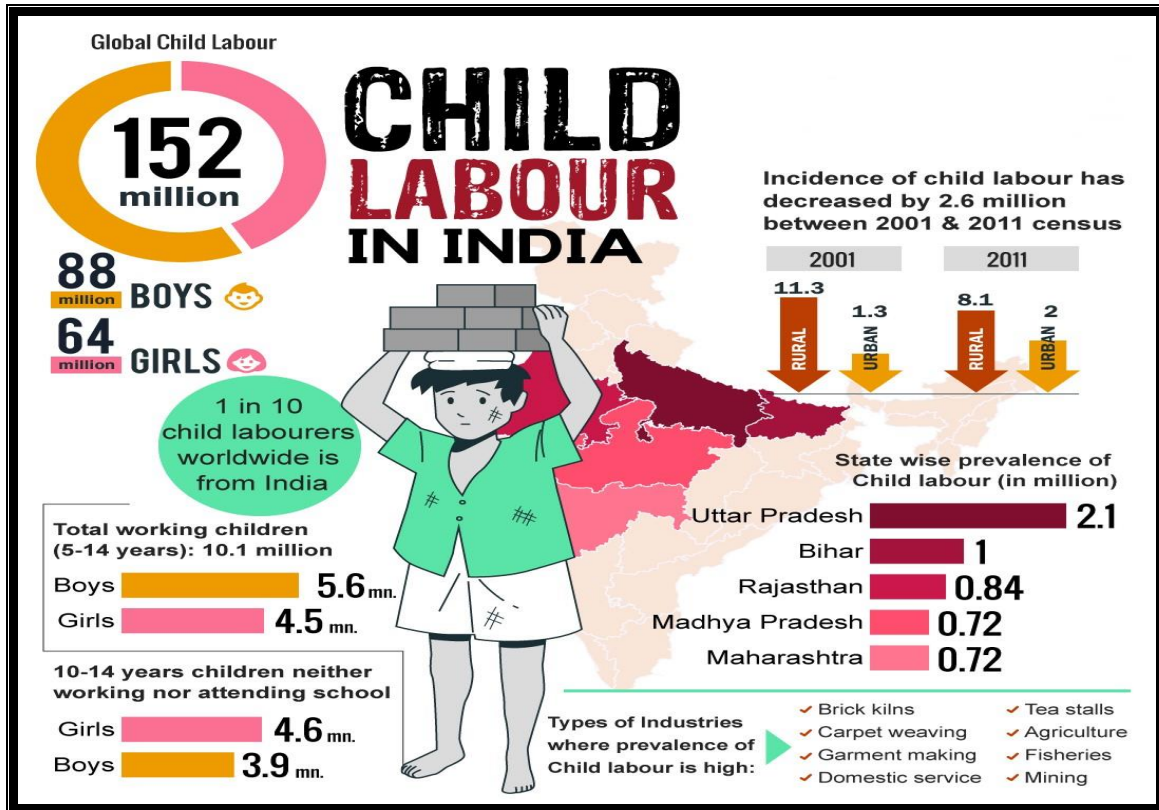
Every attempt by the Indian government to give children better possibilities for their education and lives has been hindered by COVID-19. The number of pupils dropping out of school has increased globally for a number of reasons, such as the lack of online education and the unstable financial situations of their parents. Children should be learning, playing, researching, and thinking about their future careers at that age. Nevertheless, child labor pushes children to work long hours for little pay, depriving them of the chance to learn, play, study, and fantasize about their future careers (Deepa V. & Hemanth Kumar, 2023).

Figure 1 Number of Working Children in India

Source: Government of India (2014)

For a very long time, one of the biggest obstacles to society's progress has been child labor. The total abolition of child labor is a long-term goal as well as an immediate challenge in many different countries. It has become acknowledged as a serious issue in modern times, especially in poor countries. When a child is denied of their childhood and the basic necessities they should be able to enjoy, it is referred to as "child labour". According to a 2013 estimate by the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are around 215 million children worldwide between the ages of five and fourteen who work in some capacity. They frequently endure harsh treatment and must spend long stretches of time working in appalling conditions. Their emotional, mental, and physical health could suffer as a result. These kids lack access to basic rights such as education and healthcare, among other things. ILO (2013) said that the largest in spite of the fact that it is against the law, a growing number of children are participating in labour that could be considered hazardous, and the overall number of children who are employed is also growing. These children are at risk for a variety of disorders, and they endure both physical and mental suffering for an extended period of time. Poverty is the primary factor that forces youngsters into the labour force. These children must work in order to provide for themselves and their family (Mapaure, 2009). Some research, such as that conducted by Dessay and Pallage (2003), contends that not all of the labour that youngsters perform is dangerous or unpleasant. It's possible that certain types of work, like babysitting or delivering newspapers, can result in fruitful educational opportunities. However, this is not the case if the work involves activities that are known to cause psychological strain, such as human trafficking, prostitution, or pornographic activities. International organizations have exerted a significant amount of work toward their goal of eradicating child labour everywhere in the world. Even though many nations have passed legislation to restrict the use of children in hazardous labour, child labour remains pervasive across the globe. Developing countries like India face a difficult challenge in trying to eliminate child labour from their economies (Singh, A. 2022).

Figure 2 Child Labour in India



Source: child labour in India, UNESCO report, 2022

Child labor generally refers to the hiring of minors for any manual labor, whether or not they get compensation. In India, it is a deeply ingrained social sickness. According to the 2011 Census, 10.1 million of the 259.6 million children in the age bracket of 5 to 14 were employed. The percentage of children who work has decreased from 5% in 2001 to 3.9% in 2011, yet this reduction rate is woefully short of achieving objective 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which calls for the abolition of child labor in all its manifestations by 2025.

The longevity of child labour in India can be attributed to a number of factors, including inequality, a lack of educational opportunities, a delayed demographic change, a lack of adequate job and social security, traditions, and cultural expectations.

Child Labour: An Overview

Childhood labour is the concept in which children are forced into any kind of manual task. Though the idea of child labour is noticed across the world, the condition is devastating in India. In India, children even below the age of 10 years are seen working at different places for an earning. The pathetic part is that there are also some cases where these children work without pay because their parents took a loan and were not able to repay them. This is known as bonded labour. Also, many children start working as young as 5 years on farms with their families. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labor as any form of work that jeopardizes a child's physical, mental, social, or moral development and hinders their access to education. This encompasses tasks that pose mental, physical, social, or moral risks. Child labor not only deprives children of educational opportunities but also causes them to drop out prematurely or struggle to balance schooling with demanding work schedules. So, there is an extreme necessity to get a solution for child labour to protect the future of the country.

The Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act prohibits children under the age of 14 from working at all, and teens (14 to 18) from working in hazardous jobs or operations. The average childhood age varies along with laws. Child labor is not a new issue, but it has gained prominence as human rights—especially children's rights—have developed. The safeguarding of children and providing them with essential necessities for their growth and development is a strong priority for the Legislature, the Judiciary, international organizations such as the UN and its affiliates, the International Labor Organization, and UNICEF, as well as the Indian Constitution.

Areas of Child Labour

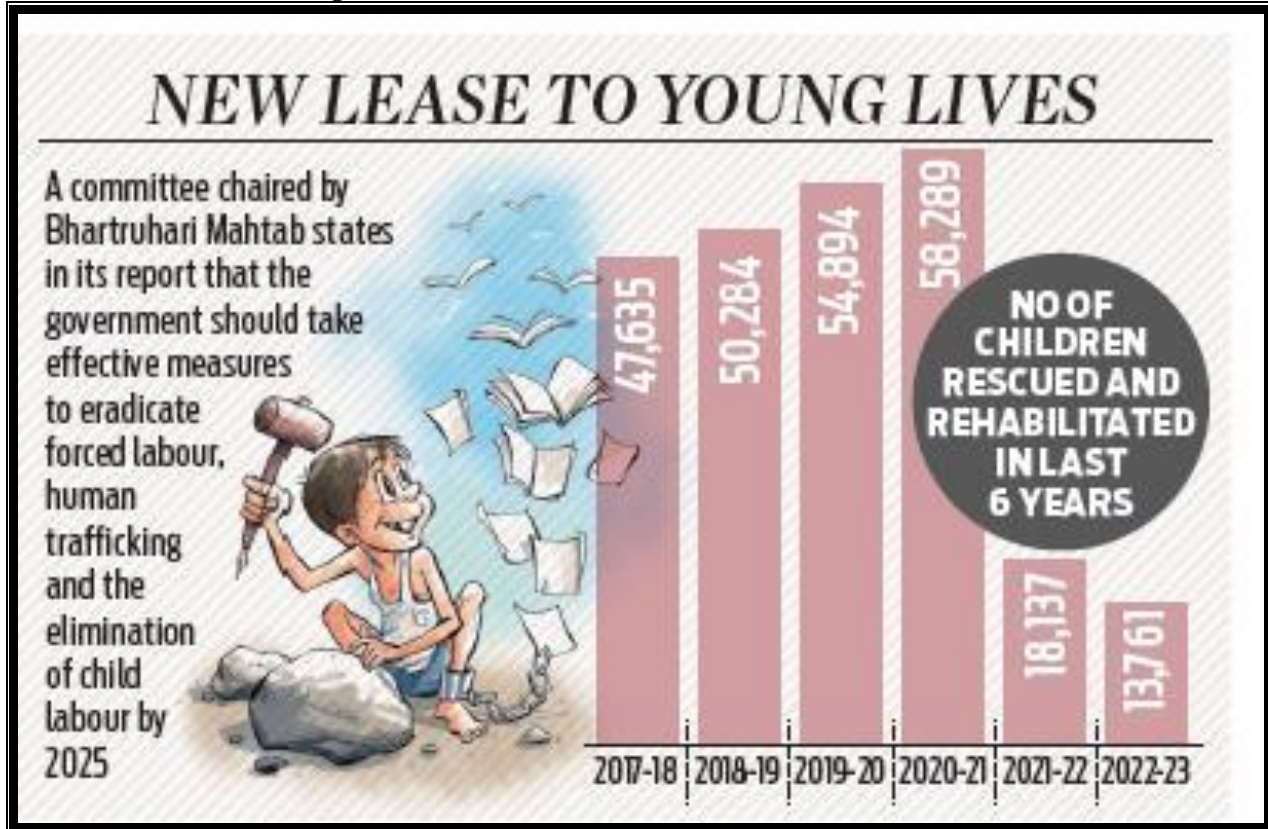
Factories: many children are employed in factories dealing in even hazardous substances, in carpet industries, clothing, glass and bricks, etc.

Agriculture: Children are frequently employed in commercial agriculture, harvesting crops in fields for long hours in sweltering heat, risking their health from pesticides, receiving little to no pay, and lacking access to enough food, water, and other necessities.

Mining and Quarrying: Children often suffer high health risks when they are engaged in underground mines, etc.

Domestic Help: Domestic help services are the most common. Children of the age of 7-8 years are kept as domestic help and often treated very badly, beaten and even subjected to sexual violence (Deepa V. & Hemanth Kumar 2023).

Figure 3 Children Rescued and Rehabilitated in India



Source: Report on Child Labour, Government of India 2023

Statement of Problem

The current study demonstrates the prevalence of child labor in India as well as its link to detrimental effects on both physical and mental health. Therefore, it is critical to safeguard individuals from forced labor, eradicate the stigma associated with this issue from society, and assist those who have survived in remaining integrated into society.

Review of Literature

Deepa V. & Hemanth Kumar (2023) in their study tried to measure the impact of child labour legislations in preventing child labour in India. The study sheds light on factual and legal scenario of child labour in India, action taken against child labour, conditions of girl child laborers and how it has become a stigma in Indian society. Singh, A. (2022) in the study stated various issues and challenges related to Child Labour in India. The study highlighted that lack of income, migration, social situations, etc. forces a youngster to be made to labour under abusive circumstances. Parvathamma (2015) highlights the origins and reasons for child labor, examines the issue of child labor in India, examines child labor that is bound, and examines the misuse and effects of child labor. The government's policy attempts to protect child labor were also highlighted in the study. Rather than attending school and getting a good education, almost 11 million youngsters are learning about textile and garment manufacture, workshops, domestic work, farming, firefighting, restaurants, and many other vocations throughout their formative years. Mohapatra and Dash (2011) attempted to investigate the socio-economic issue of child labor in their study paper. A number of important causes, including poverty, unemployment, poor income, lack of education, regressive tradition, superstition, and low status of women, have come together to give rise to the horrific practice of child labor. techniques used to get sample data on expansion rates through interviews. The results show that migrant families from various districts in Odisha have extremely poor socioeconomic conditions, which forces them to look for work. Sarkar (2015) draws attention to the issue of child labor by utilizing Indian government Census data from 1971 to 2011. The NSSO 68th round data regarding child labor engagement in India was also used in this study. In this article,

bivariate and multivariate analysis have been carried out specifically for that aim. The relationship between child labor and other social and economic factors has been examined using the chi-square test. According to Kim et al. (2020), child labor affects more children in India than in any other country in the world. According to the Census Report, 12 million youngsters between the ages of 6 and 17 worked as primary laborers in 2011. In this study, we integrate the most recent UNICEF time standards for domestic chores and economic activity with the ILO's approach to define hazardousness.

The extent, causes, and effects of child labor are discussed, along with the steps the government has taken to outlaw it in the state of Odisha, by Nanda et al. (2019). Since gaining its independence, India has made a commitment to oppose child labor. An analysis of the state of child labor and other forms of work in Odisha is attempted in this article. Child labor has been identified as a focus topic, and assessments of the issue's various aspects have been completed.

Limaye and Pande (2013) make an effort to condense the numerous meanings associated with the term "child" and offer succinct summaries of the scope of the issue from a national standpoint. In their report, they acknowledge that while numerous policy plans have been developed, a societal movement is still essential for this issue to be properly acknowledged and resolved. The growing rate of child labor in India, its correlation with socioeconomic features, and the percentage of children working have been brought to light by Dash et al. (2018). The study has projected the estimations of child labor in India through the use of logistic regression. In addition, the essay included a number of recommendations for the outlawing and controlling the use of child labor in India. A study of Satyanarayana and Rao (2017) investigates the key reasons of child labor in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. 300 samples were taken on convenience random sampling method for this research. The research identifies that there exists an association among the major reasons of child labor and the Social and economical situations. Finally the study portrays the policy recommendations to finish the child labor issue.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the present situation of child labor in India.
- To study the social welfare schemes and efforts made by the Government. for the upliftment of child labor.
- To know the problems and prospects of child labor and to suggest suitable remedies to overcome them.
- To highlights the preventive strategies used for the eradication the child labour in India.

Research Questions

- What is the present status of child labour in India?
- What are the main reasons for child labour in India?
- Where the children involved in labour work in India?
- What are the steps taken by the government for child Labour in India?
- What the preventive strategies for child labour in India?

Research Methodology

The present study is the fact-finding study of the child labor in India; therefore, the required data for the study was mainly drawn from secondary sources. Secondary data is collected from the various sources such as existing literature as research papers, government reports, news articles based on this and similar subjects, newspapers, Govt. Publications and Bulletins, reports of the Government and Non-Government Organizations, the periodicals, Journals, and other publications made available by library facilities, published and unpublished records and reports of the government and related websites.

Forms of Child Labour

- Shops and small-scale vendors
- Household
- Farms
- Mines (Labour)
- Near furnaces, welding, hazardous materials
- Children engaged in illegal activities smuggling, prostitution etc.
- Begging (more common in India) ILO (2017).

Causes for Child Labour in India

- Poverty is the single important reason for child labor. The poor parents, in order to supplement their income, allow the children to work even on unremunerative jobs. Many employers prefer to engage children because they are cheap. Moreover, children tend to be less troublesome, more disciplined and: highly adaptable.
- School dropouts.
- Loss of an earning member of the family.
- Absence of any State sponsored scheme of family allowance in India.

- Non-existence of any general scheme of compulsory education up to a minimum age.
- Slow advance of protective labor legislation.
- The evasion of the existing laws for the protection of children.
- Death of parents.
- Habituated father or any adult male member of the family spending money on drinking etc.
- Sometimes the social structure of society becomes responsible for child labour. The social structure in our country is characterized by the caste system (Singh, A. 2022; Deepa V. & Hemanth Kumar, 2023).

Types of Child Labour

Child labour: Children who work in mines, factories, workshops, establishments, and the service industry, such as domestic labor, for pay or without pay. The phrase 'child labour' has only been used by the Indian government's, Ministry of Labour to refer to children who perform 'hazardous' job.

Street children: Street children are kids who live on and off the streets, including beggars, newspaper vendors, shoeshine boys, and ragpickers.

Bonded children: Children who are either struggling to pay off their dads' inherited debts or who have had their parents pledge them meager sums of money. Because they are aloof, bonded children are in many ways the hardest to help.

Working children: children who labor at home or on a farm as members of a family workforce. Children who work alongside their parents for 12–14 hours a day at the expense of their schooling are in a similar predicament to those who work for other firms.

Children used for sexual exploitation: Countless young girls and boys, irrespective of their social or economic status, fulfill the sexual desires of males.

Migrant children: India's 'distress seasonal migration' is a major problem. Every year, millions of families are compelled to flee their towns and homes for many months in pursuit of employment.

Children engaged in household activities: In addition to children who work as domestic helpers for pay (whether under bond or not), many youngsters, particularly girls, work in their homes performing tasks that are not typically classified as 'economic activity' (Deepa V. & Hemanth Kumar, 2023; Singh, A. 2022).

Child Labour in India

As per the census 2011, the total number of child labor in the country has reduced by 65 percent. The government also said that elimination of child labor was its "priority". The total number of working children in the country has declined from 1.26 crore as per the census 2001 to 43.53 lakh as per census 2011 which shows 65 percent reduction.

Table 1 Child Labour in India

Year	Child Labor as Reported by Census 1971 to 2011
1971	10753985
1981	13640870
1991	11285349
2001	12666377
2011	4353247

Source: Government of India, 2013

Steps taken by the Government of India for Child Labour

The Factories Act of 1948: It prohibits employment of children under the age of 14 years in any factory.

The Mines Act of 1952: It prohibits the employment of children below the age of 18 years in any mines as it is one of the most dangerous occupations and many accidents have happened in the past where children were severely injured or even killed.

National Policy for Children 1974: It is the first policy document concerning the needs and rights of children. It recognized children to be a supremely important asset to the country. The goal of the policy is to take the next step in ensuring the constitutional provisions for children and the UN Declaration of Rights are implemented. It outlines services the state should provide for the complete development of a child, before and after birth and throughout a child's period of growth for their full physical, mental, and social development.

National Policy on Education, 1986: It was called for 'special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity,' especially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities. To achieve these, the policy called for expanding scholarships, adult education, recruiting more teachers from the SCs, incentives for poor families to send their children to school regularly, development of new institutions and providing housing and services. The NPE called for a 'child-centered approach' in primary education and launched "Operation Blackboard" to improve primary schools nationwide.

National Policy on Child Labor, 1987: It contains the action plan for tackling the problem of child labor. It envisaged a legislative action plan focusing and convergence of general development programs for benefiting children wherever possible, and Project-based plan of action for launching of projects for the welfare of working children in areas of high concentration of child labor.

National Nutrition Policy, 1993: It was introduced to combat the problem of under - nutrition. It aims to address this problem by utilizing direct (short term) and indirect (long term) interventions in food production and distribution, health and family welfare, education, rural and urban development, woman and child development etc.

National Population Policy 2000: The national population policy 2000 aims at improvement in the status of Indian children. It emphasized free and compulsory school education up to age 14, universal immunization of children against all vaccine preventable diseases, 100% registration of birth, death, marriage and pregnancy, substantial reduction in the infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio etc.

National Health Policy, 2002: The main objective of this policy is to achieve an acceptable standard of good health amongst the general population of the country. The approach is to increase access to the decentralized public health system by establishing new infrastructure in deficient areas, and by upgrading the infrastructure in the existing institutions. Overriding importance is given to ensuring more equitable access to health services across the social and geographical expanse of the country (Deepa V. & Hemanth Kumar, 2023; Singh, A. 2022).

National Charter for Children (NCC), 2003: National Charter for children (NCC), 2003 highlights the Constitutional provisions towards the cause of the children and the role of civil society, communities and families and their obligations in fulfilling children's basic needs. The well-being of special groups such as children of BPL families, street children, girl child, child-care programs, and educational programs for prevention from exploitation find special mention in the NCC.

National Plan of Action for Children (NPA), 2005 was adopted by Government of India in the pursuit of well-being of children. NPA has a significant number of key areas of thrust out of which the one's relating to child protection are:

- Complete abolition of female foeticide, female infanticide and child marriage and ensuring the survival, development and protection of the girl child,
- Addressing and upholding the rights of children in difficult circumstances,
- Securing for all children legal and social protection from all kinds of abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

The various Schemes/Programs are implemented by different Central Ministries, following the guidance of the national policies. They are aiming to tackle the issues relating to the overall welfare of children work independently as well as hand in hand. The State/ UT Governments also execute numerous programs from time to time for improving the lot of children. Important Schemes for Well- being of Children:

- Integrated Child Development Service Scheme
- Integrated Child Protection Scheme
- National awards for child Welfare.
- National Child Awards for Exceptional Achievements.
- Rajiv Gandhi Manav Seva Awards for Service to Children.
- Balika Samridhhi Yojna.
- Nutrition Program for Adolescent Girls
- Early Childhood education for 3-6 age group children.
- Welfare of working children in need of Care and Protection
- Child line services
- Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for children of working mothers.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act, 2000: This Act for the first time penalized the offence of child labour. Any person who contravenes the provisions of the Act is penalized with imprisonment for a certain term and fines or with both. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009: According to this Act, every child up to the age of 14 years is entitled to free education and this being a fundamental right under article 21 Also, there shall be reserved 25% seats in private institutions as well, and no child shall be deprived of education or admission into any school on the grounds of him being from a poor family (Lal B. Suresh & B. Bichu, 2016; Suresh Lal, 2019; Deepa V. & Hemanth Kumar, 2023; Singh, A. 2022).

Child Labour

As per Census 2011, the total child population in India in the age group (5-14) years is 259.6 million. Of these, 10.1 million (3.9% of total child population) are working, either as 'main worker' or as 'marginal worker'. In addition, more than 42.7 million children in India are out of school. However, the good news is that the incidence of child labour has decreased in India by 2.6 million between 2001 and 2011. However, the decline was more visible in rural areas, while the number of child workers has increased in urban areas, indicating the growing demand for child workers in menial jobs. Child labour has different ramifications in both rural and urban India.

Table 2 Child Labour Data

Year	Percentage of working children (5-14)			Total number of working children (5-14) (in millions)		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
2001	5.9	2.1	5.0	11.4	1.3	12.7
2011	4.3	2.9	3.9	8.1	2.0	10.1

*Source – Census 2001 and 2011

Table 3 Distribution of Child Labour by type of work in 2011

Area of work	Percentage	Numbers (in millions)
Cultivators	26.0	2.63
Agricultural labourers	32.9	3.33
Household industry workers	5.2	0.52
Other workers	35.8	3.62

*Source – Census 2011, Government of India

Note: 'Other workers': Workers other than cultivators, agricultural labourers or workers in household industries

States with High Percentage of Child Labour

Together, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh constitute nearly 55% of total working children in India.

Table 4 States with high Percentage of Child Labour

States	Percentage	Numbers (In million)
Uttar Pradesh	21.5	2.18
Bihar	10.7	1.09
Rajasthan	8.4	0.85
Maharashtra	7.2	0.73
Madhya Pradesh	6.9	0.70

*Source – Census 2011, Government of India

Child labour impedes children from gaining the skills and education they need to have opportunities for decent work as an adult. Inequality, lack of educational opportunities, slow demographic transition, traditions and cultural expectations all contribute to the persistence of child labour in India. Age, sex, ethnicity, caste, and deprivation affect the type and intensity of work that children perform.

Preventive Strategies for Child Labour

First, the major responsibility is for us the people to live in society. It starts in your home. Never make any servant do work underage. Give some financial help to the street boys. Unite people who want to help them. Make welfare groups. Give children education and give them shelter and food. If we all work from our own place as far as we can, then it is possible to have a result. Never put any child to hard and heavy work in an industry. Boycott the people who are doing this and raise your voice against them. Make them know the law of crime like child labor. Raise awareness to the people (Pati R.N., 2004). Secondly, governments can play a significant role by making proper law against child labor and enforce them strictly against people who are putting the children to heavy work. Governments also should assure shelter, food, education and all basic needs for children. A child should be as free as he is in heaven. Remember, children are also a tool for criminal to their crime. Governments of a country should be aware and take necessary steps for that (Suresh Lal, 2019).

Lastly, we are living in an era of globalization. The various international organizations can take steps to raise awareness to the people to stop child labor. They can help children financially by giving them free education at education for all programs and putting pressure on the government to enforce the law to provide necessary elements for the welfare of children. The combination of the above bodies will make it easy to eradicate children's ill health.

Education and child labor are closely associated. Enrolling children in school and giving them a good education is an easy way to keep them out of the clutches of child labor. The provisions of the Right to Education Act and Article 21A should be scrupulously implemented. An examination of how government schools run should also be done in order to guarantee that the highest caliber of education is provided and that the maximum amount of students are admitted into the system (Lal B. et al, 2016). Rehabilitation and reformatory programs ought to be implemented for kids who are discovered to be employed in hazardous environments. After they are rescued from hazardous circumstances, plans need to be put in place to guarantee the preservation of their bodily, mental, and emotional well-being.

Concluding Remarks

Child labor is a social problem as well as an economic practice. Given the rural economy's extremely low pay temporary improvements and large pool of unorganized agricultural labor, it is difficult to stop the growing child labor problem. The current stage of economic growth is frequently held responsible for the severe social ills, and parents view their children as a financial asset. Since child laborers are typically from the lowest castes, it is sustained by societal neglect and discrimination resulting from the caste system. Their exploitation and insensitivity from the upper caste/class pushes them into unfavorable employment paths and cruel treatment. Child labor is a social problem as well as an economic practice. Given the rural economy's extremely low pay temporary improvements and large pool of unorganized agricultural labor, it is difficult to stop the growing child labor problem. The current stage of economic growth is frequently held responsible for the severe social ills, and parents view their children as a financial asset. Since child laborers are typically from the lowest castes, it is sustained by societal neglect and discrimination resulting from the caste system. Their exploitation and insensitivity from the upper caste/class pushes them into unfavorable employment paths and cruel treatment.

Additionally, this will draw and keep young students in schools while also making learning entertaining. Since informal institutions established under various Sarva Shiksha Mission (SSM) plans are frequently found to be highly efficient in bringing out of school children into the canopy of education, the way that schools operate also has to be reformed. It's interesting to note that SSM is to blame for the rising percentage of kids attending educational institutions under subsidiary status over time. Maybe the non-traditional school schedule and unofficial teaching style have worked for them, allowing them to attend courses even after completing their allotted tasks. A strategy like this will fulfill children's right to an education without sacrificing their more general right to life.

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