



Shodhpith

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

(International Open Access, Peer-reviewed & Refereed Journal)
(Multidisciplinary, Bimonthly, Multilanguage)

Volume: 1

Issue: 4

July-August 2025

A Study on Attitude of Society towards Child Labour

Pinki Kumari

Guest Faculty, Department of Sociology, Maltidhari College Naubatpur Patliputra University

ABSTRACT

Society's attitude toward child labor is complex and often shaped by cultural norms, economic realities, and varying levels of awareness about the rights and welfare of children. In many communities, especially in low-income regions, child labor is seen as a necessary economic contribution rather than an issue of exploitation. Families struggling with poverty or lacking access to quality education may view children's work as essential for survival, with the income earned by young workers helping to meet basic needs or pay household expenses. As a result, child labor can become normalized, with communities and even local businesses perceiving it as a practical solution to economic hardship. In these contexts, societal attitudes toward child labor may lean toward acceptance or ambivalence, with little recognition of the negative long-term impacts on children's health, education, and future prospects.

KEYWORDS- Attitude, Society, Child Labour, cultural norms, children's health, societal attitudes, household expenses

INTRODUCTION

In society's attitude toward child labor varies significantly depending on cultural, economic, and educational contexts. While some communities may view it as a practical necessity, others see it as a fundamental violation of children's rights. The challenge lies in aligning these perspectives and fostering a global consensus that acknowledges the use of child labor as an obstacle to development and human rights, advocating for solutions that support families and empower children to pursue education and development free from exploitation.

However, in other parts of the world, particularly in wealthier countries with strong labor protections, child labor is largely seen as a moral and legal issue. Many societies view childhood as a time for growth, education, and protection, considering labor unsuitable for young children and counter-productive to their development. This perspective is heavily influenced by international organizations, such as the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, which advocate for children's rights and have established global standards that define and condemn exploitative child labor. In these societies, child labor is viewed as a violation of children's rights and a social ill that perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality. Public attitudes in these regions tend to support legislation, activism, and corporate responsibility measures that work to end the use of children as laborers and to improve children's access to quality healthcare, schools, and social services.

Despite the increasing global awareness of the dangers of child labor, attitudes can still be conflicted when consumers in wealthier nations unknowingly purchase goods produced by child laborers.



While many people oppose child labor in principle, they may unknowingly contribute to the problem through demand for low-cost products made in developing countries. This inconsistency highlights a gap in understanding and consumer responsibility, as well as the complexities of global supply chains that often obscure the labor practices involved in product manufacturing. As awareness grows about these connections, societal attitudes are gradually shifting toward more ethical consumerism, with many calling for transparency, fair labor practices, and corporate accountability.

CHILD'S VIEW ON CHILD LABOUR

Understanding child labor from the perspective of children themselves reveals a deeply personal and often conflicted view of work and its effects on their lives. Many children in labor situations grow up in environments where work is an expected part of their daily existence, so they often accept it as a norm, seeing it as a duty toward their families or as a natural part of life. For them, working from an early age may foster a sense of responsibility and contribution, especially in contexts where family members depend on each other's earnings to survive. However, for children in hazardous or exploitative labor, work can feel like a heavy burden that overshadows the carefree aspects of childhood. This duality—where work can bring both a sense of belonging and a feeling of restriction—is a recurring theme in children's attitudes toward their labor experiences.

Many child laborers express frustration over the limitations that work places on their lives, particularly in terms of education. Children who are forced to work long hours often miss out on schooling, which they understand as an opportunity they cannot afford to have. For many, the lack of education is a constant reminder of the opportunities they're being denied. While some children internalize this as a necessary sacrifice, others feel a deep resentment toward the circumstances that prevent them from attending school or playing with friends. The deprivation of education doesn't only mean they fall behind in literacy and numeracy; it also means they miss out on social growth, confidence-building, and a sense of achievement, which are crucial for a child's emotional and intellectual development. These feelings can lead to a complex blend of sadness, resignation, and sometimes anger, particularly when children realize that their peers in other settings live vastly different lives.

Some children view their work with pride, recognizing that their labor has a direct and immediate impact on their family's well-being. For children in rural or agricultural settings, working alongside family members on farms or in local markets is sometimes a valued tradition, passed down from generation to generation. In these cases, children feel a sense of identity and connection with their communities through work, finding meaning in the roles they play. Yet, even within this pride, there is often an underlying wish for different possibilities or a longing for a different life. Many child laborers articulate a desire for a future in which they can use the money earned from work to eventually create better lives for themselves or provide educational opportunities for their siblings, highlighting their hopes and aspirations beyond their current circumstances.

For children involved in particularly harsh forms of labor, such as mining, construction, or factory work, the experience is frequently characterized by fear, exhaustion, and even trauma. They often find themselves in environments where they are vulnerable to physical harm, mistreatment, and exploitation. In such conditions, children may develop a hardened view of labor, one that erodes their sense of security and instills in them a feeling of helplessness or fear. Many children report that they feel trapped in these jobs, unable to leave due to debt or other family obligations, leading to feelings of entrapment and despair. The lack of agency in these situations leaves children feeling as though their lives are not their own to control, resulting in a loss of hope and self-worth. This emotional toll can affect them long-term, impacting their mental health, outlook on life, and sense of self-worth well into adulthood.

In addition, children who work in hidden forms of labor, such as domestic service, often report feelings of isolation and loneliness. Living in someone else's home as a domestic worker can create a sense of invisibility, as they are separated from their families, peers, and community support. The lack of social interaction with other children can be detrimental to their emotional development, making them feel alienated from society. These children frequently express a desire for companionship and normalcy,

yearning for the chance to be with other children and experience the social interactions that define childhood. The isolation inherent in domestic work exacerbates feelings of sadness and frustration, further deepening the sense of loss that many child laborers feel.

Despite the hardships, many children continue to dream of futures beyond their present realities. Conversations with child laborers reveal that, though they may feel resigned to their situations, they retain hopes for a better life, often aspiring to break free from poverty and provide better opportunities for their families. Many express a strong belief in the value of education, dreaming of becoming teachers, doctors, or other professionals who can contribute positively to society. These aspirations reflect an understanding of what they are missing and a determination to pursue a life different from their current one. For these children, work is not just a burden but also a stepping stone they hope will eventually lead them to better opportunities.

Children's views on child labor are deeply varied and complex, shaped by their individual experiences, environments, and cultural expectations. While some may find pride in their work and their ability to support their families, most express a desire for a different future, filled with learning, play, and the chance to grow without the weight of adult responsibilities. The persistence of child labor worldwide continues to challenge these aspirations, trapping countless children in cycles of poverty and limiting their potential. The voices of these children reveal a need for more robust support systems, access to education, and societal commitment to ending exploitative labor practices so that every child can pursue a future in which they are free to learn, play, and thrive.

WORKING CONDITIONS OF CHILD LABOURERS

The working conditions faced by child laborers are often harsh, unsafe, and exploitative, reflecting the vulnerability of children within labor systems that prioritize profit and productivity over the rights and well-being of young workers. These conditions vary widely depending on the industry, the country, and the type of work, but common themes include long hours, hazardous environments, low or no wages, lack of legal protections, and exposure to physical, emotional, and psychological harm. In many sectors where child labor is prevalent—such as agriculture, mining, garment production, and domestic work—children are forced into physically demanding roles that are not suited to their age or physical development. The demands placed on them often exceed their capacities, leading to long-term consequences for their health and development.

In agriculture, for instance, children work in fields for extensive hours under harsh weather conditions, often with inadequate or no protective gear. Exposure to pesticides, fertilizers, and heavy machinery is common, and children may carry loads that are far beyond their physical strength, leading to musculoskeletal injuries, respiratory issues, and skin diseases. Furthermore, agricultural work often involves monotonous tasks that can last from sunrise to sunset, leaving children with little rest or time to attend school. The seasonal nature of this labor also disrupts any semblance of a stable education, as children may have to work for months at a time, unable to continue their studies. Without adequate safety measures, children in agriculture are frequently exposed to hazardous chemicals that are absorbed through the skin or inhaled, leading to chronic health problems that can persist into adulthood.

The conditions in industries such as mining are even more dangerous. Children working in mines are subjected to extreme risks, including tunnel collapses, falling rocks, and exposure to toxic minerals and chemicals. Mining is physically demanding, requiring children to spend hours in poorly ventilated, cramped spaces, often deep underground. They are exposed to dust, noise, and dangerous machinery, which can lead to severe respiratory conditions, hearing loss, and even permanent disability. Children who work in gold mines, for example, are frequently exposed to mercury, a toxic substance used in extracting gold, which can lead to poisoning and irreversible neurological damage. The risk of fatal accidents is high in mining, with child laborers facing constant threats to their lives. Despite these dangers, many children in mining communities are driven into these jobs out of necessity, with families often relying on this income for survival.

In the garment and manufacturing sectors, child laborers face grueling working hours, typically



with minimal breaks, cramped quarters, and inadequate lighting. These environments are often overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and lacking in proper sanitation, creating significant health risks. In factories and workshops, children may be required to operate heavy machinery, handle sharp objects, and manage chemicals, all without proper training or protective equipment. The long hours, repetitive tasks, and poor ergonomic conditions contribute to chronic pain, vision problems, and exhaustion. Additionally, children in these industries are commonly subjected to verbal and physical abuse by supervisors or employers, creating an atmosphere of fear and stress. Due to their lack of power and fear of losing their jobs, many child laborers endure these abuses in silence, with little recourse to seek help or improve their conditions. The constant exposure to noise, pollution, and hazardous materials further aggravates their health, often leading to long-term physical and mental health issues.

Domestic work, another sector where child labor is prevalent, presents a different set of challenges for young workers. Child domestic workers, who are often employed in private homes, typically experience isolation and invisibility, as their work is hidden from public view. This isolation makes them especially vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Many child domestic workers live with their employers, working around the clock to clean, cook, and care for children, often receiving little to no compensation. The nature of domestic work makes it easy for employers to exploit these children, demanding more from them than what would be expected of an adult worker. Physical, verbal, and even sexual abuse are unfortunately common in such situations, and children have little means to escape or seek assistance. The constant work, lack of privacy, and exposure to abuse have profound psychological impacts on child domestic workers, resulting in emotions of worthlessness, dread, and isolation.

The issue of low or withheld wages compounds the hardships faced by child laborers. Many children receive little or no pay for their work, or they are paid significantly less than adult workers for the same tasks. In some cases, children work to pay off family debts, where employers exploit their vulnerability by extending the duration of work indefinitely, trapping them in a cycle of labor without compensation. This form of bonded labor leaves children in situations akin to slavery, where they work long hours under severe conditions with no opportunity to escape their circumstances. With wages that barely cover their basic needs, child laborers are often forced to live in poverty, lacking access to food, shelter, and healthcare. This economic exploitation leaves them malnourished and unable to access basic medical care, which exacerbates their vulnerability to illness and injury.

The lack of legal protections for child laborers is a significant factor that enables these harsh working conditions. In many regions, labor laws are either weak or poorly enforced, allowing industries that rely on child labor to operate with impunity. Where laws do exist, they are often insufficient in covering informal sectors like agriculture and domestic work, where child labor is rampant. Even in countries with stricter child labor regulations, enforcement is inconsistent, with corruption, lack of resources, and limited inspection mechanisms preventing meaningful oversight. This legal gap leaves child laborers without the means to challenge their exploitation or seek better conditions, as they have no formal recourse to address their grievances. Employers are rarely held accountable for violating child labor laws, creating an environment where child exploitation can flourish unchecked.

These conditions profoundly impact the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of child laborers. The toll on their health is significant, with many suffering from chronic illnesses, injuries, and malnutrition due to the demands of their work. The psychological impact is equally severe, as child laborers often experience trauma, anxiety, and a diminished sense of self-worth. The pressures and hardships of labor can stifle children's development, robbing them of the joy, creativity, and learning opportunities that define a healthy childhood. The cumulative effect of these working conditions can trap children in cycles of poverty and limit their future potential, as they are denied the education and skills needed to pursue better-paying, safer employment in adulthood.

In the working conditions of child laborers are characterized by exploitation, danger, and deprivation. These young workers endure environments that put their lives and futures at risk, reflecting a societal failure to protect the most vulnerable. Addressing child labor requires comprehensive efforts to improve labor laws, enforce protections, and provide viable alternatives for children and their families.

Only by tackling the root causes and creating safe, nurturing environments can society hope to break the cycle of exploitation and ensure that every child has the chance to grow up healthy, educated, and free from the burdens of labor.

CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE OF CHILD LABOUR

Cultural acceptance of child labour is a significant factor that perpetuates this harmful practice in many societies around the world. In numerous communities, child labour is not only tolerated but often seen as a normal and even necessary part of life. This acceptance stems from longstanding traditions, social norms, and economic realities that shape how families and societies perceive the role of children in work and family life.

In many cultures, children working alongside their parents or within family businesses is considered a natural way of learning skills, contributing to the household, and preparing for adulthood. This ingrained belief often blurs the line between acceptable work and exploitative child labour. For instance, in agrarian societies, children are expected to assist with farming duties from a young age as part of their upbringing. Such practices are embedded in the cultural fabric and are rarely questioned, even if they interfere with children's education or expose them to hazardous conditions.

Moreover, in some cultures, there is a strong emphasis on collective family survival rather than individual rights, leading to children being seen primarily as economic contributors. When poverty is widespread and resources scarce, societal norms may prioritize immediate financial needs over long-term development and education. The concept of childhood as a protected phase focused on learning and growth may be overshadowed by the need for children to support their families.

Gender roles also influence cultural acceptance of child labour. In many traditional societies, girls are expected to perform domestic chores and caregiving from an early age, often without recognition as 'work.' This unpaid labour is culturally normalized and rarely questioned, perpetuating gender inequality and depriving girls of educational opportunities.

The cultural acceptance of child labour is further reinforced by community attitudes that may stigmatize families who refuse to send their children to work. In some areas, children who do not work may face social exclusion or be seen as lazy or unhelpful, pressuring families to conform to established norms.

This cultural normalization creates significant challenges for policymakers and activists trying to eradicate child labour. Efforts to eliminate child labour must therefore go beyond legal enforcement and economic interventions to address deeply rooted cultural beliefs. Awareness campaigns, community engagement, and education about children's rights and the harms of child labour are essential to changing mind-sets.

ROLE OF FAMILIES IN PERPETUATING CHILD LABOUR

Families play a crucial yet complex role in the continuation of child labour. While society and employers contribute significantly to the problem, the family unit often acts as the immediate environment where child labour begins and is sustained. Poverty remains the most significant driver, compelling many families to send their children to work as a means of survival. When basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing are hard to meet, families view child labour as a necessary strategy to supplement household income. In many cases, parents believe that their children working will ease financial burdens or help repay debts, even if it comes at the cost of the child's education and well-being.

In addition to economic pressures, cultural beliefs and social norms within families also perpetuate child labour. Some families consider children's work as part of their upbringing, a way to teach responsibility, skills, and discipline. Especially in rural or marginalized communities, it is common to see children involved in family trades, agriculture, or domestic chores from a young age. This blurs the line between acceptable work and exploitative labour. For many, schooling may not be seen as essential or financially feasible, particularly for girls, whose education is often deprioritized in favor of household



work or early marriage.

Lack of awareness about the harmful consequences of child labour also contributes to the problem. Many parents may not fully understand how working at a young age can damage their child's physical health, mental development, and future prospects. Additionally, families often face limited access to quality education and social support systems, making it difficult to break the cycle of poverty and child labour. Some families may also be coerced or trapped by bonded labour arrangements or human trafficking, where children are forced to work due to debts or promises of better livelihoods. In such cases, families may have little choice but to comply with exploitative conditions.

CONCLUSION

The attitude of society towards child labour plays a pivotal role in either perpetuating or combating this serious issue. In many communities, child labour is seen as a necessary evil, a cultural norm, or a survival strategy, which leads to widespread acceptance and normalization of the practice. This passive or indifferent stance often stems from poverty, lack of awareness, and deeply ingrained social and cultural beliefs that prioritize immediate economic needs over children's rights and well-being. Society's tolerance, whether through silence or active participation, allows exploitative employers to continue hiring children and prevents effective enforcement of laws designed to protect them. Changing this attitude requires concerted efforts at all levels—through education, awareness campaigns, community involvement, and strong legal frameworks—to foster a collective responsibility towards safeguarding children's futures. Only when society collectively rejects child labour and recognizes the importance of childhood, education, and protection can meaningful progress be made in eradicating this violation of children's rights.

Author's Declaration:

The views and contents expressed in this research article are solely those of the author(s). The publisher, editors, and reviewers shall not be held responsible for any errors, ethical misconduct, copyright infringement, defamation, or any legal consequences arising from the content. All legal and moral responsibilities lie solely with the author(s).

REFERENCES

1. Avais, M. A., Chandio, R. A., Shaikh, N., & Mirza, A. (2014). Socio-economic cause of child labour in domestic work: A study of Sukkur city. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)*, 18(1), 410-416.
2. A.B. Siddiqui (2012) "AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF CHILD LABOR-AN EXPLOITATION AND NOT EMPLOYMENT" *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences* ISSN: 2278-6236
3. Aqil, Z. (2012). Nexus between poverty and child labour: Measuring the impact of poverty alleviation on child labour. *Good Thinkers Organization for Human Development*, (3), 1-27.
4. Ahmad, A. (2012). Poverty, education and child labour in Aligarh city-India. *Stud Home Comm Sci*, 6(3), 165-172.
5. Amon, J. J., Buchanan, J., Cohen, J., & Kippenberg, J. (2012). Child labor and environmental health: Government obligations and human rights. *International Journal of Pediatrics*. Online. Available HTTP: [http:// dx. doi. org/ 10. 1155/ 2012/ 938306](http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2012/938306)
6. Shen, W., Kiger, T. B., Davies, S. E., Rasch, R. L., Simon, K. M., & Ones, D. S. (2011). Samples in applied psychology: Over a decade of research in review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(5), 1055-1064. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023322>
7. Secchi, D., Bui, H.T.M. Group Effects on Individual Attitudes Toward Social Responsibility. *J Bus Ethics* 149, 725-746 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3106-x>

8. Disassa, G.A., Lamessa, D. Psychosocial support conditions in the orphanage: case study of Wolisso project. ICEP 15, 12 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-021-00089-3>
9. Javier Cachón-Zagalaz (2020) "Systematic Review of the Literature About the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Lives of School Children"
10. Adekunle Victor Owoyomi (2020) "Social and Health Consequences of Child Labour: Implications for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria" Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology. Volume 17, No. 1, January 2020
11. Kechagia, Polyxeni, and Theodore Metaxas. 2021. "Are Working Children in Developing Countries Hidden Victims of Pandemics?" Social Sciences 10, no. 9: 321. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10090321>
12. Hoque, Md Mahmudul. (2021). Reviewing child labour and its worst forms: Contemporary theoretical and policy agenda. 6. 2021. 10.22150/jms/PAZE6574.

Cite this Article-

'Pinki Kumari,' 'A Study on Attitude of Society towards Child Labour', Shodhpith International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, ISSN: 3049-3331 (Online), Volume: 1, Issue: 04, July-August 2025.

Journal URL- <https://www.shodhpith.com/index.html>

Published Date- 14 July 2025

DOI-10.64127

