

Educational and Vocational Aspirations of Child Labourers with Special Reference to Patna

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The prevalence of child labour remains a pressing issue in India, with over 10.12 million children aged 5–14 years engaged in labour, according to the 2011 Census. Bihar is among the states with the highest incidence. This study aims to explore the educational and vocational aspirations of rehabilitated child labourers and assess how effectively interventions like the PENCIL Portal and the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) support their reintegration through education and skills development.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research employs a descriptive case study methodology, focusing on 40 rehabilitated child labourers selected through purposive sampling. Data collection emphasized individual aspirations, challenges faced, and the role of institutional support in shaping future goals.

Findings: The study reveals that while many children exhibit strong aspirations for education and vocational training, their progress is often impeded by financial constraints, inadequate family support, and limited access to quality education. Internal motivation and structured vocational training emerged as critical enablers, with 70% of participants expressing interest in skill-based education as a pathway to better opportunities. The findings underscore the importance of tailored interventions under the National Education Policy 2020 to promote equitable access for socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the understanding of post-rehabilitation outcomes for child labourers, highlighting the gaps between policy intent and ground-level implementation. It offers evidence-based insights to inform future strategies aimed at enhancing the aspirations and opportunities of marginalized children through education and vocational training.

Paper Type: Case Based Study

KEYWORDS: Child Labour | Educational Aspirations | Vocational Aspirations | NEP 2020

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Introduction

Child labour continues to be one of the most significant socio-economic challenges in India, where millions of children remain engaged in various forms of labour, often under hazardous and exploitative conditions. According to the Census of India 2011, approximately 10 million children in India are involved in labour, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimating that globally, 152 million children are child labourers, 7.2% of whom reside in India (ILO, 2017). Child labour is prevalent in both organized sectors, such as factories and manufacturing, and unorganized sectors like agriculture, construction, mining, and domestic work. In addition to these sectors, large-scale trafficking and forced child labour further contribute to the severity of this issue, exacerbating the cycle of poverty and illiteracy that persists through generations. This widespread exploitation violates children's fundamental rights, including their right to life, freedom, equality, and protection from exploitation (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2019). The issue of child labour is legally defined in India in the case of *Save the Childhood vs. Union of India* (WP (CrI) 2096 of 2005), which describes child labour as the practice of employing or engaging a child to provide labour or services for any form of payment or benefit, either for the child or another person exercising control over the child (High Court of Delhi, 2005). This definition emphasizes the exploitation of children for the benefit of others, often leading to both physical and psychological harm. Globally, child labour is addressed through Goal 8.7 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, which mandates that Member States implement urgent and effective actions to eliminate forced labour, eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking, and ensure the prohibition and eradication of the worst forms of child labour. (United Nations, 2015). This goal includes a specific target to eliminate child labour in all its forms by 2025. Given India's significant contribution to the global child labour population, its role in achieving this target is crucial. The country not only faces a considerable domestic challenge but also bears global responsibility in the fight to ensure that every child has the right to a safe and healthy childhood.

In India, most child labourers are employed in industries that involve hazardous working conditions. These children work in textile factories, sari weaving, brick kilns, carpet weaving, food services, tobacco industries, and dangerous sectors like steel extraction (Anuradha, 2016). The 2011 National Census reported that 10 million children aged 5-14 years were working either as main or marginal workers, and another 23 million children in the 15-18 age group were engaged in hazardous occupations. Despite a 20% decline in child labour between 2001 and 2021, the decrease was more noticeable in rural areas, while urban areas saw an increase in child labour during the same period (Ramana, 2015). States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra contribute significantly to the

nation's child labour population, with Uttar Pradesh alone accounting for 21.5% of India's child labourers (Swaranlata, 2016). Alarming, 1.4 million child labourers in India in the 7-14 age group cannot write their names, indicating the severe educational deprivation that many of these children face (Census of India, 2011). To address this issue, the Government of India has implemented various initiatives, one of the most important being the PENCIL (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) portal, launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The PENCIL portal serves as a critical tool for the effective enforcement of child labour laws and the rehabilitation of children rescued from labour. It helps identify, track, and rescue child labourers, ensuring their reintegration into formal education or vocational training programs (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2019). Through the portal, children are provided with opportunities for educational development and vocational training to equip them with the necessary skills for a better future, thereby reducing their vulnerability to child labour and exploitation. The PENCIL Portal (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) was launched on September 26, 2017, by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. This online platform was developed to strengthen monitoring and reporting systems, affirming the effective implementation of the revised Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) initiative. The initiative primary aim is to rehabilitate child labourers in India and work towards achieving a child labour-free society. In this study, the try to explore the educational and vocational aspirations of rescued child labour through PENCIL PORTAL of Patna district and what incentives taken by NEP 2020 to reduce child labour in India.

Review of the related literature

Das, P. (2021). Studied on "Child Labour, Seasonal Migration, and School Exclusion: The Heartbreaking Story of a Tribal Girl in Rural India". This study was based on qualitative approaches such as case study and ethnography. This study revealed the fact that child labour activities directly affect the schooling of girls belonging to tribal communities. The study also revealed that seasonal migration is one of the important factors that pulled children out of school.

In the tribal areas, most of the girls remained absent from schools during the peak season of harvest. There are two times in a year when seasonal migration occurs- at the time of sowing and crop reaping. This study also revealed that tribal ethnic groups are steadily realizing the importance of education and perceiving the association between schooling and enhanced earning opportunities. Ghosh, M., and Bhardwaj, A. (2020) conducted a study titled "Educational Status of the Slum Dwellers: Kharagpur City" using a survey-based approach. Primary data was collected through interviews and schedules from 15 slums in Kharagpur city. The study aimed to thoroughly analyze the educational status



of slum dwellers and compare the educational attainment of high school students from diverse socio-cultural groups, including Tribal, Oriya, Telugu, Muslim, and Hindu migrants. Additionally, it evaluated the effectiveness of government policies and programs aimed at improving education in slum areas. The study was based on two key hypotheses. The First one was education is directly linked to income and socio-economic conditions, and the second one was that the lack of education persists among some slum dwellers. Findings revealed a direct correlation between income levels and educational attainment, with higher income levels leading to better education. However, the study also highlighted a high dropout rate among students, primarily driven by poverty. Febin, M. and Scaria, R. (2018) published an article titled "Prevention of Child Labour in India: The Theory and Practice," which was entirely based on secondary data. The data was sourced from a variety of reputable platforms, including research articles, publications by the ILO, the Census of India, NSSO surveys, the Ministry of Labour & Employment (GoI), and verified websites. where they look at India's child labour problem from both a domestic and global standpoint. and assess how far India has come in lowering child labour. The study pointed out that child labour remains alarmingly high in developing countries, with India leading the world in terms of child labour incidence. Despite the government's implementation of numerous policies and programs, along with increases in enrolment and literacy rates, child labour continues to be a significant issue in India that requires urgent and sustained attention. Kumari, K. (2017) Studied on "Child Labour in Bihar: The Concealed Phenomenon". This study focused on critically examining official sources of information regarding the extent of child labour in Bihar. It provides an analysis within the context of Bihar's current socio-economic conditions, highlighting how these factors directly impact the lives of children and, consequently, contribute to the prevalence of child labour in the state of Bihar. The study found that child labour is primarily driven by factors such as poverty, parental illiteracy, social indifference, ignorance, limited access to education and exposure, as well as the exploitation of cheap and unorganized labour. Other contributing factors include the shortages of required education at the primary level, the unawareness of parents the harmful effects of child labour, the ineffective implementation of child labour laws, the unavailability and inaccessibility of schools, an uninspiring and impractical school modules, and the prevalence of cheap child labour, which perpetuates the cycle of child labour. Nagar & Roy (2022) studied on 'A Critical Analysis of Child Labour in India', along with finding out the factors that promote child labour, an attempt has been made to analyse those factors and to explore the diversity arising from child labour in different areas and discrimination based on gender. This research paper presents a critical analysis of child labour prevalent in India. In this research paper, the descriptive research method was used to achieve the objectives, and this research paper selected a sample from

the period between 1971 and 2011 based on primary and secondary data. The researcher has used the observational method to find out about gender discrimination. Conclusion: This study has considered family factors like big family responsibility, poverty, uneducated parents, etc., responsible for child labour. This study has clearly stated in its conclusion that child labour has been a serious problem for a developing country like India since the beginning. As a result of all the efforts, child labour has decreased from 1.26 crores as per the census 2001 to 43.3 lakhs in 2011, i.e. there has been a 65% reduction in child labour. Child labour remains a persistent issue in India, affecting children's education, well-being, and future opportunities. Jihye Kim and Wendy Olsen (2023) provides an in-depth analysis of the prevalence of harmful child labour in India using time-use data. The study highlights how different measurement techniques influence child labour statistics and offers policy recommendations to address hidden and gendered aspects of child labour. Objectives of the study were to assess the extent of harmful child labour in India by examining the time-use patterns of children aged 6-17 years. It seeks to differentiate between acceptable child work and harmful child labour based on excessive working hours and hazardous conditions. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for improved measurement techniques to account for gendered and hidden forms of child labour. The study underscores the need for more inclusive and gender-sensitive measurement techniques to capture the true extent of child labour. It advocates for policy interventions aimed at reducing excessive working hours, ensuring educational access, and addressing hidden forms of labour. Through the review of related literature, it is noticed that many researches have done in the field of child labour in different aspects such as Prevention of Child Labour in India. But no research finds in the connection between the educational and vocational aspirations of the child labourer in Patna district, Bihar.

Rationale of the study: Education creates more aware and responsible citizens who understand the importance of human rights, equality, and justice. Education empowers children with knowledge and opens doors to better opportunities and life prospects. Indian education policies systematically plan to provide free schooling and mid-day meals to help incentivize parents to send children to school instead of work. If children of deprived families attend school, they can grow and develop skills that break the cycle of poverty, which is often a root cause of child labour in India. Education and vocational skills together can help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty that often leads to child labour. Vocational education can lead to stable, well-paying jobs, reducing the need for child labour. In sum, prioritizing education and vocational aspirations ensures that children grow up with skills, knowledge, and opportunities, reducing their chances of being forced into child labour.

Statement of the Problem: Educational and Vocational Aspirations of Child Labour in the special reference of Patna district.

Operational definition of the term used in this study:

Child Labour: Child labour indicates that children who are not getting proper education at the age below 14 years rather involved in any kind of workplace. It may affect their capacity to do regular school and education.

Educational Aspirations: Educational aspiration refers to educational goals set for individuals. It is essential to one's life because it motivates and energizes the individual to attain their goals.

Vocational Aspirations: Vocational aspirations are the expressions of an individual's desires, hopes, and ambitions for future career paths, which develop over time through personal experience, values, and social context. In this research paper, the formal definition of Vocational aspirations is an individual's expressed career-related goals or ambitions, often shaped by social, economic, and educational factors.

Research Questions:

1. What are the educational and vocational aspirations of child labour in Patna District?
2. What are the major concerns of the NEP- 2020 about Education for all?

Research Objectives:

1. To identify the educational and vocational aspirations of rescue child labours in Patna District.
2. To analyze the National Educational Policy 2020 about education for all.

Methodology of the Study:

Method: The researchers used a descriptive case study research method in this study. A case study is a detailed and in-depth analysis of a specific unit, such as an individual, group, or institution, with an emphasis on understanding developmental factors related to the subject.

Population of this study: In this study, Bihar state is considered as the population of this study. **Sampling technique:** This study selected an appropriate sample through a snow ball sampling technique.

Sample of this Study: In the study, a sample of 40 rescued child labourers from different organizations in the Patna district.

Tool Used in this study: The self-prepared Educational and Vocational Aspiration Questionnaire was used to collect the data to fulfil the objective.

Findings of the study:

Objective 1: To identify the educational and vocational aspirations of child labour in Patna District.

To fulfill the above objective, the researcher has collected data through the questionnaire in different dimensions such as self-desire, educational obstacles, family support, and internal motivation for educational aspirations and vocational aspirations divided into three domains: skill-based education, economic support, and jobs after the study.

1. Self-Desire- In this dimension, 70% of the children responded that their educational aspiration is very high level, and 30% of the children showed low-level educational aspiration. Here, most children are interested in completing their school education and also interested to study in pursuing higher education.

2. Educational obstacles- Due to the educational obstacles, 59% of the children have shown very low educational aspirations. The reasons for the low-level aspiration of the Children are that they are facing many educational obstacles like not getting the opportunities to select the suitable subjects as per their personal requirements, availability of the textbooks, and lack of enjoyment in the school environment. However, 65% of the children still do not face such difficulties in their education.

3. Family support- 74% of the children responded that their educational aspiration is not upto the desired level due to the lack of proper family support for their education. Most of the Children said that their families are not interested in their education; rather, they are looking to earn from their children because of their economic background as well as their parents' educational background is very low.

4. Internal Motivation- In this dimension, 65% children showed that their educational aspiration is high due to internal motivation. They want to study because they believe that education will develop their personality, they will enjoy their life through education. Maximum number of children said that if they get a good quality education, they will develop good manners in their life.

Vocational aspirations: The researcher collected data through the questionnaire, most of which were from children; out of 40 samples, 26 appreciated skill-based education. They believe that it offers better career facilities, and 70% of the samples responded that vocational education contributes to strengthening their economic condition. 60% of the Children want vocational education for their job after completing their studies. So, based on the above data, most of the child labourers are looking for vocational education because of their financial support and better future. However, out of 40 samples, 16 Children responded that they did not learn any skills through vocational education.



Objective 2: To know the recommendations of National Educational Policy-2020 about Education for all.

The National Education Policy 2020 in India primarily aims to overhaul the educational system, promote inclusivity, and reduce inequalities, including those that contribute to child labour. While it does not explicitly target child labour, its focus on improving access to quality education, vocational training, and poverty alleviation strategies indirectly addresses this issue. NEP 2020 seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. National Education Policy 2020 given below some major suggestions to reduce child labour in India. 1. Universal access to Education from preschool to Grade-12, 2. Special focus on marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups, 3. Integration of vocational educational education, 4. Financial support and initiatives, 5. Flexible school options, 6. Strengthen school infrastructure and resources in underserved areas and 7. Awareness campaigns, 8. Creating a more inclusive system that welcomes children regardless of socio-economic background, disability, or gender, 9. Focused efforts to reduce dropout rates at secondary level. 10. Curriculum designed to be flexible, multidisciplinary, and holistic, 11. Providing flexible learning opportunities for adult learners, 12. Identifying and bringing back out of school children through open schooling and bridge courses. By making education more accessible, inclusive, and skill-oriented, NEP 2020 indirectly addresses key factors contributing to child labour and aims to break the poverty cycle through better educational opportunities.

Conclusion

Education serves as a foundational solution to reducing child labour in India. By providing children with the chance to learn and develop, we give them the tools they need to escape the cycle of exploitation and poverty. Education empowers children, families, and communities to make better choices, leading to a brighter future for the children and a stronger society also nation. Ensuring access to education for all children is crucial in the fight against child labour of the world. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, India’s esteemed scientist, teacher, former president of India mentioned in Vision 2020 “The future of India is in the hands of the upcoming generation”. However, despite his vision, the issue of child labour continues to grow every year. Child labour having a significant threat and interrupt to the nation’s development. Children are the foundation of our country, and it is imperative that we protect their rights and futures. In conclusion, the researcher suggests that improvements be made in the education system for child labourers, as despite numerous government initiatives, the number of child labourers remains alarmingly high across the country.

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The Editorial Board had used the Turnitin is an Internet-based similarity detection service run by the American company Turnitin, LLC, a subsidiary of Advance Publications which is a fully-automatic machine learning text- recognition system made for detecting, preventing and handling plagiarism and trusted by thousands of institutions across worldwide. Turnitin is an award-winning software that helps detect and prevent plagiarism regardless of language. Combining text- matching with writing-style analysis to promote academic integrity and prevent plagiarism, Ouriginal is simple, reliable and easy to use. Ouriginal was acquired by Turnitin in 2021. As part of a larger global organization GJEIS and Turnitin better equipped to anticipate the foster an environment of academic integrity for educators and students around the globe. Ouriginal is GDPR compliant with privacy by design and an uptime of 99.9% and have trust to be the partner in academic integrity (<https://www.ouriginal.com/>) tool to check the originality and further affixed the similarity index which is {08%} in this case (See below Annexure 16.4.6). Thus, the reviewers and editors are of view to find it suitable to publish in this Volume-16, Issue-4, Oct-Dec 2024.

Annexure 16.4.6

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Reviewers Memorandum



Reviewer's Comment 1: The manuscript presents a compelling and timely investigation into the educational and vocational aspirations of rescued child labourers in the Patna district of Bihar. By focusing on a vulnerable and often underrepresented group, the study fills a crucial gap in child welfare and education research. The use of a descriptive case study method aligns well with the research objectives and provides meaningful insight into the lived experiences of the children. The integration of national-level initiatives such as the PENCIL Portal and NEP 2020 adds policy relevance and enhances the societal value of the study.

Reviewer's Comment 2: The paper's strength lies in its contextual grounding and field-based findings. The authors have done well to collect primary data from 40 rescued child labourers using a self-developed tool that captures both educational aspirations and vocational preferences. The responses are thoughtfully interpreted and reveal important barriers such as lack of family support, economic constraints, and limited access to quality education. While the narrative format works well, presenting some of the results in visual formats such as tables could further support the clarity of interpretation. Nonetheless, the findings contribute significantly to the understanding of post-rescue challenges and opportunities for marginalized children.

Reviewer's Comment 3: The manuscript is well-written, coherent, and socially impactful. The conclusion effectively reinforces the key insights of the study and aligns them with policy recommendations. The references are relevant and current, offering a good mix of empirical and policy-based sources. Overall, this research is a valuable contribution to literature on child rehabilitation and inclusive education. It is suitable for publication and may serve as a useful reference for policymakers, educators, and NGOs working in the domain of child welfare and development.

Citation

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Conflict of Interest: Author of a Paper had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

Editorial Excerpt



The article has 08 % of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Kamlesh and Rashmi), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "Educational and vocational aspirations of child labourers with special reference to Patna" both subject-wise and research-wise. This manuscript presents a well-executed and relevant study that addresses the critical issue of child labour rehabilitation through education and vocational training. The empirical analysis is sound, the policy framing is appropriate, and the findings are clearly articulated. The authors successfully bridge ground-level realities with national policy initiatives like the PENCIL Portal and NEP 2020, which is both meaningful and necessary in today's child welfare and educational development landscape. After comprehensive reviews and the editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under the "Case Based Study" category.

Acknowledgement



The acknowledgement section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analyzed in this paper by the author (Kamlesh and Rashmi) were collected first handily and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The author is highly indebted to others who facilitated accomplishing the research. Last but not least, endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in the present issue.

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