



## UNVEILING THE SHADOWS: AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

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**Shivani Singh**

Research Scholar, School of law and Jurisprudence  
The Glocal University, Mirzapur Pole, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India.

**Dr. Rajesh Kumar**

Research Supervisor, School of law and Jurisprudence  
The Glocal University, Mirzapur Pole, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India.

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### ABSTRACT:

Child labor has been a significant issue for many years and presents difficulties for many developing nations. Throughout the ages, it has been present in both developed and impoverished regions of the world, up to the turn of the 20th century. Even though some nations have passed legislation and taken significant steps to prohibit child labor, the issue persists on a global scale. Child labor is a serious issue that is influenced by many different variables. The reasons behind India's high rate of child labor are intricate and ingrained in the culture. It appears that poverty is the primary reason. Child labor occurs in both rural and urban settings. However, because poverty is more widespread in rural regions, the great bulk of child labor takes place there. Despite the fact that many impoverished rural families find it difficult to live better lives in cities, this forces families to make their children work in order to boost the family income and secure their existence. This study examines the different contributing variables to child labor and looks for instances of prejudice in child labor. Furthermore, this paper's goal is to critically examine child labor in India. The results show that child labor was a major problem for India, a developing nation. However, according to the 2011 census data, there are presently 43.53 lakh working children in the nation, a 65 percent decrease from the 1.26 crore working children in 2001.

**Keywords:** Unveiling, child labour, forms, factors, discrimination

### 1. Introduction

Child labor has always been one of the main barriers to socioeconomic advancement. In many nations, ending child labor in all its manifestations is a long-term objective and a struggle. Currently, it is seen as a severe concern, particularly in developing nations. Children who miss their childhood and are deprived of the necessities of life are considered to be engaged in child labor. According to a recent estimate by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013), there are around 215 million youngsters working worldwide between the ages of five and fourteen. They frequently endure mistreatment and put in long hours under appalling conditions. Their emotional, mental, and physical well-being may be impacted by this. These children do not have the basic rights like access to school or health care. Even though it is illegal, the ILO (2013) reports that the majority of child laborers are engaged in dangerous jobs, and that the overall number of child laborers is rising. These kids suffer from chronic physical and mental suffering and are susceptible to illnesses. Poverty is the primary factor that motivates children to labor. According to Mapaure (2009), these kids labor to support their families and ensure their survival. According to some research, not all of the work that kids undertake is cruel or damaging (Dessay and Pallage, 2003). Some vocations, like babysitting or delivering newspapers, could offer good learning chances, but not if they expose kids to psychological stressors like prostitution, human trafficking, or pornographic activities. To end child labor worldwide, international groups have worked very hard. Despite the fact that many nations have passed laws outlawing child labor, child labor is nevertheless commonplace worldwide. For developing nations like India,

outlawing child labor is a difficult undertaking.

**What Child Labor Means:** Child labor is defined as the employment of minors in any job that robs them of their childhood, prevents them from attending regular school, or is otherwise damaging and dangerous to their mental, physical, social, or moral development. Because it includes the three ill-defined terms "child," "work," and "labor," defining child labor is more complicated than it may seem. According to the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138), a person under the general age of fifteen or, in certain situations, fourteen years old, may be considered a "child" in the context of child labor. The ILO (1983) states that "child labor includes children who lead adulteries too early, work long hours for low wages in conditions that are harmful to their physical and mental development and health, are sometimes separated from their families, and are often denied opportunities for meaningful education and training that would open up a better future for them."

## 2. Contemporary Definitions of Child Labour

Scholars have defined the phrase "child labor" in a variety of ways. According to Suda (2011), child labor is defined as any employment that involves children that is hazardous to their health or interferes with their ability to receive an education. According to Moyi (2011), child labor includes low pay, long hours, and sexual and physical abuse. Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) state that when children work in hazardous jobs under unfavorable conditions, it is considered child labor abuse. The definition and implications of child labor have been heavily influenced by the social, cultural, and economic contexts of each working organization as well as its missions, strategies, and objectives (Post & Sakurai, 2001; post, 2001a). The term child labor is commonly understood to mean "all cases in which children are exposed to harm at work whether or not children are less than 14 years old or less" (UNICEF, 2005, p. 10). Because these organizations have historically tended to protect and secure adult labor markets, trade unions, consumer groups, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) frequently used the terms "child labor" and "child laborer" in place of "working children," suggesting that children should be kept out of the workforce until they reach a minimum working age (ILO, 1997; Post, 2001a; Myers, 1999). Stated differently, the ILO's main goal was to safeguard adult employment and income, and various types of child labor laws have tacitly reaffirmed the notion that "children's economic freedom should be abridged to protect the economic welfare of adults." On the other hand, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations affiliated with UNICEF used the term "child labor" in accordance with article 32 of the Conventions on the Rights of the Child, which defines child labor as any economic activity that prevents or impedes a child's complete development or education. UNICEF perpetuates this practice by referring to child labor as "working children" ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)). According to the ILO, "child labor" is best described as work that harms a child's physical and mental development and robs them of their youth, potential, and dignity. It refers to work that is harmful to children's mental, physical, social, or moral development; work whose schedule prevents them from attending regular school; or work that interferes in any way with their ability to concentrate during war, clubs, and bouts; or work that interferes with their ability to have a healthy childhood.

## 3. Types of Child Labour

The phrase "child labor" needs to be defined because it encompasses a wide range of situations in which children work and cannot be used universally. The following types of work are performed by child laborers:

- **Child labour:** - Those children who are doing paid or unpaid work in factories, workshops, establishment, mines and in the service sector such as domestic labour. The ministry of Labour, Government of India has employed the term „child labour' only in the context of children doing „hazardous“ work. By implication, children who are not doing „hazardous“ work are not considered to be child labourers and are said to be doing child work.
- **Street children:** - Children living on and off the streets, such as shoeshine boys, ragpickers, newspaper-vendors, beggars etc. are called street children. Most children have some sort of home to go back to in the evening or nights, while street children are completely alone and are at the mercy of their employers. They live on the

pavements, in the bus stations and railway stations.

- **Bonded children:** - Children who have either been pledged by their parents for paltry sums of money or those working to pay off the inherited debts of their fathers. Bonded children are in many ways the most difficult to assist because they are inaccessible. If the carpet owner has bought them, they cannot escape. If the middle-class housewife has paid for them, they cannot run away. If the landlord in the village owns them, they will spend their life in servitude till they get married and can, in turn, sell their children.
- **Working children:** - Children who are working as part of family labour in agriculture and in home-based work. If children are working 12-14 hours a day along with their parents at the cost of their education, their situation is similar to that of children working for other employers. In fact children, particularly girls, are expected to take on work burdens by parents in complete disproportion to their strengths and abilities. This is the largest category of children who are out-of-school and are working full time. And it is here that we find the largest percentage of girls working at the cost of education.
- **Children used for sexual exploitation:** - Many thousands of young girls and boys serve the sexual appetites of men from all social and economic backgrounds. Direct links between the commercial sexual exploitation of children and other forms of exploitative child labor are numerous. Factories, workshops, street corners, railway stations, bus stops and homes where children work are common sites of sexual exploitation. Children are especially powerless to resist abuse by employers, either as perpetrators or intermediaries. The physical and psychosocial damage inflicted by commercial sexual exploitation makes it one of the most hazardous forms of child labor.
- **Migrant children:** – India faces a huge challenge with “distress seasonal migration “. Millions of families are being forced to leave their homes and villages for several months every year in search of livelihoods. These migrations mean that families are forced to drop out of schools, something that closes up the only available opportunity to break the vicious cycle generation after generation. At worksites migrant children are inevitably put to work. Many industrial and agro- industrial sectors like brick-making, salt manufacture, sugar cane harvesting, stone quarrying, construction, fisheries, plantations, rice mills and so on run largely on migrant labour.
- **Children engaged in household activities:** – Apart from children who are employed for wages (either bonded or otherwise) as domestic help, there are a large number of children (especially girls) who are working in their own houses, engaged in what is not normally seen as “economic activity”. These children are engaged in taking care of younger siblings, cooking, cleaning and other such household activities. As seen in the literature on women’s work, such activities need to be recognized as „work“. Further, if such children are not sent to school, they will eventually join the labour force as one of the above categories of child labour.

#### 4. Objectives

The objectives of this paper are:

- 1) To find out those areas where there is gender discrimination in child labor.
- 2) To make a critical analysis of child labor in India.
- 3) To analyze the various responsible factors for child labor.

#### 5. Research Methodology

Descriptive studies form the basis of this paper's study design. Both primary and secondary data form the basis of the study. The study's second goal is achieved through the employment of the observation method. The researchers employed analytical terms in order to achieve the third objective. The data used in the analytical analysis spans the last 50 years, from 1971 to 2011.

## 6. Socio-Economic Factors Related To Child Labour

There are some socio-economic factors that causes child labour –

- 1) **Poverty as root cause:** Different circumstances affect the child labour. Studies have demonstrated that the most notable reason is poverty (Bhat & Rather, 2009). Decisions about child labour and schooling are generally made by parents. If the family's income below the poverty line, parents think that children should also contribute in their family income. Basu (1998) used a theoretical model of child labour, where he showed the only reason parents send children to labour is because of their low income. Consequently poor parents cannot afford schooling for their children. Thus, mainly poor households are to send forced their children to labour instead of sending to school.
- 2) **Family size :** In fact, the involvement of children in large poor households usually more rather than smaller households which demonstrates family size have an effect on child labour. Parents oblige their children to work because they are not able to manage the demands of a large size family. There are also gender differences among household size. Not everyone and of all age in the family are working as child labour, which depends on the child's age and gender, for example boys are more likely to attended to school than girls.
- 3) **Family condition :** There are many growing children who have either lost one or both the parents and those impacted by HIV/AIDS in the family, are forced to work in order to support themselves and their siblings. The numbers of orphaned children are increasing particularly in sub Saharan Africa, many whom become street children, and live in very difficult circumstances. (Vandenberg, 2007).
- 4) **Traditional or cultural factors:** Culture is another factor which forces children into labour market. Different cultures of many societies make children start work at very young age which are related to traditions and cultural factors. They assumed that children need to learn skills that can be good for their future. According to Tauson (2009) in rural Guatemala; parents prefer their children to work because they considered it beneficial for them as they learn work skills.
- 5) **Corruption:** Corruption is the one of major cause for abusing resources, wherever there is poverty; there is also corruption (Murphy, 2005). According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2012) "Corruption exacerbates poverty and inequality, undermines human development and stability and sustains conflict, violates human rights, and erodes the democratic functioning of countries". Corruption can have hugely negative effect on children's right that deprives basic services such as health care, education and infrastructure. Corruption can diminish children's ability to escape poverty.
- 6) **Civil war:** The civil war is another factor contributing to child labour. The war destroys the economy of the country, people become much poor and all resources go to the war. Wars burn all good things that any country could have. It brings diseases, poverty, damages, and many other horrible things. Again, no help will be of use as long as the war is continues.
- 7) **Urban migration:** Many rural families migrate to urban areas because of rural push and urban pull factors. As a consequence of that, they are often forced to live and work in the street as they lack access to basic requirements such as food; shelter etc. and these children become street workers as vendors. Mostly street workers are vulnerable to violence and become more susceptible to illegal works, such as stealing, trafficking, drugs and prostitution (Yadav & Sengupta, 2009). These children live in urban poverty; many child labourers live in unhealthy poor conditions slum areas and work in poor environment such as domestic work, or work in hotels and restaurants etc. (Serwadda- Luwaga, 2005)

This means that the population is increasing in cities due to immigration and natural growth. Urban poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. Urban poverty in developing countries faces many challenges in their daily lives. Many poor people are living under great hardship, due to unemployment, housing shortages, violence and unhealthy environments. Increased urbanization has resulted in poverty in the cities. Urban poverty raises slums. These areas are characterized by high unemployment, poor sanitation, inadequate access to clean drinking water and inadequate housing.

**8) Globalization:** Globalization is another cause of child labour. Globalization has positive and negative impacts, nevertheless; globalization might give developing countries the opportunity to increase their gross domestic production (GDP) per capita via new trade possibilities and ascend their foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. Globalization also has brought adverse impacts on child labour in developing countries. In recent years, many international companies moved their production abroad. These companies often indulge in hiring children as cheap labours as they are enduring, and carry out commands given by their employers even if they're abused and exploited (Mapaure, 2009). Mishra (2012) claims that in India, globalization has obliged more children to work in hazardous occupations like brick kiln, motor garage, hotels, shops, transportation, manual loading work etc.

**9) Relationship between child labour, Family income and Education :** Lack of education or poor quality education is another factor that contribute to high incidence of child labour. Education is considered one of the main alternatives to abolish child labour. Practically family income affects children's education and poor parents cannot afford to pay for children however, children are compelled to work and are less enrolled.

**10) The opportunity costs of education:** The cost of education is another problem amongst poor households. This has contributed to the exploitation of children. Schools need to be affordable and accessible. Kondylis and Marco (2006) assume, that schools available in developing countries may help to increase school enrollment but may not reduce the incidence of child labour. Bhat (2010) argues that the quality education can help to keep children away from work, consequently it is important for a school to have educated teachers ratio in the classrooms. However for many poor parents it can be costly to send their children to school, as they families live on children's income and cannot afford school fees, uniforms or other additional costs. (Bhat-2010). This is a problem in developing countries to provide quality free education because it will cost money for governments (Budhwani et al. 2004).

**Areas Of Gender Discrimination In Child Labour– :** Discrimination is also present amongst child labor themselves. Older children may discriminate against younger children, foreign or minority children or children from a different caste. The sex division of labour of adults is also reflected in children's occupation.

**Meaning of gender difference:** While studying issue of gender difference, it is important to keep in mind that the term of "gender" is different from term "sex". "Sex" means the biological differences between male and female that do not change. The way of treatment of boys and girls and their expected behavior are based on gender differences. The activities that boys and girls are expected to do are referred to as their gender roles. For example- A person is not born being able to do beautiful needle work and art of cooking but he/she can learn how to do it but in most cultures, it is found that girls are taught these activities rather than boys. "Gender" refers to the learned, social differences and relations between girls and boys. Process of socialization through which children learn how to behave is not gender- neutral but shapes the various roles and responsibilities of boys and girls are assigned which is based on their sex. As children grow up, they follow the behavior of people around them such as parents, relatives, neighbors and teachers and reproduce the existing social differences between men and women. For example- A boy often acts in a manner that is consistent with the way he has seen other boys and men around him behaving.

**Factors affecting gender difference:** Gender affected by factors like age, class/caste, race, ethnicity, location (rural or urban), culture, religion, socio-economic factors to determine what opportunities present themselves to young people and the working conditions.

**Reasons of gender differences in child labour :** Existence of gender difference can be seen in child labour. Hence, it is necessary to check out the different factors related to this. Gender differences usually depend on different cultural determinants, family background and tradition of the work culture assigned to boys and girls. There is a discrimination of work between boys and girls. Boys may often be engaged towards sectors like automobile, fishing & mining and construction etc. because such nature of job is considered as heavy work and girls are motivated to do domestic work and lighter work like in Textile Industry usually women are employed. This discrimination is based on biological factors which is baseless.

**The involvement of boys and girls in different areas (as per general observation)-**

Areas	Involvement of boys and girls as child labourer
1. Domestic work	Girls are more involved rather than boys
2. Dhabas / restaurants / hotels /	Boys are more involved rather than girls
3. Agarbati, dhoop and detergent making	Approximate equal involvement of boys and girls
4. Paan, bidi and cigarettes	Boys are more involved rather than girls
5. Spinning / weaving	Girls are more involved rather than boys
6. Construction	Boys are more involved rather than girls
7. Brick – Kline, tiles	Boys are more involved rather than girls
8. Jewellery	Boys are more involved rather than girls
9. Carpet making	Boys are more involved rather than girls
10. Automobile, vehicle, repairs	Boys are more involved rather than girls

**Work Participation Of Children As Per Nss  
Effort Contribution of children**

		Distribution of (per 1000) of persons by principal usual activity category					
NSS	Age (in years)	Rural		Urban		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2004-05	5-9	2	1	2	1	2	1
	10-14	54	49	44	24	52	43
2009-10	5-9	2	1	0	0	1	1
	10-14	27	21	24	8	26	18

If we compare the above data of 2004-2005 and 2009-2010, it is observed that the child labor has declined both in the age group of 5-9 and 10-14. Similarly the work participation of children has decreased, both in rural and urban areas. But the involvement of male persons is more than the involvement of female person both in rural and urban areas. As per the statistics, child labor appears to be more in villages than in urban areas. Nine out of ten village

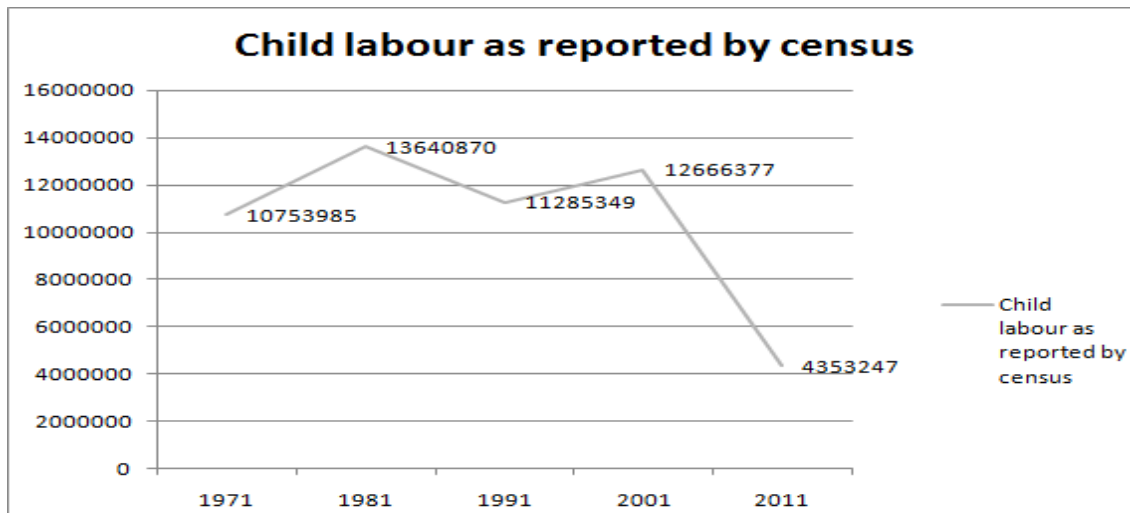
children are employed in agriculture or household industries and craftwork. Due to urbanization, more children are getting in to the service and trading sectors rather than marketing. To differentiate on the basis of gender, it is

Activities	Children of Age Group (5-14 years)					
	Number of Children (%)			Number of Children (in 100's)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Children engaged in "economic activities"	4.18	3.86	4.02	52967	45618	98392
Attended domestic duties only	0.30	3.15	1.67	3770	37208	40788
Attended domestic duties plus free collection of goods, tailoring, weaving for HH only	0.25	1.92	1.06	3178	22693	25897
Children at Work	4.73	8.93	6.75	59915	105519	165077
Attending schools	72.98	61.45	67.44	925350	725964	1651186
Children neither at work nor at school	17.26	20.42	18.80	218889	241255	460205

considered that more boys are employed in laborious activities than girls. This consideration is made based on the fact that it is difficult to take a count of girls working in households.

**Critical Analysis Of 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.

Year	Child labor as reported by census 1971 to 2011
1971	10753985
1981	13640870
1991	11285349
2001	12666377
2011	4353247



**States with Maximum %age of Child labour as per Census 1971-2011 in age group 5-14 yrs**

1971		1981		1991		2001 ****		2011	
State	% of Total Working Children	State	% of Total Working Children	State	% of Total Working Children	State	% of Total Working Children	State	% of Total Working Children
Andhra Pradesh	15%	Andhra Pradesh	14%	Andhra Pradesh	15%	Uttar Pradesh	15%	Uttar Pradesh	21%
Uttar Pradesh	12%	Madhya Pradesh	12%	Uttar Pradesh	12%	Andhra Pradesh	11%	Maharashtra	11%
Madhya Pradesh	10%	Maharashtra	11%	Madhya Pradesh	12%	Rajasthan	10%	Bihar	10%
Bihar	10%	Uttar Pradesh	11%	Maharashtra	9%	Bihar	9%	Andhra Pradesh	9%
Maharashtra	9%	Karnataka	8%	Karnataka	9%	Madhya Pradesh	8%	Madhya Pradesh	7%
Karnataka	8%	Bihar	8%	Bihar	8%	West Bengal	7%	Rajasthan	6%
Tamil Nadu	7%	Tamil Nadu	7%	Rajasthan	7%	Karnataka	6%	Gujarat	6%
Rajasthan	5%	Rajasthan	6%	West Bengal	6%	Maharashtra	6%	Karnataka	6%
Gujarat	5%	Orissa	5%	Tamil Nadu	5%	Gujarat	4%	West Bengal	5%
West Bengal	5%	Gujarat	5%	Gujarat	5%	Tamil Nadu	3%	Tamil Nadu	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Statistics of child labour in India:**

The priority of the government is to eliminate child labor especially in hazardous occupations. Indian law specifically defines 64 industries as hazardous and it is a criminal offence to employ children in such hazardous industries. In 2001, an estimated 1% of all child workers, or about 120,000 children in India were in a hazardous job. As per census reports, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra are top five states where no. of child labour is more than other states. The highest jump in terms of percentage is of Uttar Pradesh where child labour increased by 12% to 21%. More than 300000 children are estimated to be trapped in India’s carpet industry. Most of India’s carpets are woven in Uttar Pradesh where the majority of workers are low-caste Hindu boys. As per the previous records, the child laborers were mostly working in agriculture, paan (betel), bidi, construction, domestic work, spinning, and weaving sector etc. Notably, Constitution of India prohibits child labour in hazardous industries (but not in non-hazardous industries) as a Fundamental Right under Article 24. Additionally, various laws and the Indian Penal Code, such as the Juvenile Justice (care and protection) of Children Act-2000, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Abolition) Act-1986 provide a basis in law to identify, prosecute and stop child labour in India. India formulated a National Policy on Child Labour in 1987. This Policy seeks to adopt a gradual & sequential approach with a focus on rehabilitation of children working in hazardous



occupations. It envisioned strict enforcement of Indian laws on child labour combined with development programs to address the root causes of child labour such as poverty. In 1988, this led to the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) initiative. This legal and development initiative continues, with a current central government funding of Rs. 6 billion, targeted solely to eliminate child labour in India. The Ministry of Labour and Employment had implemented around 100 industry-specific National Child Labour Projects to rehabilitate the child workers since 1988.

Under this scheme, children in the age group of 9-14 years are rescued from hazardous occupations and enrolled in NCLP special training center which has provisions for bridge education, vocational, training, mid-day meal, stipend, health care and others before being mainstreamed into formal education system. A 2009–10 nationwide survey found child labour prevalence had reduced to 4.98 million children (or less than 2% of children in 5–14 age groups). The 2011 national census of India found the total number of child labour, aged 5–14, to be at 4.35 million and the total child population to be 259.64 million in that age group. The decrease in number of children working is an encouraging sign, and suggests the effectiveness of the schemes (direct or indirect like focus on primary school enrollment under “The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act” of 2009) implemented by the Government though other reasons including social awareness and economic growth are also playing a role. Many NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan, ChildFund, CARE India, Talaash Association, Child Rights and You, Global march against child labour, RIDE India, Child line etc. have been working to eradicate child labour in India.

## 7. Conclusion

Many of these children are forced to work at young ages due to many family factors such as unemployment, a large number of family members, poverty, and lack of parental education. In 2015, the country of India is home to the largest number of children who are working illegally in various industrial industries. Agriculture in India is the largest sector where many children work at early ages to help support their family. This is often the major cause of the high rate of child labour in India. A variety of Indian social scientists as well as the Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) have done extensive research on the numeric figures of child labour found in India and determined that India contributes to one-third of Asia's child labour and one-fourth of the world's child labour. Due to a large number of children being illegally employed, the Indian government began to take extensive actions to reduce the number of children working, and to focus on the importance of facilitating the proper growth and development of children. Due to the increase of regulations and legal restrictions on child labour, there has been a 65 percent decline in child labour from 2001 to 2011. Although this is a great decrease in the country of India, there is still high numbers of children working in the rural areas of India. With 85 percent of the child labour occurring in rural areas, and 15 percent occurring in urban areas, there are still substantial areas of concern in the country of India.

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