

# Deciphering Innocence: A Tale of Socio-economic Conditions of Child Labour in Odisha

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## **Abstract**

*This study mainly focuses on the current socio-economic condition of those people who were child labor in their childhood. In this study, economic indicators are income and employment status. On the other hand, level of education, health status and role in case of decision making in the society are studied as social indicators. The main reason which gives rise to child labour is widespread unemployment and underemployment among the adult poor strata of the population, inter alia, due to sharp growth of population. Large families with low income and often lack of educational, illiteracy and ignorance of parents about the importance of education as well as about the impact of labour on the health of their children are some of the reasons which breed child labour. The objective of the present study was to study the socio-economic condition of families whose children are engage in child labour in Rourkela. The child labourers were interviewed in their workplaces using a predesigned and pre-tested questionnaire in 2021. Data were collected and analyzed a total of 60 child labourers participated in the study. This study finds that person who was not child worker in early stage of his/her life have higher probability to enjoy better socio-economic condition than that of person who worked as child worker in past. In fact, it identifies that a children who is working as a child worker has 61% probability to have low standard of living in his/her future life.*

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## **1. Introduction**

The Child is generally considered to a person who is less than 18 years of age and less developed, the study of child labor is important not only for social reasons but also for economic ones. The impact of child labor on the economy works through its debilitating effect on education which is important component of human capital. The overall population 41,947,358 in Odisha 34,951,234 in rural area 6,996,124 in urban area and child population in the age group 0-6 male 27, 44,552 and female 26, 14,258 total is 53,58,810 (Annual health survey 2011). The participation of children in work in home and outside is often considered to be one of the important reasons for low school enrolment in Rourkela. The Census found an increase in the number of child laborers from 11.28 million in 1991 to 12.66 million in 2001. While an absolute increase of 181 million in the country's population has been recorded during the decade 2001-2011. The Rourkela's children are deprived every winding of social and international aspects such as in trafficking, industrial works, household labors, early marriage, forcedly prostitution, begging, less wages, helping in the vehicle etc. though the government of Odisha has taken many initiatives to prevent child labor and violation of child rights. But the achievement is not satisfactory. Child labor is now a social problem, where infants are been exploited and forced to work at a young age. "Child Labor and American History," children always had worked either at home or later in industrial companies (Hindman, 2002).

## **2. Results and Discussion**

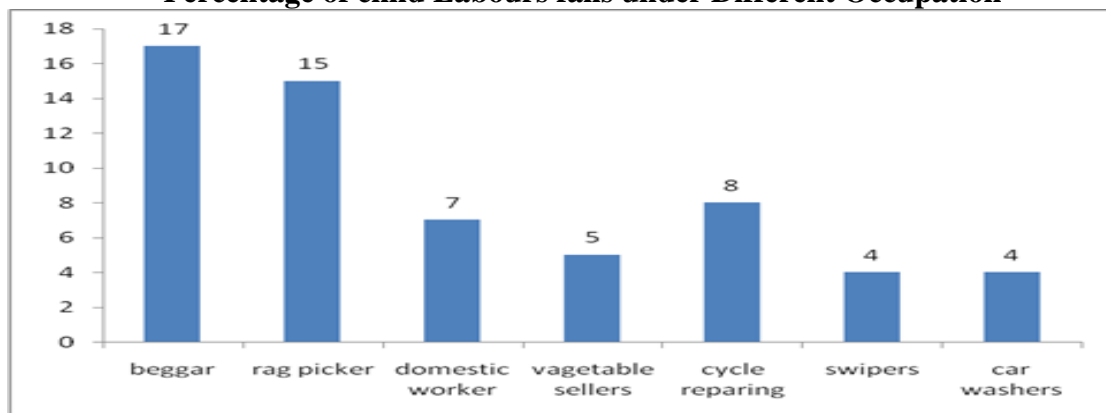
The socio-economic parameters including place of origin, caste and religion parental occupations influence the incidence of child labour. In this chapter the focus is on the socio-economic background of the sample population of household, picking or work relating to rag picking. Child labour has been an important area of social concern both nationally and internationally. Millions of children worldwide start working at a very young age and these children are exposed to various forms of exploitation. Children continue to work in large numbers in various sectors of the economy. Numerous children are engaged in occupations and processes, which are plainly

dangerous and hazardous and it is difficult to arrive at the actual number of working children in these occupations and processes. Some of the glaring examples are the children engaged in rag picking, working in restaurant, grocery shop, garage, working on household (servant), bagging on the street etc.

***Different Occupation Groups of Child Labour in Study Area***

This chart shows that 60 percent of the working children are engaged in different sector. The selected sample is a representation of the total child labour. As far as possible all the different occupation groups are given proportional representation in the sample. The analysis of demonstrates the high presence of child labor among children in the different sector.

**Fig-1  
Percentage of child Labours falls under Different Occupation**



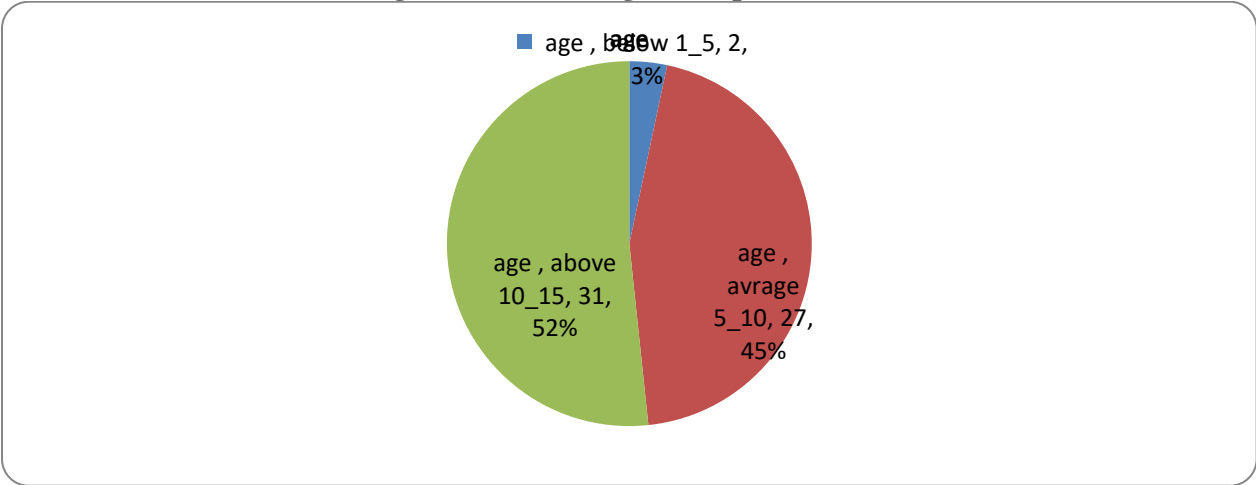
Source: Survey Data, 2021

The above fig-1 presents the percentage of child labours engaged under different occupation for their survival. As far as possible all the different occupation groups are given proportional representation in the sample. As such, the sample consisted of 17% beggars, 15 % rag pickers, 7 % domestic workers, 5% vegetable sellers, 8 % cycle repairers, 4% swappers and 4% car washer as shown in the chart 3.2. The occupation of the head of the household is considered as the main occupation of the household.

***Different Age Group of Child Labours***

The main reason of this age differentials is that most of the younger children still attend school education is usually continued until either academic failure or the disability to of their families to bear the burden of school expenses forcing them to drop out. This usually takes place after two or three years; hence there is a connection between age and the percentage of children working. That is, as the children grow older, more of them join the labor forces.

**Fig-2**  
**Percentage of Different Age Group of Child Labour**



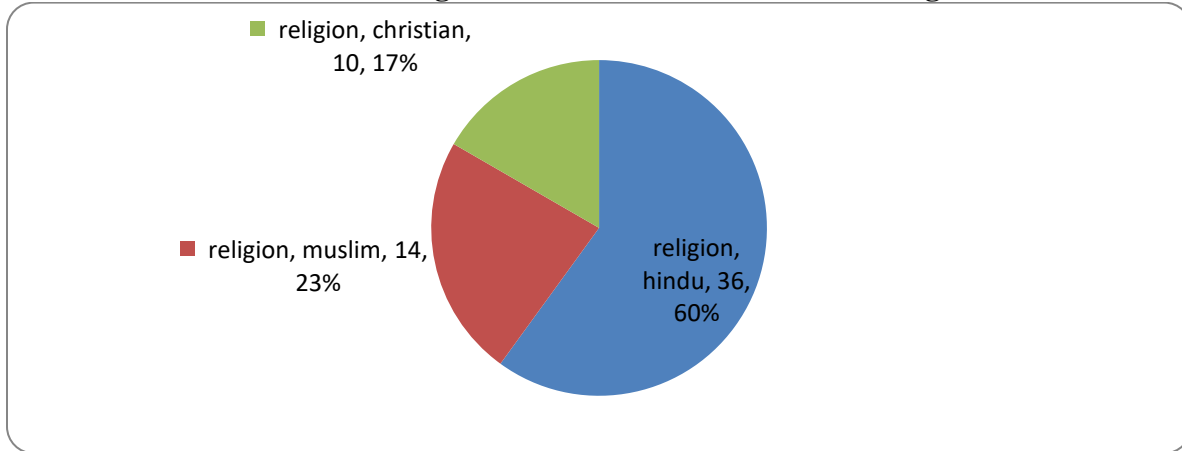
*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

The above fig-2 shows the age-wise classification of child labours engaged under different occupation. The average size of the family is 4.96 shows that, 4 percent of the children in the age group (five to nine) are participating in the labor force, while this percentage increases to 37.6 percent in the age group of (10 to 15). The percentage further increases to 58.4 percent for the age group of (15-18).

***Different Religion of Child Labour***

Religion also plays an important role in affecting the child labour.

**Fig-.3**  
**Percentage of Child Labour in Different Religion**



*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

The following fig-3 shows the religion-wise classification of child labors engaged under different occupation. The differences between the region as shown in the chart indicate that the largest percentage about 36 percent of the children of the coastal areas were resident of Hindu, followed by Muslim (14 percent) and Christian (14 percent). These four regions represent the coastal areas where the traditional sector is dominant and somehow, they lag from the overall development process.

***Working Hours of Child Labour***

The following table-1 shows the classification of child labours on the basis of their working hours engaged under different occupation. Working hours mean the time duration in which the employees in the establishment are at the disposal of the employer exclusive of any interval allowed for rest and meals.

**Table: 1**  
**Working Hours of Child Labour**

Number of Day	Frequency	Percentage
Whole Day	65	44.5
Seven Day	11	7.4
Whole Month	5	3.4
Total	82	60

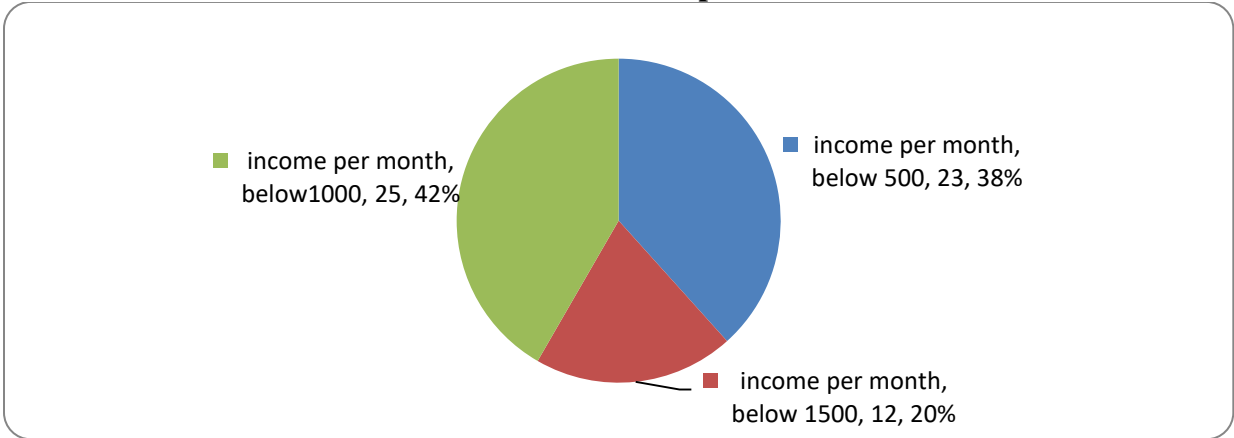
*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

It was evident that 44.5 percent of the child labor work full day. The percentage of those children who work more than one day is also higher, working whole week, and month in the deep sea to catch as much fish as they can (7.4 percent working whole week and 3.4 percent work for whole month). This could be justified by the fact that fishing is mostly done in traditional way where the work could take the whole day from dawn to sunset, week and months.

***Child Labour Income per Month***

The following chart-3.4 shows the income-wise classification of child labours engaged under different occupation. The child earning increase the incidence of child labor increases. It is highest when the income falls in the 5,001 to 10,000 category shows decline in the last category.

**Fig-5  
Child Labour Income per Month**

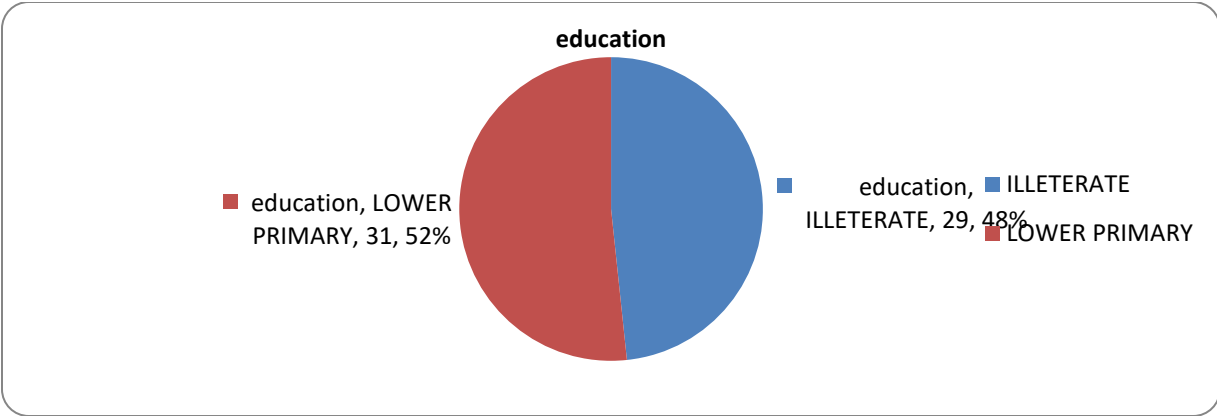


*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

***Educational Status of Child Labour***

The following fig-6 shows the educational status of child labours. As shown in 31 percent of the working children were dropped out from the school. Moreover, about 29 percent of the working children have never attended school; only 40 percent are those who currently attending school. Out of the total children currently studying 3 percent is in primary.

**Fig-6  
Education of Child Labour**



*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

A close look on educational level differentials shown in reflects that 31 percent children drop out from the primary level. This might be due to the high cost of education or the unattractiveness of the education system. In the survey, numerous parents claim that quality of education is not good in these areas. Lack of job facilities has further distorted the situation. Parents feel that child should work rather than get education as work bring experience, which in turn provide job security for future. From both the tables, it can be concluded that work is negatively related to the education of the child.

### **3. Conclusion and Policy Implications**

The prevalence of child labor is more or less seen in all periods of time, it varies in nature and dimension depending on the existing socioeconomic structure of the society. Paradoxically, it is unfortunate to say that tragically most of the child life is lost due to child work. Child labor is mainly necessitated by economic compulsions of the parents in many cases of the children. The main reason which give rise to child labor are widespread of absolute poverty, unemployment and underemployment among the adult workers, large families, lack of educational facilities, illiteracy and ignorance of parents about the importance of education as well as about the impact of labor on the health of their children are some of the reasons which breed child labor.

Most people in Rourkela live under poverty line and many begin to work at very early age. Children are found working under hazardous conditions such as mining, auto repair, battery recharging, saw milling, welding, and rickshaw pulling, garments manufacturing and

working with dangerous machinery. It is clear from this study that child labor has higher probability to create negative impacts on future life. Since child worker does not get opportunity to get better education, they cannot get better job opportunities in future life. Consequently, their income remains low which only ensure low standard of living. So, poverty and illiteracy are the main causes for leading child labor. Consequently, the vulnerable socio-economic status at adulthood is caused by hazardous child labor. If we can ensure the pragmatic educational program and vocational training to make them skilled, then the negative effects of child labor on later age can be reduced significantly.

The study recommended the following policy measures to summarize. First, the government may provide income generating activity in the area. This will curtail the child labor. Second, the government should control the high population growth in the area. Family planning should be widely introduced in the area. Third, illiteracy ranks second to poverty, and leads to child labor, therefore the government must implement its literacy programs more effectively, so that more people become literate and educated.

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