CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

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Summary

Children are very important to the nation. With them mental as well as physical development is faster than with the grown ups. They are to be treated as important national assets. Future prosperity of the nation depends upon the growth and development of the present day children.

But, it is a matter of regret to observe that a considerable number of them are left to find themselves or tied down to some workplaces while they are supposed to be enrolled in educational institutions. Children are mostly employed in the un-organised sector like match, tea, beedi, brick and catering units.

Acts and Institutions, including the Constitution of India besides intellectuals consider 'those who are aged 6 to 14 as children'. Labour at such a tender age is detrimental to health and growth of the children. Engaged in economic activities at their tender ages, they are deprived of childhood pleasures and education.

Child labourers can be classified as self-employed, wage earners, apprentices and bonded-labour. Poverty is the main root cause of child labour in majority of the cases. Children are forced by their poor parents to go for work and they are preferred by employers as they are cheaper than adult labour.
The side-effects of the problem of child labour will be horrible if proper attention is not paid and care is not taken to obviate these ill-effects. Some unfortunate children may fall into the clutches of the anti-social elements and become either 'street children' or 'hardened criminals'.

Statement of the problem

The child labour is a global phenomenon which exists everywhere with some degree of difference. It is not possible for the researcher with limited means, to cover all the child labourers for the purpose of the study. Hence the study is restricted to the children employed in two-wheeler repair workshops in five major towns of Anantapur district.

Selection of the sample

Census survey was conducted to list out the two-wheeler repair workshops in the selected towns and to find out the number of children and adults employed in two-wheeler repair workshops in the five selected major towns of the district. Three hundred working children were selected at random.

Methodology

A schedule was designed after holding discussions with informants as well as officials and persons having touch with the topic. The data were collected from the child labourers selected for interviews. Published and unpublished material available with Government and private sources were utilised as secondary data.
Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study:

* To know the socio-economic background of the children working in the two-wheeler repair workshops,
* to delve into the factors responsible to take up the economic activities,
* to spotlight the life pattern and working conditions of the child labourers,
* to list out the problems associated with employment in repair workshops and
* to orchestrate the aims and aspirations of the children working in the repair workshops.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are made use of for the purpose of this study.

1) Most of the children employed in repair workshops come from poor families.
2) Lack of interest in education and educational failures are the other reasons.
3) Working and living conditions of the child workers are not satisfactory.

Conclusions

After careful analysis of the facts collected through structured interview-schedules from the selected child labourers, working in two-wheeler repair workshops in the selected towns in the district, the following conclusions have been arrived at.
1. Relatively a large percentage of the children (36.67 per cent) entered into worklife because of poverty which is the main reason for the children to take up economic activities at their tender age.

2. Considerable number of the children (35.33 per cent) took up this economic activity with the intention to learn the work. This type of mechanical trade is believed to be a skilled, technical and job-fetching one having future.

3. Seventy five per cent of the children working in two-wheeler repair workshops surveyed, belong to the age group of 12 to 14 years.

4. Many children (75 out of 300) started working right from the age of 10 and a few (3.67 per cent) started working at an early age of seven.

5. Nearly 95 per cent of the respondents are literates; the rest illiterates. Majority of the literate children studied upto VI th Class.

6. Majority of the children stopped their studies because of financial problems of their family and the rest due to lack of interest in education and health problems.

7. Many children (53 per cent) are interested to attend non-formal classes in case they are arranged in out-of-working hours at the centres located nearer to their residences.

8. Only one-third of the children interviewed (33.33 per cent) have shown interest in attending vocational classes incase similar training is arranged in the course.
9. Mothers of only 18.33 per cent of the child labourers are literates whereas fathers of 87 per cent of the child labourers are literates.

10. Majority of the child workers reside in slum areas notified by Municipal authorities.

11. Most of the child workers (86 per cent) belong to the same town/taluk where they are working and the rest to some other town/taluk originally.

12. Almost all the child workers, surveyed, (94 per cent) contribute to the family income.

13. Seventeen per cent of the children interviewed have completed one year of service and five per cent of the children have completed five years of service rest of them have completed two to four years of service.

14. Almost all the children who gained four or more years of experience know all the repair works except re-boring the engine head of the vehicle.

15. More than half of the children work ten to eleven hours a day.

16. Majority of the children are used to take three to four cups of coffee or tea a day which is not good for health at such tender age.

17. Most of the working children are provided with drinking water facility at the workplaces. Essential facilities like toilet and first aid are not provided in the workplaces, excepting those run by authorised dealers of two-wheel vehicles.

18. Seven per cent of the child workers, interviewed, were related to the master mechanics. Hence it is concluded that
this blood-relationship with the master mechanic of these children might have induced them to choose this mechanical trade to settle in life. The percentage of those who have selected this work or this type of work, though not uncommon can be stated as meagre.

19. Family members of 15 per cent of child workers are working in the same or similar occupations. It is presumed in the case of 15 per cent of child workers, existence of relatives in the same or similar occupation is the reason for taking up this kind of activity.

20. Two-thirds of the parents of working children live in own-houses. Majority of parents of child labourers have made some arrangements of their own (temporary, or semi-temporary, or permanent) towards housing.

21. Parents of 50 per cent of the child labourers, approximately, are living in semi-permanent houses.

22. Seventy per cent of the child labourers take lunch at the workplaces and the rest go to their homes for taking lunch. Place of lunch depends upon the distance between the houses and workplaces besides the time allowed by the employer for the purpose.

23. A majority of the child workers (57.33 per cent ) have to cover at least one km. to reach the workplaces. This includes 19 children (6.33 per cent) who have to cover a minimum of four kms.

25. Slightly more than 50 per cent of the child workers have reported to have met with minor accidents while at work.
26. A majority of the child workers in their freetime (66.33 per cent) view movies. Only 9.33 per cent of the children have said that they read books when they find leisure.

27. In leisure time the children working in two-wheeler repair workshops play with marbles, empty cigarette packs, tops and chilli-katte on roadside. They are the unorganised, no cost and local games exposing both the players and the passers-by to hazards.

28. All the children sleep a minimum of eight to nine hours a day. No child working in the two-wheeler repair workshops has complained of inadequate sleep.

29. Nearly 87 per cent of the child workers have determined to start their own workshops after completely learning the work. Rest have preferred working under some senior master mechanic on salary basis.

Suggestions

The problem of child labour has assumed alarming dimension as the majority of them have to work in unhealthy and hazardous conditions affecting their mental and physical growth. The evil of child labour is spread wide in India despite several enactments since pre-Independence period. Child Labour is a symptom of existence of large and deep gaps in overall economic and social development of a Country. Millions of children at their tender age, are forced to become bread-winners of their families.

1. Abolition of child labour may slightly increase the cost but may lead to automation and increased employment opportunities
for adults. Hence irrespective of the sector, child labour must be totally banned with immediate effect. Though some occupations including two-wheeler repair workshops are not so hazardous, the entry of children below the age of 14 should be avoided.

2. The root of the problem of child labour can be traced to poverty. Lack of confidence in education and other alternatives are the other reasons.

Poverty for the purpose of this study does not mean 'dire poverty' which results in begging, both adults and children. Here poverty refers to the people who can afford to feed themselves and their families to some extent but not able to send their children to expensive schools by paying fees, buying books and school uniform. This can be solved, to some extent, by improving the economic conditions of the families of child labourers which, inturn, could be done through the effective implementation of the urban poverty alleviation programmes.

3. Another reason for sending the children to workplaces instead of schools is the lack of confidence is the usefulness of education. People do not have faith in the education imparted in panchayath, Mandal Praja Parishat, Zilla Praja Parishath, Municipal and Government schools in particular and educational system in general. Many parents are of the opinion that, if the children study upto X class, the children would neither be able to fetch a job nor be willing to take up the best of the work available in the unorganised sector. As a remedial measure, primary, upper primary and
secondary education especially in Panchayath, MPP, ZPP, Municipal and Govt. Schools should be re-oriented so as to create confidence in the minds of the parents. Adequate education facilities should be provided. Free and compulsory education upto Xth class should be enforced. Improved legislation, supported by better enforcement machinery will yield positive results in this respect. Education must be vocationalised even at the early stage where-ever it is possible.

4. Yet another reason for parents to put their children at work is the absence of an alternative. Lack of alternative here means, if a child is not willing to go to the school the only alternative available to the poor parents is to send their children to work somewhere in the unorganised sector, as employment opportunities for children in the organised sector are nil. Suppose the child is not sent to work in the above circumstances, it becomes a problem to the parent. As an idle child is a problem for the parents in several ways, sending him to work is the only alternative left to the parents. Here, the parents who expect some immediate earnings from their child, put him into unskilled occupations like, hotels, brick kilns construction works etc. Parents who can support their families themselves, to some extent, and those who set their eyes on future of the child prefer skilled occupations like repair works (automobile and general items like cycle, electrical goods etc.), tailoring, carpentry etc., which may take some time to learn the work.
5. There are three possibilities for children (i) resorting to begging in case of dire poverty, (ii) involving themselves in economic activity in case of poverty, (iii) going to school to receive education. By banning begging and child labour, the government must make going to school as the only alternative left for children. At the same time, the Government should provide adequate free educational facilities, strictly implementing compulsory education up to the age of 14 and strengthen the present educational system by suitably recasting it to suit the needs of such sections also.

6. As an intermediary measure, non-formal educational centres should be established in or around the residential localities of the poor where the child labourers live so as to facilitate the willing child labourers and parents of child labourers to receive education; Emphasis and compulsory implementation of Women’s education will go a long way in mitigating the degree of the problem of child labour to a great extent.

7. As a large number of child workers have expressed their willingness to attend school, if similar training in mechanical work is made available. It would be of utmost practical use if education at school-level is vocationalised so as to enable some of them to receive organised training in two-wheeler repair or such other works.

8. As far as the aspirations of the child labourers working in two-wheeler repair workshops are concerned, the children and the parents and guardians who introduced them to repair work are fully aware that the experience the children gain in two-
wheeler repair workshops is not suitable for getting a job in the government or in the organised sector. At the most their aspiration gets limited to getting a job with some authorised two-wheeler dealer. Many of the children (86.33 per cent) do aspire to open their own repair workshops. The remaining would like to continue to work under the same or some other master mechanic. If the same training were to be given in an organised manner through vocational education in some school or the other, the certificate they receive along with the experience, will be useful in procuring a job not only in the organised sector but also of some assistance in opening their own workshops.

9. More than 40 per cent of the working children are living in slum-areas because of poverty of their parents. The living conditions of the child workers in two-wheeler repair workshops are not that satisfactory. Effective implementation of urban slum development programmes would certainly have some positive effect on the living conditions of the child labourers.

10. Entry into economic activity, the children get access to sums of money, though small in quantity. At that age, as they fail to recognise the importance of money, they are likely to misuse and fall easy prey for vices. From this point of view also, it is not good to allow the child labour to continue. Hence in the general interest of social welfare and especially child welfare, it would be better to ban child-labour totally.
11. The stipulated hours of work for children (in case of employments in unorganised sector where children are not prohibited from working) is 4 1/2 hours within a spreadover time of 6 hours according to Section 7 of the Child Labour (P & R) Act. But, the children employed in two-wheeler repair workshops are found working 10 to 11 hours a day within a spreadover time of 12 to 13 hours. Hence, it is imperative to implement the provisions of the law strictly by the concerned officialdom.

12. In most of the cases, the children are found to depend for drinking water on the nearby tea-stalls who do not follow the principles of hygiene and sanitation. It is therefore, advisable to insist on the workshop itself to provide drinking water.

13. In none of the workshops First Aid Box is provided. In two-wheeler repair workshops minor accidents are not uncommon. For even a small thing they have to depend upon a private dispensary or a government hospital. Hence maintenance of First Aid Box by the employer must be insisted upon.

14. Preference may be given to the parents of the child labourers, while allotting permanent houses under some weaker sections housing programme which in turn may go a long way to improve the economic conditions of the parents.

15. Free periodical medical check-ups may be arranged for children working in two-wheeler repair workshops, either by the employer or by the government so as to ensure health and growth of the children.
16. Free counselling centres on hygiene and sanitation, maintenance of health and pursuance of education may be provided.

17. Largeness of the family is responsible for deterioration in the financial position. Poverty in turn is responsible for the problem of child labour. Hence family planning programme should be implemented strictly.

18. Laxity on the part of officials in implementing the provisions of the various Acts relating to child labour was obvious in the study. Hence, the officials who are entrusted with the welfare of the children (child labourers) should see it that strict implementation of the provisions of various Acts, without any laxity or lenience. Any lapse on their part in this regard should be made punishable.

19. Leading industrial and social organisations should be motivated to sponsor welfare programmes like opening of special schools, granting scholarships for the child workers interested in continuing studies, supply of nutritious food and providing medicines to child labourers should be made the integral part of such welfare programmes.

20. Social awareness in the public should be created by conducting seminars, symposia and workshops on the problem of child labour. Catchy and attractive slogans, describing the evils of child labour, must be prepared and given wide publicity particularly in all the slum areas. Besides this, folk-lore media may effectively be used to create awareness among the mass, of the evils of child labour.
21. An exhaustive and detailed survey of child labourers working in other sectors, for the purpose of comparative study, would throw more light on the specific problems which need immediate attention and long range remedial measures.

To sum up the conclusions based on the study of this "tiny sector" and the suggestions made there on are important not only in themselves but also in finding solutions to the wider problems of social welfare. The 21 suggestions made are not beyond the capacity of any sector or government which is genuinely interested in the welfare and well-being of the populace, specially in the welfare of child labourers who have been pressurised at their tender age, to forego their childhood pleasures and innocence, health and brightness besides being overburdened with the task of earning a living to supplement the income of their poverty stricken parents.

The damage done on psychological level and physiological level due in this process is immense. This social 'sore' if not nipped in the bud would turn into an eye sore of here and now, and the spectre that haunts the future.

It is a great pity indeed that even in the so-called Independent Republic of India our Bharath children and their labour are exploited heartlessly. Callous tampering with the rights of children would ultimately turn into an incurable ulcer demanding surgical operation that may likely be fatal.
Children, male or female, are not the banes but boons to the society if only it knows how to make use of them. Negligence of them would spell havoc to the whole society.

They are our precious lighted lamps shielding us from the onslaught of delusion, devastation and destruction of all sorts that besiege our 'sorry' world.

Testing of Hypotheses

The first hypothesis, 'Most of the children employed in two-wheeler repair workshops come from poor families' gets proved by the analyses of monthly and per-capita monthly income of the child labour families. Monthly income of 80 per cent of the families of child labourers is in between Rs.500 to Rs.2000. At the same time the per capita monthly income of 84 per cent of the families of child workers is in between Rs.200 to Rs.600 per month. Incomes of the families by all means are very low and are hardly sufficient to make both ends meet in the present state of economic conditions. As per the opinion expressed by children interviewed, it is learnt that more than 1/3rd of the children (36.67 per cent) took up economic activity because of poverty. The rest took up this economic activity because of several other reasons. Hence, the first hypotheses stands justified.

'Lack of interest in education and educational failures are the other reasons' is the second hypothesis. The interview schedule revealed four reasons (open ended) for children to take up economic activities of which the said hypothesis occupied the
third place in the order. Hence the second hypotheses appears to be partially correct.

'The working and living conditions of the children working in two-wheeler repair workshops are not satisfactory' is the third hypothesis. The following facts support strongly this hypothesis.

i. Most of the children (91.33 per cent) work on weekly holidays.

ii. A majority of the children (60.67 per cent) work 10 to 11 hours a day instead of 4 1/2 hours a day.

iii. Exactly 22.33 per cent of child workers are not provided with drinking water in the workshop and 89.67 per cent are not provided with first aid facility.

iv. Nearly half of the children (48.67 per cent) live in semi-permanent houses and 41.67 per cent of the child labourers are living in slum areas.

**Scope for Further Study**

In this study, the socio-economic, working and living conditions and the problems (health and other problems) of the children employed in two-wheeler repair workshops are only investigated.

Working and living conditions of the children employed in garages where four and six wheel vehicles (light and heavy vehicles) are repaired, if investigated would be useful to compare several aspects like wages, hours of work, punishments, accidents, leisure, health etc.
Problems of child workers engaged in rural areas can be compared with the working and living conditions of urban working children.

Much neglected aspect is the effectiveness (or the lack of effectiveness) of the implementation of legal provisions in reducing the incidence of child labour.

The role of education—its policies and strategies—in abolishing child labour could also be studied.

It would be of immense utility if, under a single project, all the other aspects related to child labour are studied and the remedial measures to totally abolish this child-exploitation and to usher in era of non-exploitation of children by adults. Though, under the existing socio-economic conditions, this look utopian, if neglected, this evil will become hydra-headed.