CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this study to analyse the incidence of child labour in rural areas of Haryana, a relatively prosperous state of India, to establish the interlinkages between child labour and household income, social status, gender, educational levels and other relevant factors. Data from the NSSO’s 55th round of Employment and Unemployment Survey conducted in 1999-2000 has been used to conduct the relevant analyses for this study.

Logistic regression has been used to conduct a quantitative analysis and to statistically test the hypotheses drawn from the data analysis of working children across the social and economic landscape. With the help of logistic regression, attempt was made to ascertain the odds of a child’s participation in household chores and in school given his/her economic and social status.

In the literature on child labour in India, there are mainly two broad definitions of this phenomenon: one asserts that any child not attending school may be included in the category of child labour as s/he has been denied a right to childhood and the opportunity to acquire skills for a better quality of life as an adult; the other definition distinguishes between children working for wages and those involved in work that brings no direct monetary compensation (e.g., household chores). For the purposes of this thesis, the latter definition has been adopted to define child labour; however, in order to draw any firm conclusions, this study analyses all three segments of children not attending school i.e. children undertaking gainful employment, children working at home to assist in household chores and the ‘nowhere’ children who do not attend school but do not participate in household chores either. In analysing each of these segments, this study attempts to understand the differences and similarities of the segments and, thus, to reach some conclusions regarding their motivations and profiles.

Results

In Haryana, the percentage of children working for wages through full-time or part-time work, or participation in family business, is low (2.6%). Yet, as many as 14% of all children in Haryana do not attend school. It turns out that approximately 5% of the children
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are involved in household chores, while the remaining (7.5%) are ‘nowhere’ children. Hence, it is important to study each of the three segments of non-school going children and track their motivation, demographic and economic backgrounds to study the similarities and differences of each.

With reference to the category of child labour, the available data indicates that child labour in “conventional terms” is a limited phenomenon in rural Haryana. Full-time and part-time work is negligible among young children aged 5 to 9 but is more prevalent among children (4.03% of boys and 0.88% of girls) aged 10 to 14. It has also been seen that a higher proportion of boys are engaged in full-time or on a regular basis, while girls are generally engaged only on a part-time basis. Among social groups, the incidence of child labour is the highest among schedule castes as compared to the OBC and the ‘others’ categories. A large proportion of child labourers in Haryana work as casual labourers in agriculture and in occupations identified as hazardous by the NSSO (manufacturing, construction and repair of motor vehicles). In the rural non-farm sector a majority (50%) of child labour is employed in the manufacturing sector, about 40% in repair and maintenance of motor vehicles while (10%) in the construction sector. These sectors involve working processes that can be hazardous to children. Gender differences in the activity patterns are evident both at the state and regional levels. All full-time working girls help in the household enterprise while boys’ work in activities which are much more diversified with helping in household business being relatively frequent, but not more than wage or regular salaried labour.

The core group from which the majority of child labour (both full-time and part-time) comes is Schedule caste (SC) households having a low monthly per capita expenditure and owning less than one acre of land or working as agricultural labourers for daily wages. The SC children predominantly work for daily wages as agricultural labourers in the Eastern and the Western Haryana plains: the two agriculturally developed regions of Haryana. Poverty is the root cause of wage-based child labour. A majority of the child labourers in poor households (as defined in this thesis: all households having monthly per capita expenditure less than Rs.319) work for daily wages; on the other hand, a higher proportion of child labourers from the non-poor households work as helpers at home. Children who work as helpers at home belong to the OBC social group households self-employed in

1 ‘Nowhere’ children do not work for wages or at home, but are absent from school.
2 Defined as gainful employment.
agriculture and/or involved in non-farm activities with marginal to medium landholding size. Hence, the occupation of the parents is a key determinant in the incidence of child labour: working children whose parents are self-employed are more likely to be working at home than those whose parents are agricultural labourers working for daily wages. The phenomenon of poverty-induced child labour (especially among the SC segment) is further confirmed by the specific reasons for working cited by these children and/or their caretakers. Children who work for wages (a majority of whom come from the SC segment) have dropped out of school to supplement household income; on the other hand, among the OBC and the ‘others’ social groups, poverty does not seem to be the cause of child labour as a majority of the children indicate non-economic reasons for not going to school. Our results further indicate that the SC social group has higher drop-out rates as compared to the OBC’s and the ‘others’ segment, thus indicating that economic deprivation and low social status create unfavourable conditions from these sections of the society to continue their studies.

Analysing the incidence of ‘part-time child labour’, it is found that most of this originates from the poor category of households. The part-time child labour group is comprised children from the SC and the ‘others’ social group. The SC households almost universally depend on daily wages while the ‘others’ belong to self employed or regular salaried households. Reflecting this difference in the nature of employment most SC part-time child labour works for daily wages while the ‘others’ part-time child labour is more widely involved in household enterprise (significantly less exploitation than daily wages employment). Gender differences in the pattern of part-time working children are different from the full-time working children. All part-time working girls were worse off than boys as all girls (SC) were agricultural labourers while all boys (‘others’ social group) work at home, grazing animals.

With respect to children engaged in household chores (“child work”), we find that this segment is almost exclusively filled with girls who do not go to school. 10.7% of girls and 0.02% of boys aged between 10-14 are engaged in household chores in Haryana. In fact, the percentage of children working in unpaid household chores is over twice the proportion in paid occupations. These girls are not counted as ‘workers’ in the official definition as they are engaged in non-market activities and hence not remunerated. The incidence of child work is higher among the SC as compared to the OBC and the ‘others’ social groups. Poverty is the cause of child work as we observe that one in every four girls in the poor households is
engaged in household chores, with significantly more children from SC than from the OBC social group. Both these groups have marginal landholding and/or are engaged in agricultural labour for daily wages. Strikingly, the incidence of child work among non-poor households is much lower (7.5%) than in poor households. This suggests that the income levels have a strong correlation with the incidence of child work.

Further, the distribution of child work in the non-poor category across the SC, the OBC and the 'others' social group is 40%, 25% and 35% respectively. In all the regions (except Siwalik), child work mainly comes from SC social group. While child work in SC households is due to economic vulnerability, families from the 'others' social group are cultivating households with larger landholdings and choose working at home over education due to non-economic factors. Among this ('others') social group, non-attendance in school is found to result from non-economic factors such as lack of interest in school, poor infrastructural facilities in the village, etc.

Finally, it has been observed in this study that the incidence of 'nowhere' children is higher than that of child labour. Within the social groups, the incidence of 'nowhere' children for the SC and the OBC social groups is higher than the overall state average. The 'Others' segment has the lowest incidence of 'nowhere' children amongst all social groups. Prevalence of 'nowhere' children at the aggregated level in Haryana has been observed in landless households or those households with marginal landholding size along with the households with small landholdings. Additionally, a majority of these 'nowhere' children belong to households that draw their primary income in the form of daily wages. This pattern holds across all social groups.

Moreover, incidence of 'nowhere' children has been observed to be much higher at the aggregated level among poor households (18.5%) than among the non-poor households. A comparative analysis between the social groups indicates that while this is true for the OBC and the 'others' social group, it is not applicable to the SC group. Noticeably, the incidence of 'nowhere' children among the SC is very similar across both categories: 7.3% in poor households and 7% in non-poor households. As against this, 'nowhere' children from the OBC and the 'others' segment are largely found in the poor households (i.e. those below the poverty line). Hence, this leads us to believe that among the OBC and 'others' segments, the incidence of nowhere children is largely due to poverty, while in the SC segment, other economic factors besides poverty indicate economic deprivation – social background also
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plays its role in the emergence of 'nowhere' children. Thus, this provides evidence that economic and/or social vulnerability of a household is associated with higher levels of children who are neither in school nor working.

Drop-Out and Child Labour Linkage

It has been observed from the analysis that the proportion of children who did not work in any form after dropping out of the school was three times that of those who engaged in work. Conventionally, it is believed that children drop-out from school because they have to work. Contrary to this perception, this analysis indicates that the majority of the children do not work after they drop-out, suggesting therefore, that the direction of causation does not necessarily run from non-attendance to child labour at school. This can be reversed in some cases, in that the ‘drop-out’ children take up productive work not because they are compelled to work for economic reasons but to find some productive use of their time in the absence of a formal school education. This hypothesis is strengthened by the analysis of reasons cited by respondents for non-attendance at school. A majority of the children who join the labour force after discontinuation of their studies cite non-economic reasons for non-attendance in school, such as lack of interest or poor infrastructural facilities. These non-economic factors point to the inability of the schools to retain children. Further, children who cite economic reasons for non-attendance at school join the labour force and take up wage work or help at home – they are not part of the “nowhere children” segment. It is important to add that most of the child labourers indicating economic reasons for non-attendance in school belong to the Schedule caste group. Such cases – where reasons of non-attendance in school are economic in nature and contribute directly to child work – are a much smaller proportion of the entire child population than those where non-attendance is due to other, non-economic reasons. Hence, according to this analysis, child work does not significantly explain non-attendance at school; on the other hand, the inability of the educational system to retain children in school might lead on to child work as the children attempt to find productive ways to utilise their free time.

Further, the proportion of “drop-outs” who are doing nothing is higher for boys than for girls – one hypothesis of this study is that this variation may be explained by the fact that girls contribute towards household chores after discontinuation of their studies, while a

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3 ‘Nowhere' children.
higher proportion of boys do not contribute significantly to work at home or in the labour force. This suggests that girls are involved in 'invisible' form of work that contributes indirectly to the economy of the household by allowing the parents and/or other siblings to participate in wage employment.

A comparative analysis across social groups indicates that, among the total dropouts, a higher proportion of children from the SC segment joins the labour force as compared to the OBCs and the 'others'. As against this, a higher proportion of children are doing "nothing" after dropping out among the OBCs and the 'others' segment as compared to the SC segment. Further, a majority of the child labour who drop-out of school resort to outside wage employment and this is far more acute in the SC segment than the OBC's and the 'others'. This observation points out to the economic compulsion involved in discontinuation of studies by the children of schedule caste segment. It has been noticed that even among the upper caste household's drop-outs belong to economically vulnerable household, still majority of them do not engage themselves in work. The empirical evidence, thus, suggests that a majority of the children who have discontinued their studies are doing nothing. However, because they belong to socially and economically vulnerable sections of the society, they are a reserve pool of child labour especially the boys among the Schedule caste segment who are highly susceptible to falling into the trap of child labour.

Results of Logistic Regression

Finally, the logistic regression analysis undertaken in this study provides statistical evidence to demonstrate that economic vulnerability of the household, reflected in small asset base (land and capital), and poverty act as a strong stimulus to children taking up work and losing out on schooling. In reference to child labour an extremely strong relationship between the social background of the child's family and the incidence of child labour in the household is observed. From the logistic regression analysis of child labour we find that a child from the backward caste is more likely to be involved in the labour force as compared to the child from the upper caste. Significantly, children who belong to households with larger landholding size have lower odds of being in labour force as compared to the children from households with smaller landholding size corroborating the trend that the incidence of child labour generally has an inverse relationship with the size of landholding. Similarly, children who belong to households which are involved in wage or manual labour in either
agriculture or outside are more likely to be involved in labour activities as compared to the children from households who own some assets in the form of land or capital.

Likewise, child work, as the regression results indicate, seems to be distress induced as most of this comes from economically vulnerable households. Girls from wage labour households and/or households with marginal landholding size were more likely to be involved in household chores as compared to the girls of self-employed households and households with larger landholding size. Further, girls from poor households were more likely to be working in household chores as compared to girls from non-poor households. It is important to mention here that all child work is not distress induced. The regression output indicates that girls from large landholding households who are usually self-employed in agriculture also have high odds of working in the household chores. Among all the social groups, the SC girls had the highest odds of being engaged in household chores as compared to the rest of the social groups.

In contrast to child labour and child work, in the case of ‘nowhere’ children the likelihood of children being ‘nowhere’ was similar for both the lower (SC) as well as the upper caste (OBC) while the ‘others’ had the least likelihood of being ‘nowhere’. Notably, boys were more likely to be not working nor attending school as compared to girls according to the logistic regression. Girls work in high proportions in domestic work. Furthermore, children from economically vulnerable households i.e. households who have no land or very small landholding size and the households dependent on daily wages were more likely to be out of school as compared to children who belong to larger landholding size. A strong inverse relationship is observed between poverty and school attendance. The estimated coefficients for poverty point out those children from poor households have a higher likelihood of not being in school as compared to children from non-poor households.

Using the logit regression conducted to examine the influence of selected demographic, social and economic characteristics on child labour, child work, ‘nowhere’ children and child schooling, it is possible to analyse the impact of each of these selected variables individually on the chosen social condition, keeping all other variables constant. Low size of landholding and household poverty are the two most important reasons for children entering the labour force followed by the economic development of the region. Similarly the low size of the landholding and the nature of occupation of the household (wage labour versus self-employed) are the two most important factors in determining girl’s
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involvement in household chores followed by poverty of the household. Finally, parents' occupation, poverty levels of the household and the educational levels of the heads of the households determine the likelihood of 'nowhere' children. It was also observed that, all other things being equal, a child from the “lower caste” (SC) is more likely to be involved in labour force and less likely to be enrolled in school than other children. Finally, rising levels of awareness among the adult members of the households – as measured by their educational attainment – act strongly to reduce child labour, child work and incidence of 'nowhere' children, and increase child schooling.

Policy Implications

The analysis indicates that the reasons for children engaged as wage-employed labourers are largely economic, i.e., they work to supplement household income. On the other hand, reasons for working in household chores are non-economic in nature. Child work is caused both by poverty and non-poverty induced factors. This is supported by the fact that the incidence of child work is found in significant degree even among the households with large landholding size where economic difficulty is apparently not an issue. Child work is especially prevalent among girls, which means that, despite the better economic situation, girls are not encouraged to go to school; thus they drop-out of formal education and eventually join the household work. This category of child work can only be reduced by changing the attitude of the family towards girls' education and providing facilities suitable for girls' education. This requires further study, but it is certainly established that these children are deprived of education due to factors which include non-economic ones. It can be said that the sources of child work are multiple and may require further analysis to address each of these sources so as to bring more clarity and to develop appropriate policy instruments. Moreover, we find that a large proportion of children who have dropped out of school and are not working actually cite non-economic reasons for not attending school. Since the reasons for working in economic activities or in household chores vary, we ought to have multiple strategies to tackle this issue.

The two such parallel policies to address this issue are the following: one policy will have to intervene at the household level and focus on ways to improve the income levels of households to which the working children belong. In view of the fact that the phenomenon of child labour and child work is primarily induced by poverty and social relations associated
with the caste structure, policies which will improve the economic conditions of the poorer classes, particularly of the schedule castes, should receive highest priority. The centre of focus has to be the children of marginal farmers and wage labour households who belong to the schedule caste segment.

In addition, policies that would aim to reduce drop-out rates from school and focus on retaining ‘nowhere’ children – that in our analysis seem to be a “reserve pool of child labour” – will go a long way in solving the complex issue of child labour. This would require an improved access of the ‘nowhere’ children to schools beyond primary level by providing adequate schooling infrastructure, better quality of education and covering the direct cost of schooling (these costs are in the form of books, tuition fee etc.). Further, attempts have to be made to educate parents with an objective to make them realise the benefits of education with a special focus on the girl child. Policies will have to target in trying to remove the gender bias that exists towards girl’s education through awareness campaigns. Thus, to tackle the complex issue of child labour we need a holistic approach which focuses on the economic and social development as well as which improves the access to, and quality of, education for those sections that are the perennial potential source of child labour.