ABSTRACT

Globalization has led to tremendous changes in different sectors of the economy, including the labour sector, especially the impact on child labour which is highly sensitive. The linkage pattern between globalization and child labour shows the brunt of the present crises are being borne by the family, principally the poor. To supplement the family income in the face of inflation and decreasing social sector budgets, the children are put to work at a tender age. The thesis is an attempt to study the impact of globalization on child labour, especially in the export sector, since greater outsourcing at supply and manufacturing chain, creates plenty of opportunities for child labour. Moreover, the global attempts to link International Labour Standards with the trade under Non-Tariff Barriers have led to serious debates with regard to ILO convention 138 which stipulates the eradication of child labour. Linking child labour with International Trade is adversely affecting the comparative advantage of the developing economies.

In this background, the study has made an attempt to examine the theoretical as well as empirical analysis of the linkage between globalization and child labour in export sector. The formulation of well defined objectives and hypotheses has led to concrete results with good policy implications. The case study area is Bangalore District in Karnataka, the most export potential state in the country since 90s. The export activities of both Urban and Rural areas where child labour is involved, are studied through representative sampling method, focusing on the child workers, their parents, NGOs and Corporate bodies. Since there is an inadequate data base, the researcher has collected useful qualitative data and validated the same with the help of NGOs and the concerned authority (agency which works with child labour).
Although the magnitude of child labour in India has come down since 90s, the decline is not significant. But on the other hand, the export growth during the same period is very significant. Moreover, the zonal difference in the magnitude of child labour has gradually narrowed down and since 90s the convergence trends became more apparent. Karnataka has major export activities like sericulture, mining, beedi rolling, floriculture, agarbathi and mining and quarrying industry and puffed rice factories, wherein child labour is rampant. However, the statistical figures show that since 90s i.e. globalization has led to significant decline in child labour, in the context of significant increase in exports in the state.

The field level study, however, reveals a very interesting dimension of child labour under globalization i.e. deceptive child labour. Child labour in various export supply chains in the study areas have been identified and properly validated as well. This implies that the reality is different from the official status of child labour in Karnataka. Moreover, child labour in export activities of both rural and urban has evinced more or less similar traits.

Based on both secondary and primary sources of observation, certain policy implications are made absolutely clear. These policy suggestions can very well supplement the existing policy measures to eradicate child labour. But a very dynamic suggestion could be to bring in the corporate social responsibility in the main stream. Corporate needs to have a strong moral responsibility making it clear that it does not accept child labour in their supply and manufacturing chain. The requirements in the code of conduct should be made mandatory and should be as stringently applied at any other quality control mechanism. Finally, there is a dire need for exploring the possible linkages between globalization and child labour in a systematic way so that the required changes in the legal policy frame work are introduced to create a child labour free society.