

## **“An Exploratory Research on Child Labour Eradication and Amelioration”**

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**Abstract:** *The small buds of the garden need care, nourishment and protection for growing as beautiful flowers likewise the children of the country need care, rights, protection and love for proper growth and development so that they can become healthy, productive and responsible citizens. Unfortunately some children have to work hard beyond their capacity for their survival and ultimately their development gets stuck and these children are known as child labourers. The present study “An Exploratory Research on Child Labour Eradication & Amelioration” was conducted with an objective to collect views of people from different professions regarding the most appropriate way to tackle the problem of child labour in India. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents (82%) were in the favour of betterment of the working environment of the child labourers and the rest (18%) were came up with the idea of complete scraping of child labour from our country. The ways of amelioration suggested by the respondents were; fixed working hours, fixed wages, fixed working schedule (before and after schooling), medical and entertainment facilities etc. The study suggests that government should introduce some laws and regulations related to child labour amelioration because eradication is not possible at once as well as government, citizens and policy makers should pay attention on the age of children to be considered as restricted age for selling labour.*

**Key Words:** *Child labour, Eradication, Amelioration*

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### **I. Introduction**

“It is not the water in the fields that brings true development; rather, it is water in the eyes or compassion for fellow beings, which brings about real development.” - Anna Hazare

The most beautiful & memorable part of life is childhood and we all want to live our childhood again & again because at that time we were free from responsibilities and fully engaged in fun. But some children of this world never meet with innocent, lovely and tension free lifestyle of childhood and they hate their childhood because they have to work hard for their livelihood, they are exploited by others and even they are not getting their right these children are “Child Labourers”. All these children have missed out pleasant moments of their childhood and ultimately they will remain away from the mainstream of social development.

**UNICEF (1996)** defines child labour as work that exceeds a minimum number of hours, depending on the age of a child and on the type of work. Such work is as follows:

**Age 5-11years:** At least one hour of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week.

**Age 12-14years:** At least 14 hours of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week.

**Age 15-17years:** At least 43 hours of economic or domestic work per week.

“Child Labour includes children prematurely living adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future” (**International Labour Organization, 1995**).

Merely passing laws is obviously not the solution, as they need to be enforced, in which our country has a poor track record. What are the causes for child labour? We can attribute it to various factors -- unemployment, low wages, poor standards of living, ignorance and illiteracy, social attitudes, and the like. Together they culminate in poverty and exploitation. The poor would rather have children who work to supplement the income. There are many cases where the parents sell their children as bonded labour for a petty sum of money. Banning child labour therefore is not the solution. Ignorance is one of the main problems; ignorance on the part of the parents who believe that with the children working, poverty will be eradicated; and ignorance on the part of the children who do not know their rights in this country. The working conditions of the children are inhuman and the incomes given are also meagre.

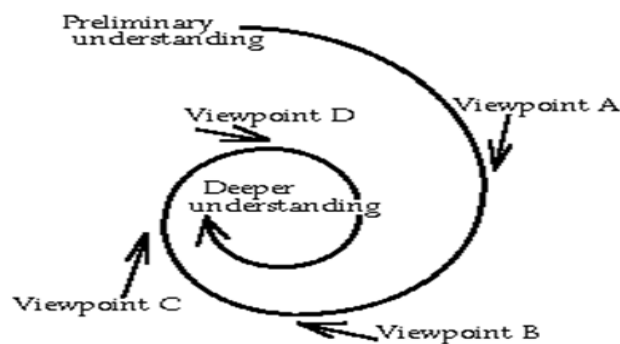
Instead of abolishing the phenomenon of child labours in the country there is powerful arguments and counter arguments advanced towards the continuation of the system. One such argument is that the children of poor households those who are making a living by selling their labour in the labour market would starve to death if child labour would be banned. Since banning child labour does not mean throwing them to the street. It means carrying out the constitutional directives of providing the child with compulsory free universal education. The government of India is also not interested to put a ban on child labourer. This is obvious from the government's thinking that child labour is undesirable but unavoidable (**Pattnaik 1996**).

## II. Objective

The main aims of the study “**An Exploratory Research on Child Labour Eradication & Amelioration**” was to collect the views about the more appropriate solution of child labour (child labour eradication or amelioration) from different professionals (housewives, working women, professionals of unorganised and organised sectors, educationists, students and officers of the institutes related to child welfare) from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh and Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand.

## III. Methodology

This is an exploratory research. Survey method has been used in the research to study the perception of the responsible members of the society about more appropriate solution of the very much sensitive issue of child labour. 210 samples were purposively selected from Udham Singh Nagar, uttarakhand and Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. A self-constructed questionnaire schedule (three heart touching stories of child labourers and questions related to this) was used to elicit the responses and it was sent by mail to the subjects and personally visited by the researcher. ‘Hindi’ version of the questionnaire schedule was used.



### Operational definitions:

**Eradication-** Eradication is the complete destruction of every trace of something or the act or process of eliminating.

**Amelioration-** Amelioration is a process to make or become better /coming to represent something more favourable than it originally referred to.

## IV. Result

The study showed that the children under 14 years of age were more indulged in selling their labour at household and non-household levels. The main findings are as follows;

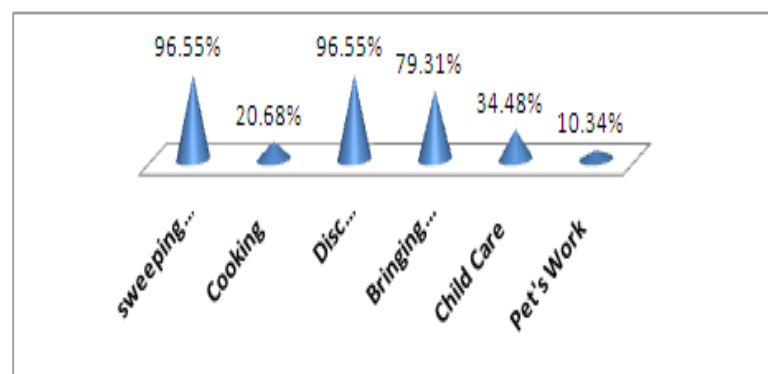
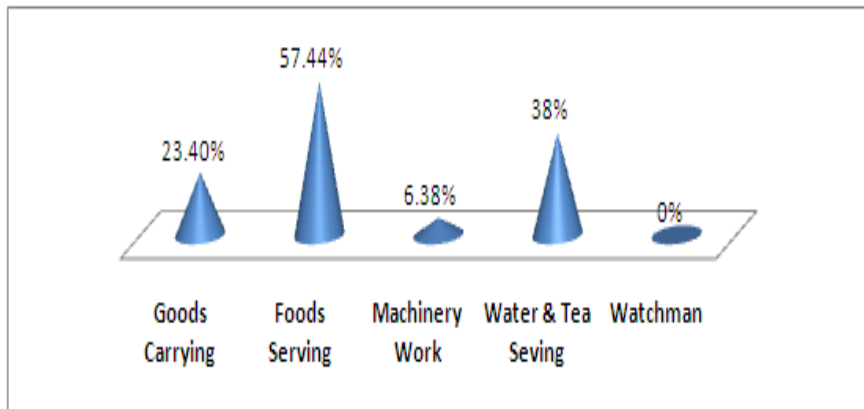


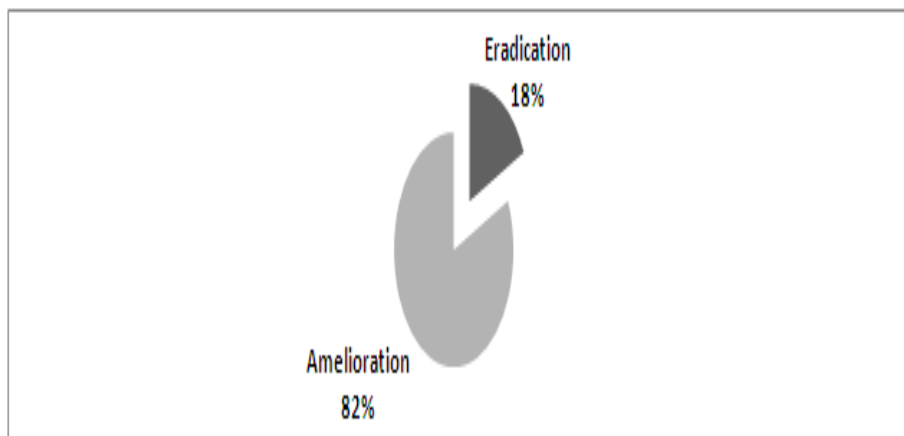
Fig.1. Percentage distribution of child labourers on the basis of chores performed at household level

Graph shows that the most demanded work by child labourers at household level were disc washing (96.55%) and brooming & sweeping (96.55%) simultaneously, followed by bringing goods from the market (79.31%), child care (34.48%), cooking (20.68%) and the least demanded work was pet's work (10.34%).



**Fig.2. Percentage distribution of child labourers on the basis of chores performed at non-household level**

It was found that the highly demanded work with child labourers at other than household level was food serving (57.44%), followed by water and tea serving (38%), goods carrying (23.40%), machinery work (6.38%) and nill service as a watchman or gatekeeping (0%).



**Fig.3. Respondents views regarding child labour**

It was an indirect approach to elicit the views of respondents about the most appropriate measure to tackle with the problem of child labour. Respondents answered the questions related to specific situations given in the form of stories of child labourers and it was found that the higher percentage of the respondents had the vision of child labour amelioration (82%) as they were seeing the practical aspect of the problem and they gave the reason behind this as it was not possible for the government to fulfill all the necessities of each and every child of the country at once 82% of the respondents were agree with the fact that betterment of the working environment of the children can bring a lot of changes in their present pathetic conditions as well as they can grow as healthy citizens by their own. This betterment includes; the work should be according to the age and physical capacity of the children, the working environment should be free from any physical and/or mental harm, the working hours should be fixed (before or after school hours), wages should be fixed, there should be provision of holidays, medical facility, entertainment etc., children should get all their rights and they must have freedom to join and/or resign the job according to their wishes.

And the rest (18%) had an idea of complete eradication of child labour as the one and only solution because child labour was a crime and it deprived the development of the children and they were in the favour of complete ban of child labour.

**Views Regarding Domestic Child Labour:**

Situation	Statements	
	Yes, the child should continue.	No, child labour is a crime & household chores also come under child labour.
A poor and helpless child living in healthy and safe homely environment, getting all his rights & schooling and doing simple household chores.	96.66% (203)	3.33% (7)

**Note:** Figures in parentheses indicate the frequency of total respondents in the category.

Table shows that 96.66% of the respondents were like to suggest that the child could stay in the home where he was doing little household chores without any physical or mental harm, getting sufficient food, clothing, shelter and proper education, had all his rights and was living in the healthy environment of the home as it was a kind of improved way to tackle the problem of child labour other than complete ban but 3.33% respondents were came with the notion that it was illegal because domestic child labour was also a crime.

### V. Recommendations

Childhood is an important period of life span and it must be safe, healthy, nourished and protected from outside harms so that the child can get a meaningful and productive future. This study reveals that amelioration is better option as compared to eradication because to make children out of it, cannot work properly as it needs a lot of resources while in amelioration, small interventions are easy to place and can bring good outcomes. The following are the recommendations emerging out from the study:

- The government must clear the definition of child labour; the age, working hours, type of work, environmental conditions etc.
- Children below 14 years are considered as child labourers but what about the children belong to 15 – 18 years of age? Policy makers should pay attention on this criterion.
- Child Labour Acts must be revised and the rules and regulations regarding the child labour amelioration should given place in it.

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