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EFFECTS OF CHILD LABOUR ON HEALTH , AND FUTURE

Rakesh Kumar*[1]

Research Scholar, CMJ University, Shilong, Meghalaya, India.

ABSTRACT

The research began with a review of available literature, organised on a regional basis. This had two justifications. In the first place, there appears to be no universal structure of ideas informing discussions on the commercial sexual exploitation of children, which is dispersed among a variety of agencies with a number of disparate objectives and activities varying from law and advocacy to welfare, and even arguments in favour of pedophilia. In the second place, it was clear that certain aspects dominate the discourse in specific regions of the world.

INTRODUCTION

The research thus began with a twofold purpose, examining existing discourses for what they might provide in the way of well argued, internally-consistent structures of ideas. In this respect, it has to be made clear from the outset that by 'discourse' we mean clearly distinguishable sets of ideas, publications, speeches and other social products that inform and construct the way people think and act. Any discourse on child commercial sexual exploitation will be related to other discourses -- on childhood, sexuality, exploitation and prostitution, for example. It will produce and reproduce these ideas in ways that tend to reinforce current structures of power and hierarchy. The first task for this review, therefore, was to examine not simply the evidence about the commercial sexual exploitation of children but, more importantly, how it is being produced, reproduced and presented.

Becker (1991) offers us an opportunity to put some analytical structure on such a case for family tradition. It may be the case that families that have a tradition of educating their children are precisely those who have found some mechanism for solving the intertemporal bargaining problem between parents and children. Recall from the analysis of Baland and Robinson (2000) that if parents are not altruistic toward their children or if the optimal bequest is negative, then parents will under- invest in the human capital of their children. Children cannot credibly pre-commit to repaying education loans that the parents undertake on their behalf. However, there are, in fact, inter-temporal bargains that can be struck that resolve the impasse even when parents are not altruistic. It is arguably the case that families that have a tradition of educating their young, even though poor, are precisely those who have managed to find a solution to the inter-temporal bargaining problem.

Theory tells us to expect a correlation between income and child labor under a couple of different circumstances. On the one hand, if a quality child is a normal good, then there should be a straightforward negative correlation between income and child labor. On the other hand, consider the income-child labor connection if credit-constrained parents are using child labor to

transfer income from the future into the present. In this case, the desire to reallocate income backward through time will occur only if current income is lower than expected future income. Thus, child labor responds not to the level of income today, but rather to the level of income today relative to future income.

As argued by Baland and Robinson, child labor is a device for transferring resources from the future into the present. Children who work do not invest in human capital that would make them more productive in the future. A family will choose to make this intertemporal shift in household resources when current income is low relative to future income. Thus, it is not the absolute level of family income that matters for the child labor decision but, rather, the current level relative to future income. There may be families that are quite poor and do not have any reason to expect any change in the future. Such families have no reason to attempt to smooth consumption by putting their children to work.

Nevertheless, the significant role of household assets lends some evidence to the possibility that incomplete credit markets give rise to inefficiently high levels of child labor. For example, the presence of older children in the home considerably reduces the probability of child labor. Note that there is a measurable impact above and beyond the contribution that the older siblings themselves make to family income. This is particularly the case for older brothers, who embody the greatest human capital. In addition, a parent's education reduces child labor for reasons other than the impact of education on the parent's productivity. It is possible that a parent's education is viewed as a marketable asset, or it may be a reflection of the informational externalities associated with the value of formal education. What is not clear is why family assets matter. On the one hand, households with assets can more readily weather adverse events. That is, these assets provide the household with the ability to manage uncertainty and, as a consequence, child labor is not required for this purpose. However, families with assets may also have more access to capital markets or can, themselves, fund a child's education without a formal loan.

It is clear that older children are more likely to work than younger children. As children grow older and acquire skills, the opportunity cost of schooling rises. This is particularly the case for adolescent boys, who are increasingly able to perform physically demanding tasks as they approach maturity. Thus, it appears that it will be more challenging and costly from a policy point of view to induce older male children to remain in school.

The role of siblings in the household does not appear to be a major deterrent to schooling once we control for other household characteristics. The only exception is that there is evidence in some cases that mid-aged children are caring for younger siblings.

When evidence that older children are caring for younger children is combined with the fact that the presence of an older sibling in the house generally raises the probability of schooling, it is possible to make a case that parents are diversifying their human capital investments in their child assets. The oldest children acquire human capital in the form of on-the-job training and the youngest children receive formal education. However, this interpretation of the evidence does

not accord well with the other significant result: the presence of siblings in the same age range tends to raise the probability of school and lower the probability of work.

CHILDREN'S STATURE IN THE HOUSEHOLD

The willingness of children to work, aside from their parents' requirement that they do so, may also play some role in determining the level of child labor. As with mothers, an increase in the share of household income earned by children may enhance their role in decision making in the family.

Moehling (1995), in her empirical analysis of early 20th century urban America, finds that working children received a larger share of household resources than nonworking children.

Indeed, some of the most challenging theory concerning child labor attempts to simultaneously determine the amount of child labor and the amount of bargaining power that the child has in the household (Moehling, 1995 and Bourguignon and Chiappori, 1994). These models are complex due to the fact that the amount of bargaining power that the child has is determined by the fraction of household income earned, but the fraction of household income earned is in turn an outcome of the bargain over how much the child works.

Tuttle (1999) adds a second dimension to the issue of child stature within the home. She argues that one of the effects of technological change in the textile mills was to create employment opportunities for children distinct from their parents. That is, some children were employed in the textile factories not in a subcontracting relationship with their parents, but directly by the plant manager. As a consequence of these new employment opportunities, parents found themselves in competition with mill managers for the labor services of their children. The consequent increased bargaining power of children raised their stature in the home.

The Indian government has recognised that Sivakasi is an area with a high concentration of child labour and tries to implement some rehabilitative programmes there. However, child labour is still very much alive in this sector. Any attempt to remove child labour is met with stiff resistance by the interested parties. One study suggests that it would cost the employers Rs.32.8 million per annum if the children were to be replaced by adult workers. Unless and until the government acts with firmness, there is little possibility of 'redeeming' these children.

According to the researcher Burra Neera, about 40,000-45,000 children are employed in the brass industry in India. Children in the brass industry are employed in different sectors. Moulding is one of the activities, which is very hazardous and dangerous both to adults and children. More than 15000 children are employed in this sector. If the child is a new recruit, he is given the work of rotating the wheel that fans the underground furnace. Other children in the moulding section must heat the oblong ingot on top of the furnace, break it into small pieces with a hammer and then melt the required amount of brass. When the molten brass is ready, they have to pass the graphite crucible with the raw material to an adult worker holding it with long tongs.

Sometimes they themselves have to pour the brass into the moulds and replace the crucible into the furnace. At times, children have to rotate the fan, remove the crucible and replace it in the furnace. They also may be asked to grind a hot black mixture into a fine powder with their hands and help the adult worker to remove the hot moulded metal from the moulds. These activities have to be done continuously and children in the moulding section would always be engaged in one or other of these activities. They may not receive any breaks in a ten-hour working day, even though a slight distraction or lapse of concentration may cause the child life-long injuries. The temperature in the furnace is about 1100 centigrade. If a drop of molten metal falls on the child's foot, it will create an immediate hole.

Boys between 7-15 years are found in this industry. They work for the whole day and get around 20 cents (Rs 10/- per day). One can see small boys engaged with a small nail and hammer, continuously beating the brass sheet to carve out the designs which are already laid. Most of the carving of the designs (with holes) is done by the children. Pandan industry is one of these oldest heritages of city of Hyderabad.

The lock industry is mostly concentrated in the Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh. Studies reveal that more than 60 percent of the workers in this sector are children under 14 years of age. Children do polishing, electroplating, spray painting and working on hand presses. They cut different components of locks for nearly 12-14 hours a day with hand presses. Exhaustion causes accidents; many lose the tips of their fingers, which get caught in the machines. The most hazardous job for children in the lock industry is polishing. The boys who do polishing stand close to the buffing machines. The buffing machines that run on electric power have emery powder coated on bobs. While polishing the locks, they inhale emery powder with metal dust and almost all polishers suffer from respiratory disorders and tuberculosis. In the small units, about 70 percent of the polishers are children.

The impact of a mother's market work on human capital formation is reversed, however. A mother who reduces hours of market work as the number of children in the family rises, in order to increase the maternal time spent with each child, also lowers family income. The negative impact on household income may create an incentive to withdraw older children from school and send them to work. In other words, a family can use income of their older children to reallocate the mother's time from periods in which her family is small toward those periods in which her family is large.

CHILDREN AS INSURANCE

The Ejrne and Pörtner model also offers an explanation for the inverse relationship between family size and education. Large families arise when the random birth of the above average child occurs only after multiple draws from the birth distribution. Such families, by virtue of their large size, are constrained in their ability to invest even in the most innately able of their children.

In this model, children are being used as a savings vehicle. Parents are optimally investing in the number and quality of children to maximize the market value of the family as a whole. of course, in some economic environments, there may be savings vehicles that are better investments than children. In countries that do not have well developed financial markets, land holdings may offer the most attractive rate of return. If the return to education is low and the return to land is high, then family wealth is maximized by having a large number of child- farmers.

Education, particularly of the mother, has a secondary impact on human capital formation. Child mortality is lower for educated mothers, thus requiring fewer costly births to achieve the targeted family size. More resources are therefore left to invest in surviving children. In this framework, positive income surprises raise fertility. Parents who receive what they believe to be a temporary windfall are likely to invest some of it in having more children. These additional children then provide additional income in the future when household income returns to a more typical level.

Homeless children – both girls and boys – are vulnerable to rape and to being forced into survival sex for money or protection. They are also used by drug dealers to 'carry' drugs. Many of their other income-earning activities are very marginal. Among Cape Town street people - both adults and children – recycling and casual jobs together account for 44% of the total means of survival.

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

Another type of work that needs particular attention is the work performed by children refugees and immigrants. Available evidence suggests that it is boys more than girls, particularly insofar unaccompanied minors are involved.

The impact of refugee status can be long-lasting. For example, many of the children working on farms in Mpumalanga and Northern Province are the children of former Mozambican refugees, who have been without formal status in the country since they arrived in the mid-eighties.

HAZARDS RELATED TO PARTICULAR OCCUPATIONS AND INDUSTRIES

Internationally, there are some areas where occupational hazards to children are well recognised:

Children involved in the manufacturing sector are usually concentrated in small-scale workshops where enforcement is poor. Where manufacturing work is sub-contracted to workshops or home production, the possibility of controlling exposures through regulatory processes is further reduced.

In retail work, young people may be required to work with hot grease, slicing machines and electrical equipment. Retail work often involves long hours and night work. For shift workers there are dangers related to transport and physical safety when travelling to and from work at unsociable hours.

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industrial sectors, associated with long and atypical hours of work, and seasonal demand for intensive labour. Hazards include farm machinery;

ergonomic stresses; hazardous chemicals; climatic hazards such as cold, rain and heat; electrical hazards, and biological hazards arising from farm animals. Many of these are present also in subsistence agriculture, although certain technological hazards will be less because subsistence farmers have fewer resources than their commercial colleagues.

Children involved in commercial sex work face violence, the risks of sexually transmitted and other diseases, as well as psychological and emotional trauma. Children in paid domestic service are often subject to long hours, night work, physical and emotional isolation and psychosocial stresses. Children in these vulnerable positions may also be subject to sexual exploitation.

CHILDREN'S PARTICULAR VULNERABILITY TO OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

Children may be particularly vulnerable to a number of hazards by virtue of their biological status and behavioural patterns. Very young children have higher body surface areas to mass ratio, which will increase the likelihood of absorption for skin-permeable chemicals. Childhood organ development may also be incomplete, resulting in children metabolising or excreting chemicals differently to adults.

The effect of chemicals that affect hormones can be particularly dangerous because of the stage of their neurological and reproductive development. Children may have increased risk for cancer from certain exposures because rapidly dividing cells are more vulnerable to carcinogenic impacts.

Machinery and work equipment, including protective equipment, are usually not designed for young people. Ergonomic hazards such as repetitive movements and awkward postures may result in significant injury to developing ligaments and bone-growth plates.

DEMAND SIDE FACTORS IN CHILD LABOR

The demand side of the market for child labor has two distinct dimensions. We most commonly think of the demand for child workers arising as a consequence of specific features that children have. It has been argued that the small stature of a child's body or a child's hands make them particularly effective at performing certain tasks, e.g., Marx (1867).

However, technological advances can have effects on the demand for child labor counter to those identified by Marx. Levy (1985), for example, notes that during the 1970s, the availability of credit for Egyptian farmers lowered the cost of technology intensive inputs. The opportunity to mechanize in sectors such as fruits and vegetables reduced production of more labor- intensive production such as cotton. The demand for child labor, therefore, declined with mechanization. Mechanization has a particularly strong impact on the work of young children who are normally assigned such menial tasks as pumping water.

Indeed, the demand for child labor can be understood as part and parcel of the demand for unskilled relative to skilled labor. Skill-biased technological change will lower the demand for unskilled labor including that provided by children. Concomitantly, the rise in the demand for

skilled labor will raise the return to education, providing an additional channel through which technological parameters determine the fraction of time that a child spends working.

Admassie (2002) makes a similar argument concerning the cause of child labor in Ethiopia. There is a fairly strong correlation between the incidence of child labor and agriculture's share of GDP. Although there are several possible explanations for this, Admassie argues that when the production system is "backwards and labor intensive," there is a greater demand for child workers.

According to a recent estimate of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), more than 120 million children between the ages of 5-14 are employed as full time labourers around the world. A good number of such children labour in the most hazardous and dangerous industries. In India itself, it is estimated that there are at least 44 million child labourers in the age group of 5-14. More than eighty percent of child labourers in India are employed in the agricultural and non-formal sectors and many are bonded labourers. Most of them are either illiterate or dropped out of school after two or three years.

PHYSICAL HAZARDS

There are jobs that are hazardous in themselves and affect child labourers immediately. They affect the overall health, coordination, strength, vision and hearing of children. One study indicates that hard physical labour over a period of years stunts a child's physical stature by up to 30 percent of their biological potential. Working in mines, quarries, construction sites, and carrying heavy loads are some of the activities that put children directly at risk physically. Jobs in the glass and brassware industry in India, where children are exposed to high temperatures while rotating the wheel furnace and use heavy and sharp tools, are clearly physically hazardous to them.

EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND MORAL HAZARDS

There are jobs that may jeopardise a child's psychological and social growth more than physical growth. For example, a domestic job can involve relatively 'light' work. However, long hours of work, and the physical, psychological and sexual abuse to which the child domestic labourers are exposed make the work hazardous. Studies show that several domestic servants in India on average work for twenty hours a day with small intervals4. According to a UNICEF survey, about 90 percent of employers of domestic workers in India preferred children of 12 to 15 years of age. This is mostly because they can be easily dominated and obliged to work for long hours and can be paid less than what would have to be paid to an adult worker. Moral hazards generally refer dangers arising for children in activities in which they are used for illegal activities, such as trafficking of drugs, the sex trade, and for the production of pornographic materials.

Children in India are employed in almost all the activities of the non-formal sector. However, most of them are employed in the agricultural sector or in jobs closely related to agriculture, as is

the pattern in many developing countries. A unique factor in India is that a significant number of these children are bonded labourers.

BONDED CHILD LABOUR

Slave labour or bonded labour is one of the worst forms of labour not only for children but also for adults. In India, bonded labour has been illegal since 1976 when Parliament enacted the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act. However, the practice is still widespread. Even conservative estimates suggest that there are at least 10 million adult bonded labourers in India. 89 percent of adults in debt bondage belong to scheduled castes and tribes and 89 percent of those who control them are agricultural landlords. Most of the work carried out by bonded labourers is hard manual labour in the fields or brick kilns. Children or adults are bonded in order to pay off debts that they or members of their families have incurred.

There are thousands of bonded child labourers in India. They are also mostly the children of parents who belong to scheduled castes and tribes. Young children are sold to employers by their parents to pay back small loans that they have borrowed. Such children are made to work for many hours a day over several years. According to one study, there are about 10 million bonded child labourers working as house servants in Indian families. Varandani recently estimated that there were nearly 55 million children in India working as bonded labourers in agriculture, mining, brick-kilns, construction work, fishing activities, carpet weaving, fireworks, matches, glass moulding, bidi-making (cigarettes), gem-cutting and polishing work, electroplating, dyeing, washing and domestic work. About 20 percent of these bonded child labourers were sold to cover some small debts obtained by their parents, usually for some social celebration like a wedding in the family.

Scavenging is the work that faces children with the most extreme risk. As many of them work with bare feet, they get cuts; they are also exposed to extreme weather conditions, sunstroke, pneumonia, influenza and malaria. They have to carry heavy loads, which stunts their physical growth. They face digestive disorders and food poisoning as they eat thrown away or left over food. A recent study conducted in Delhi found they were at risk of catching Aids, as they may accidentally come into contact with infected needles deposited in the refuse. Since animals scavenge in the same heaps of refuse, dog bites are quite common among these children.

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