

Socio-Economic Status of Domestic Child Workers

[A Case Study of Domestic Child Workers Students of Nava Yug Secondary School of Jyabahal]

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Abstract

Child labor is one of the serious problems of Nepalese society. This research is carried out with an objective of assessing economic background of the guardians of domestic child workers and to discover the root causes of domestic child workers along with examination of samples on present condition of domestic child workers from Nava Yug Secondary School. This research is carried out by applying descriptive research design. The major finding of the study was majority of the guardians are from poor and agricultural background and most of the child workers spend more hours in domestic works than in their studies.

Key words : *Domestic Child Workers, Children, Child Labour.*

1. Background of the Study

Children are the fountain of affection they are faultless and spotless. They are the milestone of the future. So their all round development is quite essential. But the maximum numbers of children of the developing countries are living in poverty and scarcity. Children are as beautiful as the bud of a flower, as pure as the water fall and innocent too. But in our society the proper environment is not available in which they could grow happily; rather they are ill treated and exploited by pedophiles and prosperous people. In Nepal children are facing various problems due to the backwardness, poverty, illiteracy. These are the main causes of child labour in Nepal.

Child domestic workers are a familiar and a serious problem throughout the world, especially in South Asia. Most of the domestic child workers are girls, because they are seen to be better suited to carry out household chores. Some of them can earn a little income if they find a kind and caring family who may even educate them or help them get married. And most of them are less fortunate they live a life of hardship and misery. They are often locked inside the compound, scolded, beaten and abused.

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Today, children are crying for their urgent and basic needs. The world of tomorrow will be happiest place to live, if the society cares for mental and physical health of the children. If they are socially and economically deprived and exploited we can not be sure that their future is going to be happy , if the society encourages them with equality, freedom and dignity it can develop satisfactory adulthood (UNICEF, 1997).

Children are the integral part of society and precious treasure of the world. We can not even imagine the existence of the society if there were no children around us. They are our source of hope, joy and inspiration. Hence, children are regarded as the future of the world, leader of nation for development and future star of nation. A child can grow as a future citizen with proper love, care and understanding. In each stage of childhood, a child who is innocent, vulnerable, dependent and voiceless, need the proper support of adult care, otherwise there is a chance for every child to be in danger, if they are not taken care properly and adequately and their future will leads towards uncertainly.

Child labour is not a new phenomenon in developing countries, and Nepal is no exception to this. The pattern of child labour in Nepal is similar to other developing countries, where children work in undesirable occupations , wages are low, workers rights are not recognized and where there is no labour organization. Child labor in Nepal has different dimensions. Children are engaged in various occupations such as manufacturing carpets, the construction of roads and buildings, quarrying and mining as well as working as domestic servants in towns far from their homes. The other dimensions are the traditional areas of work such as agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry and other family operated business and domestic works.

Domestic labor is an invisible form of torture and the children are still working under slavery like conditions. And a large part of the rural economy includes child labor working such as gothala (children graze cattle), fetch water , collect firewood and fodder ,work in the fields and attend to endless domestic chores, they also become wage earners either in cash or kind , by working a domestic servants in the home of the rural urban rich

Child exploitation is a reflection of the socio-economic reality of the country. This is also a consequence of the feudal land system, which is still a bitter reality of many third world countries. Thus child labour is a cause and effect of the exploitative socio-economic and political structure of the world. Like other developing countries, the rural communities in Nepal are going through a painful period created by increasing social justice, economic exploitation and backwardness. The growing magnetizations among the rural population, rural migrations and urbanization has also contributed to an increase in the migration of child labour. (Pradhan, 1997)

The reason that leads to child employment was substantially with local conditions and local cultures. Where a family can not afford to keep a child at home so s\he is put out to earn, it may be at a wage or the father may be employed and simply takes along his family to help in order to maximize his earnings. The earnings are then paid to the father or mother.

Domestic child labour (DCL) is defined internationally as children with or without wage. DCLs are employed to perform domestic workers such as washing dishes, cooking, clearing the house, looking after young children and other household activities. (KC, 1998)

The problem of child labour in Nepal is due principally to the acute poverty of people and excessive growth of population particularly in the rural areas where most people live on subsistence farming. Exploitative social relations in the villages further aggravate the problem. the harsh living conditions and frequent natural disasters lead to seasonal as well as permanent migration of families and in some cases children who on their own will move from the rural to the urban areas: child labour exists as an integral part of our labour market .No sector of labour is completely free of child labour. In Nepal many children are engaged in various kinds of labour. In about 65 different organized and unorganized labour sectors children work for their own survival and family subsistence. They work long hours with a little or no pay at all. They are deprived of basic amenities. Most of them don't have access to their families. They are vulnerable to all kinds of physical emotional and economic exploitation and abuses, moreover many children in Nepal work in most intolerable conditions like slavery and bondage. (CWIN, 1998)

2. Statement of the Problem

Children are the future of a nation. They have many rights to grow as a complete citizen but in developing nations like Nepal children are vulnerable and forced to labour. The existence of domestic child labour is not a new phenomenon. Children are found to engage in almost all the sectors in employment, that is why it is very much complex subject. Although the Constitution of the Nepal, 2072 ensures the child rights and has prohibited the child labor of any kind, and so many projects of NGOs and INGOs are concerned about the child labour are working on this sector, we have not been able to find the actual fact and remedies to reduce child labour.

Children are the main pillars for development of a country. They should be taken care properly specially about their health, education and other several sphere of life. However, the majority of children are living dreadful and fearful life under the root of uncertainly and poverty. Most of the people are even unable to feed their

children and they migrate towards urban areas and cities for better jobs and better life. Most of children leave their home when they are unable to fulfill basic means of livelihood, education and facilities.

The use of DCL is common in Nepal, especially in its affluent urban areas. However, specific information on the incidence of DCL in urban and rural setting is lacking, though it is suspected that at least half of DCLs may be working in urban center in Nepal. Indeed, there is a general lack of data and information to allow for a through analysis of the incidence and nature of DCL in both national and local level. This research tries to discover the answer to the following questions:

- Which age group of children are involved as domestic worker?
- What leads the children to be a domestic child workers?
- What is the working condition of domestic child worker?
- What is the major occupation of domestic child worker's family?
- What is the economic condition of domestic child worker's family?

3. Objectives of the Study:

To assess socio-economic status of schooling domestic child workers is the general objective of the study, whereas, the specific objectives are as of:

- to assess economic background of domestic child workers family,
- to assess the root causes of domestic child workers
- to examine present working condition of the domestic child workers and

4. Significance of the study

The number of domestic child workers is very high and it is invisible in urban areas of Nepal. It is increasing day by day but there are only a few number of authentic and comprehensive research studies were carried out in this field. This limited numbers of studies have provided very important information, but that information is not sufficient enough to plan a viable program to reduce the socially undesirable problem. Because of this reason, additional research work is in need in this field. This study will be beneficial for future researcher as a source of secondary information.

Findings of this study will be beneficial for various organizations working in the field of child labour. Further this research will be the source of information to policy makers planners and all the stakeholders related to child labour .

5. Limitation of the study

This study is conducted using both primary and secondary sources of information. For collection of primary information, a sample size of 30 students working as domestic child worker studying in Nabayug Secondary School were selected, this may not represent the whole scenario.

Random sampling method was applied which may also be insufficient to represent the population.

6. Review of the Literature

To gain useful and background information about the problem over the study literature review is essential. It is one of the most important parts of any research work. The development of literature in this field has been enriched by many researchers by their contribution in theoretical concepts. But there is no universal definition of child. In the same society also it may varies from rural to urban areas. Cambridge International Dictionary of English, Cambridge University Press, defines child as: 'a boy or girl from the time of birth until he or she is an adult'.

The Nepal Labour Act (1992) and (1995) define a child as a person below the age of fourteen years. Again Children's Act (1992) defines child who is below the age of sixteen years.

According to the ILO proposed convention (1999) no person under the age of 18 is to be in a worst form of child labour. (The worst form of child labour was defined to include all forms of child slavery, use of children in prostitution, pornography, and illegal activities (ILO 1999: 14).

6.1 Child Labour and Domestic Child Worker

Defining child labour is not as simple and straight forward as it may appear because it encompasses three difficult –to define concepts: “Child”, “Work” and “Labour”. Childhood can be defined in terms of age, but then different societies may have different thresholds for demarcating childhood and adulthood. In some societies, age may not be a sufficient basis for defining “childhood”. The fulfillment of certain social rites and traditional obligations may well be important the integration of children into socio-economic life may begin so easily and the transition from childhood to adulthood may be smooth and gradual, that it may be virtually impossible to identify clearly the different life phases.

We must therefore recognize that we are dealing with a concept which could mean different things depending on the context. Besides, in the absence of an effective age record system, even applying an agreed legal definition becomes highly problematic.

Very often children work because they and their families are poor, but poverty is not always the cause of child labour. There are also cultural pressures – particularly on girls. Employers too may simply view children as the cheapest form of labour in the market. And there are also extreme cases, such as child

forced labour. Particularly vulnerable to exploitation are children from ethnic minority, low income and low class groups and girls.

One reason for the general lack of attention the problem in the past is the perceived difficulty of distinguishing between positive and negative child work. There is, after all, strong common-sense, cultural, economic and educational reasons to support the widely held view that work can be positive for children. Through work children can gain increasing status as family members and citizens. They can learn the skills of their parents and from neighbours. Work can therefore build their confidence and self-esteem, and can be a painless and gradual initiation into adult life. In practice many children work, and from an early age of 6 or 7, often in a family farm. Work can clearly be a positive influence on a child development. But child labour is often seen as negative.

The problem is that when the conditions of work change, the picture changes dramatically. Work turns into exploitation when children:

- Work too young: many children start factory work at 6 or 7 years for example, in the carpet industry;
- Work too long hours: in some cases 12-16 hours a day;
- Work for too little pay: as little as\$ 3 for a 60 hour week or no pay, as in agriculture;
- Work in hazardous conditions: in mines, quarries, plantations sweatshops or even in the streets;
- Work under slave: like arrangements: there are an estimated 20 million child bonded labours in South Asia. (Fyfe.A., 1993:6). Work can be taken as a process of socialization when children learn to share responsibility. Child labour seems to exist as a reflection of our socio-economic reality with various degrees of exploitation (Pradhan, 1992:123). The ILO (1995) tends to support the view that “‘Child work’ is a potential learning experience. For the child, and therefore not harmful but ‘child labour’ as ‘exploitative by native and detrimental to the child’s growing process, depriving the child of the rights to survival, development, protection and participation” (ILO, 1996:1).

According to various different researches undertaken by Central Bureau of Statistic (CBS), Central Department of Population Studies (CDPS) and International Labour Organization (ILO), the total number of working children between 5 to 14 years is 2.6 million (25,96,000) of which the economically active children are 1.7 million (1,66,0000). Wage earning children number 278,000 as revealed by the rapid assessment of the worst forms of child labour. This assessment showed that the worse seven areas defined by the ILO such

as trafficking in children in commercial sexual exploitation, rag picking, child porter, child labour in carpet factories, domestic child labour bonded, child labour, children in mines and porter children, the number is 127,000. Out of these children, 37 percentages are illiterate and 63 percentages are school dropouts. Likewise, 58 percentages of these children come from landless families (CWIN, 2002:17).

In Nepal, there are 77,000 domestic child workers, 60 percentages are domestic child workers, 2100 domestic child worker work in urban areas, 45 percentages are female. In domestic child work, average age group of domestic child work is 13 years, 10 percentage lies under 10 years and 70 percentages lies 11-14 years age group. Among totally domestic child workers, 49 percentage are not studying school, 64 percentage domestic child workers have to work more than 14 hours, health situation 51 percentage have bad, 59 percentages are suffering from various types of abuse and 14 percentage have been suffering from sexual abuse, 48 percentages cannot go their house in feast and festivals (CWIN, 2002:18).

Pradhan in his article, ‘The Issue of Child Rights: Commitments and Little Action’, states that the children are not only deprived of their fundamental right to survival and protection, but also equally exploited and discriminated against in their every day life. In certain regions of the country, the children are still being pushed into slavery. Child labour, street children, child abuse and neglect, girl trafficking, and child bonded are very common issues. Nepal has ratified and signed many global conventions to express its commitments to the rights of the child. However, no concrete effort has been made to implement them (Pradhan, Gauri, 1992:3).

Domestic child workers are almost invisible form of child labour exploitation hiding behind the begging mask. Many employers feel that they are doing a big favor to the child and its family. There has been very little profiling in this sectors of unorganized child labour where no protection is granted either by law or by the trader unions. People tend to take it is internal matter of a household and would rather ignore what goes on behind the closed doors. That is apparently the reason that there has been very little documentation in this matter (CWIN, 2001:34).

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Research Design

Research design is a planed structured and strategy of investigation convinced so as to obtain answers to reach questions. It refers to the procedure for the collection of data and its analysis. The research design adopted in this study is

descriptive in type. This study is mainly focused to analyze the socio-cultural and economic status of domestic child workers to portray their present situation to arrive in generalized conclusion.

7.2 Sampling Procedure

Nava Yug Secondary School was selected for the study, which is situated in Kathmandu district. There were a total of 300 students. Most of the classes have students who are working as domestic child worker. There were 60 domestic child worker students and they were working in others house. Among 60 domestic child workers going to school, 30 students were selected and simple random sampling technique was followed for the selection of samples.

7.3 Method of Data collection and Analysis

Both primary and secondary data are obtained to carry out the research. primary data are retrieved from Questionnaire, the responses given by the respondents are analyzed using simple statistical tools like tables, graphs, percentage, diagrams etc .Various publications, reports, journals ,books were cited for secondary information.

8. Presentation and analysis of data

8.1 Age/Sex Structure of the Domestic Child Workers

Table-1: DCWs by age and sex

Age Group	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
4-8	2	16.66	1	5.55	3	10
8-12	3	25	7	38.9	10	33.33
12-16	7	58.34	10	55.55	17	56.67
Total	12	100	18	100	30	100

Source: Field survey 2007

Table 1. indicates that the number of girls in DCW is higher than boys. Out of total sampled DCWs 40% are boys and 60% are girls. It is considered that girls are more preferred for household works. In urban areas, where the women are more engaged in services (outside) activities, the servants are very much needed. While employing girl child as a servant there is a guarantee of good household chores and obedient, where as boys are more aggressive in nature. 10% of the total respondents are in between 4 to 8 years of age, 33.33% are in

between 8 to 12 years age and 56.67% of the total DCWs are in between 12 to 16 years of age.

8.2 Economic Situation of Domestic Child Workers Family

8.2.1 Major Occupations of DCWs Family Households

Major occupations of DCWs family households are divided into three groups such as agriculture, daily labour and wages and others. The following table shows major occupations of DCWs family households.

Table-2 : Major Occupations of DCWs Family Households

S.N	Occupation	Number of DCWs	Percentage
1	Agriculture	17	56.67
2	Daily labour and wages	10	33.33
3	Others	3	10
	Total	30	100

Source: Field survey 2007

Above table shows the types of occupations of DCWs family households. 17 DCWs or 56.67 % of the total respondent's households have been involved in traditional agricultural sector and 3 DCWs or 10% of the total respondent's family households are involved in different services such as guard, peon etc, and 10 DCEW's or 33.33 % of the total respondents family households are found involving in daily wages labour sector in occupation.

8.2.2 Economic Condition of DCWs Family

Economic condition is the major causes of all situations of economic activities. In recent modern stage, economic indicator plays a vital role in society. The following table shows the economic condition of DCWs family.

Table-3: Economic Condition of DCWs Family

S.N	Situation	Number of DCWs	Percentage
1	Low level	21	70
2	Very low level	9	30
	Total	30	100

Source: Field survey 2007

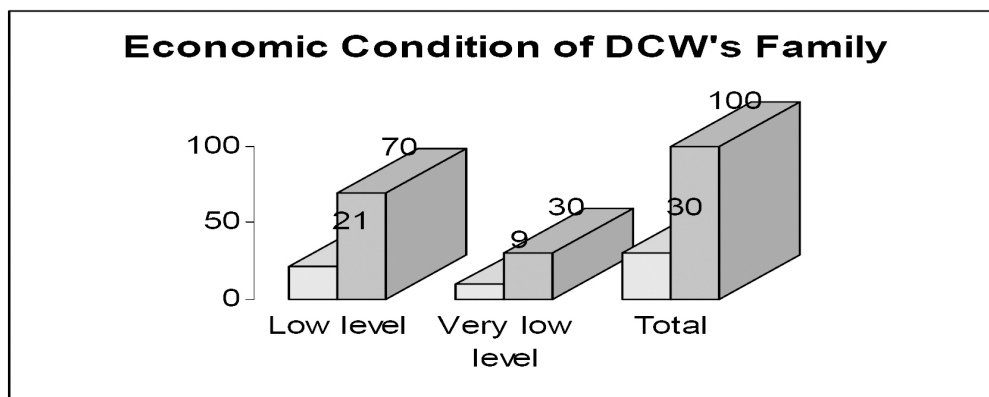


Diagram-1

The economic condition is based on the notion of DCW in study period. Above table shows 21 DCWs or 70 % of the total respondents' families are surveying in low level, and other 9 DCWs or 30% of the total respondent's families are surveying in very low level.

8.3 Causes for being Domestic Child Worker

All respondents lie in low and very low level of economic condition. Major causes are low economic conditions in their family. Beside this, due to lack of food, for schooling, willingness for journey in new locations etc are other causes for the sampled DCWs to work as domestic child workers.

8.4 Educational and working situation of DCW

8.4.1 Studying Classes of Respondents

Studying classes of respondents was divided in three groups such as below 5 classes, 6-8 classes and 9-10 classes for this study. The following table shows studying classes of respondents.

Table-4 : Studying Classes of DCWs

S.N	Classes	Number	Percentage
1	Blow- 5	12	40
2	6-8	13	43.33
3	9-10	5	16.67
Total		30	100

Source: Field survey 2007

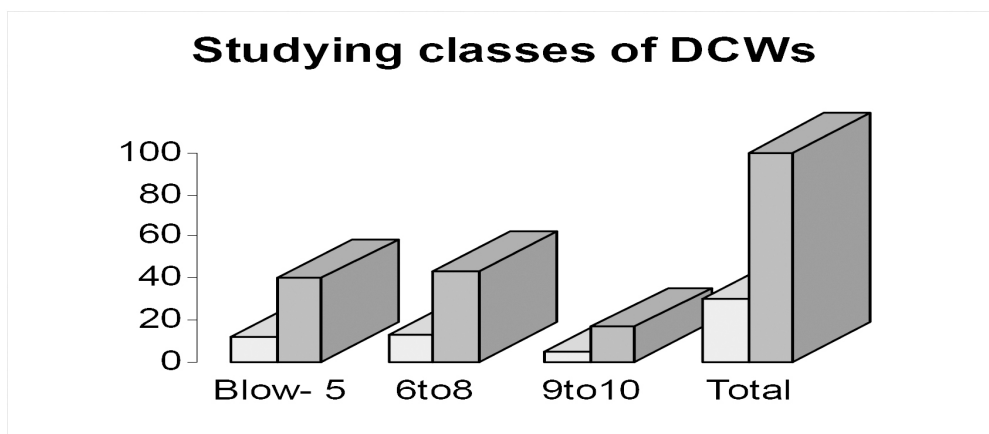


Diagram-2

Above figure indicates that 12 respondents or 40% of the total respondents are studying in primary level (below class 5), it s a very reality that most of the respondents were taken as DCWs in small age. Where as the number of respondents studying in lower-secondary level or in class 6 to class 8 is 13 or 43.33% and only 5 respondents or 16.67% are reading in secondary level.

8.4.2 Studying Position in the Classroom of DCWs

According to the key informants (the respective teachers of Nava Yug Secondary School) most of the DCWs position in classroom is poor but in the response of the question ‘what is your position in the classroom?’ 13% of the total sampled DCWs replied that their position is between top 5, 30% replied that their position is between top ten and rest of the sampled DCWs replied that their position is weak.

8.4.3 Duties of Domestic Child Workers

This chapter deals with duties of domestic child workers. In general, domestic child workers have to engage in low level oriented works such as cooking, cleaning, washing dishes and clothes, shopping and caring babies. According to respondents’ experiences, they have to involve in cooking, cleaning washing and caring babies etc.

8.4.4. Situation of Working Hours (per day)

Situation of working hour is categorized into 0-3 hours, 3-5 hours and over 5 hours. The following table shows the situation of working hour/ day.

Table-6 : Situation of Working Hour (per day)

S.N	Working Hour	Number	Percentage
1	0-3 hours	8	26.67
2	3-5 hours	9	30
3	over 5 hours	13	43.33
	Total	30	100

Source: Field survey 2007

Situation of working hour per day

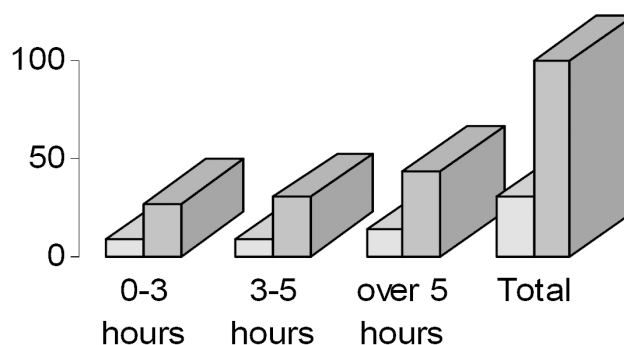


Diagram-3

According to above table, 8 respondents have to involve 0-3 hours per day in working schedule, which is 26.67%. Similarly, 9 DCWs or 30 % have to work 3-5 hours per day and 13 respondents or 43.33 % are forced to work over 5 hours per day in working schedule.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Among 30 DCWs 40% were boys and 60% were girls. Most of the household respondents were involved in agriculture, which was 56.67%. Economic conditions of the respondent's family was fund low and very low level, which was 70 % and 30 % respectively. All respondents lie in low and very low level of economic condition. Major causes are low economic conditions in their family. Beside this, due to lack of food, for schooling, willingness for journey in new locations etc are other causes for the sampled DCWs to work as domestic child workers. 13 respondents work more than 5 hours, which was 43.33%. According to the key informants (the respective teachers of Nava Yug Secondary School) most of the DCWs position in classroom is poor but in the response of the question 'what is your position in the classroom?' 13% of the

total sampled DCWs replied that their position is between top 5, 30% replied that their position is between top ten and rest of the sampled DCWs replied that their position is weak. This chapter deals with duties of domestic child workers. In general, domestic child workers have to engage in low level oriented works such as cooking, cleaning, washing dishes and clothes, marketing and caring babies. According to respondents' experiences, they have to involve in cooking, cleaning washing and caring babies etc.

Conclusion

This study is related with socio-economic status of domestic child worker in urban area, which was conducted in NavaYug Secondary School at Jyabhal Kathmandu. The following conclusions were stressed on the basis of finding.

- The children from the parents of low economic condition are serving as a domestic child worker.
- Most of the guardians were agent for domestic child worker.
- The finding shows that the cause of poverty is an essential factor, which plays a vital role to increase domestic child worker.
- It shows that the duties of domestic child workers are low level activities.
- The finding proves that working hour is high for domestic child worker and study period is limited.

Recommendations

To uplift the condition of domestic child worker the following suggestions can be recommended.

- Child labour should be clearly defined for legal and regulatory purposes.
- The code of conduct should be made from state for DCW owners to keep child labour as a domestic servant.
- Child labour in domestic services and other information sectors should be gradually brought under the preview of the Act.
- Minimum age of entry into various types of works should be fixed specially in domestic child work.
- System of certification of age should be introduced to check entry of under aged children into employment.
- Legal arrangements to deal with bounded labour problem should be introduced.
- Government should provide free education with all facilities in appropriate environment for the betterment of society.

- All the Acts made by government should be implemented strictly to guarantee the right of child.
- Local bodies should act on the issues related to child labour on their periodic plan.
- The authorities should be given to the local bodies to monitor DCWs condition at work.
- Community surveillance system should be launched to monitor the problems of child labour.
- Awareness programs should be given to the parents of DCW.
- Poverty reduction programmes should be implemented to the DCW families.

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