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# **POVERTY AS A CATALYST FOR DOMESTIC CHILD LABOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN CHENNAI**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Child labor involves any employment that removes children from childhood development while blocking their school attendance along with exposing them to physical or mental difficulties. Children existing in poverty face a situation where they become monetary resources instead of education recipients because their families lack adequate protection from domestic work. Children remain involved in domestic labor even with protective laws because the authorities fail to enforce these standards and families stay uninformed about these regulations. The research attempts to determine how poverty influences the existence of child domestic labor throughout Chennai. For data collection purposes the study uses convenience sampling as its technique. A total of 200 samples were acquired for this research. The data collection areas extended across Chennai. Statistical data establishes poverty as the main factor causing domestic child labor in Chennai because economic limitations significantly contribute to this abusive work environment. Because of poverty children must work as domestic help to support their family thus losing both their right to protection along with their education. This research shows poverty acts as the main cause for domestic child labor in Chennai therefore it emphasizes the need for social intervention programs and poverty alleviation strategies to protect children's rights and stop this exploitative practice.

**KEYWORDS:** Child, Poverty, Labor, Economic, Norms.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

India maintains a high poverty level and many children work in domestic roles while this employment format tightly links to poverty levels together with limited educational access and cultural patterns enabling child exploitation. Family impoverishment causes parents to send their children to work domestically because they require financial support. Children perform unsuitable tasks for extended hours in hazardous conditions. A separate section of this

legislation maintains provisions for rehabilitating children liberated from labor.

The Indian government initiated the National Policy on Child Labor in 1987 to eradicate all forms of child work within the country. The policy emphasizes child welfare through initiatives that combine educational promotion with awareness creation and improvements to legal and institutional systems. The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 establishes six- to fourteen-year-olds as having fundamental education rights. The legislation allocates specific sections to stop young people from working alongside rules demanding that authorities must enroll rescued child workers into educational programs. Besides this, educational impoverishment among parents and children contributes to Chennai's child labor issues. The importance of education remains unclear to parents who also fail to secure educational resources for their children.

Chennai's cultural norms along with specific practices play a role in sustaining child labor conditions. The cultural belief exists that children need to help generate household revenue or domestic tasks are acceptable work for female children. The limited ability to solve the problem stems from this situation. The rise of technology alongside automation within domestic work has decreased the market demand for child labor in particular sectors while educational initiatives remain crucial for addressing child labor in Chennai. Efforts focus on increasing education accessibility for girls along with providing support for children rescued from child labor until they successfully return to school. The increased public awareness has strengthened efforts to combat child labor by obtaining critical support from concerned citizens across Chennai.

The population of child workers in Bangladesh ranks as among the highest worldwide. Poverty serves as the main force pushing children into labor in Pakistan yet numerous children conduct work across the garment sector as well as agriculture and home settings. The combination of poverty together with insufficient education and poor law enforcement systems drives child labor throughout the country. The existence of poverty and insufficient education together with inadequate law enforcement help create this problem in Mexico especially in agriculture and informal jobs. Weak law enforcement joins poverty and lack of education as causes that drive the problem. This study examines the influence poverty has on child labor in domestic settings.

## OBJECTIVES:

- To analyze the major causes of domestic child labor in Chennai.
- To analyze the role of education in reducing child labor.
- To analyze the effectiveness of current policies and programs aimed at addressing child labor.
- To analyze the relationship between poverty and child domestic labor in Chennai.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

**Bhattacharya (2016)** The author investigates domestic work modifications through observations of class relations and family transformation in India. This analysis explores both caste systems and residential colony restructurings effect on social views of domestic workers in modern India. The reorganization of residential areas in cities established the current understanding of domestic laborers in society. This evaluation creates possibilities to define effective organization strategies for domestic workforces. The new economic and social environment requires changes in working conditions for domestic workers. The research takes place in Chennai city. The Penn Thozhilalar Sangam uses its experience to organize domestic workers throughout its network. The analysis included 25 studies with cross-sectional studies representing the majority **Ibrahim, (2019)**. Child labor resulted in various medical issues which included inadequate growth combined with malnutrition along with increased illnesses and behavioral and emotional disorders that reduced the ability to cope with challenges. The researchers evaluated the quality of incorporated studies as between fair and good. Seven research investigations established that child labor directly led to negative mental health consequences according to **Sturrock S. and Hodes M. (2016)**. Data revealed that child labor caused more substantial relations with internalizing psychological issues than externalizing problems. The weight of poor mental health caused by child labor becomes substantial because many children are currently working. Young children and domestic workers faced elevated risks of poor mental health because child labor might isolate them and reduce their self-esteem and create feelings of external control. The authors **Menon, N., & van der Meulen Rodgers, Y. (2018)** observe that minimum wage effects on child work show an opposite direction so research into multiple Indian states supports more nuanced conclusions. The research shows that a steep minimum wage decreases child labor activities in household work throughout both male and female populations of urban areas. The increase of household responsibilities affects male children in rural regions but not female children. **Quattri, M., (2016)** This study about



Dhaka delivers crucial information about how childhood poverty leads children into domestic work and disrupts their educational pathways. According to **Brown (2002)** Child work has remained standard throughout history yet child labor together with its harsh working environment emerges more frequently into public view. The 19th century saw child labor visible because industrial work attracted children to join the workforce. The increasing number of children involved in export product manufacturing has made child labor more visible in the present time. **Ray R. (2000)** conducted research using Indian database from expenditure and employment surveys alongside state indicators to study (a) how poverty affects backward class and female headed household rates of poverty and (b) how poverty levels with various individual factors impact child labor and school attendance. The author devotes specific focus to gender matters and investigates educational and employment opportunities for backward-class children and female-headed household children. The analysis performed by **Egyei R.K. (2012)** indicated that girls received better outcomes in school than boys. The occurrence of child labor mostly affects the rural population. Being educated at an advanced level enables fathers to notably decrease the chance that their children will participate in physical work. Production assets along with livestock and household characteristics show important importance in reducing child labor statistics. Children from disadvantaged homes tend to enter the workforce according to the study results. The research by **Thamilarasan, D. M. (2024)** examines health issues among slum children in Chennai to investigate the connection between economic deprivation and child work alongside health status consequences. The educational deficit in India compared to other Asian nations requires substantial political leadership together with additional funding to achieve progress according to **Weiner M. (1996)**. Systems of deep class and caste division prevent people from the upper strata from initiating national efforts for educating the masses. The expanding consumer industries alongside the economic opening along with created more job opportunities would potentially lead the governing middle class to accept that an increase in literacy levels throughout the country justifies child education investments.

The research by **Alam (2015)** indicates that children favor working in the textile industry above the service sector. Researchers discovered numerous occupational groups where child workers can engage based on their gender while elucidating which personal details and domestic conditions guide their professional selection. Most employees in the service industry function as maids which makes this sector a difficult sector to observe. The service sector poses significant risks for child abuse to occur. **Edmonds, E. V. (2006)**. This research shows that

black South African families who qualify for transparent social pension benefits enroll their children in school more frequently while decreasing total work hours spent by these children. The available data best matches the explanation which shows black elderly men face liquidity problems thus causing rural families to send fewer boys to school than they ideally choose under normal circumstances because of educational costs. **Sahoo, B. P. (2021)**. Research results demonstrate poverty stands apart from other determinants influencing child labor activities because gender and caste classification of children proves vital for this problem. The research results indicate that children of lower-caste Indian families actively work in the labor market. The research indicated boys participate in payment work compared to girls who focus on house responsibilities. The research authors are **Dash B. M., (2018)**. The research relies on employment and unemployment data about child labor that was gathered during the 68th round National Sample Survey Organization in India. The research employed bivariate as well as multivariate analytical methods. Research investigators use the chi-square test to analyze the relationship of child labor with diverse sociological economic components. Through multiple logistic regression analysts identified the variables that positively or negatively influence child labor. The data analysis took place inside the software programs SPSS and STATA. This article examines the increasing child labor numbers and presents data regarding child labor distribution by socio-economic factors and child labor work participation in India. **Sasmal, J., & Guillen, J. (2015)**. Social research identifies poverty as the primary reason behind child labor activities which simultaneously restricts children from attending school and developing human abilities. Children from impoverished families graduate as untrained employees who receive minimum wages later in their adult lives. The parents continue to experience poverty which drives them to send their children to work leading to the creation of a child-labor trap. A state-level panel data analysis performed in the Indian context shows that poverty together with illiteracy has a statistical association with child labor. The study establishes poverty produces negative effects on educational opportunities for children and leads to persistent poverty which ultimately forms a child-labor trap. According to **Giri A. K. and Singh S. P. (2016)** child labor causes negative impacts to both children and their communities and society and the entire nation because it hinders economic growth through forbidding human capital's full realization of its positive externalities. The condition of being poor acts both as a leading factor that generates poverty and as an outcome of poverty status. The survey revealed that low income was the primary reason for child labor in 90% of rural children and in 80.8% of urban children according to **Devi K and Roy G (2008)**. A total of 78.6% of the respondents visited health facilities such as hospitals or health centers or health facilities during the past

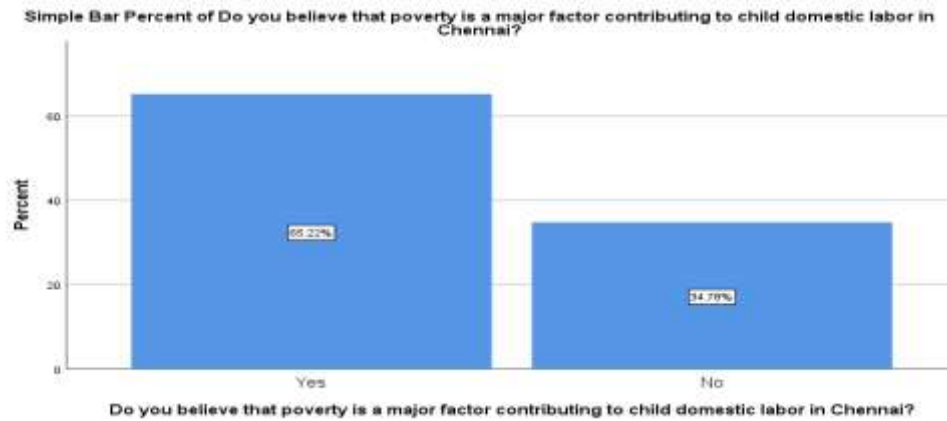
year with any medical issue. Working children in rural areas reported that 75.9% experienced employer verbal abuse during their employment at their place of work. **Das, P. (2020)**. The research analyzes school dropout patterns of migrant tribal girls studying at primary schools located in selected Odisha tribal communities. The study evaluates how social capital enables researchers to understand why girls face poor academic performance leading to child labor which results in an early school dropout. Rural Indian girls face barrier to both social advancement and fair opportunity because enculturation processes limit their school education in these specific socio-cultural settings. Most domestic child labor victims according to **Banerjee (2008)** consisted of girls who were from families lacking education. The physical, mental, and sexual abuse led to physical harm of these children. The children suffered from blood loss as well as digestive tract diseases and lacked crucial nutrients and exposed to respiratory infections and skin conditions while being highly undernourished. Research findings demonstrate the desperate condition of household child employment in Kolkata India. **Edmonds (2005)**. The paper starts by determining the scale and primary traits of child labor. After the initial assessment of child labor extent, it discusses diverse evidence regarding multiple aspects of child work. The fundamental reason behind child labor exists in poverty conditions. The force that drives child labor forward across the planet can be attributed to both poverty and inadequate institutional systems.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

Empirical research forms the basis of this study and graphical displays combined with charts serve as statistical tools. Convenient sampling methodology was utilized during this research and 200 samples were gathered. The research team collected responses across various locations in Chennai while using Gender, Age, Occupation, Educational qualification as well as place of living as independent variables. The dependent variables are poverty is a major factor contributing to child domestic labor in Chennai, the major causes for the domestic child labor in Chennai, Education is a key factor in reducing the prevalence of child labor in Chennai, effectiveness of current policies and programs aimed at addressing child labor in Chennai.

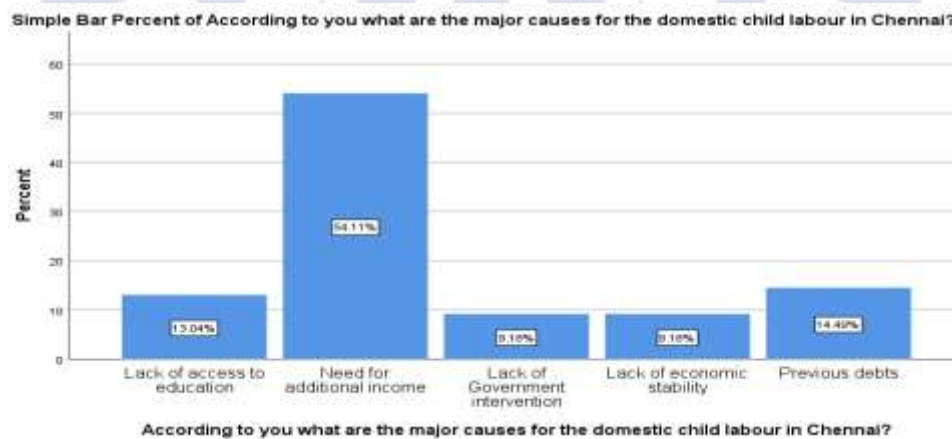
## ANALYSIS:

**FIGURE: 1**

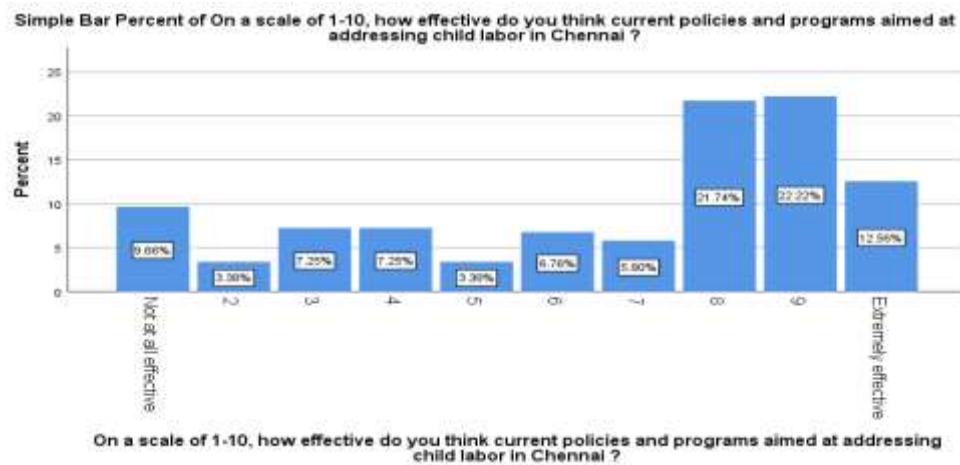


**LEGEND:** Figure 1 shows the simple bar chart which represents that poverty is a major factor contributing to child domestic labor in Chennai.

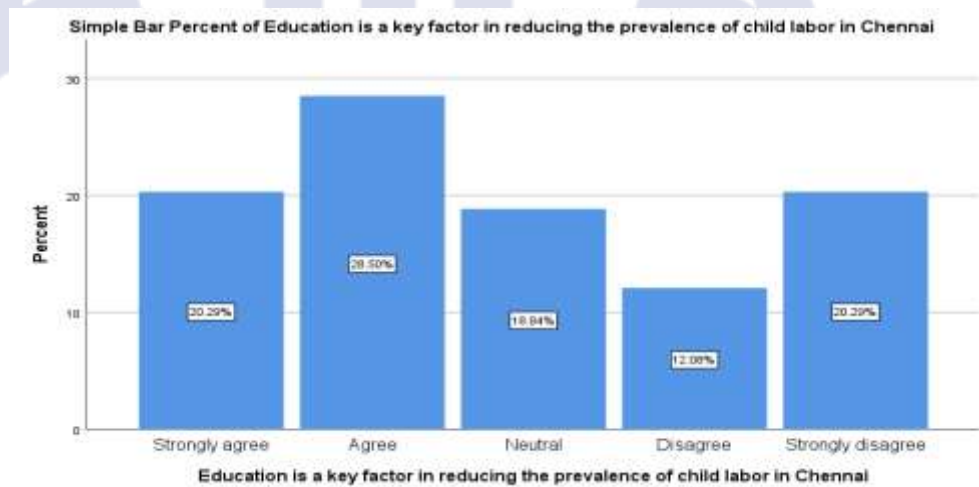
**FIGURE: 2**



**LEGEND:** Figure 2 shows a simple bar chart which represents the major causes for the child domestic labor in Chennai.

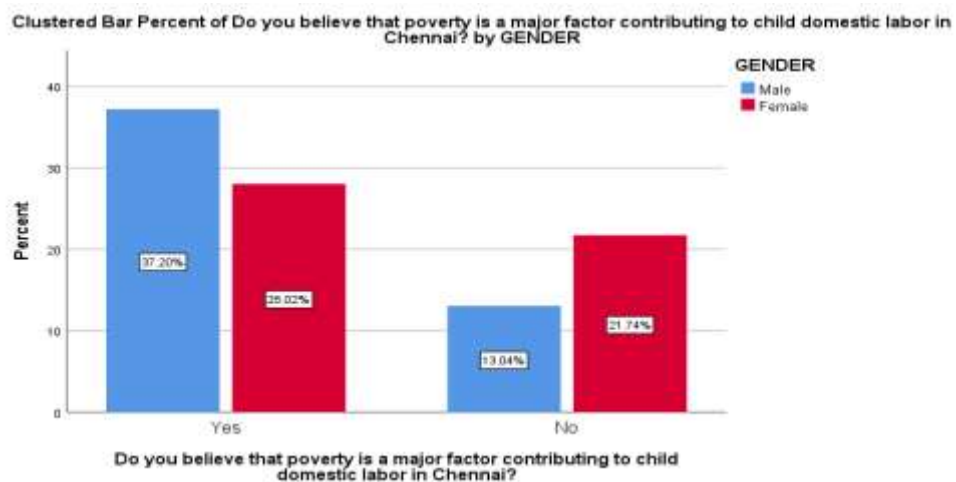
**FIGURE: 3**

**LEGEND:** Figure 3 shows the simple bar chart which represents the effectiveness of the current policies and programs aimed at addressing child labor in Chennai.

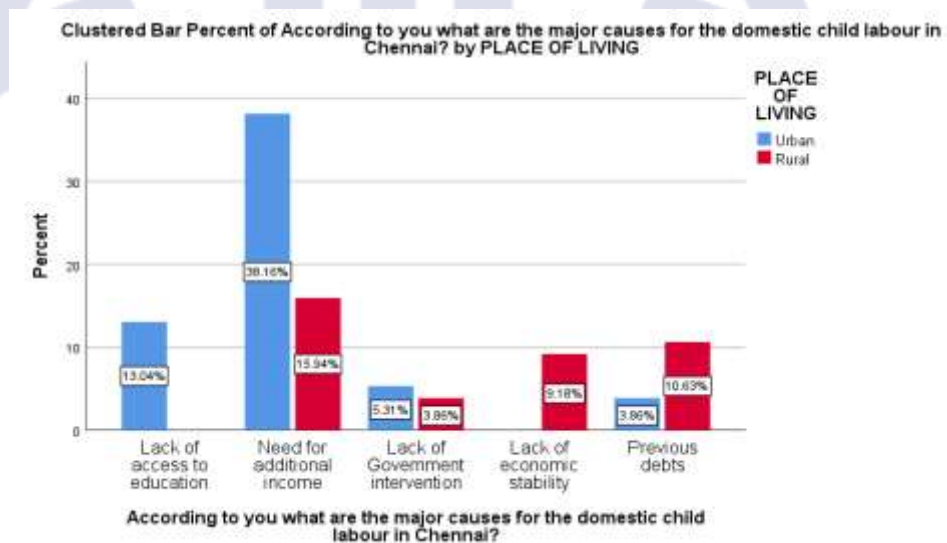
**FIGURE: 4**

**LEGEND:** Figure 4 shows the simple bar chart which represents that education is a key factor in reducing the prevalence of child labor in Chennai.

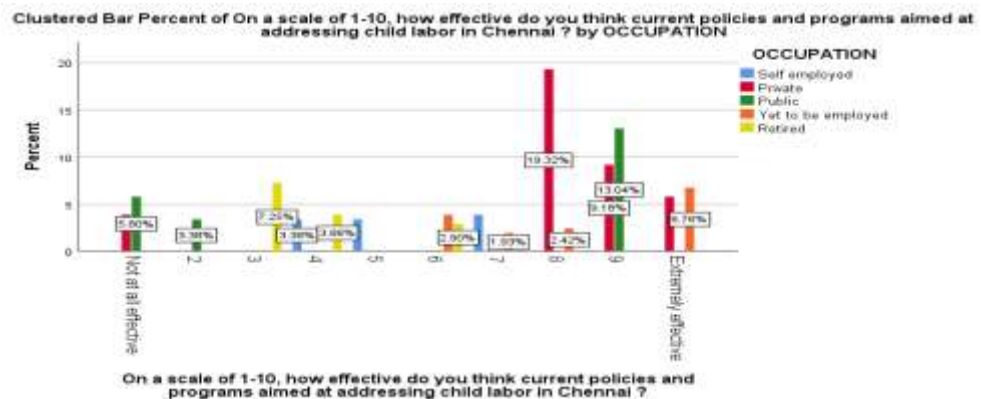


**FIGURE: 5**

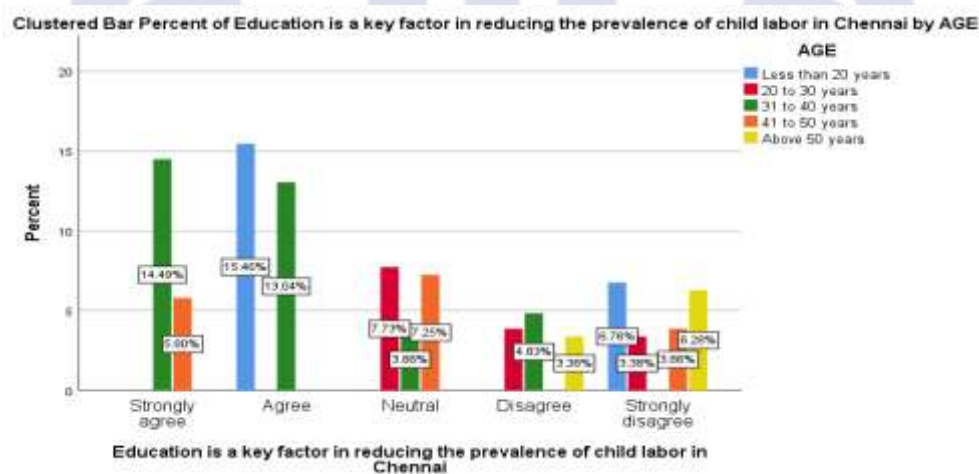
**LEGEND:** Figure 5 shows that poverty is a major factor contributing to the child labor in Chennai with the influence of gender of the respondents.

**FIGURE: 6**

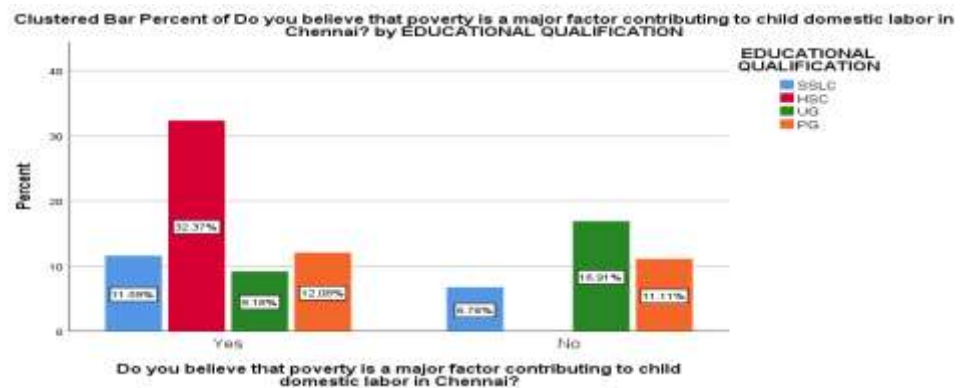
**LEGEND:** Figure 6 shows the major causes for the domestic child labor in Chennai with the influence of place of living of the respondents.

**FIGURE: 7**

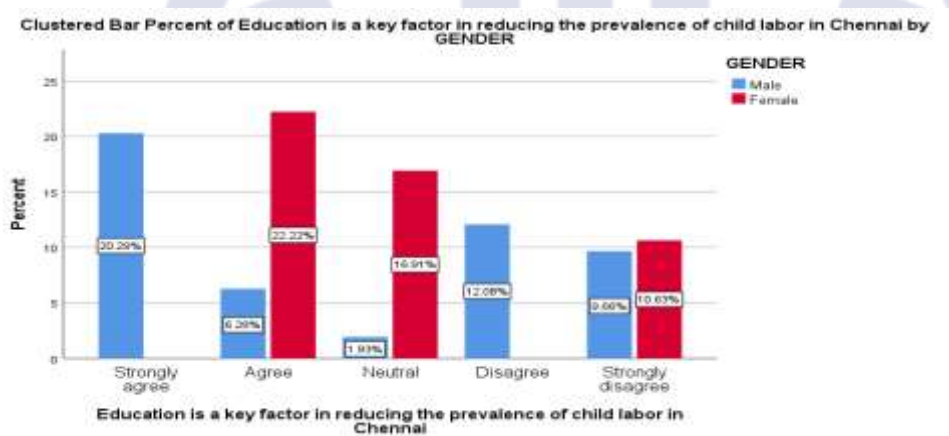
**LEGEND:** Figure 7 shows the effectiveness of the current policies and programs aimed at addressing child labor in Chennai with the influence of occupation.

**FIGURE: 8**

**LEGEND:** Figure 8 shows that education is the key factor in reducing the prevalence of child labor in Chennai with the influence of the age group of the respondents.

**FIGURE: 9**

**LEGEND:** Figure 9 shows that poverty is the major factor contributing to child domestic labor in Chennai with the influence of educational qualification of the respondents.

**FIGURE: 10**

**LEGEND:** Figure 10 shows the statement that education is the key factor in reducing the prevalence of child labor in Chennai with the influence of gender of the respondents.

## ONE WAY ANOVA:

➔ Oneway

ANOVA					
PLACE OF LIVING					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.629	4	2.157	10.658	.000
Within Groups	40.888	202	.202		
Total	49.517	206			

**INTERPRETATION:** Since the calculated p value is  $< 0.05$ , the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the place of living of the respondents and the opinion on the effectiveness of the current policies on child labor in Chennai.

## RESULTS:

**Figure 1** shows that 65.22% of the respondents responded yes to the statement that poverty is the major factor contributing to child labor and 34.78% of the respondents responded no to the statement. **Figure 2** shows that 54.11% of the respondents responded need for additional income as a major cause for the domestic child labor in Chennai and 14.49% of the respondents responded that previous debts as the major cause for the child labor. **Figure 3** shows that 22.22% of the respondents responded extremely effectively and 9.66% of the respondents responded not at all effectively to the statement. **Figure 4** shows that 28.50 % of the respondents agreed with the statement and 20.29% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. **Figure 5** shows that 37.20% of the male respondents responded yes to the statement that poverty is the major factor contributing to child labor and 28.02% of the female respondents responded yes to the statement. **Figure 6** shows that 38.16% of the respondents living in the urban area responded to the need for the additional income and 10.63% of the respondents living in the rural areas responded to previous debts as the major cause for the domestic child labor in Chennai. **Figure 7** shows that 19.32% of the respondents who work in the private and public sector responded to the effectiveness of the current policies and programs. **Figure 8** shows that 15.46% of the respondents who are less than 20 years agreed with the statement and 14.49% if the respondents in the age group of 31-40 years strongly agreed with the statement. **Figure 9** shows that 32.37% of the respondents who pursued HSC

responded yes to the statement and 12.06% of the respondents who pursued PG responded yes to the statement. **Figure 10** shows that 22.22% of the female respondents agreed with the statement and 20.29% of the male respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

## DISCUSSION:

**Figure 1** demonstrates most respondents believe poverty plays the significant role in child labor as families without enough money often lack ability to hire help or afford childcare. Parents commonly depend on their children to carry out household duties because of financial shortages. Data in **figure 2** shows that most respondents selected additional income as the primary reason parents send children into domestic labor because some families struggle to maintain their financial stability which leads them to send their children into work to generate supplementary household funds. Most respondents found the statement extremely effective according to **figure 3** because the key initiatives to handle child labor consist of laws ending child labor together with educational programs and vocational training opportunities and improved working environments with reduced exploitation alongside social change advocacy measures. The data in **figure 4** indicates that most research participants accepted the statement which states that education accessibility serves as a vital solution for fighting child labor. Through education systems children receive essential abilities and understanding that enables them to achieve success in upcoming years. Education plays a dual role by informing people about child labor problems while showing its damage on physical along with mental health of affected children. Most respondents of both genders declared poverty stands as the dominant cause leading to child labor according to **figure 5** because children from low-income families undertake labor to help their families survive. Poverty blocks people from getting essential things like food and medical care while it restricts entry to educational possibilities. Most survey participants identified financial necessity combined with debt repayment as the principal drivers of domestic child labor in Chennai according to **figure 6** because Some parents engage domestic child labor to generate additional income and pay off debts. The practice of child labor presents a violation against fundamental human rights that leads to severe harm in physical together with mental and emotional development areas. **Figure 7** demonstrates that most interviewees support current policies being highly effective because the enforcement of child labor legislation presents multiple obstacles. Children engaged in work within unregulated informal sectors make law enforcement difficult hence current child labor policies fail at achieving sufficient monitoring capabilities. The survey data shows that education plays a vital role in fighting child labor since most respondents expressed strong



agreement with this statement according to **figure 8**. Quality education enables children to evade child labor force but additionally offers support to working children to quit their jobs and resume their academic studies. Education enables children to acquire abilities and acquire information. According to **figure 9** most survey participants supported the claim for Poverty because it blocks children from getting access to education thus continuing cycles of poverty and child labor. Children from deprived backgrounds lack sufficient resources for attending school so they end up working to sustain their families. According to **figure 10** most male and female respondents chose to accept the statement because children who access school education can obtain knowledge and develop skills while gaining confidence that helps them secure improved opportunities afterward. The educational process enables family members to extract themselves from poverty thus decreasing their need to utilize child labor for monetary gain.

### **LIMITATION:**

One of the major limitations of the study is the sample frame. The sample frame experiences significant limitations because researchers have restricted it to a small geographic area. The study faces difficulties when attempting to expand results to broader population sizes. The research only included 200 participants so the thoughts of the total population across specific states or cities or nations cannot be assumed from this data. The physical elements create a greater impact that constrains the study.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

Quality educational access combined with affordable education and social and cultural barrier solutions for school attendance will lower child labor rates in Chennai. Effective enforcement of laws together with increased awareness about child labor impact can help reduce child work. Education programs with parallel awareness campaigns must target both parents and employers and the public population to achieve the goal.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Child labor consists of work that restricts childhood development and interrupts school attendance and inflicts physical or social or mental or moral damage on children. Experiencing poverty drives families to consider their children as valuable income sources instead of protected educational and protected individuals. Children engage in labor work in Chennai because families depend on their earnings to survive which makes poverty the significant

contributing factor to child labor. Children lose access to their rights for education and protection and experience unsafety during their childhood. Law enforcement combined with monitoring activities are essential for achieving effective reduction of child labor practices. Understanding how child labor hurts children and their communities will assist in lowering the frequency of child labor. The complete elimination of child labor depends on continuous collaboration between government entities and civil society along with private sector members to provide a better future for Chennai children while safeguarding their rights to education and protection and safeguarding their childhood period.

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