

Gender Differentials in Working Duration Among Child Labour in Odisha, India

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Abstract

Child labours are the victim of crushing poverty fighting for survival at an early age. Female child labours are doubly disadvantaged due to their working status and existing gender discrimination. This paper attempts to investigate into the gender differentials in working duration among child labour in Odisha by taking National Family Health Survey 2005–06 data. Although there is no apparent gender differential in terms of percentage of working, but differential in working duration is quite evident. The gender differential in duration of overall working slackens at the higher age group, whereas the differential widens in terms of engagement in household chores by age. Irrespective of socio-economic condition of the household, the gender differentials in child labour persists in Odisha. Existing policies to eliminate child labour may be gender sensitized and stringently implemented.

Introduction

Child labours are the victim of crushing poverty, fighting for survival at an early age. They are the subjected citizens – physically, mentally, socially, and economically and so on. Working at tender age restricts them from becoming responsible citizen, because they cannot avail education, grab economic and social opportunities. Working affects not only their present status but also closes the scope for their overall future development and thereby their successive generations too. By the time they grow up, they would be without any wealth, which again will compel their successor(s) to work. The golden time of their childhood meant for education, playtime, and fun is shattered owing to their ill-fate of being born in a poor family. Furthermore, female child labours are doubly disadvantaged due to their working status and existing gender discrimination. Male child in a patrilineal and Hindu society like that of Odisha, are accorded more importance, usually at the cost of female child. When resources are limited, its distribution is heavily tilted towards male child, neglecting female child. It is noticed even in terms of basic needs like allocation of food, cloths, accessing health care and education.

Although exact estimation of child labour is difficult, it is estimated that during 2005 there were 9.6 lakh child labours in Odisha (CLAP, 2006). Further, National Family Health Survey 2005–06 (NFHS–3) reports that 11.1 percent of children in Odisha belong to the working group, against the national average of 11.8 percent (IIPS and Macro International, 2007, p. 50). As per the latest survey (National Sample Survey Organization Survey 2009–10), the total number of child labour in Odisha was 13,45,63 which constitute 2.70 percent of

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the total children. Irrespective of the rate or magnitude of child labour in the state. There is no denial to the fact that the problem of child labour persists and it needs instantaneous attention. However, studies relating to child labor generally deals with its causes and or consequences. Most of them do not address the issue of working duration, its gender differentials etc. Hence, study on such issues is always desirable. As such, the present study aims to find out the gender differentials in types of work assigned to the child labours and the duration of their working in Odisha, India.

Definition of Child Labour

It should be noted that definition of child labour or working status of a child varies with defining organization. So, it is quite important to clarify which definition is adopted in the particular study. The present study uses the definition on child labour given by UNICEF, because the NFHS-3 used this definition, and present study uses the NFHS-3 data. UNICEF defines child labour in the following manner:

Any child aged 05–11 years who in the seven days preceding the survey,

- Worked for someone who is not a member of the household, with or without pay, OR
- Did household chores for 28 or more hours, OR
- Engaged in any family business.

Any child aged 12–14 years who, in the seven days preceding the survey,

- Worked for someone who is not a member of the household, with or without pay for 14 or more hours, OR
- Did household chores for 28 or more hours, OR
- Engaged in any other family work for 14 or more hours.

Materials and Methods

Present study is based on the third National Family Health Survey data. This survey was conducted all over the country during the year 2005–06, in Odisha during November 2005 to April 2006 (IIPS and Macro International, 2007, p. 15). Data were collected through direct face to face interview from the selected households through the well-structured bilingual (English and principal native language of the state) interview schedule. In Odisha, the survey interviewed 3,910 households, covering 3,975 children in the age group 05–14 years. However, only 3,798 usual resident and those on whom the information on working status is available are retained. But, for subsequent analyses, sample size is reduced to 429 working children of age 05–14 years. NFHS provides data on every individual along with the household information. Thus, one can use this data-set with great flexibility. Further, since the survey followed sound sampling design and assigned appropriate sampling weight, it also allows application of any statistical techniques (for details of the sampling design visit: <http://www.nfhsindia.org>).

Percentage of working children by types of work (first table of the paper) is based on all the children of age 05–14 years, whereas, all other tables are calculated based on only the working children, that is 429 children. As the definition of child labour has two segments, namely working duration and age of the child (05–11 and 12–14 years respectively), entire analyses are made taking these issues into consideration. It should also be noted here that ignoring technical differences, the term child labour and working children are

interchangeably used. For further convenience, working children of age 05–11 years are termed as younger child labour, whereas working children of 12–14 years are termed as older child labour. In this study, percentage distribution, mean, standard deviation and quartiles are calculated. Further, multiple classification analyses (MCA) are carried out to assess the extent of differentials in working duration using SPSS-20.

Results

Types of Work

Prior to dealing with the working duration among child labour, it is pertinent to know the types of work that children are engaged in. This information is essential for policy formulation and implementation. Knowing it clearly helps formulation of appropriate and effective plans for eradication of child labour. Out of the total children, about four percent works for non-household member (table: 1). Almost half (46.1%) of the total children need to lay their petite hands on household chores. However, as per the definition only about three percent (2.9%) of them falls under the working or child labour category. One step ahead, about eight percent (7.5%) of the children are urged to engage in family work. Thus, when the children who are not usual resident and did not respond to the question on working status are removed from the analysis, and combining the above mentioned three aspects of working shows that 11.3 percent of children in Odisha are working or child labour. But by including all the children of aged 05–14 years, NFHS–3 identifies 11.1 percent of children as working (IIPS and Macro International, 2007, p. 50). Similar to the other studies on Odisha (Mohapatra& Dash, 2011; Patra&Nayak, 2009), present study also found that percentage of working children is much higher at the older age group for both female and male children. Percentage of working among younger children is about eight percent, whereas it is about 20 percent for older age group.

Table1: Percentage of Working Children by Types of Work

Types of work	05–11 years		12–14 years		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Worked for non-household member	2.1	2.7	7.1	8.1	3.9
Helped in household chores	29.9	45.2	53.7	81.3	46.1
Did any other family work	6.0	3.5	19.8	8.3	7.5
Percentage of working children	8.2	7.6	18.7	20.1	11.3
Number of working children	118	95	102	114	429

Among the younger female children, about three percent work for non-household member, whereas among male it is two percent (Table: 1). About 45 percent of female children have to engage themselves in household chores, whereas among male only 30 percent lay their hands on household chores. About three percent of female and six percent of male have to do other family work as well. These results clearly reflect the gender differentials in cultural assignment of work by gender. Overall, among the younger child labour, both female and male, about eight percent fall under the working or child labour category. This means, there is no such gender discrimination in sending the children to work at younger age, although assignment of work greatly varies by gender.

Among the older female child labour about eight percent work for non-household member, whereas for male it is seven percent (Table 1). While 81 percent of older female children get engaged in household chores, in the case of male it was only 54 percent. About

eight percent of female and 20 percent of male children also do other family work. Among older child labour, marginally higher percentage of female children falls under working or child labour category. But study (Rahman et al., 2010) conducted elsewhere shows that with the increase in age male child labour increases whereas it decreases for female. Differences in these findings may be due to the differences in sampling design and or socio-cultural differences. Present study exhibits that in terms of percentage of working, while gender discrimination is slightly apparent among the older child labour, the gender variation is quite distinct in assignment of work.

Working Duration

To understand the problem of child labour, information solely related to working status is inadequate. It is a requisite to be well informed of the duration of work as well. NFHS-3 collected data on duration of work a child labour did in one week preceding the survey. From the definition it is quite clear that working or child labour status is determined by working duration and age group. Younger children are categorized as child labour for shorter duration of work than the older children. Thus, it is more rational to assess the duration of work by the age group. In this context, it is found that among younger child labour (05–11 years), duration of working for non-household member and helping in household chores both almost doubles for female children, but it is the reverse in terms of ‘doing any other family work’ (Table 2). Among these children, duration of helping in household chores is somewhat deflated, because some of them actually do not contribute at all to household chores, but falls under child labour category due to engagement in other two activities. In terms of overall working duration, younger female children work for about 31 hours a week, whereas it is only 22 hours for their counterpart. However, the standard deviation is slightly greater for female than male child labour.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Working Duration (In Hours) Per Week

Mean and SD of duration of	05–11 years		12–14 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Working for non-household member	4.89	9.07	17.77	17.41
SD	13.59	18.31	25.12	24.84
Helping in household chores	9.57	17.67	10.22	24.14
SD	11.82	14.92	14.19	13.15
Doing any other family work	7.27	4.67	14.66	4.04
SD	8.95	8.35	16.12	10.37
Overall working	21.73	31.41	42.64	46.48
SD	16.46	18.93	20.51	18.84
Number of working children	118	95	102	114

Note: Figures after decimal, hundred equals to one unit/hour; SD = Standard deviation

There is no apparent gender differential in terms of duration of working for non-household member among older child labour (12–14 years), it is about 17 hours per week for both female and male. But, there is a huge difference in duration of helping in household chores. On an average an older female child labour helps in household chores for 24 hours a week, whereas it is only 10 hours for a male child. Such gender difference is similar with younger child labour as well, although at lower level. Duration of doing any other family work for female is only four hours a week, whereas it is as high as 15 hours for male children. This gender differential is also similar to that of the younger child labour. The

duration of overall working is about 46 hours per week for female, whereas it is about 43 hours for male children. It means that the gender differential in duration of working is slightly lesser for older child labour.

Mean duration alone may not be able to ascertain existing gender differentials, because the sample size in the present study is somewhat small. Hence, attempt is made to assess the gender differential by the help of quartiles. Result (Table 3) shows that among the younger female child labour, about a quarter works for 15 hours a week, whereas the same proportion of male children (of the same age group) works for about nine hours a week. About half of the younger female child labour work for 28 hours per week, whereas among male it is only 15 hours. Further, third quartile shows that about 75 percent of younger female child labour works for about 47 hours a week, whereas it is only 30 hours for male. One step further, remaining quarter of younger female child labour work for even more than 47 hours a week, whereas among male children they work for more than 30 hours. This shows that there is huge gender differential in duration of working among the younger child labour in Odisha. In other words, percentage of younger female children working for longer duration is significantly higher than their counter part.

Table 3: Distribution of Working Children Into Quartiles by Working Duration (In Hours) Per Week

Measures	05 – 11 years		12 – 14 years		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Quartile					
First quartile	9.00	15.00	28.00	30.69	18.78
Second quartile	15.00	28.00	42.00	42.00	34.99
Third quartile	30.00	47.37	56.00	63.00	49.00

Note: Figures after decimal, hundred equals to one unit/hour.

Examination of gender differential among the older child labour (Table 3) reveals that first quarter of both male female children work for close to 30 hours a week and half of both female and male work for 42 hours. Third quarter of female children works for 63 hours a week, but male children works for only 56 hours. It means, among older female children the remaining quarter works for more than 63 hours, whereas for male children it is more than 56 hours a week. Earlier studies (Groot, 2010, p.16; Ensing, 2010, p. 41) show children even working for 12 – 14 hours a day. However, in present study gender differential in working duration is much apparent in younger ages than in the older age group.

Results and Interpretation of MCA on Working Duration

Working Duration of Younger Child Labour

An attempt is made to assess the gender differentials in working duration with the help of multiple classification analyses (Table 4). It is found that the mean duration of work among the younger child labour does not change much by the relationship to head even if the effect of other variables is controlled (Table 4, Model I). It means to say that on an average son / daughter works for about 27 hours a week, whereas ‘others’ work for about 24 hours and the adjusted mean duration also remains almost unchanged.

Both adjusted and unadjusted mean working duration of the younger child labour is about 24 hours a week if both parents are alive. The working duration shoots up to 40 hours if either/both of the parents are not alive; while other factors been adjusted it slightly reduces to

37 hours. It signifies that survival status of the parents is quite crucial for working duration of the child labour, because it is directly linked with the economic condition of the family. In this context, an attempt is made to assess whether duration of working varies with economic condition of the household. Result (Table 4, Model I) shows that children from poor family have to work for longer duration than the children from comparatively better-off family. Earlier studies (Mohapatra & Dash, 2011; Narzary, 2011; Patra & Nayak, 2009; Naidu & Ramaiah, 2006) also show poverty as the root cause of child labour. Amount of earning among child labour to a great extent depends on duration of working. Thus, by working for longer duration, child labour from poorer households tries to maximize their earning.

Table 4: Unadjusted and Adjusted Mean Working Duration (In Hours) of Child Labour Per Week

Characteristics	Model: I 05–11 years child labour			Model: II 12–14 years child labour		
	Un adj.	Adj.	n	Un adj.	Adj.	n
Relationship to HH						
Son/Daughter	26.66	26.87	183	44.97	44.89	177
Others	23.53	22.27	27	44.39	44.71	38
Both parents alive						
No	39.71	37.13	25	44.18	44.25	34
Yes	24.44	24.79	185	44.99	44.98	181
Wealth index						
Poor	28.09	27.07	173	45.76	46.02	185
Middle & Rich	17.74	22.51	37	39.35	37.74	30
Place of residence						
Urban	24.93	30.70	16	44.41	47.87	21
Rural	26.37	25.90	194	44.91	44.54	194
Caste / Tribe						
Scheduled Caste	19.12	20.18	35	48.32	47.84	43
Scheduled Tribe	34.40	32.34	89	44.11	44.05	96
Other Backward Class	21.82	23.24	50	47.29	47.52	45
General	19.10	21.26	35	38.77	39.30	30
Source of drinking water						
Around residence	17.07	23.45	14	46.47	50.76	22
Elsewhere	26.93	26.46	195	44.68	44.20	193
Type of family						
Nuclear	27.72	26.46	147	44.87	44.81	141
Others	22.85	25.79	63	44.85	44.97	73
Age of the HH head						
Below 38	26.34	24.48	86	43.72	43.64	54
38 – 44	25.61	26.07	60	44.13	43.72	68
Above 44	26.77	28.88	63	46.07	46.42	93
Sex of the child						
Male	22.01	23.45	115	42.96	42.81	101
Female	31.41	29.66	95	46.57	46.70	113
	R ² =0.250			R ² =0.054		

Note: Un adj.= Unadjusted; Adj.= Adjusted; n = cases / sample size; Dependant variable = working duration in hours; figures after decimal, hundred equals to one unit/hour

One of the interesting findings is that the mean unadjusted working duration for younger child labour of urban area is negligibly lesser than that of rural children. But the adjusted

mean working duration for urban children is substantially (about 5 hours) higher than the children from rural areas. This result implies that if proper infrastructural facilities are available in the rural areas, the rural area will not be lagging behind. Other explanations may be the rural employers are comparatively more generous than their counter part and type of work in urban area demands longer working hours. Further, demand for child labour in rural area is mainly in primary sector, which calls for heavy work but for shorter durations. Both unadjusted and adjusted mean working duration of scheduled tribe children is higher than other community children, followed by other backward class. The children from the general caste or socio-economically better-off community work for shorter duration compared to children from other communities. This might be due to the relatively better economic condition of general caste households in one hand, and lack of education of tribal parents on the other hand. It is notable that in several parts of India, children are engaged in activities like collecting firewood, grazing cattle, fetching water, etc. But from such information, only question relating to source of drinking water is available. It is presumed that if the source of drinking water is not around the residence, children may (also) be engaged in fetching drinking water. This may be firstly to ease the workload of parents, secondly to make children realize about their responsibility towards the family. As expected, it is found that, if the source of drinking water is not around the residence, the working duration of younger child labour is comparatively higher.

The share of household chores greatly depends on the family structure and number of family members. Due to the swapping wind of modernization and westernization, even in the remote rural villages, nuclear type of family is being preferred in present time. In nuclear families, working children have to work for longer duration than children from 'others' type of family. This may be because normally the nuclear family are composed of lesser number of members, thereby even children have to discharge their duties in running the family, if not for earning. Age of the head of the household has also strong theoretical linkage with the child labour. The reason being that an aged household head, working as daily labour, may not be able to earn sufficiently and thereby have to press on their children to work. In this context, it is notable that the adjusted mean working duration gradually increases with the increase in the age of the household head.

The issue of gender discrimination in working duration is apparent from result of multiple classification analysis (Table 4, Model I, second last row). Result shows that when adjusted for other factors – even if sex were the only variation among the working children – younger female working children would have to work for longer duration than male children of the same age. In other words, female children in Odisha are comparatively more disadvantaged than male children. However, as the R-square value is quite negligible, due to the small sample size, magnitude of gender discrimination may not be gauged from this result. Yet, it demonstrates the existing gender discrimination in working duration.

Working Duration of Older Child Labour

Among the older child labour there is no apparent differential in working duration by relationship to household head, survival status of the parents and type of family (Table 4, Model II). But an apparent variation is noted by the economic condition of the household. As that of younger child labour, children from poor households are likely to work for longer duration than child labour from relatively better-off households. Although, unadjusted mean of working duration for child labour is almost same for both rural and urban children, but while adjusted for other factors, urban child labour are more likely to work for longer

duration. This finding is also similar to that of younger child labour. One of the interesting findings is that among the older child labour, working duration (both unadjusted and adjusted) is highest for scheduled caste, and followed by other backward classes. But among the younger child labour it is the scheduled tribe children who work for longer duration. However, among the older child labour also working duration is minimum for the children from socially higher strata.

Another notable finding is that while the source of drinking water is around the residence, duration of working is higher for older children (Table 4, Model II), whereas it is opposite in the case of the younger children. This result signifies that though children are engaged in fetching water while young, but with growing age, they are engaged more in income generating activities. Similar to that of younger child labour, working duration increases with the increase in the age of the household head. However, increase is not so distinct in case of older children.

Assessment of the gender differential in working duration among the older child labour reveals that even while adjusted for other factors, female children are more likely to work for longer duration. The difference in adjusted mean working duration is about four hours. This implies that every other factors remaining same, if only sex were to be different, female child labour will be engaged for longer duration than that of male children. It should be reiterated here that as the R-square values is quite negligible, the magnitude of gender differential cannot be ascertained, and it only highlights the existing pattern. However, the gender differential in working duration among the older child labour is comparatively lesser than that of younger children. The difference in unadjusted and adjusted mean working duration between younger female and male child labour is about nine and six hours respectively, whereas it is about four hours (both unadjusted and unadjusted) among the older child labour. Thus, it can be said that with the increase in age, the gender differential slackens to a certain extent.

Discussions

Though there are evidences of innumerable studies related to the causes of child labour, but studies relating to working duration of child labour seem to be limited. So, present exercise was carried out to throw some light in this direction. Further, gender dimension was embedded to make the study more interesting and relevant, because prevailing mindset towards son preference in Indian societies is a well-established fact. Although son preference in Odisha is recorded to be moderate, discrimination of girl child regarding vaccination and medical treatment are quite pronounced in the state (Mutharayappa et al., 1997). Thus, inspection of gender differential in duration of working among child labour is a matter of curiosity. No parents in normal circumstances would like to engage their own children in any work, until they attain maturity. However, it is the economic hardship that compels the parents to employ their children as child labour (Mohapatra & Dash, 2011; Narzary, 2011; Hossain & Rahaman, 2011; Patra & Nayak, 2009; Naidu & Ramaiah, 2006).

There are no apparent gender differentials in terms of magnitude of working children in both the younger and older age groups. But the percentage of working children (both female and male) is much higher among the older age group. This finding is similar to those of previous studies (Mohapatra & Dash, 2011; Patra & Nayak, 2009). Earlier (Patra & Nayak, 2009) study says that it is due to preference of employer for the older children. But others (Rahman et al., 2010) found that in rural Rajshahi district of Bangladesh, with the increase in age male child labour increases whereas it decreases for female. Gender differentials in

duration of overall working slacken at the higher age group. However, the gender gap widens among older children in terms of engaging in household chores. This wider gap can be attributed to the cultural division of work. In India, with growing age girls are supposed to learn all sorts of household chores, whereas boys are supposed to help the earning male member(s) of the family in income generating activities, including agriculture. Such division of labour is more pronounced in the rural areas. Irrespective of gender differentials in duration of work, the duration of working among the younger child labour looks disturbing. Working duration of about three-four hours per day must not debar these tender aged children from schooling and enjoying their childhood. Theoretically, if the child works for about three-four hours a day and that too only in the morning or evening, it should not affect the formal education directly. However, the NFHS did not address this issue (on what time child work), and thus is meant to be handled by other researchers. Future researchers dealing with child labour issues should consider about collecting data on days of working that is whether working on week-ends, holidays etc, so that working status can directly be linked with the schooling of children. Further, contributing with their tiny hands towards family activities after formal school or during the holidays is customary in India and it is socially somewhat acceptable. Such socio-cultural acceptability of working of children points towards the lacuna and need for modification in the definition of child labour as well.

The lesser gender differentials in working duration among older children may be due to the fact that as the female children grow older, they are groomed for marriage and assigned more of household works. Secondly, due to the strong cultural values attached to virginity in the country, parents most preferably desist sending their daughters to work outside the home. Rather they are assigned more of household chores. Third, as the female children approach adolescent period, they are subjected to more confinement within the family. Overpowering economic hardship instead may compel her mother to venture outside home for some earning. In other words, by the time a daughter attains adolescent period, the mother might be on the verge of completion of her youth, and thereby do not worry to work outside the home.

Conclusions

There is no apparent gender differential in terms of percentage of working in both the age group children, though the percentage of working children is much higher among the older children. Gender differential in duration of overall working is lesser among the older children, though at higher level. As the R-square values of both the models are quite negligible, magnitude of gender discrimination may not be measured from this study. However, one could clearly assess the existing pattern of gender discrimination among the child labour in Odisha. Further, this study could also highlight the type of data-set required for the study of child labour. There are various policies relating to elimination of social pathologies (including child labour) in India. Almost all of them are very meticulously prepared, and look very good in pen and paper. What is lacking is their implementation. Hence, existing policies to eliminate child labour may be gender sensitized and stringently implemented. Simply suggesting new policies have no added value, unless the existing ones are tried and tested to prove ineffective.

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