

Challenge Faced by Domestic Child Workers in Achieving School Education

Rajaram Pyakurel

Lecturer (Population Education)

Mahendra Ratna Campus Tahachal, Kathmandu

Email: raj.pyakurel24@gmail.com

Abstract

Domestic child workers work in an inside house with or without direct payment. Legally it is prohibited although socially, and culturally promoted in city areas. This article analyzes the challenges faced by domestic workers in the home, and how they are motivated to study in difficult situations. This article was based on the phenomenological study of domestic child workers from child rights perspectives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with participants. On the basis of the data, two themes were generated and analyzed. A lot of the information that came in the form of data was based on the problem they ran into. It concludes that domestic child workers face physical, mental, and social problems in their workplace (Home). Their children's rights were violated by their parents, and employers although were motivated to study to fulfil their future aims.

Keywords: Domestic child worker, problem, child rights, workload.

Article information: Manuscript received: 2080/09/27, Reviewed date: 2080/11/06, Acceptance: 2080/01/12
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/sahayaatra.v7i1.66215>. Journal home page: <https://nepjol.info/index.php/sahayaatra>.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons CC BY-NC License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Introduction

Domestic child workers work in an inside house with, and without direct payments. In city areas, people are busy with work and need a helping hand for their home chores. Child workers perform washing dishes, cooking, cleaning, looking after the young children or elders, and other household activities (Gotame & Koirala, 2009). Most domestic child workers are girls because they are more experienced than males in performing household chores in Nepalese society. Mainly child workers are involved in household chores and continue achieving school education in community schools in Kathmandu. Poverty, illiteracy, urbanization, rural-urban migration, and economic under-development, etc. are the major responsible factors for creating this situation. They are deprived of the basic needs to survive. Parents who are not able to maintain food and education for their children are compelled to do domestic work just to get food and education. 'Most of the guardians were agents for domestic' child workers (Upadhyaya, 2017). [PK1] Due to poverty, children are used as domestic workers and their parents expect them to earn money at home. Domestic workers face many obstacles in continuing their education. Their learning environment in the home and learning space are questionable. It's a problem to manage proper learning time and space. For learning, motivation is an essential component. Support and encouragement play important role in education attainment. It is hard to get learning-friendly environments in their workplace (Home). Some of them are victimized by acts of

violence. They face a lot of discriminating behaviour at home. In terms of basic needs, their food, shelter, clothes, and health were found critical (Baral,2020). Most of the domestic workers are found in city areas like Kathmandu, they are from minorities, poor, marginalized communities. According to the ILO reports of Nepal 2021, most of the domestic workers are female and from poor economic families [PK2]. It is estimated that many helpless children are poor, and backward, whose mother or father has died as domestic workers in the city. It is seen in the literature that there is a lot of research about domestic workers, but the research literature about the struggle of domestic children for community school education is found only minimal. As a teacher in a community school, I have participated in teaching such children, so I am also interested in their problems,

This paper aims to explore the challenges faced by domestic child workers in achieving school education. It further investigates the nature of the challenges and their causes. This paper attempts to identify the problem faced by child workers at home and their struggle for School education. This is small-scale research that attempts to explore the obstacles of domestic workers in the home and their life endeavours for education. The study is believed to contribute to generating knowledge in the field of domestic child labour and their struggles. I have tried to analyze the problems of domestic workers and their struggle for education with respect to the theory of human rights and child rights. The paper also reports my own experience of teaching such deprived domestic child workers. I have also included my own experience of teaching such deprived children when I was a teacher in a government school in Kathmandu a few years ago. Some of the children studying in the school were also working as domestic workers. They didn't do their homework due to the workload at home and they slept during school hours. I want to search for the answer to the question, of how have domestic child labourers achieved success even working as domestic labourers and what motivates them to learn.

Theoretical explanation

This study is based on child rights perspectives. Nepal signed the Convention on Child Rights in 1990 (Gajurel,2008). Nepal's constitution (2072) also adopted the principle of child rights. According to UN conventions, every [PK3] child shall have the right to education, health, maintenance, proper care, sports, entertainment, and overall personality development from the families and the State. No child shall be subjected to physical, mental, or any other form of torture in the home, school, or other place and situation whatsoever. Protection of child rights is the duty of the state and its citizens. Child rights are a component of human rights. It provides the foundation for child development. On this aspect I want to search for the answer to the question, 'What are the problems of domestic child workers from the perspective of child rights?'

Methodology

This study is based on the qualitative approach to research design. It is based on the phenomenological design that typically focuses on studying human experiences of certain phenomena, gathering data through in-depth interviews, reporting their experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences. The participants of the

study were two boys reading in class 10. Both participants belong to the poor and disadvantaged communities of Nepal and were involved in domestic child labour. Both of them have more than five years of experience in domestic work in Kathmandu. I selected two participants for data collection with the help of my friend who works as a teacher in a community school in Kathmandu. I visited the school and talked with them during school time with the permission of the head teacher of the school. The next day, I talked with them about my study. I interviewed Rajendra during school hours in the computer lab during break time. I recorded (2080/5/1) 27 minutes of focus interviews on my smartphone. Then, 2 days later (2080/2/3), I interviewed Bikram during school hours in break time in the library. I recorded 23 minutes interview with him. I tried to maintain a comfortable environment and avoid my perception during the interview. I took permission from them individually after recording the interview on my smartphone with them. I assured them I wouldn't disclose their name and school in my work and reports. I transcribed the recorded data into text and generated some summaries. Then I created representative key idea words from the summarized sentences and grouped the key ideas. The information is analyzed by creating the appropriate theme.

Results

Life is problems

Domestic child workers experience various problems. They can be categorized into three sub-themes. They are physical problems, mental problems, and social problems.

A) Physical problems

The physical problem is related to physical harm and difficulties. Domestic child workers had a heavy workload at home. They work from early morning to late night in pitiful conditions (Upadhyaya, 2017). They did not get a rest and sleep during sickness. It creates physical health problems for them. One of the participants, Rajendra reported, *"I have to wake up before 5 a.m., clean the house, sweep, and prepare tea for big brother who goes to college in the morning. Even in the evening, it is 10 PM when I finish the kitchen work, and on guest arrival day It is 11 PM to finish kitchen work., Cleaning and collecting water should be done even when suffering from sickness"*.

"Domestic child workers who work more hours per day get more health problems. Most of them suffer from fever headaches and cold/cough" (Kafle, 2020). *(Bikram: I'm suffering from a chronic common cold due to sleeping in the cold passage. I didn't sleep soundly, It created headache problems for me in the daytime).* They are physically abused. Their human rights and child rights are violated by their parents and employers. They cannot get appropriate treatment and care in difficult conditions. They are treated as a family but behave like slaves. Having to lift heavy things (water jar, gas jar, bag of rice), not getting food on time, and not having the proper desire to sleep. Due to a lack of fulfilment of basic needs like food, shelter, clothes, they face many physical health problems like malnutrition, and headaches, and being underweight. They were physically abused by their employer which was against child writing.

B) Mental problems

Domestic child labour faces many mental (Health) problems. It is a product of the social, economic, and environmental surroundings of their living. They face a lot of discriminating behaviour at home. They feel alone, and depressed when they receive scolding from their employer, and other family members. (*Bikram: I sometimes get scolded for no reason. I am being accused of something I did not do. I feel pain at that time, I want to be alone. I get bored seeing myself.*) Due to heavy work, they feel stressed, tired, and weak. They cannot get support love & care. They are treated as machines. They didn't receive respect, motivation, or happiness. (*Rajendra: I was brought here to be taught by the best. They said that I have to work a little bit. I am working like a servant here. Not only me, but my family members also have to be scolded if there is a little mistake. I feel sad about it.*) They were unable to enjoy their childhood rights. They are mentally disturbed. They were suffering from mental torture. Sometimes they felt depressed. They live in a big family although they do not have a trustworthy family member to share their feelings. (*Rajendra: There are a lot of members in the family but I cannot share my feelings & joys with them. I share some of my feelings and pain with my one friend in school, who listens & encourages me*)

They are emotionally abused by their employer. always feel afraid that work will go wrong, thinking that something terrible will happen, forgetting what was said, and feeling weak. Depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders were common mental problems of domestic child workers. It affects the all-round development of their life.

C) Social problems

Domestic child workers were socially isolated. They are far from their family, relatives, and their place. They were detached from their family. (*Rajendra: Last time 5 years ago I went home. Dad sometimes talks on the phone. My family members have not come here yet similarly I haven't met any relatives here yet*). They were uneasy during the adjustment to a new place, people, and environment. They experience many social problems. Which is related to their social identity, and socialization process (*Bikram: I don't tell my friends that I am doing housework in other people's houses and studying. I don't like it. I think that if my friends find out about me, they will hate me.*). Most domestic child workers feel afraid of their employers. They cannot communicate them properly. They just follow their order. (*Rajendra: They scold me if I reply with the answer so I just follow the order*).

Most domestic workers cannot utilize their children's rights. They face a lot of discriminating behaviour at home. In “terms of basic needs their food, shelter, clothes, and health were found critical” (Baral,2020). (*Bikram: I experienced different discrimination on food, clothes, education, care & treatment*) Every child has the right to have parents with them but domestic child workers don't have do not have their parents with them. They mentally feel insecure and disturbed. They feel pain and stress in difficult situations. They feel bullied at home. Their human rights and child rights are violated socially.

Struggle for hope

People are optimistic in nature. They accept challenges for a better future. This theme is divided into Struggle and Hope.

A) Struggle

Domestic child worker life is easy. They face many difficulties and challenges related to their home chore and study. Due to a heavy workload at home, it is hard to manage time for study. Domestic child worker works from early morning to late at night. They cannot manage leisure time to study at home. 'Their working hour is higher than the study period' (Upadhyaya, 2017). They participate in studying 6 hours in school although they work more than 8 hours at home. (*Rajendra: I regularly work more than 8 hours from early morning to late night.*) They conduct their studies late at night and early morning before other members wake up. (*Bikram: I wake up at 4 o'clock and conduct my homework, I don't have homework time at night*). Some of them cannot take math and science coaching classes conducted by the school because they cannot manage time before and after school hours. (*Rajendra: School conducts math and science coaching classes for class 10 students. I cannot attend the class due to workload in the morning. After finishing all the morning kitchen work. I came to school. It's already 10 at home, so I'm not able to take the coaching classes.*). It is needed to pay an extra amount for catching which is unpleasant for employers. They don't have sufficient learning materials. They cannot get guidance and support for their learning. (*Bikram: I have sufficient books but do not have enough copies, or a calculator, instrument box, and question bank*). Domestic workers face many obstacles to continuing their education. They cannot manage proper learning time and space. They cannot get support and care from their employer and other family members. Most of them conduct their homework and learning practice during break time. (*Rajendra: I don't have any money. I don't eat any tiffin in tiffin time. I have no time for preparing tiffin. Similarly It is hard to manage time to do homework at home so I conduct homework in break time as much as possible, and the remaining homework is done early in the morning*).

They consult with friends and teachers when they feel a problem in learning. Their teacher inspired them to learn and support them. It creates hope and motivation for their study.

B) Hope

Hope is an optimistic state of mind which is based on an expectation of positive outcomes. It creates motivation towards their goals. Domestic child workers struggle for hope of a good future. They worked in domestic chores for good jobs after completion plus 2, Rajendra remembered his parent's voice. (*Rajendra: A good education can be done in Kathmandu. Like you, many children are working at home and studying there. The person in the house where you work is a major in the Nepal Army, and he also offers you a job in the army after completion of plus 2.*) Hope is not a passive emotion. It energized them in difficult situations. They remember the picture which they are going to be in the future. (*Bikram: I try to think positively, I'm here to fulfil my dreams, and I inspire myself*) They remember their family background and their parent's dream, which motivated them to study. (*Rajendra: I did this struggle for the betterment of my future so I must learn*). They have their own meaning in life. They think they cannot enjoy [PK5] their children's rights during childhood. They experienced sorrow, pain, and divorce with family for the betterment of life.

Discussion and conclusion

Compliance with the basic principle of human rights is mentioned in the preamble of Nepal's constitution. In the capital of the country where the democratic governance system is practised, it is inhuman to be exploited by domestic child workers. They face many challenges in achieving a school education. It is found that they faced many physical, mental, and social problems in fulfilment of their basic needs. Employer and their parents violated their children's rights. They are compelled to work more than eight hours without any direct economic benefits. (One of the participants said that there is a lot of work, and my time is spent in the kitchen from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. I personally and my family will not get anything financially. He only allowed me to study during the day. Even at night, my kitchen works till 10 o'clock). Domestic workers face many obstacles to continuing their education “Their working hours are higher than the study period” (Upadhyaya,2017) They cannot manage proper learning time and space. (One of the respondents said that they do not have a separate reading room, they read in the meeting room where other members watch TV and talk to each other) They do not get support and care from their employer and other family members. Because they are disconnected from their parents and are fully dependent on their employers. They are emotionally abused by their employer. Such children always feel afraid of making mistakes. Depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders were found to be common mental problems of domestic child workers. They also face a lot of discriminating behaviour at home. They feel alone and depressed when they are scolded by their employer. They do not get any rest and proper sleep during sickness. Due to a lack of fulfilment of basic needs like food, shelter, and clothes, they face many physical health problems like malnutrition and underweight. Most of them are found completing their homework and learning practice during break time because they do not get an appropriate learning environment at home. They just learn during school hours. They remember their aim which motivates them to learn. Their strong determination and hard work keep them active to continue their study even working as a domestic worker in fitful conditions.

Reference

- Abusaleh, K., Islam, M. R., Ali, M. M., Khan, M. A., Shahinuzzaman, M., & Haque, M. I. (2022). Prevalence of economic exploitations and their determinants among child labourers in Dhaka City, Bangladesh: a mixed-method study. *Child Indicators Research*, 1-20.
- Adhikari, K. P. (2017). *Factors Affecting in Learning Mathematic (A Case Study of Domestic Child Labour Students)* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Mathematics Education).
- Baral, C. R. (2020). Assessing the Condition of Domestic Child Workers Aftermath of Nepal Constitution of Nepal. (2078). Nepal Law Commission.
- Earthquake in Besisahar Municipality, Lamjung. *Patan Pragya*, 7(1), 10-21.
- Bhusal, K. (2016). *Situation of Domestic Child Labourer* (Doctoral dissertation, Central Department of Rural Development).

- SAHAYAATRA (सहयात्रा), Vol. 7(1), वर्ष ७ (१), May, 2024, ISSN: 2594-3154 (Print)
- Budhathoki, B. B. (2020). Struggle in formal education by domestic-worker students. *International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah*, 8(11), 145–152. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v8.i11.2020.2377>
- Economic survey of Nepal*. (2022, July). <https://www.mof.gov.np/>
- Tibbitts, F., & Fernekes, W. R. (2011). Human rights education. *Teaching and studying social issues: Major programs and approaches*, 87-117.
- Gajurel, D. (2008). Child rights in Nepal. Available at SSRN 1106619.
- Gotame, M., & Koirala, H. L. (2001). Domestic Working as Gendered Space: A Study of Selected Localities in Kathmandu. *The Geographical Journal of Nepal*
- Hammarberg, T. (1990). The UN convention on the rights of the child--and how to make it work. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 12(1), 97-105.
- Kaphle, M. (2014). Problems Faced by Domestic Child Workers in Katmandu Metropolitan City, Nepal, 2006. *Journal of Manmohan Memorial Institute of Health Sciences*. 1. 10.3126/jmmihs.v1i1.9899.
- Pokharel, S. (2018). Socio-Economic Status of Domestic Child Workers. *KMC Research Journal*, 2(2), 119-132
- Rai, G. (2022). Social background and current status of domestic child labour in Peripheral city
- Shrestha, K., Thame, C., & Aldis, W. Review of International and National Policy and Programs in Relation to Domestic Child Labor in Nepal. *Reducing inequities*, 183
- The Act Relating to Children-2075*.
- Upadhyay, P. (2019). Shattered dreams and stolen childhood: a study of child labour and child rights in restaurants and hotels of Pokhara, Nepal. *Janapriya Research and Consultancy Center (JRCC)*, 111
- Upadhyay, S. K. (2017). Socio-Economic Status and Its Impact on School Going Domestic Child Workers in Kathmandu District. *Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies*, 14(1-2), 124-128