

Child Labour and School Dropout in Sonitpur District of Assam: Exploration of Status, Determinants and Linkages

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Abstract

Children are the foundation of a nation's future, yet in developing countries, child labour and school dropouts hinder their potential to contribute meaningfully to society. This study examines the status and determinants of child labour and school dropouts in the Sonitpur district of Assam. A total of 100 children aged 5 - 14 years were selected using a multistage purposive sampling technique from two sub-divisions, Tezpur and Dhekiajuli. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires. Statistical tables were used for descriptive analysis, while logistic regression was applied to identify the key determinants of child labour and school dropouts. Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationship between the two phenomena. The findings indicate significant gender dispairities with male children

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being more affected in both child labour(25 out of 29 cases) and school dropouts(29 out of 34 cases). Child labour was found to be slightly more prevalent in urban areas, whereas school dropouts were higher in rural regions. The regression Analysis identified caste as the strongest predictor of child labour(odds ratio=17.8), while family size emerged as the most significant factor influencing school dropouts(odds ratio= 8.810). Additionally, a statistically significant positive correlation(r=0.577, p<.01) was observed between child labour and school dropout. The results underscore the urgent need for policy interventions addressing socio-economic factors such as family size, caste and parental education to mitigate both child labour and school dropout rates in the region.

Keywords: Childlobour, School Dropout, Logistic Regression, Socio-Economic Factors.

Introduction

Children represent the future of a nation, serving as the human capital upon which a country's development depends. However, in developing countries the practices of child labour undermines this potential by driving children of the opportunities to grow and contribute meaningfully to society. Child labor remains a critical issue worldwide with around 160 million children as it poses a serious challenge to children's wellbeing (ILO & UNICEF). ILO defines child labor as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work which is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children or interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. Child labour is widespread and bad for development of individual child, the society and economy in which she or he lives. Children usually participate in economic activities; children assist their parents at home, in farms in shops etc. All work is not bad for children. So, there is exist a difference between child work and child labour (Tripathi, 2010). Child labour remains a persistent problem in the world today. The latest global estimates indicate that some 160 million children were engaged in child labour at the beginning of 2020, accounting for nearly 1 in 10 children globally. School dropout and child labour are two interrelated social issues that have far-reaching consequences for individuals, families and communities worldwide Every year, a large number of students drop out of school worldwide. In 1993, 27 million children entered school in class 1 in India but only 10 million 37% of them reached class 10 in 2003. Dropouts' rates peak in the transition between class1 and 2 and again in class 8, 9 and 10. Dropout rates remained negative between classes 4 and 5 (Kishore et.al, 2012). Child labour and school dropouts are two interlinked social issues that have plagued developing nations for decades, with far-reaching consequences for both individual children and the broader societal fabric. The prevalence of child labour where children are engaged in economic activities instead of attending school is often a symptom of deeper systematic problem such as poverty, inadequate education systems and lack of protective policies. This study will explore the current status of childlabour and school dropouts in Sonitpur District, highlighting the key factors driving these phenomena. Poverty is widely recognized as a primary driver of child labour as families in dire economic circumstances may rely on the income generated by their children to make ends meet(Satz,2003). This creates a vicious cycle where children are unable to access education, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and limiting their future prospects (Satz, 2003).

The problem of child labour is particularly pervasive in Assam, a state primarily driven by an agrarian economy. A significant portion of Assam's child labour population is engaged in agricultural activities, assisting parents in the fields and farms, while children in urban areas often work without parental supervision and face higjer risks of exploitation. Child labourers in Assam are predominantly employed in sectors such as agriculture, construction, tea plantations, jewelry making, quarries, brick kilns, cottage industries and domestic work. The brick kiln industry, in particular, has been identified as a major employer of children aged between 8 to 12 years paying them minimal wages. Assam which grapples with poverty, reported 99,512 child laborers in 2011, accounting for 3.2 % of its total population. The number of child laborers in Assam has fluctuated across decades from 239,349 in 1971 to 351,416 in 1991 and from

351,406 in 2001 to 347,353 in 2011. The state's educational system is also characterized by a notably high dropout rate, which surpasses the national average of 1.5%, while at the upper primary level; it is 8.8% as opposed to 3 % nationally. The secondary level dropout rate in Assam is a striking 20.3 %, significantly higher than the national average of 12.6 %. Moreover, boys in Assam exhibit higher dropout rates than girls at both the lower and upper primary levels with 10.1 % boys dropping out at the upper primary stage compared to 7.6 % of girls. At the secondary level, however, the dropout rate is marginally higher for girls (20.7%) than for boys (19.8%). Thus the interplay of poverty, child labour and educational challenges continues to undermine the state's social and economic development.

Objectives of the Study

after careful consideration and reviewing the available literature following objectives has been adopted 1. To examine the status of child labour and school dropouts within Sonitpur District. 2. To identify the determinants of child labour in Sonitpur District. 3. To identify the correlation between child labour and school dropouts within Sonitpur District.

Methodology

This is a case study focused on the status and determinants and linkages of school dropout and child labour in Sonitpur district of Assam. Sonitpur is the second largest districts in Assam after Karbi Anglong district in terms of area. According to 2011 census population of Sonitpur district is 1,924,110 out of which urban population is 1,73,845 while rural population is 17,50,2665. The district has a population density of 365 inhabitants per square kilometer. Sonitpur has sex ratio of 946 female for every 1000 males and a literacy rate is 69.96 %. Sample size: 100 samples have been collected for the study purposively. Which is a minimum sample size needed for a meaningful result. Sampling design: The present study is basically a primary data based study. Multistage purposive sampling technique has been adopted to collect the sample. The present study seeks to examine the determinants of child labour and school dropouts among area of Sonitpur district of Assam. The units of the study are children of 5-14 years of age group who are the engaging in earning or economic activity of early young age potentialities for paid or unpaid works. Sonitpur district has seven Sub-division in the district such as Biswanath, Chariduar, Dhekiajuli, Gohpur, Helem, Na Duar, Tezpur. The primary data for the present study had been collected from two sub-divisions namely Tezpur and Dhekiajuli. A total of 50 respondents from each sub-division have been interrogated making 100 samples for the study. To fulfill the objectives of the study data were collected through a multi-stage sampling method from those selected subdivisions with the help of a structured questionnaire.

Data analysis technique: Statistical tables has been applied to convey the result of the first objective and to fulfill the second objective Logistic Regression is applied as the primary analytical method due to the binary nature of the dependent variables — child labor (1 = child labor present, 0 = otherwise) and school dropouts (1 = dropout present, 0 = otherwise). The regression model is based on the logit function, which predicts the probability of child labor or school dropouts based on the set of explanatory variables. To fulfill the third objective pearson's correlation coefficient technique has been applied.

Results and discussions:

To derive meaningful insights from the collected data which is typically contained in schedules and questionnaires, it is essential to analyze and present it in a structured manner. In this section statistical tables were used for summarizing and simplifying data for better interpretation.

	Distribution in Gender	Rural	Urban	Total
No of school	Male	19	10	29
utop-outs	Female	1	4	5
No of child labour	Male	14	11	25
	Female	0	4	4

Table 1: Profile of drop-outs and child labour in the study area

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows both school dropouts and child labour in Sonitpur district, Assam across rural and urban areas. The

combined data reveal a total of 34 dropout children(29 males, 5 females) and 29 child laborers(25 males, 4 females). The findings highlight a significant gender gap, with males being more affected in both cases. Additionally, child labour is slightly higher in urban areas, whereas dropouts are more prevalent in rural areas.

Class Interval	Male	Female	Total
0-5>	0	1	1
5-10>	21	15	36
10 – 15>	6	20	26
15+>	2	1	3

 Table 2: Number of Education Years of the Dropouts Children in the Household.

Source: Field Survey.

From the above table -2 indicate the number of education years of the dropout's children in the household from field survey in Sonitpur District of Assam. Out of 66 dropout's children 29 males and 36 females have taken. Where it is found in survey most of the male dropouts dominate the 5 - 10 years range (21 out of 36), while female dropouts dominate the 10 - 15 years range(20 out of 26), suggesting possible gender-based differences in educational challenges or opportunities. Only 3 children (2 male, 1 female) have completed more than 15 years of education, indicating a very low number of dropouts among higher-educated children.

Logistic regression equation on child labour (Model-1)

Model-1 is constructed with Child Labour as dependent variable where Child Labour is a dichotomous variable quantified as is there is Child Labour in the household 1 and 0 other wise. A logistic regression equation is constructed (model-1) to find out the determinants of Child Labour. The set of explanatory variables used is as follows: Child Labour as Dependent, size of the family, type of the family, Dummy, if nuclear1;0 joint family, place of the residence, dummy if rural 1;0 urban, caste dummy if general1:0 others, wealth of the family, household asset if yes 1: 0 otherwise, education of the father in years, education of the mother in years, source of income dummy if govt 1: 0 otherwise, monthly income of the family, number of school going children in the household Child Labour and School Dropout in Sonitpur District of Assam...

The descriptive statistics of the variables included in Model-1 are given in table

As shown in Table 3, the mean wealth of the families is Rs 1497000, mean education of the father is 8.58 years and mean education of the mother is 6. 47 years. SD of wealth is recorded as Rs. 2019745.709, SD of Education of the father is 5.225 years and SD of Education of the mother is 5.118 years. The result of the logistic regression equation (Model-1) is given in table 4.

Binary logistic regression was performed to assess the impact of several factors on the Child Labour. The model contained twelve independent variables (Size of the family, Caste, Education of the mother, monthly income of the family, type of the family, religion, place of residence, wealth of the family, education of the father, Source of income of the family, Number of School going children and household assets). The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant, χ^2 (5, N=100) =80.22,p<.001, indicating that the model was able to distinguish between respondents who reported and did not reported Child labour. The model as a whole explained between 55.2% (Cox and Snell R square) and 78.8% (Nagelkerke R square) of the variance in Child labour and correctly classified 71% of cases. As shown in Table 5.18 only three of the independent variables made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model (Size of the family, Caste and Education of the mother). The strongest predictor of Child labour was Caste recording an odds ratio of 17.8. This indicated that General Category people were over about 17.8 times more likely report Child Labour than Other Castes.

Households, controlling for all other factors in the model. The odd ratio of 1.998 for size of the family indicates that the large families were 1.998 times more likely to report child labour than small families. Odd ratio .594 for education of mother indicates that the educated motherswere .594 times less likely to report child labour.

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Table 3:

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation				
child labour	100	.29	.456				
type of the family	100	.79	.409				
Religion	100	.32	.469				
place of the residence	100	.53	.502				
Caste	100	.70	.461				
wealth of the family	100	1497000.00	2019745.709				
education of the father	100	8.58	5.225				
education of the mother	100	6.47	5.118				
source of income of the family	100	.21	.409				
no of school going children in the household	100	1.18	.821				
size of the family	100	4.66	1.707				
monthly income of the family	100	42086.00	40660.946				
household assets	100	1.06	.600				
Valid N (listwise)	100						

Table 4 :

Variables in the Equation									
								95% EXP(B)	C.I.for
		В	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B) Lower	Upper	
Step 1a	Size of the family	.692	.341	4.118	1	.042	1.998	1.024	3.900
	Type of the family (1)	.588	1.550	.144	1	.704	1.801	.086	37.589
	Religion (1)	-1.040	1.442	.520	1	.471	.354	.021	5.965
	Place of the	1.496	1.046	2.048	1	.152	4.465	.575	34.667

residence (1)								
Caste	2.879	1.427	4.071	1	.044	17.804	1.086	291.873
Wealth of the family	.000	.000	.036	1	.849	1.000	1.000	1.000
Household assets (1)	-19.771	40192.946	.000	1	1.000	.000	.000	
Education of the father	.238	.200	1.406	1	.236	1.268	.856	1.878
Education of the mother	521	.228	5.220	1	.022	.594	.380	.929
Source of income of the family (1)	19.653	7296.433	.000	1	.998	34286753 7.479	.000	
M o n t h l y income of the family	.000	.000	2.278	1	.131	1.000	1.000	1.000
No of s c h o o l going children in the household	655	.618	1.124	1	.289	.519	.155	1.744
Constant	-3.550	40849.857	.000	1	1.000	.029		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: size of the family, type of the family, religion, place of the residence, caste, wealth of the family, household assets, education of the father, education of the mother, source of income of the family, monthly income of the family, no of school going children in the household.

Logistic regression equation on School dropouts (Model-2)

Model-2 is constructed with School Dropouts as dependent variable where School Dropouts is a dichotomous variable

quantified as is there is School Dropouts in the household 1 and 0other wise. A logistic regression equation is constructed (model-2) to find out the determinants of School Dropouts. The set of explanatory variables used is as follows: School drop outs Dependent, size of the family, type of the family, Dummy, if nuclear1;0 joint family, place of the residence, dummy if rural 1;0 urban, caste dummy if general1:0 others, wealth of thefamily, household asset if yes 1: 0 otherwise, father's education in years, mother's education in years, source of income dummy if govt 1: 0 otherwise, household's monthly income, number of school going children in the household. The descriptive statistics of the variables included in Model-2 are given in table 5.

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation				
Dropouts	100	.35	.479				
type of the family	100	.79	.409				
Religion	100	.32	.469				
place of the residence	100	.53	.502				
Caste	100	.70	.461				
wealth of the family	100	1497000.00	2019745.709				
education of the father	100	8.58	5.225				
educationof the mother	100	6.47	5.118				
sourceof income of the family	100	.21	.409				
no of school children in the household	100	1.18	.821				
size of family	100	4.66	1.707				
-		-	6				
Family's monthly income	100	42086.00	40660 946				

Table 5:

Family's monthly income	100	42086.00	40660.946
household assets	100	1.06	.600
Valid N (listwise)	100		

As shown in Table 5 the mean wealth of families is Rs 1497000, mean father's income is 8.58 years and mean mother's income is 6. 47 years. SD of wealth is recorded as Rs. 2019745.709, SD Education of the father is 5.225 years and SD of Education of the mother is 5.118 years. The result of the logistic regression equation (Model-2) is given in table 6.

Binary logistic regression was performed to analyze the impact of several factors on the School Dropouts. The model contained eleven predictor variables (Size of the family, Caste, Education of the mother, monthly income of the family, type of the family, religion, place of residence, wealth of the family, education of the father, Source of income of the family, Number of School going children). The model containing predictors was statistically significant, χ^2 (5, N=100) =101.58, p \otimes .001, indicating that the model distinguish between respondents who reported and did not reported School Dropouts. The model as a whole explained between 63.8% (Cox and Snell R square) and 87.9% (Nagelkerke R square) of the variance in School Dropouts and correctly classified 65% of cases. As shown in Table 5.20 only four of the independent variables made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model (Size of the family, Caste, Education of the mother, monthly income of the family). The strongest predictor of School Dropouts was size of the family estimating an odds ratio of 8.810. This indicated that families with larger size were over about 8 times more likely report school dropouts than smaller families, controlling for all other factors in the model. The odd ratio .025 for caste indicates that the general caste were .025 times less likely to report Child labour than other castes.

Table-6

Variables in the Equation									
								95% EXP(B)	C.I.for
		В	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B) Lower	Upper	
Step 1a	Size of the family	2.176	.774	7.895	1	.005	8.810	1.931	40.190
	Type of the family (1)	-1.150	2.068	.309	1	.578	.317	.005	18.240

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Religion (1)	.077	2.286	.001	1	.973	1.080	.012	95.435
Place of the residence (1)	2.350	1.649	2.032	1	.154	10.489	.414	265.596
Caste (1)	-3.687	1.830	4.059	1	.044	.025	.001	.905
Wealth of the family	.000	.000	1.965	1	.161	1.000	1.000	1.000
Education of the father	.493	.365	1.820	1	.177	1.637	.800	3.348
Education of the mother	932	.467	3.992	1	.046	.394	.158	.982
Source of income of the family (1)	.015	2.177	.000	1	.995	1.015	.014	72.417
Monthly income of the family	.000	.000	5.235	1	.022	1.000	1.000	1.000
No of school going children in the household	.839	.822	1.044	1	.307	2.315	.463	11.582
Constant	-6.762	3.982	2.883	1	.090	.001		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: size of the family, type of the family, religion, place of the residence, caste, wealth of the family, education of the father, education of the mother, source of income of the family, monthly income of the family, no of school going children in the household.

From this study it is seen that the total number of school dropout children in the study area is 34 out of 100 families in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of school dropout children in rural area 20 out of 100 families (19 male and 1 female)in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of school dropout children in urban area 14 out of 100 families (10 male and 5 female) in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of school dropout children religion wise in the study area is 34 out of 100 families in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of school dropout children in Muslim religion 27 out of 100 families (25 male and 2 female) in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of school dropout children in Hindu religion 7 out of 100 families (4 male and 3 female) in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of child labour in th study area is 29 out of 100 families in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of child labour in rural area 14 out of 100 families (14 male and 0 female) in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of child labour in urban area 15 out of 100 families (11 male and 4 female) in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of child labour religion wisein the study area is 29 out of 100 families Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of child labour in Muslim religion wise is 24 out of 100 families (23 male and 1 female) in Sonitpur District of Assam. Total number of child labour in Hindu religion wise is 5 out of 100 families (2male and 3 female) in Sonitpur District of Assam.

Model-1- Three of the independent variables made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model (**Size of the family, Caste and Education of the mother**). The strongest predictor of Child labour was **Caste** recording an odds ratio of 17.8. This indicated that General Category people were over about 17.8 times more likely report Child Labour than Other Castes.

Model-2-Four of the independent variables made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model (Size of the family, Caste, Education of the mother, monthly income of the family). The strongest predictor of School Dropouts was size of the family recording an odds ratio of 8.810. This indicated that families with larger size were over about 8 times more likely report school dropouts than smaller families, controlling for all other factors in the model

The correlation between school dropout and child labour

School dropout and child labour are two interrelated social issues that have far-reaching consequences for individuals, families and communities worldwide. Understanding the dynamics between threes two phenomena is crucial especially in the context of least developed countries where both challenges often converge. Povertyy is a primary driver of both school dropout and child labour(Sasmal & Guillen,2015). Children from low-income households maybe forced to leave school and contribute to their family's income, either through wage-earning employment or through unpaid labour can perpetuate itself, creating a " child labour trap " that is difficult to break. The econometric analysis conducted in the Indian context demonstrates a significant correlation between poverty, illiteracy and child labour(Sasmal & Guillen,2015). Children living in poverty are more likely to drop

out of school and enter the workforce, either in formal and informal sectors. This relationship is further exacerbated by factors such as gender and caste discrimination, which can disproportionately affect certain groups of children (Marandhar & Sthapit,2012). The impact of child labour on school dropout is particularly acute in least developed countries. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between school dropout and child labour among a sample of households. To this end, 100 samples were collected and the pearson correlation coefficient between the two variables was calculated shown in the following table

Correlations							
		Dropout	Childlabour				
Dropout	Pearson Correlation	1	.577**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000				
	Ν	100	100				
Childlabour	Pearson Correlation	.577**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	Ν	100	100				
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							

The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation (r = .577, P < .01, two tailed) between school dropout and child labour. Specifically, a pearson correlation coefficient of 0.577 was found, which was significant at 1 % two tailed level. This finding suggests that as the prevalence of child labour increases the likelihood of school dropout. Furthermore, the present findings underscore the importance of addressing the underlying factors that contribute to both child labour and school dropout.

Conclusion

Many poor parents bear children in order to enhance family income. Poverty and inadequate income forces parents to put their children in the labour force. Lack of parental motivation, high opportunity cost of schooling, broken families, orphanages, marital conflicts in a family, non- availability of school education in their respective native places, fear of the teacher and poor performance in school and also failing in a subject like Mathematics at primary level and Englishlanguage at middle school level also contribute to aggravation of the problems of child labour.Non-schooling of children or dropouts children has intimately connected with exploitation of child labour which is the consequence of social inequality, attitude of the privileged classes and lack of public involvement in the protection of basic entitlement.Employment of children is a social evil. They are our little buds who will blossom for making the future of our country. So it is our duty to see that they develop healthily both in body and mind. It is true that the government is taking necessary steps to rehabilitate them but lack of proper information and accessibility has made this evil still persist in our society.

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