

Research Article

Role of Mass Media to Prevent Child Labour

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A B S T R A C T

Child Labour is a social evil that has been persisting in the Indian the social order for a very long time. Children under the age of 14 are employed to work under hazardous conditions in various industries and businesses. Firstly, this research paper deals with the involvement and role of the Mass Media on abolishing child labour across India. Secondly, it is to see whether the role of the Mass Media has reached the people of small cities like Vellore in India. Finally, to see how the Government and various NGO's use Mass Media to reach as many as they can, regarding this social evil in India.

Keywords: Child Labour, Social Evil, Mass Media, Abolishing

Introduction

The Media has been constantly used as an efficient means of spreading awareness amongst the masses. The Media has the power to reach almost everyone. Child labour has been a widely discussed topic because of the hazards it carries and the question arises as to why there is a definite need to abolish it. Most of the government and private organizations use the media to spread awareness as it can be broadcasted in people's native languages so as to make them understand better. There are dozens of languages in which newspapers are printed, many communities broadcast radio shows, and many news channels air information which is specific to a language. A lot of movies have been used to create awareness by using the method of role play so that people can empathize with the children working under such conditions. All efforts that have been undertaken to spread awareness about the problem using the media have been analyzed and have been studied. The success of their implementation was gauged by interviewing various children who have been rescued or have been enslaved in this manner in the small city of Vellore, India has been analyzed too. We have seen that almost 95% of child labour has been abolished and many children have been rescued

and have been shown the way to proper education.

Literature Review

The role of the media in the elimination of child labour is one of the most significant components of the process of total human development. The Media should highlight the defaulting firms or business houses that surreptitiously employ children and violate the laws relating to child labour in the society. Labour wages for children remains low even though the work involves drudgery and is hazardous in nature. Working forecloses the option of school education for most children.¹ From the perspective of various social problems prevailing in our country, Mass Media has a significant role to play in mobilizing the people against exploiting children and forcing them into labour. The problem of child labour in India, its different types and abolishment pathways as the focus of communication through the print and news media and how this topic has been addressed is of importance to this research. This has also been represented in various movies that were aimed at spreading awareness about child labour. One of the first movies to deal with child labour was "Boot Polish" that shows how two kids, after the death of their mother, are forced into begging by their aunt. Later, with the help of a bootlegger, they buy a shoe polish kit and begin to shine

shoes, thus working instead of begging for a living.²

The Cinema played a major role in the reduction of child labour in non-domestic-non-monetary work as it is mostly found in subsistence economies. Several shows were aired in order to spread awareness among the people. For example, in the local media programmers like Machachari, a show that is aired by the Citizen Television and the brick making by children in Columbia as reported by Salazar are two examples.³ There are many reasons as to why the issue of child labour should be adequately addressed, especially by the Media and the Government at large. In more ways than one, child labour affects children adversely. They are rushed into adulthood, and begin early marriages. Katheleen et al. 2008, postulated that children who have become part of the economic industry are more likely to marry when young.⁴

Methodology

The researcher collected various excerpts published in newspapers, movies, radio shows and television programs on news channels regarding the issue of child labour. He visited different types of construction sites, restaurants and shops etc. where children are working as child labourers and interviewed them on their working conditions. The researcher also interviewed the workers, asking them about the conditions of child labourers. Finally, he compared how much effect the awareness that was created by the use various mass media technologies had and have been implemented in the small city of Vellore, India.

Role of Mass Media In Child Labour

Newspapers

Newspapers have been a method of spreading awareness about various social evils and problems faced by the society. Child labour has been a frequently seen headline. Newspapers tend to highlight the prevalence of child labour in particular areas of cities so that various government

organizations and private NGOs can take steps in the abolishment of the same.

The Figure-1 depicts an article published in the Hindustan Times on July 3, 2004 to highlight the issue of rising child labour in the two cities of Pakistan. Similarly, in Figure-2, the article published in TIMES CITY on June 12, 2002 was used to create awareness amongst the people about the need of volunteers in a private NGO which is helping to abolish



Figure 2. Create awareness amongst the people

child labour.⁵ Likewise, there were several newspaper articles that play a major role in creating awareness about child labour.

Cinemas

Movies help people understand and empathise with the character or the role. They feel that they are actually there with the person. That is how it has been used to create awareness using the method of role play about child labour. Various movies have been released in India and abroad highlighting the daily life of a child working in inhumane environmental and industrial conditions. People tend to feel that they are there hence; they get to know more about the lives of the children in an enhanced way rather than just by reading about it.

The movie "Slumdog Millionaire" which was an Oscar winning movie gained worldwide popularity because of its rags to riches story that revolves around the life of an orphaned slum dweller who wins a famous competition by using the knowledge he gained from various life experiences. It shows that everyone has the capability to do something big, they just need an opportunity. It is also an insight into the begging and the child trafficking industries of India.

The 2010 documentary film on "The Dark Side of Chocolate" about the exploitation of African Children harvesting chocolate for factories highlights the fact that



Figure 1. Issue of rising child labour

the exploitation is still occurring nearly ten years after the cocoa industry vowed to end it. It aims at triggering the government and making sure that they know that they need to implement certain plans and programmes to help the children who are in dire need of being rescued from the horror of such a life. The main problem with a country like



Figure 3. Slum dog Millionaire movie poster



Figure 4. African Documentary film

Africa is the poor literacy rate. If the children continue to work under such circumstances it will not help the country develop at all. Likewise, there were several movies that played a major role in creating awareness about child labour.

Radio

Radio boxes are a common sight in villages and small towns around the country. Many people don't have a television set which is much costlier to install. Many radio shows and discussions have been broadcasted signifying the need to

abolish child labor. Many NGOs have been called upon to conduct shows on how to help those needy children. Most shows are in the native language of the people making it easier to understand the problems and also to find solutions for them.

All India Radio: A Specific Audience Program that was aired in 2013 by All India radio aimed at spreading awareness in India about social issues like child labour. It targeted a specific audience of private NGOs about the plans they could implement especially in areas where it was most persistent, and to help abolish it completely.

A BBC Program on 26 September, 2010⁶: What is wrong with child labour? Fran Abrams explains the subject of children at work place in the UK. She hints at the history of child labour, and the modern-day notions of the 'priceless child' who ought to be absorbed in education and safeguarded from the strict economic reality of society. In protecting our children, she asks, are we causing them harm? And might the youth of Britain benefit from a revival of child labour?

Television

There are innumerable news channels in hundreds of languages in India. People prefer to watch news over any other means because they don't have to go away from home as in the case of cinemas. Also, it is a video depiction and a verbal communication and thus, easier to understand and is better conceived. News Channel anchors basically go to the place where child labour is most prevalent highlighting the reasons for the same by broadcasting the live status of these children. This directs the interactions with the consciousness of the people about this important issue. Many TV entertainment shows like "Uttaran" focus majorly on the issues of child labour and the mistreatment meted out to them by their employers.



Figure 5. News was broadcasted on NDTV

Figure-5 shows that the news was broadcast on NDTV channel on September 22, 2018 which showed how much the country has moved forward in abolishing child labour and must continue to do so.⁷ Likewise, there were several

news channels and serials that played a major role in creating awareness about child labour.

Child Labour In Vellore: A Case Study

Vellore is the first child labour free- district in the state. Here, child labour refers to labour in hazardous occupations. The reason that this city has achieved this feat is because of the rigid laws and awareness that was created among various employers and parents regarding child labour. The main reason would be the introduction of a society which completely focuses on mitigating child labour in hazardous occupations.⁸

Some of the Interview Excerpts from Vellore

Interview of Mr. Rohit, working at Intex, Vellore:

Question: Can you express your views about the child labour condition in Tamil Nadu?

Mr. Rohit: Child labour in Tamil Nadu is because of only one reason and that is the poverty of the families. It is not that the children undertake the work out of their own interest. Their dismal conditions force them to do so.

Question: What do you think is the main cause for their poverty?

Mr. Rohit: Lack of proper education in backward areas and low job opportunities.

Question: Do you think the government is taking enough measures for the problem of child labour?

Mr. Rohit: On the part of the government, they are doing their best and they are focusing on children working in different places. The Government should focus on the conditions of their families and should try to solve the problems of their families because of which the children are forced to work. Moreover many children are orphans so the government should try to educate these orphan children and make their future bright.

Question: Can you give any suggestions for this problem?

Mr. Rohit: The main solution should be the focus on how the awareness needs to be created. Children working in different hotels restaurants etc. should be given awareness of the importance of education. Not only the children but their families also should also be given awareness for the bright future of their children.

Unfortunately, not everyone can be saved by the NGO's or the various schemes the government has implemented. There are some who still are trapped under the vicious circle of child labour because they don't know that there is a law to protect them.

Interview of Mr. Singh, working at Punjabi Dhabha, Vellore:

Question: Do you have any child workers at your hotel and why?

Mr. Singh: If we have child workers at our place, the police can shut down our hotel. We read an article in the newspaper about the penalties that can be imposed on us if we continued having children work with us. Not only have we stopped child labour in our place, we have even provided education to the children working with us earlier.

Findings and Result

Each of the mass media technologies plays their parts in spreading awareness about child labour in a very effective way. Newspapers highlighted the areas in the country where child labour is most prominent and helped the NGOs with that information. They also published various articles for the NGOs to call out for volunteers. Cinemas have used the method of role play efficiently to make people empathize with the children. News channels on televisions broadcast various debates and discussions on the issue of child labour as well as showing the live feeds of children working under hazardous conditions. Radio sets being cheap, were used to generate awareness among the people living in villages and small towns by various NGOs conducting radio shows in their native languages.

Parents are now more reluctant to send their children to work as labourers because of the awareness of how much more they can earn if the children are educated and how they can help the family towards further development. Employers are wary after coming to know the penalties they might face if caught. Children have been made aware of the need to follow their dreams and to learn and to enjoy their childhood which can never come back.

Suggestions

In order to eradicate child labour completely we need to stand up against it. It is the need of the hour to support the organizations that are standing up against this phenomenon. As individual citizens, we need to make our fellow citizens aware about the impact of this problem on the nation and its development and it is here that we can use Mass Media as the means to make everyone aware; the parents, employers and even the children. We need to make sure that the various programs implemented by the government organizations reach the parents and the children.

Conclusion

The Media has the power to reach the masses and even change the perception of the people. Hence, instead of false publications, the media should be used as a means of effective awareness creating a medium to completely abolish the problem of child labour in a country like India. The impact of the media can be seen in the city of Vellore where there has been an exponential decline of child labour after the awareness that was generated amongst the parents, children and the employers by various means

It is also a fact that media coverage brings to the forefront the actual picture of what is to the children who are forced to work. It helps to unravel the true face of the business and industrial sectors. It also helps to bring to the spotlight the war going on between the government and the businessmen and industrialists to remove the same.

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