

Socio-Economic Analysis of Child Labor in the Carpet Industry of Kashmir – A Micro Study

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Abstract

In the present paper an attempt has been made to study socio – economic characteristics of working children in the Carpet Industry of Kashmir. It includes their social profile, age, education, nature of employment, family type, economic status, child's contribution to family income etc. Based on the primary data the study reveals most of the child labors were in the age group of 11 -14 years and among them female child labor outnumber male child labor. Economic compulsion and educational backwardness of parents were the main reasons forcing children to leave the school and join labor market at different point of time. Our analysis shows that there is negative correlation between percentage contribution of child labor to family income and total household income. In other words as family income increases, the proportion of child's contribution to family income decreases and vice-versa.

Keywords: Child labour, sex, education, employment, family, dropout, carpet industry.

1. Introduction

The violation of human rights both in India and elsewhere is condemned. But at the same time, child labor is practiced all over the world that it has come to be known as a necessary evil in some places. The issue of child labor should rank top on the global agenda, but, in practice, it is folded by a wall of silence and perpetuated due to several reasons. Child labor continues to be an affront to the conscience of the world community. Therefore it is our duty to bring this evil practice to an end in view of ensuring an ideal society in future. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of working children in the carpet industry of Kashmir with special reference to block Qoimoh.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are mentioned below:

- To study the socio-economic characteristics of working children.
- To study family background of working children engaged in the carpet weaving.
- To analyze the main factors responsible for dropout.
- To analyze the level of earnings of child labor and its impact on household income.

1.2 Methodology

In the present study, multistage sampling has been used. In the first stage Qoimoh block was selected because of concentration of more carpet weaving units, employment of large number of children in the carpet weaving industry and easy accessibility. In the second stage it was decided to take the sample of 100 households from five villages (20% from each) which have higher concentration of child labor and where there is evidence of large scale carpet weaving at the village level. Hence with the help of key persons (village elders) a sample of five villages via Brazloo, Bachroo, Hum-Shale- Bug, Tangan and Badroo were selected in the present study. In the third stage a list of carpet weaving units/households from selected

villages was prepared with the help of village leaders and others having knowledge about carpet weaving units in the village. Only those households were interviewed where there was at least one child in the age group of 6-14 years employed in the carpet weaving. Thus a sample of 162 child laborers was taken for the present study. As per objectives of the study parents and employers were interviewed. Personal interviews and observation methods were resorted to in order to collect relevant data. Interviews of child laborers and employers were conducted with the pre-tested questionnaires and schedules. Personal observation schedule was also found up by the researcher at the work place of child labor. The data thus collected was analyzed and has been presented in tabular form.

2. Discussion and analysis

2.1 Sex and Age

It is a well established fact that age plays a dominant role in shaping personality and values of responsibility to work and to participate in the different walk of life. It was in the above mentioned context that the sex and age group of child was given an important position in the present study. Distribution of the child laborers according to their sex and age group is presented in the table 1

Table 1: Distribution of the Child Laborers according to age and sex.

Age (Years)	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
6	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0
8	1	1	2	1.23
9	0	2	2	1.23
10	1	3	4	2.47
11	7	13	20	12.35
12	13	17	30	18.52
13	19	29	48	29.63
14	23	33	56	34.57
Total	64 (39.50)	98 (60.50)	162	100.00

Note: figures in brackets indicate percentage, Source: field survey.

It is obvious from table 1 that 34.57 percent child laborers were 14 years old, 29.63 percent, 18.52 percent, and 12.35 percent, were 13, 12, and 11 years old respectively. The data confirm the impression that people usually send their children for work among 11 years or so. The children working in the age group of 11-14 years were 95.7 percent. The table further shows that female child laborers outnumber male child laborers in the carpet weaving sector of the study area. As 60.50 percent child laborers are female and the rest 39.50 percent are male. The societal preference for male children results in girls being valued less, fed less, educated less but worked harder and are more disciplined and deprived of every opportunity to broaden their personal, social and intellectual horizons.

In most economically disadvantaged families, greater the poverty, the more aggravated is the situation of the female child. In certain families, the rules of permission and restriction on women and female children are much more stringent which allows for greater exploitation and discrimination. Higher proportion of female children in the sampled villages can be attributed to socio-economic factors as majority of the households put a ceiling into female children's aspirations. The notion of temporary membership in the parental home results in the perception of the female child as a burden to be passed on to another family where she remains an outsider, a household drudge, a reproductive machine and unpaid worker throughout in life. Further girls' economic participation goes unnoticed as they are employed in either family labor or domestic worker in unorganized sector like carpet units.

2.2 Education

Education is of utmost importance for the proper growth and development of the individual. It plays an important role in one's life in the sense that it helps in shaping the right kind of life style in the human beings. The educational

standard of children in the sampled villages is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Educational attainment of child labors

S. No.	Education	SEX		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Illiterate	27	42	69 (42.59)
2	Up to 5 th	25	32	57 (35.18)
3	Up to 8 th	12	24	36(22.23)
	Total	64	98	162(100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

Source: field survey.

The table 2 shows that a little more than 2/5th (42.59 percent) of the child laborers have never gone to school and 35.18 percent have studied up to 5th standard , while the rest 22.23 percent have studied up to 8th standard . Thus more than 3/4th (77.77 percent) child laborers are either totally illiterate or have not completed even primary education.

2.3 Factors Responsible For Drop Out

Those child labors who have attended the school, but discontinued at different point of time, mentioned variety of reasons The reasons for discontinuance of the studies and those for not attending the school have some commonality between them. However the reasons of discontinuance are more comprehensive in nature than those for not attending the school. These reasons are grouped into five broad categories that are briefly defined as under:

2.3.1 Parental and Natural Reasons

It includes death and chronic illness of parents, bad behavior of step father /mother, aged parents ,illness of the child, bad neighborhood, friends work so 'I work' and child wanting to become skilled craftsmen in the face of limited or not economic opportunities.

2.3.2 Poverty and Economic Hardship

It includes repeated failure of agriculture, loss in business, no funds with parents to support studies, large size of family, need to supplement income of the family, and prevalence of unemployment among educated youth.

2.3.3 Social and Customary Reasons

It includes age- old practice of not sending girls to school after a particular age, learning traditional practices of the family. Parent's apathy towards education, child required to look after young siblings and pressure of household chores etc.

2.3.4 Educational Backwardness

It includes repeated failure in a class, lack of basic facilities in schools, fear of teachers, frequent absence of teachers and hostile political environment.

2.3.5 More Than Two Reasons

More than two reasons given by children are grouped in above categories e.g. Personal, natural and economic reasons, social, customary reasons, personal natural, social customary and economic, personal natural economic and educational backwardness etc.

The sex wise information regarding discontinuing the studies is tabulated in table 3. Of the total child labors under study, nearly 1/4th (26.54 percent) have given two or more reasons for non enrollment or discontinuing their studies at different point of time. Poverty and bad economic conditions of the family (grouped together) figure as on of the most important single cause for dropping out of school, the ratio for boys and girls being 2:1 as shown in table 3. Scholastic backwardness of the child is another important single reason responsible for discontinuance of studies, as 8.02 percent of both sexes left studies because of this reason whereas 8.16 percent of the girls left studies due to social and cultural factors.

Table 3: Child Labors Indicating Reasons of Discontinuing Studies by Sex

Sex	NE	PN	EH	SC	EB	PNEESC	Total
Boys	27(42.18)	3(4.68)	12(18.75)	1(1.56)	5(7.81)	16(25.0)	64(100)
Girls	42(42.95)	4(4.08)	9(9.18)	8(8.16)	8(8.16)	27(27.55)	98(100)
Total	69(42.59)	7(4.32)	21(12.96)	9(5.56)	13(8.02)	43(26.54)	162(100)

Note: 1. Figures in brackets indicates percentage. 2. NE - Non Enrollment, PN - Personal & Natural, EH-Economic Hardship's, SH- Social & Customary, EB – Educational Backwardness.

From the above analysis it can be safely concluded that reasons for drop out as mentionable by children showed that economic compulsion and educational backwardness are the two most important factors forcing children to leave the school at different points of time. Social and customary factors are other important factors especially for girls to withdraw from the studies. In other words, there is a close relationship between education of the child and the need for taking up the jobs for helping the families financially and keeping them alive. Perhaps these children are quite sensitive to the problems faced by their families. Unless these conditions are improved the problems of literacy and social drop-out will persist and children will be forced to engage in some economic activities to help and supplement the income of their families.

2.4 Employment

We have divided the child labors in two groups according to their nature of employment. One is self-employed i.e. those child labors who are working in their house along with other members of the family. The other consists of children who are employed against wages outside their house. The data presented in table 4 shows the nature of employment of the sampled child workers according to sex.

Table 4: Employment of Child Workers by Sex

S. No.	Category of Employment	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Employed	30(46.87)	26(26.53)	56(34.57)
2	Self employed	34(53.12)	72(73.46)	106(65.43)
	Total	64(100)	98(100)	162(100)

Note: Figures in brackets shows %age.

Source: field survey.

The above table reveals that self employed children outnumber employed children and among them girls (73.46 percent) are mostly employed at their home as compared to boys (53.12 percent). Out of the total 162 child labors 106 (65.43 percent) has been found working at their houses and only 56 (34.57 percent) have been employed outside their house.

3. Family background

The family background of the respondents assumes more significance because it is the family where the child learns the basic skills to cope with social norms, values and demands. It has its own pattern of interpersonal relations, acts as an agency for socialization which in turn is affected by the socio-economic conditions of the family. Within the villages under study the pattern of respondents' families is varied among different income groups. The villagers still attach importance to joint family which is breaking up and paves way for nuclear family. In the present study an attempt has been made to collect salient features of social and economic conditions of the family with a view to examine its impact on child. Direct observations coupled with the discussions with the parents of child workers yielded some material on this point.

3.1 Family Type

In general it is believed and experienced that children in a joint family system would be given all protection and they will be facilitated to seek better education, recreation and the broader requirements of socialization itself. A

critical look at the studies on child labor in the Indian context would reveal that disintegration of joint family system especially in rural society paved the way for emergence of child labor practice. It is equally true in the present study also. For instance data depicted in figure 1 shows that nuclear families constitute 87.04 percent to the total families interviewed followed by joint family which is only 12.96 percent. Hence it is inferred from the analysis that nuclear family system, which is also an influencing force in child labor practice, is predominant in the study area. It is revealed from the study that parents in the nuclear family have got greater influence to decide upon whether a child is to be educated or employed in contrast to the joint family system where old people have a considerable amount of influence in decision making.

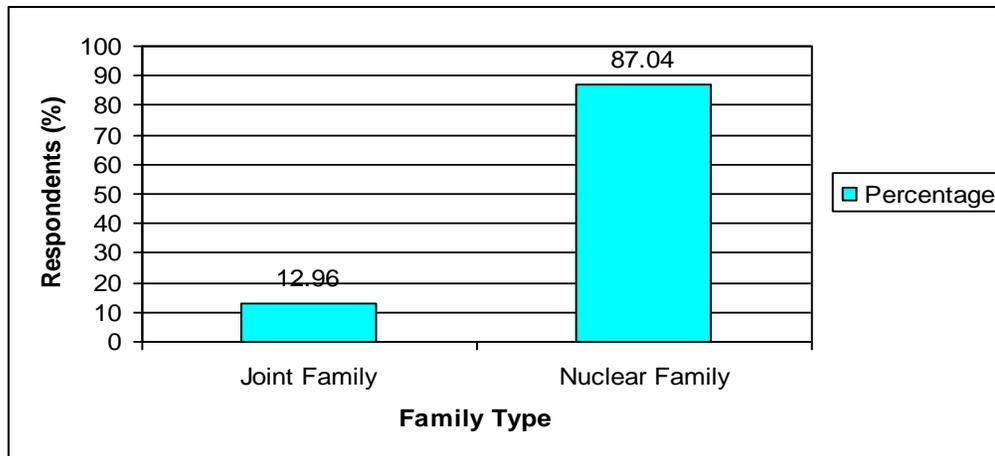


Fig. 1: Distribution of respondents according to type of family

3.2 Size of family

After knowing the type of the family of child laborers, another related query was regarding the number of family members. Table 5 gives the number of family members in a child workers family.

Table 5: Number of family members

S. No.	No. of family member	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	1-4	17	10.49
2	4-8	80	49.39
3	8-12	65	40.12
	Total	162	100.00

Source: Field study

The table 5 reveals that 80 (49.39 percent) child laborers belonged to such families where there were 4-8 members. Similarly 65 (40.12 percent) child laborers belong to families which had 8-12 members. Only 17(10.49 percent) laborers belonged to families which had 1- 4 members. Thus, one can say that in a poor family which had more than 6 members, it is difficult for one person to run the house. Hence there is no other alternative but to send the child to work rather than to school in order to supplement family income .The children who belonging to the small family category that is 1- 4 members worked either because there was no earning member in the family or just to enjoy with friends at the carpet units and at the same time learn some skills. Most of the children of this category added that they had to work because their father had died and being the eldest child, it was their duty to look after the family. Thus, we see that whether the child belonged to small or large family, they are forced to work for some reason or the other.

3.3 Housing Conditions

The distribution of respondents according to their nature of housing and civic amenities is presented in the tables 6 & 7.

Table 6: Types of Houses of Child Labors

S. No.	Type of House	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Pucca	125	77.16
2	Semi-Pucca	34	21.18
3	Kutcha	3	1.85
	Total	162	100.00

Source: Field Study.

As shown in table 6 more than 3/4th (77.16 percent) child labors live in Pucca houses where as 21.18 percent live in the semi-Pucca houses and only 1.85 percent live in Kutcha houses. These figures show relatively good position occupied by the sample area as against the data available on the overall state of J&K according to census 2001. Census 2001 has revealed that 55 percent households live in Pucca houses ,32.15 percent in semi-Pucca houses and 12.85 percent households where living in Kutcha houses in J&K state.

Table 7: Type of Civic Amenities in Child Workers House.

Type of Amenities	Number	Percentage
WATER		
No Regular Facility	12	7.41
Public Tap	122	75.31
Private Tap	28	17.28
Total	162	100.00
ELECTRICITY		
No Regular Facility	12	7.41
No Facility	7	4.32
Owned	143	88.27
Total	162	100.0
LATRINE		
No Facility (Open Space)	65	40.12
Public	54	33.34
Private	43	26.54
Total	162	100.0

Source: Field Study

Almost all the localities lack one or the other type of basic amenities like water, latrine and electricity. Even where these facilities are available they are woefully inadequate to meet the needs of residents. Table 7 shows that almost all the households understudy have the availability of public or private water facilities but there are still 7.41 percent of the households who lack the availability of regular water facilities. All the respondents interviewed who do not are having the regular availability of water supply were asked to tell the distance from which they have to bring the water when they feel shortage of water supply. Almost all of them responded that they have to bring it from a distance of 0.5 to 1 km or even more.

Electricity was available to majority of the respondents' houses (80.27 percent) but there were still 7.41 percent households who do not are having the regular availability of electricity and 4.32 percent were un-electrified. Those

who do not are having the regular availability of electricity were mostly using lanterns or in some cases gas cylinders or candles to light the houses in the evening. Further it is observed from the field survey that all the un-electrified houses are recently constructed and taping of service required a considerable amount of money and time.

The table 7 also shows that out of total 162 child labors, 65 (40.12 percent) were not having the facility of latrines, 54 (33.34 percent) and 43 (26.54 percent) were having the public and private latrines respectively. Those who do not have the facilities of latrines responded that they have to go in open space outside the residential area at a distance of about 0.5 to 1 km. Some told that they have to go in other Molalla of the same village where there is the availability of Latrine.

The overall analysis relating to housing conditions shows that carpet weaving is carried within the four walls and due to lack of proper ventilation and incapability of basic amenities of life, it affects the eyes and creates other health problems to all employees in general and the children working in these carpet units, in particular hence there is a need for the involvement of policy makers to look at the matter seriously and provide all basic amenities of life to these carpet weaving employees so that they may not suffer in future.

3.4 Education of Parents

Undoubtedly, education plays an important role in the development of an individual, society or nation. The educated parents plan their families; provide best possible education and recreational facilities to their children. They are cautions about the nutritional and health requirements of their children and give them love and affection essential for their growth, development and preparation for the future life. The table 8 reflects the educational level of parents of child labors.

Table 8: Educational Attainment of Child Labors and Their Fathers

S. no.	Level of education	Father	Child Worker's Education
1	Illiterate	83(59.71)	69(42.59)
2	Up to 5 th	32(23.02)	57(35.18)
3	Up to 8 th and above	24(17.27)	36(22.23)
	Total	139(100)	162(100)

Note: 1. Figures in brackets shows percentage.

2. 23 child labors have same parents; therefore total fathers shown are only 139.

It is only with this end in view that the present study tries to analyzes families who are male dominated, education of fathers has been alone analyzed. The table 8 shows that a little less than 2/3rd (59.71 percent) of fathers were illiterate and 23.02 percent have studied up to 5th standard. Only 17.27 percent of them have studied up to 8th standard and above. Thus more than 4/5th (82.73 percent) of the fathers were either illiterate or have not completed primary education. When we compare the education of fathers with that of their children, our study shows that there is a direct relationship between the father's illiteracy rate and child labor i.e. higher the illiteracy rate of father, higher is the incidence of child labor.

3.5 Parental Occupation

In the rural areas children inherit their family occupations. The occupation of the parents of child labors has been presented in figure 2.

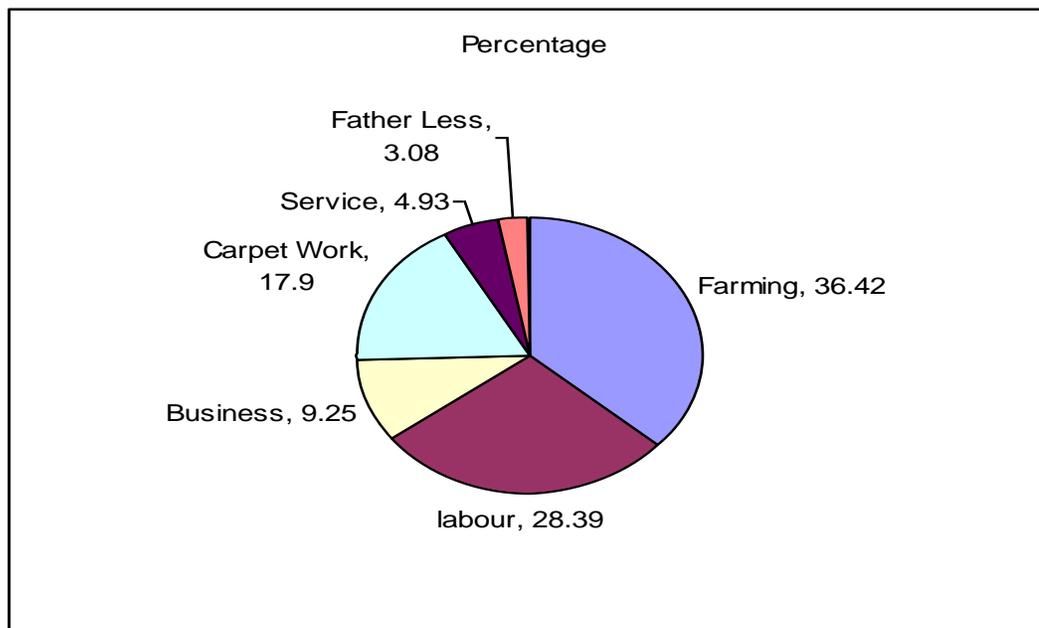


Fig. 2: Occupation of Parents of Child Laborers.

The data presented in the figure 2 highlights that majority of parents (36.42 percent) have agriculture as their occupation, 17.90 percent are involved in the carpet weaving work either in their own house or in other units, 28.39 percent and 9.25 percent are laborers and business men respectively. From this data one can safely conclude that nearly half (46.29 percent) of the child laborers came from laboring class (both skilled & semi-skilled) followed by farming class (36.42 percent). It is also revealed that people in service do not like their children to go for jobs at an early age, most probably because they have learnt from their colleagues about the ill effects of the child labor.

3.6 Economic Status

It is generally stated that the income level of the households is one of the key determinants of child labor. The lower the income of the household the greater the incidence of child labors. The income level of the household is taken here to mean the total monthly income of all members of the family including the earnings of the child workers. Since the children are not considered very competent to give the exact income of their family. The information regarding household income has been collected from parents and/or other elder/head of the family e.g. mother, elder brother, elder sister, grandparents, uncles etc. In few cases the income of the household is gathered from respondent child worker also. The information in this context has been collected from all the 100 sampled households of the selected five villages of block Qaimoh of district Kulgam which is presented in the table 9

Table 9: Monthly Income of the Households /Parents (in Rs.) & no. Of child labors

S. No.	Income	Percentage	No. of Child labors	Percentage
1	Up to Rs 2000	22.00	67	41.35
2	Rs 2000-Rs3000	55.00	52	32.09
3	Rs3000-Rs4000	20.00	30	18.51
4	Rs4000-Rs5000& above	3.0	13	8.02
	Total	100.00	162	100.00

Source: Field Survey.

The above analysis reveals that more than 3/4th households monthly income is less than Rs 3000 while 20 percents' monthly income is between Rs 3000 to Rs 4000 and only 3 percent have more than Rs 4000 per month.

The table also shows that a little more than 2/5th (41.35 percent) of the child labors belong to those households whose monthly income is below Rs 2000, nearly 1/3rd (32.09 percent) belong to those households whose monthly income is between Rs 2000 to Rs 3000, 18.51 percent belong to those whose monthly income is between Rs 3000 to Rs 4000 and only 8.02 percent belong to those households whose monthly income is above Rs 4000. Thus the analysis of the table shows that there is an inverse relationship between households' monthly income and child labor i.e. lower the level of income of household, greater is the incidence of the child labor. This indicates that due to low income of the family children were deprived of the facilities which were essential for their proper growth and development and on the contrary, they were put to work to supplement their family income. As the parents of the working children had jobs with low emoluments, it was very difficult for them to educate their children.

3.7 Child's Contribution to Family Income.

Family being the basic social unit, earning members contribute to the family fund so that at least the basic needs of all family members including non-earnings ones may be satisfied. The distribution of the child labors in terms of their percentage contribution according to different house hold income groups has been presented in figure 3

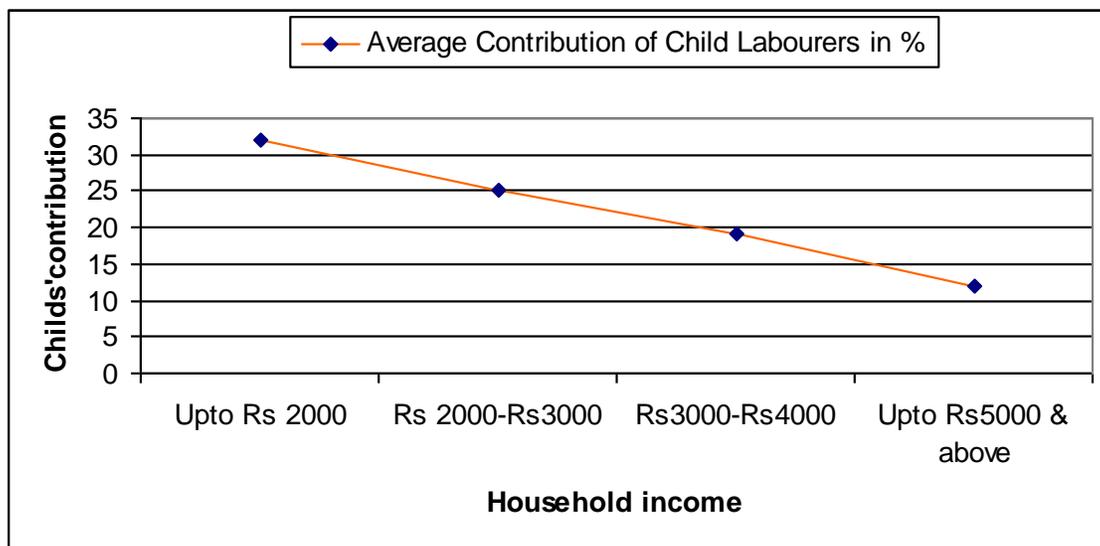


Fig. 3: Childs' contribution to family income per month.

The above figure shows that those households whose monthly income is up to Rs 2000, 32 percent (on an avg.) of their income is contributed by their children working in carpet weaving units, 25 percent to those households having income between Rs 2000 to Rs 3000, 19 percent and 12 percent income to those households having income between Rs 3000 to Rs 4000 and above Rs 4000 respectively. Thus our analysis show that there is a negative correlation between percentage contributions of child labors to their family income and total household income. In other words, as family income increases, the proportion of child's contribution to family income decreases and vice-versa.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, it can be seen that the working children in the carpet industry came from socially as well as economically poor families and they supplemented the family earnings to a limited extent. The poor economic conditions of the rural segment of the population, poor social background and high dependency ratio in families force children to take up jobs for contributing to the family income in early life. Economic compulsion and educational backwardness of parents were the main reasons forcing children to leave the school and join labor market at different point of time. Our analysis shows that there is negative correlation between percentage contribution of child labor to family income and total household income. In other words as family income increases, the proportion of child's contribution to family income decreases and vice-versa.

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