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**ASSIGNMENT**

**CHILD LABOUR**

Child labour refers to the exploitation of children through any form of work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school and is mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful. It involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities often at an early age. Also, it is the employment of children under the age of 18 and the violation of their rights, their well-being and denies them the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Child labour is an illegal act in which the government prohibit though not all works done by children e.g. helping their parents around their home, actors, artists, assisting in family businesses, earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays are illegal. That is, it does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their education instead it contributes to children’s development and to the welfare of their families, they provide them with skills and experience and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

Child labour started during the 19th and 20th centuries when many children between the age 5 – 14 from poor families worked in western countries and their colonies alike. Children as young as 13 were seen as adults and engaged in the same activities as adults. They were expected to contribute to their family income though their wages were as little as 10 – 20 percent of an adult male’s wage. These children worked mainly in agriculture, home - based assembly operations, factories, mining, etc. Some worked night shift lasting 12 hours. The work of children was important as they needed to provide their labour for their survival and that of the survival of their family.

There are different forms of child labour but the worst forms of child labour are slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, serfdom, forced labour, children in armed conflict, sexual exploitation, illicit activities and producing and trafficking drugs.

Slavery is where one person is owned by and made to work for another person without having any say over what happens to them. Slaves are held against their will from the time of their capture, purchase or birth and are not allowed to leave or to refuse to work. They were generated in many ways such as when they are captured in wars, kidnapped, offspring’s of slaves, enslaved as a punishment for crime or debts. Some were sold by their parents while some to satisfy debts and escape starvation.

Child trafficking is the illegal trading, buying, selling or movement of children for labour or sexual exploitation. They may also be trafficked for the purpose of adoption. Child trafficking is done for money especially where the working conditions are poor. Children may be forced into many dangerous and illegal situations, including, domestic labour, prostitution, drug trafficking and being turned into child soldiers.

Debt bondage is forced labour or unfree labour, where work is exchanged to pay off loans that people cannot pay off with money or goods. The services required to repay the debt and their duration may be undefined. Debt bondage can be passed on from generation to generation with children required to pay off their ancestors’ debt. For example, a poor family may hand over their child to someone to pay off their debt, and that child will have to work for years until the debts is cleared.

Serfdom is when a person is forced to live and work on land belonging to another person often with little or no pay. As with slaves, serfs could be bought, sold or traded with some limitations. They generally could be sold only together with land, could be abused with no rights over their own bodies, could not leave the land they were bound to and could marry only with their owner’s permission. Serfs who occupied a plot of land were required to work for the owner who owns that land. In return they were entitled to protection, justice and right to cultivate certain fields to maintain their own subsistence.

Children in armed conflict are forced to fight or to work as cooks, porters and messengers. They are recruited at any age (either as volunteers or by abduction) by governmental forces, paramilitaries or rebels. This is often caused by poverty, discrimination or their will to avenge for suffering inflicted on them or their families.

Sexual exploitation is the mistreating, abusing, and taking advantage of someone for personal gain and profit by involving them in prostitution or commercial sexual activity. This form of child labour has serious short and long term consequences. Children are at a high risk of physical abuse, malnutrition and sexually transmitted diseases. It is extremely difficult for children to get out of this situation and very hard for them to deal with what they have experienced physically and mentally. Children around the world are exploited sexually, used by adults for sex or used in sexual images (pornography) or performances. They may be bought and sold into marriage, prostitution or slavery in both developing and developed countries. Children are also kidnapped and trafficked across borders and said to be prostitutes in foreign countries.

Illicit activities are illegal activities or crimes. Children involved in illicit activities are often exposed to violence, which can severely affect their mental and physical development. They may be forced with threats and violence to take part in criminal activities or be under pressure to find money for their family. Some children get involved in crime through gangs or because they think that is a way to obtain respect. They may not develop good social skills and are more likely to suffer from depression, alcohol and drug addictions and become juvenile criminals.

Producing and trafficking drugs is an illicit activity that often involves children. Drug trafficking is an illegal trading (buying or selling) of drugs. Children might do this against their will or with the belief that this will give them status and money. Children who produce or traffic drugs are at great risk of abuse and many also become addicted to drugs at a very young age in which it has various consequences.

Child labour affect children in many ways. It impacts a child’s social development because the child spends time doing labour instead of with peers in social play and learning how to interact properly. They need to build personal positive relationships in order to succeed and feel confident. Children also experiences isolation and depression, which often prevents them from continuing to develop healthy emotions as they grow, and can lead to many physical effects.

Child labour can be eradicated by various ways such as the government providing educational facilities that will make them productive, creating public awareness that child labour affect the mental, physical and social health of young children, eradicating poverty by providing more jobs, reviewing the law that child labour is prohibited and there are punishments and consequences one will face if they are caught abusing a child, etc. The children are the leaders of tomorrow, they are to be treated properly and not to be abused, therefore they need to have a normal childhood and be properly educated.