



Child Labour Utilization in the Tourism Industry: A Case Study from Ampara District in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry is considered as one of the world's fastest growing economic activities and the largest employer of manpower which generates millions of employment opportunities. Since tourism is a labour intensive industry there is an escalating demand for labour in different sectors of tourism. This demand becomes a critical issue due to reasons such as the scarcity of the trained and skilled human resource, lower salaries and wages and unwillingness among many people to pursue tourism-related employment. As a remedy to this critical issue, child labour has been used frequently. They have been employed in both formal and informal sectors of the tourism industry. This situation is more common in the Sri Lanka tourism industry, especially in remote tourism regions. The main objective of this research was to study the nature of child labour in the tourism industry of the Ampara district of Eastern Tourism region of Sri Lanka. After a preliminary survey, Ulla, Panama North and Panama West GNDs of the Ampara district of Eastern tourism region were selected as the study area. Applying judgment and purposive sampling techniques, 56 child workers and 19 accommodation establishments were selected as the sample. Both quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaire surveys, observations, interviews, group discussions and case studies were employed to collect data. The data was analyzed applying both qualitative and quantitative analytical methods. The overall findings of the study are discussed under several subheadings including the socioeconomic and family background of child workers, the existing nature and types of child labour, reasons for selecting of employment linked to tourism, places of work, salaries and wages, the nature of expenditure and problems faced by child workers. The overall findings of this study revealed that child workers have been employed in formal and informal sectors of the tourism industry. All the child labours are in the age range between 15 to 17 years. The most common form of utilizing child labour in the study area is as sellers. Economic burdens at home are the major reasons which draw the children to these jobs. Engaging in different activities, they are able to earn an income ranging from Rs. 3,000 to 15,000 and they have spent this income on different purposes. Since there are many problems related to child labour utilization active policies and plans are timely and significant to alleviate these problems.

KEYWORDS: *Tourism Industry, Child Labour, Labour utilization*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is considered as one of the world's fastest growing economic activities and the largest employer of manpower which generates millions of employment opportunities. Since tourism has been identified as a significant strategy in the process of socio-economic development, it has received much attention in both developed and developing countries. At the same time, tourism has been identified as a labour intensive industry since it is a valuable source of creating more employment opportunities. As a result, there is an escalating demand for labour in different sectors of the tourism industry. But a vacuum has been created by the scarcity of trained and skilled human resource to fulfil this demand. Another issue which creates this situation is that skilled labour hesitates to join and start a career in this field due to the lower salaries and wages. To cater to this demand and to fill the vacuum, child labour has now being identified as a good solution and it is presently being commonly used in different sectors of the tourism industry. Hence, using of child labour in different tourism-related activities is a common practice in most of the developing countries. In many occasions, children have been forced to work as carrying heavy baggage of travelers, work in tourism-related construction sites, cleaning accommodation establishments, maintaining of tourist sites including adventure parks, watchers of tourist attractions and vehicle parks, janitors of sanitary complexes, beach cleaners and beach boys.

The tourism sector of Sri Lanka too has been gaining more and more important in the economy of the country. Over the last few years, it has become a more prominent activity in the economic agenda of the country and has been identified as a valuable source of creating more employment opportunities. Although the Sri

Lankan tourism industry plays a vital role in creating many positive impacts there are many constraints to be overcome. Among them, the scarcity of skilled human resource is a predominant issue. Due to a number of reasons, Sri Lankan tourism industry too has now faced many difficulties in finding skilled labour to cater to the increasing demand in the industry. Remote tourist regions located away from the core of the country and the destinations with poor facilities faced this problem more than others. Similarly, skilled labour hesitates to join the tourism related careers due to lower salaries and wages. Therefore, employing child labour in different activities has now become more common in different tourist destinations especially in remote destinations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the International Labour Organization (2017), throughout the world, around 218 million children have been employed to work in different sectors. Recently, there has been a renewed universal concern about the presence and impact of child labour from international and national organizations, politicians, activists and academics alike. Research on utilizing of child labour in the industrial sector began to expand rapidly during the past decade (2000 – 2010). This growth was also reflected in the research of tourism and hospitality sectors. This rapid expansion of child labour research has attracted the attention of a growing number of researchers and policymakers in the same field.

As cited by Hagedoorn (2013) the ILO and other international organizations generally define child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development. A key aspect of child labour is that it is likely to interfere with children's right to

education. Recent figures from the ILO show that 1 in 6 children work in different sectors. As much as 218 million children aged 5-17 are involved in child labour worldwide mainly in the Asia and the Pacific region and Sub Saharan Africa. However, child labour is also employed in industrialized countries.

Hagedoorn (2013) cited in his study that very little research has been done on child labour in tourism in the past. Further, he cited the work of Plüss (1999) who had conducted research and came to the conclusion that child labour in tourism is a very widespread phenomenon. Black (1995) traced the historical trend of child labour utilization in the world tourism industry and according to him 13 to 19 million children and youths under eighteen years of age are employed in the formal tourism industry worldwide. Child labour, therefore, counts for approximately 10% of the formal tourism labour market. As reveals by Maplecroft (2012) employing of child labour in the tourism industry is more common at the world's popular tourist destinations such as the Philippines, India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Brazil.

The study on the role of Employers' Associations in child labour elimination of International Labour Organization (2007) reveals that millions of children work in the tourism sector of India. This research critically examines the reasons why children work, the way that they are engaged in different activities, their socio-economic and family background, the risks to a child working in the tourism sector, the role of the tourism industry employers and associations to mitigate this problem and the initiatives undertaken by the International Labour Organization, United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Government of India to address the problem.

Rao (2008) analyses the dimensions of child labour in India and the broad trends and multidimensional approaches to the problem of child labour. He further discusses the nature, magnitude, working conditions, causes and consequences and the position of child labour engaged in different regions of the country. He also reveals and analyses the socio-economic characteristics of child labour, their levels of earning, standards of living and impact on household income. Rao (2008) again states that child labour is a complex issue in the tourism industry in India. According to him, the workers between 6-8 years have to face many difficulties including hunger, humiliation, physical and sexual abuse which ultimately leads them to poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Kanbargi (1991) in his book on Child labour in the Indian Sub-continent analyses the demographic trends of child labour and its relation to fertility, literacy and education. Further, various aspects of migrant child workers have been discussed and strategies suggested to eliminate the problem of child labour by Kannan (2001). He discusses the determinants and correlation of child labour in the context of liberalization and globalization. As cited by Sharma et al. (2012) Rajendran (1998) has conducted a pilot study on the migrant children working in the hotels and restaurants of Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu and reveals the nature of the work and the types of work they are engaged in. The studies on child labour reviewed above indicate that the plight of the working children has a close relation with certain aspects of individual capitalism. Das and Sing (2016) in their study of Socio-economic condition of child labour working in the hotel industry of Barak valley in Assam highlighted that the percentage contribution of child labourers for the tourism industry of Assam of India was 5.3. They further reveal that the

sectorial contribution of child to the hotel and tourism sector together was 7.76%.

When the Sri Lankan situation in this regard is considered, there is a dearth of research which especially focuses on child labour utilization in the tourism industry. The Ministry of Labour Relations and Productivity Promotion (2010) has compiled a report on Sri Lanka's Road Map 2016 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, under the aegis of the International Labour Organization which reveals the child labour utilization of various sectors including estate, fisheries and tourism. All the above studies focus at the need to understand the prevailing socio-economic situation and advocate a closer look into the deep roots in order to reveal the nature of the children's economic contribution. But the scarcity of research related to the different aspects of child labour utilization in the tourism industry creates a sound platform for multifaceted research. Therefore a research which focuses on the different dimensions of child labour utilization is timely and significant.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research was to study the nature of child labour in the tourism industry of the Ampara district in the Eastern Tourism region of Sri Lanka. The specific objectives of this research were to; study the socio-economic background of the children work in the tourism sector, identify the present nature of the child labour utilization, examine the extent and the types of child labour is utilized, investigate the reasons which made children to engage in the tourism-related jobs and analyze their contribution to the family in different ways and problems faced by the children engaged in the tourism-related employment.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study comprises a number of steps; a) a preliminary survey to select the study area, b) selection of the study area, c) a pilot survey to test the questionnaires, d) data collection and e) data analysis.

Selection of the Study Area

A preliminary survey about the nature of the labour utilization in the tourism industry was initially conducted to select the study area. In this regard, two tourism regions including Colombo from the core and the Eastern from the periphery were concerned. Out of the surveyed, there is a booming development of the tourism industry in the Eastern tourism region. Due to this rapid development, there is now an escalating demand for labour from both formal and informal sectors. But, a vacuum has been created by the scarcity of skilled human resource to cater to the increasing demand. As an alternative to this issue, using child labour has now been identified as a good solution. Different facets of child labour utilizing of the region could be identified. The criteria used to select the study area were the present nature of tourism industry, nature of utilizing child labour, number of children employed in formal and informal employment, location of tourist attractions, location of accommodation establishments such as homestays and hotels, nature of wayside business and nature of tourism-related informal activities. Based on the criteria, the Ampara district of Eastern tourism region was selected as the most suitable region for the analysis of the nature of utilizing child labour in the tourism industry of Sri Lanka. Within the district, Ulla, Panama North and Panama West Grama Niladhari Divisions in which the famous tourist attractions such as Ulla, Panama and Arugambay are located as well as numerous tourist hotels and homestay

accommodations were concentrated and child labour utilization was relatively high were selected to carry out the research.

Selection of the Sample

The judgment and purposive sampling methods were used to select a representative sample of both child workers and tourist establishments such as hotels, restaurants and homestay lodgings. After the preliminary survey, Ulla, Panama North and Panama West in Ampara district where child labour utilization is abundant were chosen as the main sites for the detailed study. The judgment sampling technique

was used to select a) the respective GNDs and b) the hotels, restaurants and homestays. After that, 56 child workers were selected for applying the purposive sampling technique. When the sample was selected, the definition of child labour and the age limit (below 18 years) cited by Hagedoorn (2013) referring the International Labour Organization were considered. Both categories of the sample were selected depending on the willingness to respond. Accordingly, the total sample selected for the survey was 75, which comprised 56 child workers and 19 tourist establishments (Table 01).

Table 1:

Category	Sample Size from Selected GND			Total
	Ulla	Panama North	Panama West	
Child workers	18	22	16	56
Tourist establishments	06	08	05	19
Total				75

Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018

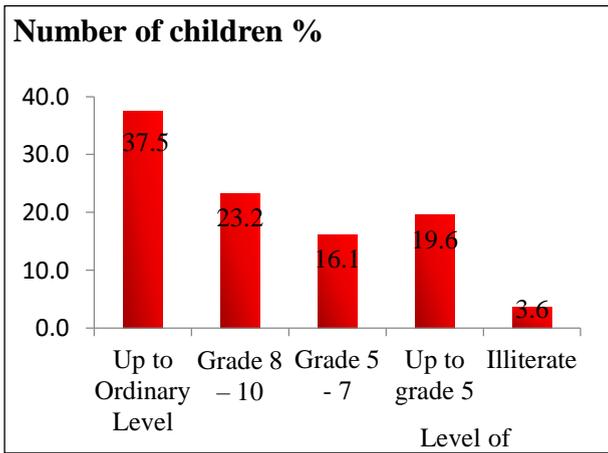
Data Collection and Analysis

The process of data collection of this study comprised two categories as primary and secondary data collection. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to collect primary data. In this regard, questionnaire, surveys, observations, interviews; both semi-structured and in-depth, group discussions, case studies and event records were employed. Main sources of secondary data were books, journals and other secondary sources of information related to child labour utilizing in the tourism industry. This secondary data was critically reviewed and used to write the literature review of the study. Both qualitative and quantitative

analytical methods were employed to analyse the collected data. The data collected through the questionnaire survey were converted into percentages and collated in the form of tables, graphs and figures to make the data analysis and presentation meaningful. As quantitative analytical tools, simple statistical methods such as central tendency (mean, median and mode) were employed. Among the applied qualitative analytical methods, using photographs, ranking and summarizing the information, making the list of important facts and drawing visual displays are most prominent.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The utilization of child labour in the Ampara district of the Eastern tourism region could be discussed and analysed under several subheadings such as a) socioeconomic and family background of child workers, b) the existing nature and types of child labour utilization, c) reasons and purposes impact on the selection of an employment linked to tourism, d) place of work, e) salaries and wages f) the nature of spending the income and g) problems faced by child workers. When these multiple



sectors are critically examined, the nature of child labour utilization of the study area can clearly be analysed.

Characteristics of Gender, Age, Education, Socio-Economic and Family Background of Child Workers

Different characteristics such as family background, age distribution, gender, level of education and nationality is considered to analysed the socio-economic background of child workers. According to the gender composition, it was not reported female child workers who engaged in any type of employment. It is a unique feature which has been formed due to a cultural reason. Tamil and Muslim communities are the prominent nationalities of all the selected research sites. Due to this reason, females either do not permit to work or hesitate to work in a field such as tourism.

As revealed by the field survey (2017-2018), the respondents belonged to three nationalities viz. Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil where Tamil outnumbered Sinhala and Muslim. Only 28.0% (16 children) and 17.85% (10 children) out of the total of 56 represent Sinhalese and Muslims respectively.

Age is one of the most important characteristics in understanding the nature of child labour and the particular problems. In the detailed analysis, it could be noticed that the majority of the children (43) were between the age groups of 15 to 17 years. There are only 12 who are older than 17 years. Only one (01) belongs to the age below 15 years.

The educational background of the respondents is another important criterion should be taken into consideration in the analysis of child labour utilization. Figure 01 indicates the level of education of the child labours engages in the tourism-related employment of the study area.

Figure 1: Level of Education of the Child Workers

Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018.

A significant proportion that is 37.5% (21) of child workers had studied up to the Ordinary Level. The number of respondents who are illiterate is only 3.6% (02). A considerable percentage of children (19.6) was just functionally literate and studied up to grade 05. Only 23.2% (13 children) have studied up to the level of grade 08 to 10. The percentage of child workers who have studied either up to grade 05, 06 or 07 is 16.1%. The level of education of the respondents has reported at the date/s where the field survey was carried out.

The background of the family in which a person lives has immense importance in deciding the reason/s to join him or her to a particular job before reaching due age. Hence the family background of the child workers was considered as a main criterion to analysis the child labour utilization of the study area. It was evident from the field survey (2017-2018), a large majority of the children (85 percent) were from nuclear families where they live with both further, mother and other family members. The rest (15 percent) are either from matriarchal or patriarchal families where they live either only with mother or father and family members. This background shows an increasing trend and a link between the selections of a job in the tourism field which is the most abundant industry in the study area.

The Existing Nature and Types of Child Labour Utilization

Child workers of the study area are being employed in a wide variety of activities such as baggage carriers of travellers, assistants to masons in tourism-related construction sites, helpers of recreational activities such as windsurfing, scuba diving, janitors of accommodation establishments, watchers of tourist attractions and vehicle parks, janitors and sanitary labours of sanitary complexes in and around tourist sites, beach cleaners, assistants of tourist vehicles, assistants of vehicle repairing centers or garages,

sellers of agricultural produce, handicrafts, fancy goods, processors and sellers of wayside food stalls, brokers of accommodation suppliers, beach boys, sellers of worship and votive items at places of worship and others as communication staff (Table 02).

Table 2: Types of Child Labour Utilization

Rank	Type of Employment	Number	Percentage
01.	Helpers of recreational activities	07	12.5
02.	Janitors of accommodation establishments	06	10.7
03.	Processers and sellers of wayside food stalls	06	10.7
04.	Assistants in construction sites	05	9.2
05.	Baggage carriers or bellboys	04	7.1
06.	Assistants of tourist vehicles	04	7.1
07.	Brokers of accommodation suppliers	04	7.1
08.	Communication staff	04	7.1
09.	Watchers of tourist attractions and vehicle parks	03	5.4
10.	Janitors and sanitary labours of sanitary complexes	03	5.4
11.	Beach boys	03	5.3
12.	Beach cleaners	02	3.5
13.	Sellers of agricultural products	02	3.5
14.	Sellers of worship and votive items	02	3.5
15.	Assistants of tourist vehicle repairing centers	01	1.8
Total		56	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018.

The field survey reveals that a total of 56 child workers have been employed in different tourism related employment. As depicted in Table 02, an individual majority of 12.5% have been employed as helpers of recreational activities while the lowest individual number (01) is employed as assistants to tourist vehicle repairing centers. When the different activities are categorized and analysed in detail, it is clearly evident that the most common form of utilizing child labour in the study area is as sellers of different items including sellers of worship and votive items (02), sellers of wayside food stalls (06) and sellers of agricultural products (02) which makes a total of 10. Apart from this, a total number of 09 children work as janitors of accommodation establishments (06) and janitors and sanitary labours of sanitary complexes (03) in and around tourist destinations. In addition to the above, working as assistants in construction sites (05), assistants of tourist vehicles (04), working as informal workers (04), brokers of accommodation suppliers (04), bellboys (04) and watchers of tourist attractions and vehicle parks (03) are noticeable forms of employing children in tourism-related jobs in the study area. Further, the observations during the field survey revealed that there is number of children who have been employed as outside workers as the assistant in tourism-related construction sites and vehicle parks (Figure 02).

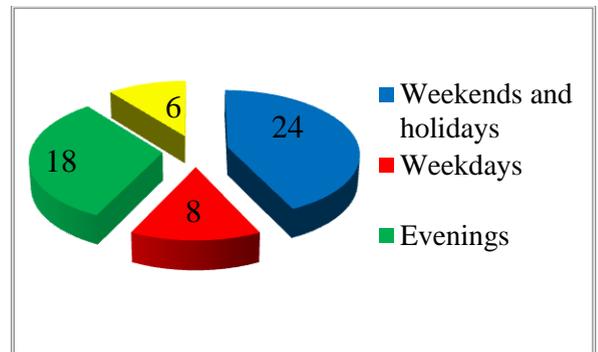
Figure 2: Common Forms of Employing Children as Outside Workers



Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018.

When the nature of employment is taken into consideration, it could be noticed that they are mainly engaged as part-time workers especially on weekends, holydays and evenings. The number of children who work on a permanent basis is not significant (Figure 03).

Figure 3: Nature of Employments of Child Workers



Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018.

As depicted in Figure 03, as much as 24 children (42.9%) are employed in different tourism-related employment on weekends and holidays, whereas 32.1 percent (18 children) are employed in evenings. It can be concluded that the majority of children work while schooling. Children who work on weekdays (08) and on a full-time basis (06) had either sat for the Ordinary Level examination or school leave.

Reasons for the Selection of an employment in the Tourism Sector

When the different reasons which impact on the selection of employment linked to tourism are considered, it was observed that 14 had selected to work in a tourism-related establishment, in and around tourist attractions, beach or at the wayside on fulltime or on part-time. They have been motivated by the reasons such as personal attitudes including readiness to find out a job. Eleven (11) children have chosen to

work due to the economic burdens or hardships at homes. In addition, 08 child workers have decided to work in this field due to the ease of earning money quickly. In the same way, 07 children have initiated employment in this field as pressure from the parents while 04 have selected to work on the influence of friends and colleagues. Seven (07) child labours that have been motivated by other reasons such as the lucrativeness of the tourism industry, the wish of mingling with tourists etc. (Table 03).

Table 3: Reasons Impact on the Selection of an Employment Linked to Tourism

Reason	Number Child Workers	
	Number	Percentage
The economic burden at home	11	19.6
Pressure from the parents	07	12.5
Readiness to find out a job	14	25.0
Willingness to engage in the family business	05	8.9
Influence of friends and colleagues	04	7.1
Need to earn money for personal use	08	14.3
Other	07	12.5
Total	56	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018

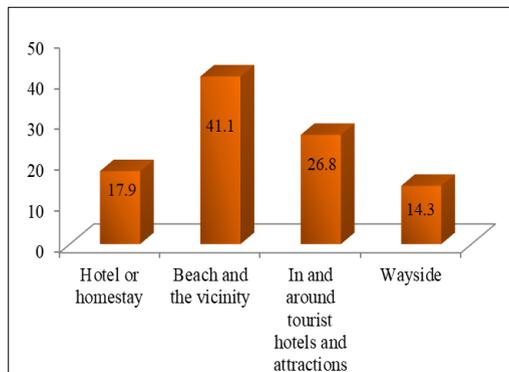
Places of Work

When the different places of work of the child workers of the study area are considered, a few important facts can be discerned. As indicated in Figure 04, the highest number (28) of children works at the beach area and its vicinity. This is due to the fact that of that the majority of child workers serve as helpers of recreational activities such as windsurfers and scuba divers at Arugambay, Ulla and Panama beach areas and or as beach cleaners and beach boys. In addition to this, 26.8% (15 children) have been working in and around tourist hotels and other attractions that are

located at the Eastern coastal belt of the Ampara district. Arugambay, one of the best-surfing destinations in the world provides an excellent example as the most places where the child workers can be seen. And also they have purposely selected to work at Argambay area since they could earn a reasonable lump sum during the international surfing competition which is annually being held. The Eastern coastal region of the study area is more famous for different types of restaurants, accommodation establishments including homestay lodgings and small hotels. The majority of these hotels and homestays are

operated as family businesses. As a result of this, 10 child workers work in hotels, restaurants or homestays. Eight children (08) work as wayside hawkers.

Figure 04 – Place of Work of Child Labours



Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018.

Salaries and Wages

When the child labour utilization of the tourism industry is taken into consideration, it is important to inquire about the salaries and wages of them. As a whole, the monthly income levels of these child workers range between Rs. 3,000 to 15,000. The income details of the child workers are shown in Table 04.

Table 04 - Salaries and Wages of Child Workers

Monthly Income (Rs.)	Child Workers	
	Number	Percentage
Less than 3,000	15	26.8
3,000 – 6,000	23	41.1
6,000 – 9,000	08	14.3
9,000 – 12,000	04	7.1
12,000 – 15,000	04	7.1
More than 15,000	02	3.6
Total	56	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018.

As depicted in Table 04, only 02 children earned more than Rs. 15,000 for a month while 04 have been able to earn a monthly income which falls into the category of Rs. 12,000 – 15,000. They are the employees in hotel and accommodation establishments who work on full time basis. There are only 04 child workers who earn between Rs. 9,000 to 12,000. This group works either on a fulltime basis or during weekends. The highest number of child workers (23) earns an income of Rs. 3,000 – 6,000. Children who have been employed on part-time in evenings of the week belong to this income range. Out of the total 56 child workers, 15 persons who work in evenings had been able to earn less than Rs. 3,000.

The Nature of Expenditure

Child workers of the study area spend the income in different ways. As depicted in Table 05, out of the total of 56 child workers, 26 (46.4) spend their income to buy daily needs of the family. As much as 23.2% (13) of the child workers contribute for the family furtherance and spend the income to built a new house or for the renovation of existing one and purchasing household items, electrical items including televisions, refrigerators, tape recorders etc. There are 12 children who have purchased pen and papers for their education. Allocation of the income for saving is the main mode of expending the income of 03 children. The number of child workers who spend their earnings on pleasure activities such as watching musical shows, attending carnivals, going on trips etc. is only 02.

Table 05 – Nature and Purposes of Expenditure

Nature of Expenditure	Number	Percentage
Purchasing daily needs of the family	26	46.4
Spending on family furtherance	13	23.2
Buying pen and papers for education	12	21.4
Savings	03	5.4
Other	02	3.6
Total	16	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018.

Problems Faced by Child Workers

Even though tourism-related employment opportunities of the study area has contributed to the betterment of the children in the region, many negative impacts can be observed. Owing to the various facts, children of Ampara district who have been employed in different employments have faced several difficulties and problems. In an overall concern, these problems could be categorized into several groups. The main problematic issue in this regard is employing children is against the labour law of the country. Owing to this reason, they always work with consternation and this was considered by their employers as an advantage to pay lower salaries and wages without EPF or ETF. As a result, child workers are not paid a fair salary. All most all children (56) included in the sample face this problem severely. Sometimes, they have to work long working hours such as 10 to 12 for a less daily payment. This problematic issue too is a common to all child workers of the study area. On the other hand, they work in insecure working environments where they are vulnerable to exploitation even

physically, mentally and sexually. At the same time, there is a risk of being exposed to drugs and alcohol.

5. CONCLUSION

As discussed above, it is clear that the utilization of child labour in the tourism industry of Ampara district has many facets. Some of the children of this region are being employed in formal and informal sectors such as baggage carriers, construction assistants, helpers of recreational activities, janitors, watchers, labours, beach cleaners and beach boys and sellers of different items. A critical examination of child workers revealed that no female child workers engaged in any type of employment which is due to a cultural reason. Male workers belonged to all three nationalities viz. Sinhala, Muslims and Tamil where Tamil auto numbered others. All the children employed in different employments are in the age range between 15 to 17. Their educational background differs from literate level up to the maximum of Ordinary Level. Though there is a wide array of employment in which the children of the region are employed, the most common form of utilizing child labour in the study area is as sellers of different items including sellers of worship and votive items. Apart from, many have been employed as collaborators or helpers of the recreational sector. It is due to the fact that, the most common tourist activities of this region are associated with beach and sea-based recreational activities. In many of the occasions, the children of the study area are employed in different jobs on a part-time basis. Different reasons including the economic burdens at home, compelling of the parents, personal decision and willingness, the influence of friends and colleagues and readiness to earn money have been impacted to initiate a job in the

field of tourism. Out of this, economic burdens at home are the major reasons which draw the children to these jobs. When the different places of work of the child labours of Ampara district are considered beach and the vicinity of Arugambay, Ulla and Panama are the most popular sites. Engaging in different activities, the child workers are able to earn an income ranging from Rs. 3,000 to 15,000 and they have spent this income on different purposes including family furtherance, purchasing daily needs for the family and pen and papers for their education. Although there are many advantages of employing child labours, it has contributed to generating different issues in the study area. The field survey revealed that many problems have presently been aroused. Therefore there is a pressing need to carrying out an in-depth study to investigate these problems in detail. Due attention, active policies and plans are timely and significant to alleviate the problems associated and absorb this important human resource into the tourism industry when they complete the relevant age.

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