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Impact of Development-induced Displacement on Children: A Study in Jammu Region

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ABSTRACT

India focused on various development projects like dams, power plants, highways, etc. after independence. Proverbially regarded as symbols of modern India, they enabled the country to kickstart a forward journey towards self-reliance and economic development, especially through the Five Year Plans. While an array of development projects laid the foundations of a prosperous nation, they also resulted in large scale displacement of citizens who faced loss of land and livelihood without much relief due to lacunae in land acquisition laws prevailing in the country. Children were worst hit due to development-induced displacement. The present study focuses on the impact on displacement on the education of the displaced children and other concomitant socio-economic fallouts on them. Based on empirical survey carried out in Pul Doda region in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the study captures the impact of displacement on children due to construction of a dam. The results of the study indicate that forced displacement has led to loss of learning, morbidity, and forced labour to complement the dwindling family income.

Keywords: Development Projects, Displacement, Children, Jammu & Kashmir, India

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INTRODUCTION

The present study examines how the displaced children face socio-economic and educational problems after being forcibly displaced from their ancestral homestead due to Baglihar dam project in Jammu and Kashmir. Baglihar dam is a symbol of economic prosperity of the nation as well as the region. It generates electricity, irrigation facilities, and employment opportunity for thousands of people. But the dam which is boon for a majority of population, turn out to be bane for those who are forcibly displaced from their ancestral land.

Post-independence, Indian government mainly focused on economic development which was in the shape of dams, mega dams, mining, factories, and irrigations projects. All these development projects led to an increase in the Gross National Product (GNP) of India. However, the fallout of such projects was not so pleasant for those who were subjected to involuntary displacement (Mohanty, 2005; Kumar and Mishra, 2018). There is always a dilemma about how to ensure development of a nation without causing discomfort to the citizen resulting from development-induced displacement which is invariably involuntary. At the same time, a country cannot do well without such development projects. Also, the developmental projects are invariably required as they improve quality of lives of people and provide employment to them and supply them better services (Kaushal, 2009). But unfortunately, the development projects become doom for the displaced families who lose their ancestral property, homestead, social relation, kinship structure, family structure in the process.

Indeed, displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation have been serious concern for all developing countries including India. Since independence, large number of hydropower projects have been constructed and more than 50 million people have been displaced from their homestead while only 25% of them have been rehabilitated (Saxena, 2008). Victims of development-induced displacement are dependent on land, water, and natural resources such as forest for their survival. After displacement, these people are rendered totally helpless (Mohanty, 2005). Several studies have been conducted on dams and involuntary displacement. All these studies point towards the fact that involuntary displacement forcibly pushes the people into new social environment to which they are alien (Nayk, 2013).

Children are the ones who pay very heavy price for displacement. In the absence of any other alternative, most of the displaced families engage in seasonal migration due to which their children are denied access to education, health, child welfare (Parasuraman, 1993). The previous studies have clearly shown that there is hardly any state intervention to mitigate impact of displacement on children even though they are the worse affected by development projects like dams. What happen with their social life after displacement? Such a question has been largely ignored.

The present study focuses on displaced children in Pul Doda region of Jammu and Kashmir, and the impact of displacement on their educational, and socio-economic life. Education plays very important role in developing and empowering a nation. Educated nation automatically marches towards development more rapidly than the uneducated one. Educated children are a symbol of developed and happy nation. If the children are well educated, then the future of that society and nation is very bright. Though a lot of work has been done on displacement and its consequences, but one can hardly find any literature on impact of displacement on children. During the whole process of displacement and resettlement, the children are the ones who remain unnoticed. The whole family after displacement gets busy in getting monetary compensation from the respective government and as a result, the children are totally neglected. They are the ones who suffer most and receive nothing except misery during the whole process of displacement and resettlement. Their education does not receive any priority from the family, and they are forced to work and contribute towards family income.

Displacement benefits only a certain section of society and proves disastrous for most of the displaced people, especially children and women. The literacy rate among displaced children reduces sharply as the school dropout increase after displacement. The government also does not pay any attention towards the displaced children and compensation is only given to the whole family. There is no provision to address the educational, health, and socio-economic problem of displaced children. In Pul Doda region of Jammu and Kashmir, the brunt of development is felt most by the displaced children. The lack of uniform resettlement and rehabilitation policy further increase the problems faced by displaced children.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The present paper was focused on educational impact on displaced children and socio-economic problems which they face after displacement from their ancestral homestead. For this purpose, we selected Pul Doda village which was submerged by Chenab River because of Baglihar dam project. Before dam construction, Pul Doda was a business hub in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It falls on the national highway between Botate and Kishtwar district. People were mostly dependent upon their business and there was no other alternative source of income. Most of the people were landless and their income was totally dependent upon their business. No doubt, the state government has given monetary compensation to displaced people, but that compensation did not fulfill their needs. The social life of displaced children got more affected after displacement because of the lack of resettlement and rehabilitation policy.

Data was collected from the field in Pul Doda of Jammu region, following a purposive sampling method and snowball technique. In purposive sampling method, the researcher purposely choose person who, in his/her judgement, possess appropriate characteristic required of the sample members, and are thought to be relevant to the research topic and are conveniently available to him/her. In snowball technique, the researcher begins the research with a few respondents who are known and accessible to him/her. Subsequently, these respondents give other names who meet the criteria of research, who in turn give more new names (Ahuja, 2014).

In the present study, semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect relevant data and responses from the respondents. The main objective of the research conducted was to examine the living condition of displaced children after their involuntary displacement. Most of the displaced children were scattered in different locations. So, it was difficult to cover maximum number of respondents. The study has taken 120 respondents out of the total 300 displaced persons for conducting the research which is 40 percent of the target population.

FINDING OF THE STUDY

Education and Displaced Children

Education plays an important role for all-round development of individual personality. It helps significantly in the socialization of children. Without education neither human beings can develop their personality, nor can they adjust to society. In the present study, it has been observed that the displaced children got affected due to the loss of education after being displaced due the Baglihar dam project.

When the displacement takes place then children are worst affected because the displaced family is not in that position to handle the situation. It has been seen that displaced family only focuses on compensation and resettlement issues. Even the state government has given only monetary compensation to displaced family. What about the social life of their children? The displaced children become more vulnerable group among displaced family. In the Pul Doda of Jammu and Kashmir, it has been seen that most of the children were adversely affected by the displacement. Displaced children were affected due to loss of schooling, as educational institutes also got submerged in the river Chenab. The social structure of the Pul Doda was totally affected due to the submergence by Baglihar dam project. The affected family were not able to continue their children's study due to the low economic status.

Table 1: Education impact on school going children before after displacement.

Education	Education Before displacement		After displacement	
	Respondents	(%)	Respondents	(%)
Primary	18	(15.00)	14	(11.67)
Middle and high school	44	(37.00)	26	(21.66)
HSS and Graduation	50	(41.00)	23	(19.17)
PG	08	(07.00)		
Nil			57	(47.50)
Total	120	(100)	120	(100)

Source: Field Survey

Data shows that the education level tremendously decreased among displaced children particularly from 8th grade to graduation. Earlier there were both government and private schools and everyone went to the school, because of their family income. Before the displacement 37% children were studying from middle to high school while 41% of them doing higher secondary to graduation programmes. However, after the displacement, only 19.17% of the displaced children were able to continue their higher studies. Further, 47.5% of displaced children left their education because of the poverty and the living standard of their family. Their families were unable to send them to school. Unfortunately, children started working in shops to contribute to their family income.

Education has been adversely affected among children of displaced families. It has been seen that the girls' education got more affected as their family members do not allow them to go for higher education in Jammu and other places. Most of the girls left their education after 12th grade. Displaced family are living in rented house and it is difficult for them to bear the cost of education in terms of collage fee, study materials, bus fare, uniform, etc. It has been also observed that majority of the displaced girls are forced to leave their education after pass high secondary school as there is no higher education facility at the resettlement site. Girls' parents are not able to continue their higher education due to low economic status of the family. Further, due to the forced displacement in Pul Doda, the displaced children face lot of socio-economic issues such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social stigma, etc.

One of the displaced children reported: "Before the displacement, I was studying in 10th class in a private school and my father was doing business in Pul Doda. My family and I were living quite happily, and I never faced any kind of problem. But in 2007-08, after displacement my education got affected, suddenly our social environment got disrupted, everything submerged in the river Chenab. I left my education and started working in Jammu factory to contribute to my family income. My family was not in that position to continue supporting my studies. My sister also left her education in 12th grade due to low economic status of my family. Now I am working in Jammu since last 8 years" (Ravi Kumar, now 24-year-old).

Table 2: Reason for discontinuing education

Response	Respondents	(%)
Low economic status	38	(66.67)
Lack of higher education facility and high cost of education	11	(19.30)
Due to Family responsibility	08	(14.03))
Total	57	(100)

Source: Field Survey

From the above table, 38 (66.67%) respondents revealed that they left their education due to the low economic status of the family. And 11 (19.30%) respondents reported that they left their education due to the lack of higher education facility and high cost of education. The study has further shown that 08 (14.03%) respondents stated that due to family responsibility they were not able to continue their higher education. From the above table it is seen that in Pul Doda of Jammu and Kashmir, the educational opportunities have significantly decreased among displaced children. The socio-economic condition of displaced children is so deplorable that they are forced to work as a child labor in different places.

One of the displaced girls revealed: “I had to discontinue my education after 12th class due to displacement. Earlier my family happily supported my education due to good economic status. But after displacement, due to the low economic status and lack of higher education facility at the resettlement site, I had to quit my education. There is only one-degree college in her district. Seats in the college are limited and students are more in numbers. Hence, it is difficult to get admission. The students who are well-off, go to Jammu city for higher studies. But my family cannot bear the burden of my education in Jammu as they lost their main source of income after displacement. My father works as a helper in a wholesale shop and earn hardly 6,000 rupees per month which is not enough for my family. I was thus forced to discontinue my education and work with my mother at home” (Sunita Bala, now 26-year-old).

It is obvious that a good number of children had to discontinue their education due to resource crunch arising out of the involuntary displacement. They not only lost educational

opportunities but also faced depression and alienation. It has been observed that most of the displaced family were doing petty business after displacement and did not earn enough to support the education of their children. Sometimes the situation became so bad that it was difficult for them to arrange for the two meals per day for their children. In such condition, the education of children lost its priority among displaced family. They hardly thought about educating their children. The compensation process was so long and tiring that the displaced families totally lost any focus on the education of their children. Moreover, lack of educational facilities and costly higher education further led to the discontinuation of education among displaced children. Some of the families were forced to send their children at different places to work as child laborer. Overall, it can be seen that after displacement the loss of education not only increase the illiteracy rate among displaced children but totally crippled their social life. Education as an institution totally broke down after displacement. Loss of education also resulted in the emergence of new social problems among displaced children such as the issue of child labor.

SOCIAL IMPACT ON DISPLACED CHILDREN

Health issues

Health is one of the important indicators for the standard of living. If a person has good health, he/she can earn his/her livelihood. Apart from the economic status, mental and physical health is a major indicator of the standard of living as well-being of people (Mahapatra, 1999). There have been many incidents of health-related issues in Pul Doda. The health problem of the displaced persons increased day by day. The displaced children have many illnesses such as stomach problems, fever, malaria, diathermia, and psychological depression and stress. Diseases have also increased due to stagnant waterlogging near the river Chenab. There are no pukka roads and drainage system in the resettlement site. All these resulted in water logging, messy roads, and increased mosquitoes, especially in the rainy reason. Children's health has declined due to unavailability of sufficient food and low nutrition intake. This is particularly the case with people below poverty line. It has also been seen that there is an increased level of depression and stress due to worsening economic condition and income insecurity.

Earlier children did not face any kind of health problems. They were used to good nutritional food such as milk, meat, chicken, butter, desi ghee, fruits, etc. But after the displacement, the food habits changed because of the decline in family income. Displacement forced them to live in a low economic condition, where every little thing has to be brought from the market. In native place, they used livestock for personal consumption as well as business purposes. The study observed that the health among young children was mostly affected because of the lack of safe environment, safe drinking water, lack of nutritional food, lack of health facilities. It has been seen that those families who are living near river Chenab faced more problems due to the waterborne diseases.

Table 3: Health problem faced by children after displacement

Displaced children	Respondents	(%)
Depression and regular headache	15	(26.32)
Typhoid and malaria	18	(31.58)
Regular back pain weakness, and malnutrition	24	(42.10)
Total	57	(100)

Source: Field Survey (Sample respondents are taken only who are working as child labor)

The study has found that after being forcibly displaced from their native village, the displaced children faced lot of health issues at the resettlement site. They were not properly resettled. Majority of the displaced families and their children were living in rented houses at different places. Data shows that 15 (26.32%) children were suffering from psychological depression with regular headache after being forced to drop out of school and the loss of source of family income. There were 18 (31.58%) children who were suffering from the typhoid and malaria since they were working in unsuitable environment at different places. Most of the children who were living near river Chenab faced lot of health issues due to water-borne diseases such as malaria, diahoria typhoid, etc. The study further reported that 24 (42.10%) children were suffering from regular back pain, weakness, and malnutrition due to long hours of daily work in different places such as Narayana shops, sand collection from the river Chenab, working in crusher, etc. The health conditions of these children deteriorated further due to long working hours without appropriate breaks. It has also been seen that some of the displaced children

were suffering from malnutrition because of lack of balanced diet. Their families are poor and as such are not able to provide proper food to their children.

Here the displaced women have taken into consideration (case study) as her children was unable to give proper response of the questions. One of the displaced women revealed various health issues faced by her children: "Earlier I had two cows, 8 sheep, and 2 goats, I used their milk for my children, I and my family did not face any nutritional problems in native place. I also earned 10,000 rupees per month by selling milk in the market. I always cooked meat and chicken twice in a week because of family income. But after getting displaced, the food habits have changed in our family, now we cook simple food like dal and chapatti. I am totally dependent upon the income of my husband. He runs a petty business and earns 4,000 rupees per month. It is difficult for us to get good nutritional food due to price rise. My two children suffer nutritional diseases due to the lack of nutritional food. Sometimes we do not have meals twice a day. I am always worried about my children's health and am living under depression. Since last 10 years, I am living near river Chenab under constant fear" (Jabeena Banno, now 37 years).

From the above finding, it may be observed that after most children are facing health issues since they lost their family income, social support, social relation, education, etc. Displaced children are always neglected by the government and project authority. The government provides monetary compensation to the whole family, not to individual members of the family, least of all children.

Child labor

Child labourers are exploited, exposed to hazardous work conditions, and paid a pittance for their long hours of work. India has the largest number of child workers in the world. They are employed in many industries and trades, including garments, footwear, brick kilns, stainless steel, hotels, textile shops, carpets weaving, lead mining, stone quarrying, and tea gardens (Ahuja, 2014). In addition, nearly 85% of child labourers in India are hard to reach, invisible and excluded, as they work largely in the unorganized sector both in rural and urban areas (Ibid).

The study has focused on child labour as it become a serious issue among displaced families. It has been observed that after the displacement, displaced families pushed their children into child labour to augment their family income.

Table 3: Working as Child labour after displacement

Response	Respondents	(%)
Yes	57	(47.5)
No	63	(52.5)
Total	120	(100)

Source: Field Survey

The present study has found that due to the backwardness of the area, no child rights activist was seen, and media attention was also not there. After the displacement, the problem of child labour increased tremendously among displaced families due to poverty and high unemployment rate among the affected people. Children were forcibly pushed into child labour in different places.

The study has found that in Pul Doda 57 (47.5%) respondents reported that child labor increased after displacement. There were 63 (52.5%) respondents who said that none of the children worked as child labourer after displacement. Displaced children were working in different places, such as tea stall, big shops, road construction, crusher stone, and sand collecting from the river Chenab to contribute towards family income. The study found that the issue of child labor emerged among displaced families. Only a few respondents openly talked about child labour and most of the respondents denied the existence of child labour. Many of the displaced family were not ready to discuss the child labor among their children, though the study found that some of the families forced their children to work as child laborers at different places. They did not pay attention towards the education of their children but were mainly interested in increasing the income of their family. It was very difficult to collect data regarding child labor as most of the families did not disclose anything about it. Sending their children to work rather than to school is very embarrassing for the displaced parents. Hence, people were reluctant to talk about it openly. But the social phenomenon of

child labour was observed among displaced families. The family members sent their children to work mainly to enhance their family income.

Table 4: Type of work after displacement

Type of work	Respondents	(%)
Working in grocery store and <i>Dhabas</i>	15	(26.32)
Working in stone crusher	14	(24.57)
Working as sand collector, motor mechanic shops and others	28	(49.11)
Total	57	(100)

Note: (63 respondents are not taken here as they are not working as a child labor).

The child labourers were found to be working in different sectors. The present study found that 15 (26.32%) displaced children were working in grocery store and *dhabas* after displacement at the resettlement site. There were 14 (24.57%) children who were working in a stone crusher on daily wages and earned hardly 5,000 to 7,000 rupees per month to support their family income. There were 57 (49.11%) children working as a sand collector near river Chenab and earned 4,000 to 6,000 rupees per month to contribute towards family income. Some of the displaced children reported that they were working in motor mechanic shops. Majority of the displaced children reported that they were living in rented house with their parents and helped them in running the household.

One of the displaced people reported: “In Pul Doda, child labour has become a serious issue due to forced displacement. Before the displacement, children were engaged in their education and child labour was absent. Parents earned satisfactorily to maintain their family. But after 2008, when the displacement took place in Pul Doda, a large number of families lost their livelihood and their children became the victim of child labour. After the displacement, a number of children have started working in *Dhabas*, mechanical shops, factories, and also as bus conductors, street vendors, attendants in tea stall, etc. to contribute to their family income. These children are also facing health problem, because of the unsuitable working condition like huge rush in big *Dhabas*, dust in stone crusher, etc. The atmosphere to which

they are exposed at their workplace is heavily affecting their health. Displaced families are living under below poverty category and their children have also left their schools because of poverty and unemployment. In most cases, impoverishment itself forces the parents to put their children's to work full time to maintain the family income" (Gopal Das, now 55-year-old person).

Testimony of a young respondent is quite alarming: "Before displacement, I was studying 6th standard in a school in my native village and my father was doing a small business. At my home, I have two sisters and two brothers. After displacement I had to discontinue my education as our source of income was lost. Now my father is working as a security guard in Jammu city in a factory and he earns hardly 8,000 rupees. He sends 4,000 rupees which is not enough for us as we are living on rented house since last 10 years. I am also working for 10 hours per day in a shop and earn 4,000 rupees to contribute towards my family income. Also, there are so many children who are working in different places to contribute to their family income. Our district is backward and there is no employment opportunities here. We are forcibly working in a miserable condition (Javed Ahmed, now 16-year-old).

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Loss of childhood life among displaced children

Focus group discussion was conducted among displaced children in the age group of 10 -17 years to discuss their childhood life. It was revealed that children before displacement had very happy childhood memories and they used to play and study together with their friends. They had to go to school every day and learn new things to enhance their knowledge. Their social life was stable, and they lived happily like any other normal children. But after displacement, life of these children was totally crippled. Many of them had to discontinue their education and thus had to leave their schools. Their friends also did not play with them anymore as most of these displaced children started working outside in different places. The happy faces of the children could no longer be seen and most of the time they were busy in earning money for their family. Most of the children revealed that in the age of studying and playing they were forced to work as child labourer and took the responsibility of their family. They lost their childhood. They no longer felt like children, but as adults fulfilling their family

responsibility. Most of the children had the same story to tell about lost childhood and loss of innocence and finally being initiated to the trials and tribulations of the adult world.

Further, in focus group discussion, the health issue of the children was also discussed particularly of those working as child laborer in stone crushing unit, brick kilns, and sand collection agencies. Most of the children reported that they were working in unhealthy condition and as such their health was deteriorating day by day. Those who were working in stone crushing unit and brick kilns informed that they were suffering from Tuberculosis (TB) and other chest-related diseases. Even the family of displaced children did not pay any attention towards the health of these children and were mainly interested in the money which these children earned. Some of the children even faced verbal abuse at the workplace. They were harassed and exploited by their owners.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that displacement has totally snatched the childhood life of these innocent children. They were totally neglected by the project authority and respective government, and nothing was done to improve their social life. Not only have they lost their childhood but also the educational opportunities. In absence of any interventions, they might lose their lives as well due to their deplorable health conditions.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the above analysis that displacement is the biggest consequence of development projects. It creates poverty among displaced people as they lose their land, home, income sources, and natural resources. It directly affects the social life of people. In the name of national development, millions of people are forcibly displaced from their ancestral homestead. Children –the future of the country, are the worse affected by the development-induced displacement. They are, invariably, forced to discontinue their education. The current study found that most displaced children had to drop out of schools or colleges after being forcibly displaced from their native place. The educational levels have tremendously decreased among displaced children as their parents are not in a position to continue their schooling. Majority of displaced families are living under impoverished condition. The health related issues increased among displaced children due to the

psychological depression, lack of good nutritional food, and lack of basic facilities, lack of source of income.

It has been observed that due to dam displacement, the childhood life of displaced children got tremendously affected as neither the family nor the state government took any kind of responsibility to secure their future. Majority of the displaced families have given much importance to compensation and resettlement issues and ignored the social life of displaced children. In the absence of uniform rehabilitation and resettlement policy, displaced people and their children will always face survival issues.

SUGGESTION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION

- The resettlement and rehabilitation policy should be prepared in such a way that displaced children can get proper benefits from the government/project authorities.
- Both the centre and state government should work together and share economic burden of compensation towards displaced people.
- The centre and state government should provide all education facilities to displaced children at the resettlement site and provide special scholarship scheme to displaced children for their education so that they do not face any issue in future.
- The project authority should also provide free higher education and medical facilities to displaced children.
- The special skill training programme should be provided to all displaced children by the government or project authority so that in future they can earn their livelihood.

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