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Child Labour And Maternal Bargaining Power in India: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Child labour endures as a critical social and policy issue in India, shaped not only by poverty and economic necessity but also by the family structure and parental influence. The review systematically maps existing studies on child labour and family dynamics in India using the PRISMA methodology to ensure a thorough and transparent assessment. Central to this analysis is the often-overlooked role of mothers' bargaining power within the household. The review finds compelling evidence that when mothers hold greater bargaining power over household decisions and resources, children are more likely to remain in school and less likely to enter the labour force. However, a consistent gap persists in how current studies measure and address the influence of maternal decision-making on child labour. By systematically identifying these gaps and assessing the robustness of existing evidence, this study offers a roadmap for future research and actionable policy recommendations. The findings emphasise that empowering mothers is not only essential to breaking the cycle of child labour but also vital for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in India.

Keywords: Child Labour, Household Decision Making, India, Maternal Bargaining Power, Systematic Review