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**The Effects of Child Labour on Childhood
and Adult Health: Evidence from India**

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The Effects of Child Labour on Childhood and Adult Health: Evidence from India

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Abstract

Child labour was a huge problem in post-colonial India and various measures were taken to address the issue, often with perverse effects. Previously existing datasets did not allow drawing connections between child labour and later life consequences. The Longitudinal Ageing Study in India of 2017-18 allows us to fill the gap. This paper attempts to gauge the effects of child labour on health in childhood and adulthood for those who worked in childhood in post-colonial India. The paper uses control function probit models for discrete health variables and two stage least squares estimation with instrumental variables for continuous health variables. It finds that individuals who worked in childhood are significantly more likely to have been bedridden for more than a month and missed school in childhood. As adults, they are shorter and more likely to be smokers. They have lower body mass index, poorer grip strength and worse self-rated health. Nevertheless, the negative association does not hold for retrospective reports of childhood health, mental health, and drinking in adulthood. The paper argues that from a normative point of view, it is crucial to address the health challenges faced by older adults who were subjected to unequal opportunities in childhood. Since the issue of child labour is still of raging importance in India, with 3.9% of the total child population working according to the 2011 Census, the findings have policy relevance for present times as well.

JEL Classification: J13, J20, O15

Keywords: Child labour; self-rated health; height; body mass index; grip strength; depression; health behaviours

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