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Title paper[1]:

ATTITUDES OF HINDUSTANI MOTHERS
TOWARDS CHILD LABOUR
The Case of Nickerie – Suriname 2017

Abstract

To gain insight in the hidden causes of child labour among the Hindustani, research is conducted regarding the attitudes of Hindustani mothers. Although the Surinamese government set several protection and educational policies to eradicate child labour, 9.6% of the children still conduct one form or another of prohibited labour (MICS, 2010). ILO (2013) has indicated poverty, family size and urbanization as causes of child labour, but poverty remains pivotal. Since a couple of years the economic situation in Suriname is deteriorating. Not all who live in poverty let their children conduct child labour. According to the current research the attitudes of parents towards child labour is distinctive, since it is believed that social behavior stems from attitudes. In this study the multicomponent model of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (2005) are used to examine the attitudes of Hindustani mothers with no or low income. In this qualitative study, in-depth interviews were used to confirm the expectation that not only the socioeconomic determinants will show up as root causes for the attitude formation, but also the experienced childhood and culture of the parents. The study focuses specifically on the Hindustani people of the West coast of Suriname.

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[1] Note: Readers should take into account that this paper is work in progress. Therefore, the author requests, that no part of this paper will be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means.

1. Introduction

This paper is written in the context of the international conference *"Challenging Perspectives on the Indian Diaspora 2017"*[2], to be held at the International Institute of Social Sciences, The Hague (The Netherlands) from 05-07 October 2017.

It is estimated that worldwide 150 million children are engaged in child labour (UNICEF, 2016). The exact magnitude is not certain, due to the difficulty to register hidden 'cases' of the phenomenon and due to the lack of a globally applicable definition. Although, the United Nations (UN) proposed a clear definition, state parties are free to formulate their *'own'* definition. Child *labour* should not be confused with child *work*, in which it is assumed that the work itself has an educative component and that the work does not interfere with the development of the child. In this study the UNICEF definition of child labourers is adopted: *"Children are classified as child labourers when they are either too young to work (i.e. below 14 years of age) or are involved in hazardous activities that may compromise their physical, mental, social or educational development." (UNICEF, 2016)*

In 1993 the government of Suriname ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has set several social protection and educational policies to eradicate child labour. Recent data shows that 4% of the Surinamese children (aged 5 – 14 years) conducted child labour in the period between 2009 and 2015 (UNDP, 2016). According to the ILO (n.d.), most prevalent economic sectors in which child labour occurs in Suriname are agriculture, fisheries, timber & mining (36.5%), vending of products (19.8%) and services (24%). To address child labour several causes have been indicated, including: poverty, family size, lack of educational opportunities, composition of the household and urbanization. Yet, poverty still remains the main cause. Since the official devaluation of the Surinamese currency in 2015 the economic situation has deteriorated sharply (Central Bank of Suriname, n.d.). Therefore an increase in poverty can be expected, with a consequent increase in child labour.

To fight child labour, Suriname adopted the Conventions No. 138 and No. 182 which have been suggested by the ILO (ILO, 2016). Furthermore, the National Children's Action Plan (National Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour [NCUK], 2015) and the Integrated Policy Plan for Children and Adolescents have been developed to tackle the phenomenon.

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[2] The conference is organized by the Foundation of the Hindustani Diaspora Chair, which is established at the Faculty of Humanities of VU University of Amsterdam.

The main focus of these suggestions seems to lay in the field of legislative measures & enforcement and education. These strategies to eradicate child labour do not take into account the attitude regarding child labour of the parent(s)[3].

Attitudes have a great influence on behavior (e.g. Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Therefore it is meaningful to involve people's attitudes in the elimination strategy.

Also, amongst others, attitudes are formed by culture (e.g. Berry & Poortinga, 2006). Suriname is usually defined as a multi-ethnical country. Although the different ethnic groups are well integrated in the Surinamese community, it is remarkable how these groups also hold on to their own traditions and culture. It is therefore assumed that the different traditions/cultures play an important role in the attitudes parents have regarding child rearing, and thus: child labour. Because generally mothers play a crucial role in child rearing, the focus in this study is on the Hindustani mothers.

The objective of this study therefore, is to get insight in the attitudes that Hindustani mothers have regarding child labour, through mapping which emotion one experiences when thinking about child labour, what (intended) behavior one shows with regard to child labour and what one thinks or knows about child labour. To gain insight in these attitudes of the parents the following research question is formulated:

What attitudes do Hindustani mothers have regarding child labour?

The next section gives an overview of the theoretical framework in which this research is carried out. The characteristics of Suriname and the Hindustani community are subject to section three. The description of the methodology and the final results of this study are respectively presented in section four and five. The last section (six) concerns about the conclusions on the attitudes towards child labour of the Hindustani mothers. In the closing paragraph critical points for further research are discussed.

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[3] In this paper were is written 'parent', can also be read caregiver, guardian, etc.

2. Theoretical Framework

Attitudes are considered to be relatively enduring organizations of beliefs, feelings and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant events. According to the Cognition – Affect – Behavior (CAB) theory of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998), attitudes are composed of the way one thinks about a social event (cognition), the emotion one feels towards that social event (affect) and what the past or intended behavior is regarding the social event (behavior). In this study this tripartite CAB-model is used to examine the underlying attitudes of mothers. For a more in-depth explanation of the effect of attitudes on the behavior, Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (2005) is consulted.

Ajzen considered that attitudes toward behavior stem from the individual's expected consequence of that behavior (behavioral beliefs). The theory of planned behavior also suggests the influence of normative beliefs and control beliefs, on the intention of the individual. In this study culture is explained as influenced by the individuals biological, ecological and political context (Berry, 2006).

To sum up, the mediating factors (beliefs) all influence the development of the intention for the behavior of the individual, which ultimately has an effect on the actual behavior and in this case on the prevalence of child labour (figure 2.1).
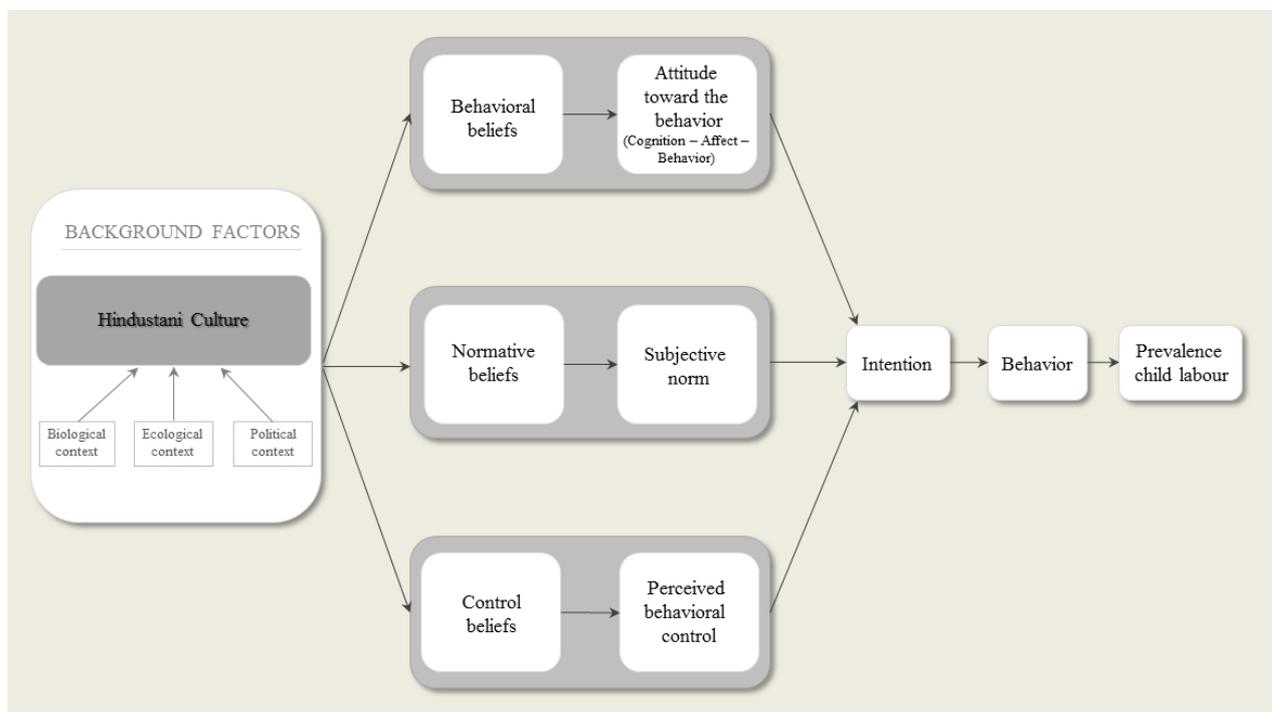

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework

3. Characteristics of Suriname and the Hindustani community

Suriname is a small nation situated in the northeast coast of South America with the neighboring countries: Guyana, French Guyana and Brazil. The vast majority of the population of 567.291 (Central Bank of Suriname, 2017), live in the coastal area (94.6%), as most part of the country, the interior, is Amazon rainforest.

Due to the recession, the poverty rate of 7.6% (2016) is rising as well as the unemployment rate of 7.8% (UNDP, 2016). In terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) Suriname holds, with an index of 0.73, the position of 97 out of 187 (UNDP, 2016). Although this can be considered as a high human development score worldwide, Suriname scores less compared to most CARICOM states.

The Hindustani community is by far the largest ethnic group of Suriname (27.4%, n = 148.443; ABS, 2014). Most live in the coastal districts Paramaribo (37.2%), Wanica (34.9%) and Nickerie (14.0%).

The Hindustani are descendants of the Indian immigrants. Because of the abolition of slavery in 1863 there was a lack of labourers on the plantations. For this reason Indian labourers were recruited in India to work at the plantations of Suriname. The Indian immigrants were so called 'free' labourers; still work conditions and payment were very poor. It is said (e.g. Choenni, 2016) that most immigrants left their country for socio-economic reasons; like poverty, unemployment and social status (caste system). They wanted to start a new and better life, and were willing to work hard for it.

Choenni (2016) describes that during the contract period a lot of contractors did not value education for their children. Although in Suriname school attendance was a compulsory since 1878, Hindustani children did not always attended school. Furthermore, Choenni (2016) describes that parents were indifferent about school attendance. In their opinion everybody, thus also children, had to earn money. This is also supported by the school registrations of Hindustani children (7-12 years of age) of 1914.

Table 3.1 shows that in 1914 urban Suriname significant more Hindustani boys (n = 147) were enrolled in school than girls (n = 23). This significant difference between boys and girls is even more prominent seen in the enrollment of pupils of the districts; boys: n = 510 versus girls: n = 55.

Table 3.1 Amount of enrolled pupils (boys and girls) in urban and rural Suriname 1914 versus 2010

		Total schools	**Total pupils**		**Hindustani pupils**	
			Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
1914	Urban area *(Paramaribo)*	63	4.443	2.264	147	23
	Rural area *(Wanica, Nickerie, Coronie, Saramacca, Commewijne, Marowijne, Para, Brokopondo, Sipaliwini)*	41	1.661	985	510	55

Source: Choenni (2016); schematic representation by author

Nickerie

The district of Nickerie has a population of n = 34.233 and the district capital Nieuw-Nickerie houses n = 12.818 inhabitants (ABS, 2016). Although, most (94.2%) have the Surinamese nationality, almost six percent has another nationality (amongst others Guyanese, Dutch and Chinese). As a whole Suriname (27.4%, n = 148.443; ABS, 2014), and even more so in Nickerie (n = 20.724; 61.5%), the largest ethnic group are the Hindustani.

Figure 3.1 shows that among the Hindustani, males and females are fairly distributed. The figure also shows that the most prominent age categories for women are 15-19 (n = 919), 25-29 (n = 830) and 45-49 (n = 817); and for men 40-44 (n = 941), 25-29 (n = 937) and 15-19 (n = 934). Indicating that the largest group is young to middle-aged and belongs to the active population (15 – 64 years of age).
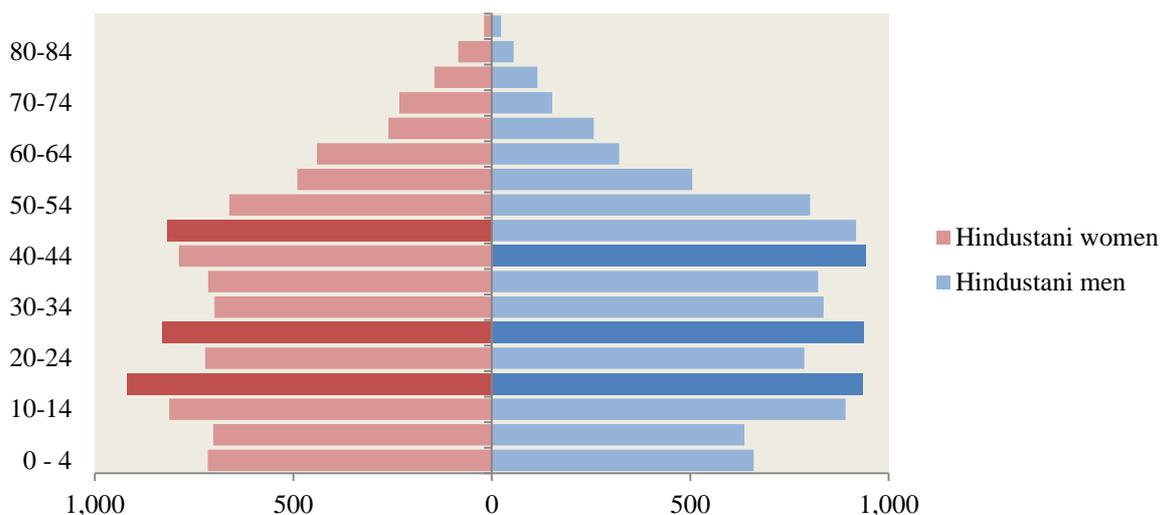
The Hindustani of Nickerie are typically active in ISIC section A (agriculture, forestry and fishing; n = 1.653). The cultivation of rice (padie) is traditionally considered to be the most important agricultural activity in Nickerie (e.g. Choenni, 2016; Budding', 2012; Speckmann, 1962).

4. Methods

Sample

For this study informants were deployed to recruit participants. Hindustani mothers were recruited (through the snowball effect) in the district of Nickerie. Neighborhoods with low socio-economic status residents and/or agricultural activities were visited. For this study fourteen (n = 14) Hindustani mothers of children aged between 5 and 17 years were interviewed.

The age of the women was between 23 and 48 years ($\bar{x}$ = 37 year). Most participants (n = 9) adhered the Hindu religion. Furthermore, three (n = 3) participants have been converted to Christianity; these women were raised following the Hindu religion though. Also, two (n = 2) Islamic women were interviewed. The mothers who participated had one to six children ($\bar{x}$ = 3 children), of which at least one child was between 5 and 17 years old.

Most mothers (n = 8) finished compulsory education (elementary school[4]), two (n = 2) of these women finished even secondary school for juniors.

Noteworthy is that three of the women (n = 3) who finished compulsory education wanted to continue with secondary school, but were not able because: the family had a lack of finances; she was not allowed to continue school in Paramaribo (approximately 230 km away) or because she had to help in the household. The mean age at which one stopped with formal education was $\bar{x}$ = 13.6 years of age.

The majority of the participants (n = 10) did not had an occupation. The other four participants were all shop clerks of Chinese supermarkets; with which they earned between SRD[5] 800,- and SRD 1.500[6] per month.

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[4] In Suriname compulsory education is for children aged 5 – 12
[5] Surinamese dollars
[6] This is equivalent to between 107,- and 200,- US dollars at the average exchange rate of 7.50 in 2017. In Suriname the average national income per capita per month is SRD 3.004,- which is equivalent to approximately US dollars 400,-.

Materials and method

To examine the attitudes of parents in-depth-interviews - with informed consent - were taken. Several icons were used to make it easier for the participants to respond, especially for participants who turned out not to be very responsive.

To finalize the interview, the participants had to fill out a short questionnaire to collect their demographic information and received their financial compensation.

5. Results

Behavioral beliefs and attitude towards child labour

The most mentioned possible benefits for letting a child conduct child labour are extra income (n = 6), helping parents (n = 5), good learning school (n = 3) and a better alternative than criminal behavior (e.g. stealing; n = 2). On the other side mothers believe that child labour takes away the childhood from children (n = 4) and can be dangerous for children (n = 3). Typically most participants (n = 10) believed that currently it would not be very beneficial for them to let their child(ren) work for extra household income. For them the most important issue is that their children get proper education, i.e. secondary school or higher. It is also of importance that children (especially sons) stay out of trouble, which is most probably achieved with school attendance.

Furthermore, it is explicitly argued (n = 12) that it is far more beneficial to let children go to school so that they can get a good job when they are grown-ups. In their opinion being educated is the easiest way to get a good job. In this sense it is seen as an investment for the future.

In addition several mothers (n = 3) think that education is even more important for girls than it is for boys. In their opinion being an educated woman will minimize the chance of being dependent on a man (i.e. husband). Noteworthy is that in particular the mothers of daughters who did not finish formal education, had no occupation and who had history of abuse had this opinion.

Just over a half of the mothers (n = 8) know that children younger than fourteen years of age are not allowed to work. Typically a proper age to start working is believed to be ate the age of twelve or thirteen. Also just a half over of the mothers (n = 8) have a negative affect towards child labour. With one exception (n = 1), at the moment of the interview none of the mothers let their children conduct child labour.

Normative beliefs and subjective norm

Regarding the norm children should in the first place obey their parents and secondly, if parents are in need, children should help if they're able to. This implies that in the first place parents, instead of the law, decide what children can and can't do. What is considered suitable for children is for the mothers determined by the rearing they got themselves (n = 10) and the religion they adhere (n = 4); the Muslim and Christian mothers explicitly stressed this. Furthermore, well behaved children are seen as children who do not argue with their parents, don't raise their voice and are polite to other people.

Then again, it's the parents obligation to treat their children well (i.e. with respect). It is remarkable that all mothers (n = 14) think a good mother is a mother who gives her child(ren) everything. This is what they think makes children happy.

Helping behavior from their offspring and obeying seems an important construct as most mothers (n = 10) regard this as their subjective norm in relation to child labour. In addition several mothers (n = 3) think it is important to be seen as a good mother by the community. Especially the mothers who adhere the Hindu religion had this opinion.

Control beliefs and perceived behavioral control

Data analysis shows that several situational factors that influence the control beliefs from the mothers, can be distilled. These factors can be categorized as factors from the past and present (table 1).

Table 1. Situational factors that influence control beliefs

Situational factors	
Past	*Present*
Poverty	Poverty
Little/no schooling parent(s)	High school fees
History of child labour parent(s)	High costs daily groceries
	Distance to school
	Single parent household
	Poor health condition parent(s)
	Marital problems

Eight out of fourteen mothers experience no behavioral control in their situation. They attribute the events they experience to God, their problematic marriage (e.g. alcohol abuse of husband) and/or the economic deteriorating of the country. These mothers believe they are not able to change or escape their situation, and in addition experience feelings of powerlessness. This in contrast to the mothers who believe they are in charge about their own lives.

These mothers think they will be creative (e.g. selling jewelry, sell home cooked meals and get a job) enough in case their situation will be more deteriorating.

Intention

Most mothers (n = 9) had no intention to let their child(ren) conduct child labour. Even if their economic situation would get worse due to for example loss of income or increased prices.

6. Discussion

The results indicate that the mothers of this study can be categorized into two groups: mothers with the intention to let their children conduct child labour (n = 5) and mothers to do so (n = 9). Regarding the behavioral beliefs mothers with an outspoken intention to let their children conduct child labour (when their economic situation further deteriorates) mention only benefits of child labour, as mothers with no intention mention only possible costs in particular for the child.

It seems to be of no significance whether the mother is aware of the the prohibition of child labour (cognition); the mothers with intention are likely to consciously violate the law to gain extra income (i.e. to be able to feed their children). Also mothers who did not know about the prohibition of child labour, but were informed about it during the interview, still reported this intention. The results showed that most mothers with a positive intention (n = 4) also had a positive affect towards child labour. This can be explained by the finding that they mentioned only benefits and no costs of child labour.

Typically the normative beliefs doesn't seem to explain the difference between the two groups of mothers. Both groups report the same kind of normative beliefs. On the other hand, the subjective norm between the two groups differed significantly; mothers with intention mentioned more than mothers without intention, that it is important that children help their parents when they are in need and that they should obey their parents. While the mothers with no intention mentioned more that parents are responsible to make their children independent adults.

All mothers (intention and no intention) reported factors that could possibly positive influence the control beliefs. Thus like the normative beliefs, in this study the control beliefs don't explain the differences between the two groups of mothers. Typically though, mothers with intention all reported no feelings of control of their (economic) situation, and furthermore all attributed their situation to external factors like a problematic marriage, being a single mother and the government (due to the deteriorating economic situation of Suriname).

In conclusion, different cultural factors seem to influence the attitude towards child labour and the intention to let a child conduct child labour at different levels. Whereas ecological and economic contexts typically influence the behavioral and control beliefs, and the political context (i.e. religion) mainly influences the normative beliefs. Also a positive affect regarding child labour seems to positively influence the likelihood to let children conduct child labour, while a positive cognition doesn't seem to negatively influence this likelihood. The careful implication can be made the efforts to eradicate child labour should not only focus on legislation and education, but also on the awareness of mothers of the (proven) negative effects child labour can have on their offspring.

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