

Responsible Sourcing and Child Labour in Mica Mining in South Asia

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Abstract: Global demand for mica is increasing due to heavy consumption of mica in the automobile, manufacturing, construction, and cosmetic industries. As per the Mica Market reports, the global Mica market is expanding and Asia Pacific dominates with a share of 40%. China is one of the leading producers and exporters of mica since 2020. Many popular mica companies are engaged in the production and extraction of mica and in other related business activities. Many beauty companies are under surveillance due to the involvement of child labour in mica mines. Unfortunately, many children are still engaged in mining work and many ‘ghost mines’ are functional in India and South Africa. This paper will present an overview of responsible mica sourcing, child labour in mica mines, related problems and their working conditions in South Asia. This article presents an bibliometric analysis of responsible sourcing and child labour in mica mines in the South Asian region.

Keywords: Responsible Sourcing, Ethical Mining, Ghost Mines,

Introduction: The 2020 ILO-UNICEF global estimates that approximately 23.6 million children and 7.4 million girls and 16.2 million boys were engaged in child labour in South Asia till 2020ⁱ. Post-pandemic, a substantial increase is noticed in child labour. Responsible mining is essential and demanded by consumers. Mica is used in many products, and many consumers are not even aware of the story behind the Mica mines. Many children are losing their lives and dropping out of school due to poor health caused by the Mining work. India and Madagascar are two largest exporters of Mica in the world. The majority of illegal and ghost mines in India are in two states, Bihar and Jharkhand. Mica is mostly used in cosmetics for a shimmering and shining look. The demand for clean beauty products is increasing in the world. WTO Agreements, Bilateral Agreements, Child Labour Standards always recommend a complete ban on child labour in the entire globeⁱⁱ. Unfortunately, the majority of child workers are from marginalized sectors who are living below the poverty line. ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973 prescribed the minimum age for working children depending on the nature and type of work. The article is based on secondary data and a bibliometric review based on the Scopus database.

Table: Global Estimate of Child Labour and Hazardous Work by Age and Gender

Gender and Age Group	Economically Active Children (EAC) ('000s)	Child Labour ('000s)	Child Labour as percent of EAC	Children in Hazardous Work (CHW) ('000s)	CHW as percent of EAC	CHW as percent of child labour	Work Ratio
Total 5-14	210,800	186,300	88.4	111,300	52.8	59.7	17.6
Boys	109,000	97,800	89.7	61,300	56.2	62.7	17.7
Girls	101,800	88,500	86.9	50,000	49.1	56.5	17.5
Total 15-17	140,900	59,200	42.0	59,200	42.0	100	42.4
Boys	75,100	34,400	45.8	34,400	45.8	100	44.1
Girls	65,800	24,800	37.7	24,800	37.7	100	40.7
Total (5-17)	351,700	245,500	69.8	170,500	48.5	69.5	23.0
Boys	184,100	132,200	71.8	95,700	52.0	72.4	23.4
Girls	167,600	113,300	67.6	74,800	44.6	66.0	22.5

Source: ILO-IPEC-SIMPOC, *Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour*, Geneva, International Labour Office, 2000.

South Asian region had a history of child labour in various sectors including mining. When it comes to Mica Mining, the nature of work is very risky and millions of children sacrifice their lives in mines. It was estimated

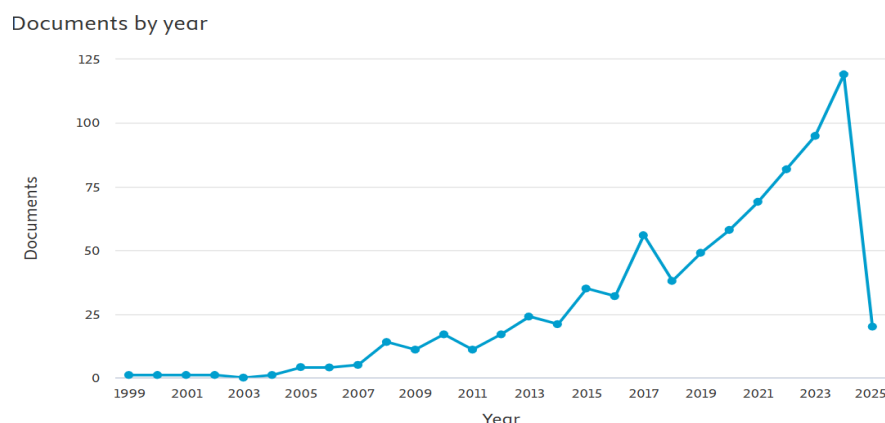
that more than 30 million children are engaged in child labour in South Asia, and they are not attending schools. The South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS) however estimates that there are more than 80 million children are engaged in child labour in this zone (55 million in India, 10 million in Pakistan, 8 million in Nepal, 7 million each in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka). Undoubtedly, India is leading in the number of child labour employed in various sectors. The beauty companies are hiding the black secret from their consumers and for manufacturing beauty products, many children are compromising their future and lives. Responsible Mica Initiative is an initiative engaging various stakeholders to protect the children. High level of risk assessment is measured in Asia and South Africa.

Methodology: The article is based on secondary information collected from various documents and reports related to child labour.

Bibliometric Review: A bibliometric review is conducted using the Scopus Database and VOSviewer Software is presented below:

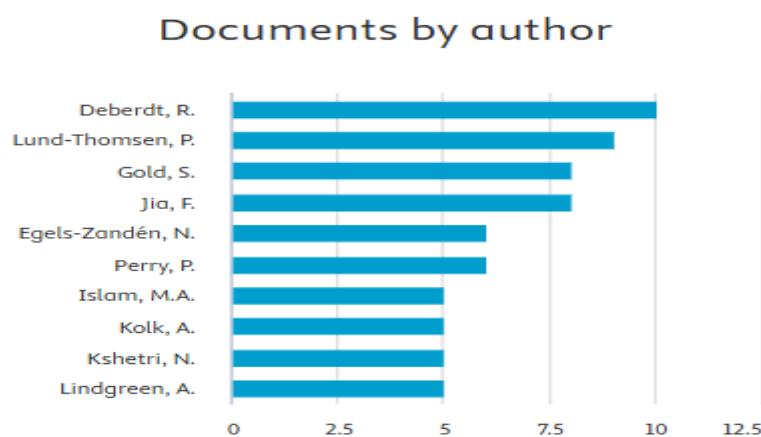
Scopus Database is explored to get the details of articles on ethical and responsible sourcing and child labour. The range of research papers explored was confined to the years 1999 to 2025, and a total of 786 relevant documents were found. The summary of the document range is presented in the graph 1.

Graph 1: Documents by Year



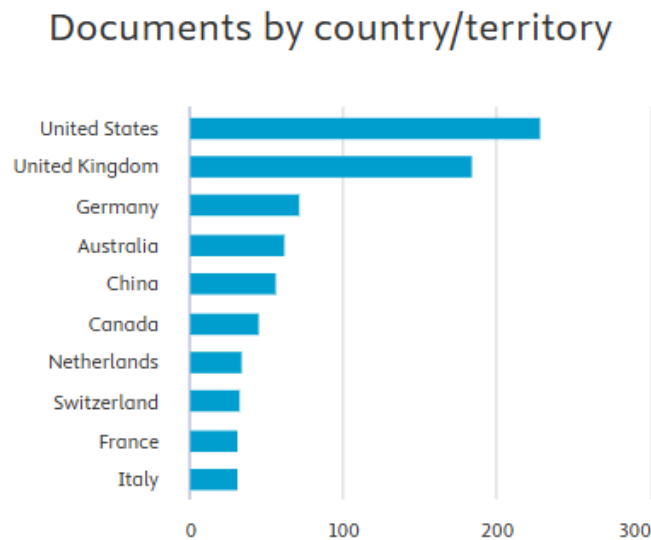
The second graph presents the research conducted by various authors in the area of ethical and responsible sourcing, and it was observed that four authors are exploring this area.

Graph 2: Documents by Author



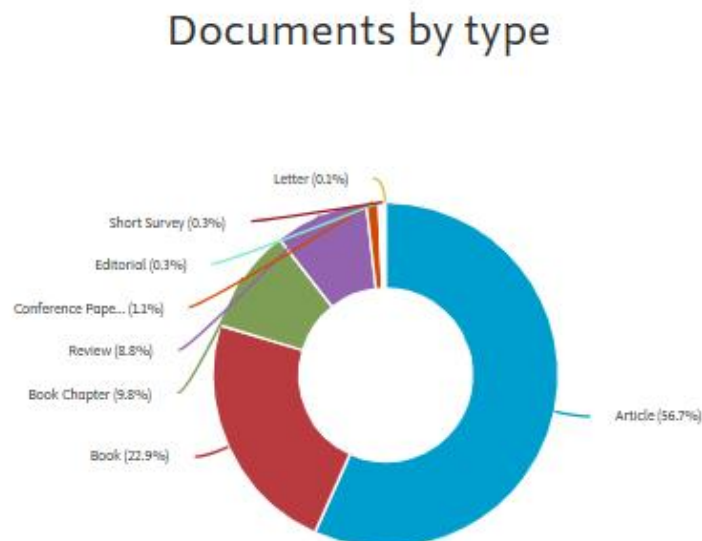
After investigating the bibliometric data, it was found that the leading research is conducted in two countries, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Graph 3: Documents by Country



Referring to the bibliometric data, it is observed that most studies are confined to research articles and books on responsible sourcing.

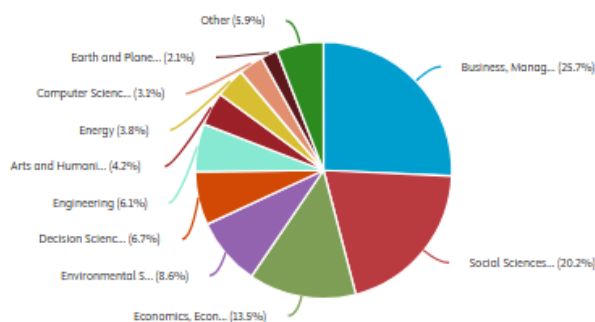
Graph 4: Documents by Type



Most studies are conducted in social sciences, business management and economics areas according to the bibliometric details -

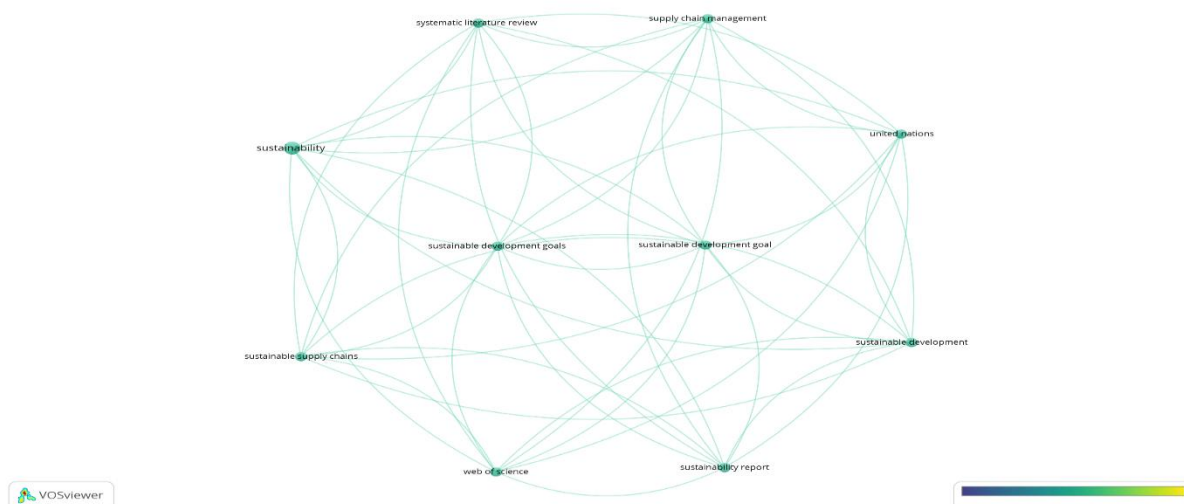
Graph 5: Documents by Subject Area

Documents by subject area



Most of the research is conducted in the area of sustainability or sustainable supply chain. Hence, the bibliometric analysis presents the trends, pattern and areas of research conducted on responsible sourcing.

Graph 6: Details of the Research Areas



Conclusion: The bibliometric pattern shows an increasing frequency of research conducted in this area, but most research work is inclined in the western countries. In the South Asian countries, there is limited research work on responsible and ethical sourcing, which is essential to curb the problems related to child labour. The collaborative research in the related areas can improve the conditions of child labour in Mica mines and in the entire mining sector in South Asia,

ⁱ Child Labour Statistical Profile: South Asia, 2020

ⁱⁱ UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 1997, Geneva: UNICEF, 1997, p 27