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### Health status of rag pickers, factory workers and domestic workers in relation to their family environment

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#### Abstract

The study has been undertaken to determine the problem of girl child labour. The issue of child labour has been a great concern in recent times all over the world. Most studies however delimit their analysis to the victims of child labour without mentioning the girl child labour as a separate entity. Child labour among girls is a much bigger problem than child labour alone. The fact that millions of girls in India are languishing in hard work is not just a matter that affects the girl or their families. It is an enormous loss to the whole country and humanity itself. An incidental purposive sample of 300 girl child labour aged 8-14 years of age studied, within the municipal limits of Jodhpur City, Rajasthan. Out of these 300 girl child laborer, 100 were rag pickers, 100 were factory workers and 100 were domestic servants. After the selection of the rag pickers localities, the family environment scale was administered on the selected sample. They were taken individually and in small groups. The finding leads to the conclusion that more rag pickers were malnourished as compared to domestic servants and factory workers. It was observed that that health status of Rag pickers suffers poorer health because they are more exposed to unhealthy surroundings, poverty and a lack of values attached to the girl child as a comp to are two factory workers and factory workers. This research will develop a theoretical perspective to get better insight into the problems of girl child labourers. Hence a growing body both at national and international levels will focus on the girl child's rights to survival, health care, nutrition, education social opportunities and protection. Strict implementation of laws will serve as an important preventive measure. This research will guide that this is the responsibility and concern of everyone.

**Keywords:** Child labour, family environment, domestic workers, rag pickers, factory workers

#### Introduction

Children grow progressively and become visible as they move towards adulthood. If they are burdened in their childhood and deprived of basic necessities, their physical and mental growth is influenced. Children are universally recognized as the most important asset of any nation. Everyone has the right to an environment favourable to his physical, mental, emotional and intellectual growth and development. The functions of work in childhood ought to be psycho-social development and not just economic, children's work as a social good is directly opposite to child labour as a social evil (Fuller 1962) <sup>[11]</sup>.

India, the largest democracy in the world also has the highest child labour population in the world. These are children, between 6-14 years, belonging to the most deprived sections of the society and are engaged in labour when actually they should be studying and playing. The majority of them are girls. In the recent Supreme Court judgment on abolishing child labour, it was observed that "none of the official estimates includes child labour in the unorganized sector and therefore, are obviously gross underestimates. Estimates from various non-governmental sources as to the actual number of working children range from 44 million to 100 million".

Children, more so girl children, are especially rendered vulnerable by the norms and practices of the society at large. Consider, too, social inequality and discrimination, which are important, but are often overlooked, causes of child labour. Asian society is generally stratified on the basis of class, caste, community, ethnicity and gender. These social divisions have various facets that contribute to the perpetuation of child labour. (Kairta Ratna, 1995) <sup>[12]</sup>.

Poverty has an obvious relationship with child labour and studies have "revealed a positive correlation in some instances a strong one between girl child labour and such factors as poverty" (Mehra 1996) <sup>[13]</sup>.

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The greater the poverty, the more aggravated is the situation of the girl child. Denied education, nutrition and health care in many ways further restricting her growth and development. In certain communities, the rules of permission and restriction on women are much more stringent thus allowing for their greater exploitation and discrimination. (a)

The injustice against girls or gender discrimination has become an acute problem in India. It was only in year (1990), the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) provided an opportunity to the countries in the region to focus their attention on the girl child. In India, girl child is undesired, uncared for, neglected and treated as an inferior being. She is compelled to accept a second-class status in the traditional male-dominated socio-economic religious setup.

Girls constitute 50 percent of the child labour force in India who are mostly deprived of fair wages and are exploited by the employers. Their employment does not create any skill formation. Compared to male children, the girl children are more exploited in the payment of wages and appreciation of work. What is more horrible is that "the cruel methods adopted to kill the child in the womb if she is a girl is a sad reflection on the womb-to-tomb syndrome."

The problem of child labour is so enormous and the need for action is urgent, choices must be made about where to concentrate available human and material resources. The most humane strategy must therefore be to focus scarce resources first on the most intolerable forms of child. Labour such as slavery, debt bondage, child prostitution, work in hazardous occupations and industries, and the very young, especially girls. Most studies however delimit their analysis to the victims of child labour without mentioning the girl child labour as a separate entity, child labour among girls is a much bigger problem than child labour alone.

Girl child labour harms not only the present generation but also the posterior. If one conceives the idea of a girl child labour it brings before the eyes the picture of exploitation of little, physically tender, illiterate, under occupation and unhealthy conditions. The problem of girl child labour is such that it can hardly be legislated away as its roots lie in the abject poverty and backwardness of the society.

### Objectives

- To find out and compare the level of health status among the different categories of girl child labour (a) Rag pickers (b) Domestic Servants (c) Factory workers.
- To find out and compare the pattern of family environment among the different categories of child labourers. (a) Rag pickers (b) Domestic Servants (c) Factory workers.

### Hypothesis

- The level of health status will be lower among rag pickers and factory workers as compared to domestic servants.
- A positive environment i.e. concerned, committed, helpful, supportive, open expression, organized and competitive environment will lead to better health status.

### Methodology

An incidental purposive sample of 300 girl child labour, aged 8-14 years of study, within the municipal limits of Jodhpur City, Rajasthan. Out of these 300 girl child labourers were rag pickers, 100 were factory workers and 100 were domestic servants.

### Tools

To investigate the health status and family environment, these scales and standards were used

Family Environment Scale (FES) of MOOS adapted by Joshi and Vyas (1996) [14] was used.

Health Status was measured according to standards of ICMR (1990) [15] and NCHS, WHO Geneva (1983). The dimension of the health status were:-

### Weight for Age

- Gomez, *et al.* (1956) [7]
- Indian Academy of Pediatrics (1972) [16].

### Height for Age

- Visweswara Rao's (19)
- Waterlow's (1972) [17].

### Weight for Height

- Waterlow's (1972) [17].

### Procedure

After the selection of the girl child labourers' localities, the family environment scale was administered on the selected sample, and anthropometry measurements were taken individually and in small groups to find out the health status.

### Analysis of Data

The overall analysis of the percentage was attempted from data obtained from all the samples. The samples were analyzed into distinguishable categories in each area and then factor-wise mean scores were tested for the significance difference by the 't-test at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance and product-moment correlations.

### Result

#### Health Status

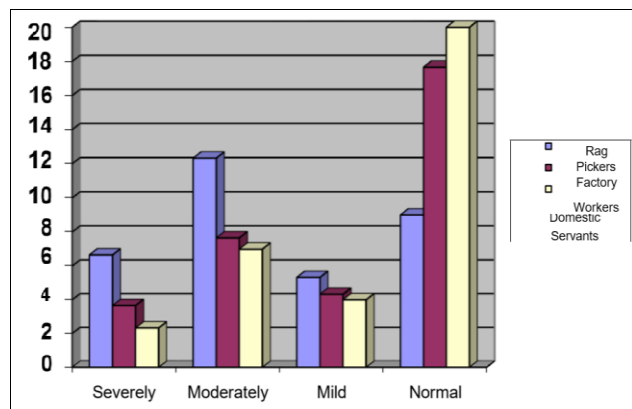


Fig 1: Show severely, moderately mild and normal

In this present investigation, according to Weight for Age more rag pickers 33% were malnourished as compared to 30% of domestic servants and 29% of factory workers.

Comparatively, the lowest percentage of normal degree (23.33%) was found in rag pickers whereas factory workers and domestic servants have the same percentage i.e. 25.33% on normal degree under Height for Age.

Same data when compared according to Weight for Height. 24% of the rag pickers were malnourished as compared to 15% of factory workers and 13% of domestic servants. A maximum percentage of domestic servants displayed normal health status.

Overall it was observed that the Health Status of Rag pickers suffer poorer health because they are more exposed to unhealthy surroundings, poverty, lack of food and lack of values attached to girl children. Generally, these rag pickers spend most of their time on the streets.

Thus the hypothesis on Health Status is accepted as the level of Health status is lower among the rag pickers and factory workers as compared to domestic servants.

**Table 1:** Girls child labourers' on Family Environment Scale

Groups	Subscales	Below Average	Average	Above Average
Domestic Servants	Cohesion	6.0%	40.0%	54.0%
	Conflict	13.0%	32.0%	55.0%
Rag Pickers	Achievement Orientation	13.0%	30.0%	57.0%
	Control	5.0%	36.0%	59.0%
	Cohesion	64.0%	22.0%	14.0%
	Conflict	29.0%	50.0%	21.0%
Factory Workers	Achievement Orientation	41.0%	21.0%	38.0%
	Control	56.0%	37.0%	7.0%
	Cohesion	21.0%	54.0%	25.0%
	Conflict	52.0%	45.0%	3.0%
Factory Workers	Achievement Orientation	45.0%	42.0%	13.0%
	Control	22.0%	56.0%	22.0%

Overall data in the above table reveals the percentage of girls on the family environment scale. It can be concluded that in the present sample, rag pickers are below average on cohesion. On the control subscale whereas conflict subscale, factory workers are below average. But on achievement orientation, both factory workers and rag pickers are below average.

So it can be concluded that the family member of domestic servants are concerned and committed to the family. They are supportive and helpful to each other. On the other hand family members of rag pickers are least bothered about the members in the family and even they do not know where about of their children.

Rag pickers feel more frustrated in the home and spend more time involving herself in busy tasks. As the girl does not want to go home and works all the day there is no competitive framework in the family and they are unaware of new activities going around them. The head of the family is the eldest male. Whenever they are at home, they have to follow the rules and regulations of the head of the family. In such circumstances, the head of the family controls the family. There is a lot of conflict in the family of factory workers causing tension at home which makes them frustrated.

Achievement orientation is below average in rag pickers and factory workers. They are having fewer skills for a competitive framework because of a lack of exposure. As they belong to extremely poor families. They are not anxious to be independent and self-reliant which is necessary for the development of the need for achievement. They are worried about their everyday lives.

The hypothesis is accepted as a positive environment i.e. concerned, committed, helpful, supportive, open expression, organized and competitive environment will lead to better health status and fewer behaviour problems.

### Recommendation

We shall join hands to promote and ensure a child-friendly

environment and a new system and to welcome a New Dawn where:-

### All the girls up to 18 years of age shall be in schools where relevant and quality education is ensured

- The health status of the girls improved, the Infant mortality rate was reduced, and early childbirth and related problem controlled.
- Parents are educated and become responsive to better child care.
- Girl child labour is made practically impossible as all the girls join schools and are not available for work.
- Exploitation and discrimination against girls resisted.
- Illiteracy is eradicated.

Media can be used very effectively in this regard. E.g. radio/television etc. apart from the schools can serve as the best place for educating parents about how to treat and care for their children. For those parents and people who do not send their children to schools once again media can serve as an important tool for educating them through different programs.

We should realize that all children are our children and children are born to be loved. What we need are strong laws so that the real offenders are punished. Only then, the abuse of children will stop.

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