



CHILD LABOUR: PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS AMONG THE GROWTH OF CHILDREN IN THE SLUMS OF DELHI

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Child labour is a global concern and 'harsh reality' of the world. Poverty is an account of this 'harsh reality'. Studies from an Indian constituency states that India has the highest proportion of child labourers in the current scenario and according to the studies nearly 7 percent of the child labour are responsible for a significant amount of the Gross Domestic Product.

Objective: To study the psychological effects on child labour in the slum areas of Delhi.

METHODS: A community based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 500 child labourers in and around slum areas of Delhi. Data regarding demographic and psychological effects were recorded by using a semi-structured questionnaire. A descriptive analysis was carried out.

RESULTS: The mean age of the children is 10.3 years with a range of (7-14 years). Among the 500 child labour, 41% (206) were girls and 59% (294) were boys and there were 33% (168) children who are working past one year, 31% (158) last three years, 18% (90) since 3-5 years and 17% (84) children for more than 5 years. Social issues among child labour include, 40% of the child fight a lot, 24% of the child gets extremely angry, 48% child was accused of lying and cheating, and 47% has stealing habits.

CONCLUSION: In India, child labour is an important public health concern and Child labour policies and education policies have to be formulated and implement interventions that will reduce the number of child labourers.

KEYWORDS: Psychological Effects, Child labour, and Slum areas.

INTRODUCTION

Background: Children are future citizens of the Nation and children development is the greatest priority of the nation. Unfortunately, child labor engulfs children across the world. Currently 1.2 billion individuals who is aged 10-19 years lives in the world. Nevertheless, according to data the prevalence of child labor around the globe varies and the statistical figures about child labor are alarming high. It is estimated that 186 million child laborers across the worldwide. ^{1,2} According to the literature one-third of children of in the developing countries are failing to complete even the primary level of education.³

Globally the share of population is growing faster, predominantly in India. India is the second most heavily populated country in the world. Child labour is the most important area of concern especially in the aspect of the health and psychological problems of the children. Child labour is a global phenomenon and 'harsh reality' as well. Poverty is account for this 'harsh reality' of child labour. Child labour exists in all countries of the world but its scale varies from country to country and studies from an Indian constituency states that India has the highest proportion of child labourers. Nearly 7 per cent of the child work force are responsible for significant amount of the Gross Domestic Product.⁴ National census (2001) of India reports that India is home for 12.6 million child labor who is aged 5-14.¹ The share of child labor in India was 17.5 million and children are working numerous industries such as agricultural sector, leather manufacturing, mining and match-making businesses, etc.⁵

Rationale: Child labor continues to be a great concern in many parts of the world. *This is the first kind of study which slum child labour as a study participant in New Delhi.* Child labour is a significant public health problem facing by many children. According to research 17 million children are working in various hazardous industry in India and these work environment directly or indirectly may influence children growth.⁶ A community-based, small scale studies reported that 12.6 million children engaged in various hazardous occupations and many are “hidden workers”, these hidden workers are engaged in household works.⁷

Aim:

- This research aimed to study the demographic profile of child labour in slum area of Delhi and to assess the psychological effects children growth among child labour.

Objectives:

- To describe the socio demographic profile of slum child labour.
- To assess the psychological effects of child labour at slum area of Delhi.

Operational Definition:

Child labour: The term “child labour” is at times used as a synonym for employed child.”

According to **Homer Floks**, the Chairman of the United States Child Labour Committee, defined child labour “as work by children that interferes with their full physical development, their opportunities for desirable minimum of education or their needed recreation”.⁸

METHODS

Community based descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among child labor aged between seven to fourteen years of age, New Delhi. As per the data available from Delhi Government official website, population from 51 slums across Delhi were considered for the sample. Children have been selected from these slums with following background.

Native Places: Most of the children have migrated from outside Delhi with their parents. 28% of child labour and 29 % of school going children were from Uttar Pradesh. 21 % of Child labourers and 29 % of school going children were from Bihar. 17% child labourers and 24 % school going children were from Delhi. 11% child labourers and 3 % of school going children were from Rajasthan. There were also children from Haryana, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Nepal in both the categories.

Occupations: Child labourers involved in the study were in different occupations. They sell balloons, flowers, books, toys on roads, make petty thefts in the local buses, involved in pick-pocketing, begging, rags and plastic material picking, wine bottles collection, work as labourers at dhabas or small tea shops, make seat covers and work at parlour, and individual who is not willing to participate in this study were excluded from the study.

Sample size: with the prevalence of 3.9 %⁹ of the total **child** labor either of 'main worker' or 'marginal worker', 95 CI (Confidence Interval) and 2 % Margin of error 384 is calculated as appropriate sample size and 30% over sampled. So total study sample is 500.

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

$$p = 0.04$$

$$q = 0.96$$

$$z = 1.96$$

$$e = 2$$

Simple random sampling strategy was used to obtain the sample unit of child labor from an in and around of slum area of New Delhi. Of an average 8-10 samples were collected per day. Data were captured by using semi-structured Questionnaire. Data Analysis was done by using SPSS Software version 22 – Descriptive Statistics.

Ethical Considerations: This study was approved by the Institutional ethical committee of SRM School of Public Health, SRM IST, Kattankulathur, and Tamil Nadu. All participants were provided with oral and written informed consent.

RESULTS**Table - 1 Demographic profile of the Children**

Variables	Options	Child Labour (%)
Age	7-9 Years	104 (20.8)
	10-12 Years	216(43.2)
	12-14 years	180 (36)
Sex	Boys	294 (59%)
	Girls	206 (41%)
Education	Up to class 5 th	307 (61%)
	Between class 5-8 th	193 (39)

Socio Demographic Profile of the respondents:

The mean age of the children in child labour children is 10.3 years with a range of 7-14 years. 59% (294) were boys and 41% (206) were girls and in Child labour category. 61 % (307) children were below class 5th and 39% (193) were between 5th- 8th in child labour category.

Table - 2 Characteristics of Child labour for the study

Characteristics of Child labour		
Status	Category	Child Labour (%)
Working Status	>1 year	168 (33)
	1-3 years	158 (31)
	3-5 years	90 (18)
	<5 years	84 (17)
Earnings/ Daily	Less than Rs. 100	161 (32)
	Rs. 100-300	221(44.2)
	Rs 300-500	48 (10)
	More than Rs. 500	70 (14)
Employer Treatment	Not treat them well	221 (44)
Body Injury	as a result of their Employment	180 (36)
Working days	7 working days in a week	154 (31)

There were 33% (168) children who were working since one year, 31% (158) since three years, 18% (90) since 3-5 years and 17% (84) children for more than 5 years. Out of 500 children 39% (194) children labour for less than 4 hours, 48 % (240) labour between 4-8 hrs and 13% (66) labour for more than 8 hours for the child labour category. 32 % (161) of the children earn less than Rs 100 daily, 44.2 % (221) earn Rs 100-300, around 10 % (48) earns Rs 300-500 and 14 % (70) earns more than Rs. 500. 44% (221) children reported that their employer does not treat them well. 36% (180) child labour have faced some kind of body injury during past one year as a result of their employment as compared to 2 % (12) children for school going category. 24% (119) of child labour children suffer health problems due to their employment as compared to 1% (6) to school going children. 48 % (241) children in child labour category remains outside their home in connection to their employment. 31% (154) of child labour children work for 7 days a week and do not have a holiday. 22 % (108) of the child labour father does nothing as employment as compared to 14% (70) of the school going children. 57% (288) of child labour parents are illiterate as compared to 5% (26) of school going children.

Psychological Effects among the Growth of Child Labour between 7-14 years of age in Delhi Slums

Table - 3 Psychological Effects among the Growth of Child Labour in Delhi Slums

Statements	Child Labour % (n=500)			
	Not True	Somewhat true	Certainly true	Total
Emotional problems scale				
Often complains of headaches	36	44	20	100
I worry a lot	54	22	24	100
Often unhappy, downhearted... (I am often unhappy)	53	38	10	100
I am nervous in new situations...	48	30	22	100
Many fears, easily scared (I have many fears)	40	30	30	100
Conduct problems Scale				
I get very angry	43	33	24	100
Usually do as I am told	55	34	11	100
I fight a lot	60	25	15	100
I am often accused of lying or cheating	52	30	18	100
I take things that are not mine	53	23	24	100
Hyperactivity scale				

I am restless	22	47	31	100
I am constantly fidgeting	26	43	31	100
I am easily distracted	36	51	13	100
I think before I do things	37	47	17	100
I finish the work I am doing	24	46	30	100
Peer problems scale				
I am usually on my own	32	49	19	100
I have one good friend or more	37	50	13	100
Other people my age generally like me	28	56	17	100
Other children or young people pick on me	25	48	27	100
I get on better with adults than with people my age	31	49	20	100
Pro-social scale				
I try to be nice to other people	14	50	36	100
I usually share with others	23	51	26	100
I am helpful is someone is hurt	16	50	34	100
I am kind to younger children	21	50	29	100
I often volunteer to help others	21	55	24	100

Emotional Problems: Each child was subjected to questions present in the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (SDQ). Percentile of each attribute is examined. It was found that 20 % of the children involved in child labour often complain of headaches and another 44 % of children are at potentially at risk who complain of headaches intermittently. If total of (somewhat true and certainly true) is taken into consideration, then 64% of the children complains of the headache. Similarly, 44 % of the child labour worry a lot, 48% often feel unhappy, 52% of the child labor get nervous in new situations and 60 % of the children are easily scared.

Social Conduct issues: 24 % of the child labour get very angry another 33% are potentially at risk. Thus it can be inferred that 57% of the children in child labour get very angry. 55% of the child labour do not do what they are told to do. 40 % fight a lot. 48% are accused of lying and cheating and 47% take things that are not theirs.

Hyperactivity Issues: Going by the previous logic (certainly true plus somewhat true) sequence 78% of the child labour are found to be restless. 74% are fidgeting, 64 % easily distracted, 37% (Not true) do not think before doing a thing, and 24 % of child labour do not finish the job they undertake.

Peer Problems: 68 % of the child labour usually on their own, 37% of them do not have a good friend, and 28 % are feel like they are not liked by others. 75 % of the children bullied by others. Almost 69 % (certainly true plus somewhat true) of them get on better with adults rather people of their own age.

Pro- social issues: 14% are not nice with other people. 23% do not share their things with others. 16 % (Not true) are not helpful to others if somebody is hurt. Another 21% (not true) are not kind to young children and 21 % do not volunteer to help others. These all categories are potentially at risk to turn as anti-social behaviors.

DISCUSSION

This study provides a snapshot of the vulnerability of behavioral challenges among children in Delhi slums. Unstable and poor housing conditions, air pollution, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities are some of the basic risk factors for children growing up in slums of urban cities.¹⁰ The mean age of the children in child labour children is 10.3 years with a range of 7-14 years. 59% (294) were boys and 41% (206) were girls and in Child labour category. There were 33% (168) children who were working since one year, 31% (158) since three years, 18% (90) since 3-5 years and 17% (84) children for more than 5 years. Out of 500 children 39% (194) children labour for less than 4 hours, 48 % (240) labour between 4-8 hours and 13% (66) labour for more than 8 hours for the child labour category.

The study also reveals that 20 % of the children involved in child labour often complain of headaches and another 44 % of children are at potentially at risk who complain of headaches intermittently. Our study reveals that 24 % child labourers in the slums of Delhi get angry immediately for a minor issue, there are another 33% (somewhat true) who are potentially at risk and findings of Steinberg and Avenevoli (1997) were similar to the trends of the present study, where it is observed that child labour diminishes children's self-esteem.¹¹ The low self-esteem is developed as a result of getting engaged in low status work. It is also due to the abuse whether it is physical, psychological or verbal experienced by the children. There are other psychological difficulties pointed by Musvoto (2007) quoted because the

child labour are constantly is a victim discrimination and abuse.¹² The study reveals that 37% of them do not have a good friend, and 28 % are feel like they are not liked by others and 75 % of the children bullied by others.

CONCLUSION

Present study has revealed that child labour has significant impact on the behaviour related to social conduct and peer relationship where as it has minor impact on emotional and hyperactivity aspects of the children when it is compared to the school going children from the same socio-economic background across children living in slums of Delhi. Child labour is found to be most of the sector of the informal economy in India and it affects the child growth. Current study reveals that psychological effects among child laborer are significant problem among growing children. Even though the Constitution of India guarantees free and compulsory education to children between the age of 6 to 14 and prohibits employment of children younger than 14 in 18 hazardous occupations, child labor is still prevalent as a hidden scenario and in the informal sectors of the Indian economy.¹³ Child labor disturbs human rights, and is in contravention of the International Labor Organization (Article 32, Convention Rights of the Child).

LIMITATIONS

- Interviewers were aware of the study objective, so there may chance of an interviewer bias in the study.
- Potential reporting bias could have occurred.

Conflict of Interest: None.

Source of Funding: None.

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