



A STUDY OF CHILD LABOURERS AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE REGARDING CHILD ABUSE

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: - *Child abuse is a state of emotional, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment meted out to a person below the age of eighteen and is a globally prevalent phenomenon. Child Abuse violates the most basic rights of children and adolescents, which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Violence may take place in homes, schools, orphanages, residential care facilities, on the streets, in the workplace, in prisons and in places of detention." Such violence can affect the normal development of a child impairing their mental, physical and social being. In extreme cases abuse of a child can result in death.*

Objective: - *To assess the knowledge of child labourers about Child Abuse in Uttar Pradesh.*

Material & Methods:- Total 250 children who are currently working were randomly selected from five districts of Uttar Pradesh (*Raibareilly, Varanasi, Mau, Muzaffarpur, Bhadohi*) as study subject. A Pre-structured Interview Schedule was used to collect data from the respondents. **Statistical Analysis:-** Data was analyzed with the help of statistical software SPSS 16.0 (trial version).

Results and conclusion:- Result reveals that there are very few respondents who are aware about the term "Child Abuse" and nearly half of the respondents had faced some kind of abuse in their lifetime, among which physical abuse is experienced by nearly half of the total respondents. The result also shows that most of the children were abused by their employer.

Keywords:- Child abuse, Neglect, Physical abuse, Child Labour.

INTRODUCTION

According to WHO: "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."¹

The UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children has given the following overview of the situation of abuse and violence against children across the globe.

- WHO estimates that almost 53,000 child deaths in 2002 were due to child homicide.
- In the Global School-Based Student Health Survey carried out in a wide range of developing countries between 20% and 65% of school going children reported having been verbally or physically bullied in school in the previous 30 days. Similar rates of bullying have been found in industrialised countries.
- An estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact.
- UNICEF estimates that in sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt and Sudan, 3 million girls and women are subjected to FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) every year.

- ILO (International Labour Organisation) estimates that 218 million children were involved in child labour in 2004, of which 126 million were engaged in hazardous work. Estimates from 2000 suggest that 5.7 million were in forced or bonded labour, 1.8 million in prostitution and pornography and 1.2 million were victims of trafficking.
- Only 2.4% of the world's children are legally protected from corporal punishment in all settings.²

India is home to 430 million children, roughly one in five of all children (individuals under age 18) in the world. From the moment they are born, the challenges many of them face are staggering.³ The government estimates that 40 percent of India's children are vulnerable to threats such as trafficking, homelessness, forced labor, drug abuse, and crime, and are in need of protection.⁴

Some studies limit the term 'child abuse' to "children who have received serious physical injury caused willfully than by accident" (Garden and Gray, 1982;5). This definition has not been accepted by the social scientists because of the ambiguities in the word 'serious' and diversities in 'physical injury'. Kempe and Kempe (1978) have defined child abuse as "a condition having to do with those who have been deliberately injured by physical assault". This definition is limited in scope as it restricts abuse only to those acts of physical violence which produce a diagnostic injury. Thus, acts of neglect and maltreatment of children which do not produce an injury but are equally harmful cannot be included in this definition. No definition of child abuse can be considered valid unless it includes non-physical acts like mental injury and neglect and ill treatment of a child. Burgess (1979; 143) has given a wider definition of child abuse. According to him, child abuse refers to "any child who receives non-accidental physical and psychological injury as a result of acts and omissions on the part of his parents or guardians or employers". Verbal abuse, threats of physical violence and excessive physical punishment which do not require medical attention are also included in the definition of child abuse. So this study was carried out in line with the above definition of Child Abuse experienced by the most vulnerable group of society i.e. Child Labors.

Objective:- To assess the knowledge of Child Laborers about Child Abuse in Uttar Pradesh.

Research Methodology - Five districts of Uttar Pradesh (Raibareilly, Varanasi, Mau, Muzaffarpur, Bhadohi) has been randomly selected from the map of Uttar Pradesh. In the period of 3 months from (July-September 2014) by applying snow ball technique we interviewed total 250 study subjects from five sampled district to ensure the representativeness & generability of the study results. **Statistical Analysis:** Data was analyzed with the help of statistical software SPSS 16.0 trial version.

RESULTS & FINDINGS:

Table-1: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Socio-demographic Variables (N=250)		Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	5-9 Year	23	9.2
	10-14 Year	227	90.8
Sex	Male	211	84.4
	Female	39	15.6
Education	Illiterate	79	31.6
	Primary	116	46.4
	Middle	50	20.0
	High School	5	2.0
Type of Family	Joint	81	32.4
	Nuclear	169	67.6
Family Income (Monthly)	Less 5000	52	20.8
	5000-10000	151	60.4
	More than 10000	47	18.8
Residential Area	Urban	86	34.4
	Rural	133	53.2
	Slum	31	12.4

Majority of the respondents (90.8%) are falling under the age group of 10-14 year, and only 9.2 % of the respondents are of 5-9 of years age group. Majority of the respondents are Male which is 84.4% and only 15.6% of the respondents are female. The highest proportion of child labour

(46.4%) was educated upto primary level and one third (31.6 %) are completely illiterate. Only 2.0% of the respondent got education up to High School. Data reveals that 67.6% of the respondents belong to nuclear family and less than half of the respondents which is 32.4% are from Joint family. Majority of the respondents (60.4 percent) have family income between 5000-10000. It is also visible from the data that more than half of the respondents (53.2 %) are from rural area and 34.4 % of the respondents are from the urban area.

Table-2: Gender wise distribution of respondents regarding their Knowledge of child abuse or child exploitation

GENDER Variable (N=250)	Knowledge regarding child abuse		
	Yes	No	Total
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Male	15 (7.1)	196 (92.9)	211 (100.0)
Female	4 (10.3)	35 (89.7)	39 (100.0)
Total	19 (7.6)	231 (92.4)	250 (100.0)

Table-2 shows very shocking result that only 7.6 % of the respondents are aware about the term “child abuse” or “child exploitation” and majority of the respondents (92.4%) have no idea about the word child abuse, which clearly indicates that though they are working as child laborers but they are totally unaware about the meaning of child abuse. We also see that the percentage of female respondents’ knowledge (10.3) is quite higher than the knowledge of male respondents (7.1).

Table-3 Percentage of victims of child abuse

GENDER Variable (N=250)	Residential Area	Are you a victim of child abuse		
		Yes	No	Total
		No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Female (N=39)	Urban	4(50.0)	4(50.0)	8(100)
	Rural	7 (35.0)	13(65.0)	20(100)
	Slum	5(45.5)	6(54.4)	11(100)
		16(41.0)	23(59.0)	39(100)
Male (N=211)	Urban	34(43.6)	44(56.4)	78(100)
	Rural	51(45.1)	62(54.9)	113(100)
	Slum	10(50.0)	10(50.0)	20(100)
		95(45.0)	116(55.0)	211(100)
Total	Urban	38(44.2)	48(55.8)	86(100)
	Rural	58(43.6)	75(56.4)	133(100)
	Slum	15(48.4)	16(51.6)	31(100)
		111(44.4)	139(55.6)	250(100)

When the interviewer told them about the meaning of child abuse and then it was asked that whether they have gone through any kind of child abuse (as told by the interviewer) in their life till date, the response was totally contradicting with the fact that only 7.6 percent respondents were having knowledge about the term “child abuse” (as shown in above table no.-2) but in reality 44.4% of the respondent had experienced child abuse in their life without knowing that something wrong is happening with them. Most of the victims were male (i.e. male child laborers are approximately 8 times more than female child laborers) as it can be observe from the above table that out of total male respondents 45.0 are victim of Child Abuse and majority of them (50.0) belong to Slum area. If we talk about the area wise prevalence of victims of Child abuse then it is visible from the above table that majority of the victims (48.4) reside in Slum area.

Table-4 Type of child abuse the victims are suffering from

Variable(N=111)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Physical	53	47.7
Mental	50	45.0
Sexual	02	1.8
Neglect	06	5.4
Total	111	100.0

Nearly half of the respondent (47.7 percent) said that they were exposed to physical abuse and 45.0 percent respondent suffered from mental abuse while the percentage of sexual abuse and neglect was very less which is 1.8 and 5.4 percent respectively.

As in our study only 1.8 percent respondent were subjected to sexual abuse which is totally contradicting with the study of Sevilyay Senol Celik and Media Subasi Baybuga⁵ in which 65% children working on the street said that they have been subjected to sexual abuse.

Table-5 By whom you abused / assaulted?

Variable(N=111)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
By Relatives	09	8.1
By Employer	45	40.5
By Co-Worker	26	23.4
By Customer	20	18.0
Any Other	11	9.9
Total	111	100.0

Most of the child laborers (40.5%) were abused by their employer. While 23.4 percent were abused by co-worker and 18.0 percent by their customer. Only 8.1 percent respondent stated that they were abused by their own relatives. The highest figure shows that employer are use to exploit their employees in any way.

Table-6 Knowledge regarding Organization who works on Child Labour/ child abuse

Residential Area Variable (N=250)	Knowledge regarding Organization		
	Yes	No	Total
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Urban	2 (2.3)	84 (97.7)	86(100.0)
Rural	0(0.0)	133(100.0)	133 (100.0)
Slum	0(0.0)	31 (100.0)	31 (100.0)
Total	2(0.8)	248(99.2)	250(100.0)

When the children were asked whether they know any organization that works for the victims of child abuse, the response was very depressing as only 0.8 percent respondent said yes, rest of the respondents belonging from Rural & Slum areas were not having any idea about any organization working in this field. The major finding of this analysis shows that those who were aware about any organization belong to urban area.

Discussion- Ahmadkhaniha et al. in their study carried out in 2007 had stated that Abuse is a universal problem, which negatively affects the physiological, psychological and social health of the victim. UNICEF (2009), Kurt et al (2005), Baybuga and Celik (2004) and Hadi (2000) have reported the reasons in their studies for working of children on the streets, socioeconomic factors that contribute to children working on the streets and the various types of abuse that occur .

There is very few research carried out on physical abuse in India. A study of Physical and Sexual Abuse and Behavioural Problems amongst boys in a Child Observation Home in Delhi was conducted by Dr. Deepti Pagare, of Community Medicine, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi, as part of her doctoral dissertation revealed that About three-fourth (76.7%) of subjects reported physical abuse.⁷ Similarly A research study in West Bengal conducted by Save the Children and Tulir in 2006 on child domestic workers revealed that: Almost 70% of the child domestic workers had been physically abused.⁸ which is close to the present study in which

near about half of the children included in present study reported about physical abuse experienced by them during their working times at work place.

While this study has not collected data on impact of severe physical abuse on the psyche of the child but there can be no doubt that the effect of hurt, pain, anger, humiliation and loss of self-esteem is enormous. Children who have been repeatedly subjected to physical abuse carry these effects throughout their life and often also end up as perpetrators of violent acts for themselves or for others.

The subject of child sexual abuse is still a taboo in India. There is a conspiracy of silence around the subject and a very large percentage of people feel that this is a largely western problem and that child sexual abuse does not happen in India. The WHO estimates that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact, though this is certainly an underestimated figure. Much of this sexual violence is inflicted by family members or other people residing in or visiting a child's family who are often responsible for their care and hence children normally trust on them. A review of epidemiological surveys from 21 countries, mainly high- and middle-income countries, found that at least 7% of females (ranging up to 36%) and 3% of males (ranging up to 29%) reported sexual victimization during their childhood. According to these studies, between 14% to 56% of the sexual abuse of girls, and up to 25% of the sexual abuse of boys, was perpetrated by relatives or step parents.⁹ Among different evidence groups, highest percentage of children who faced sexual abuse were those at work (61.61%).¹⁰ Children exposed to any of the types of abuse may develop mental health disorders. A study by Ahmadkhaniha et al (2007) found 20.9% of children had been sexually abused and children diagnosed with depression were 3.2 times more likely to have been sexually abused than children who were not depressed.

Strength of our study is that the study area which we have selected, consist enough numbers of child laborers and very few studies have been conducted in this region till now, so there was a strong need to conduct this kind of study in this particular region. We have taken the sample which has fair representative data of child laborers from each district.

Potential limitations of our study include that the issue on which we have focused in our study is very subjective in its nature and it totally depends on the respondents that how much

they are aware about the issue and how they interpret the conditions of Child abuse in their daily life and what they exactly told us. As we have done a cross sectional study so we have to rely on the data given by the respondents whose mind could be controlled by their employers or parents.

Conclusion

Only a small proportion of child abuse cases are ever reported to the police. One of the most important reasons why children and their relatives choose not to come forward is a fear that they will not be treated sympathetically. Indeed, many victims and the adults supporting them endure terrible experiences that add to their trauma. These can include intimidating interviews by police officers, degrading and painful medical examinations, and intimidation by perpetrators to drop charges. Court cases too can be unpleasant experiences for the child since they can last for years and involve stressful cross-examinations. This paper concludes that children have the right to be protected against all types of abuse. Children should be educated to increase their awareness about various types of abuse and they should also be provided with support by government institutions. Furthermore, preventive measures should be adopted to reduce all types of abuse against children.

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