

Understanding the Health Issues of Impoverished Child Rag Pickers in India

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Abstract : Objective: This study aims to enhance the body of knowledge about the vulnerabilities of child waste pickers in solid waste management. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the occupational menaces and their potential harm to the health of child waste pickers. Material and Methods: The present study design is descriptive in nature and involves children aged 5 through 14, who were rummaging through garbage in the roads and streets of Aligarh city, Uttar Pradesh. The researcher adopted an empirical approach to interview 65 participants (27 boys and 38 girls) across Aligarh city, Uttar Pradesh. The majority of the participants are Muslims (76.9 %), scheduled Castes (13.8 %), and Hindus (9.2 %). Out of 65 participants, 73.8% of children were migrated within the last five years. The primary data were analysed by utilising descriptive statistics, including frequencies, cross-tabs, means, and percentages. Results: The results show that the vast majority of children (87.7%) have experienced superficial injuries or open wound at their work. More than 32% were suffering from respiratory problems such as coughing, wheezing and short of breath, close to 37% reported skin problems like allergy, irritation and bruising and 4.6% had eye problems such as pain and irritation in eyes. Nearly 78% of children lift and carry a heavy load like large garbage bags. Over 83% informed that they sort through refuse in a filthy environment such as open dumpsites, effluents, and runnels. Conclusion: This research provides pieces of evidence of how children are being tormented in the rag-picking sector. It has been observed that child rag pickers are susceptible to injuries or illnesses due to work-related risks and toxic environment. In India, there is no robust policy to address the concerns of waste pickers and laws to protect their rights. Consequently, these deprived communities of rag pickers, especially children, have become more vulnerable over time in India. Hence, this research paper calls for a quick response to the exigencies of child rag picker by developing a holistic approach that deals with education, medical care, sanitation, and nutrition for child rag pickers.

Keywords : child rag pickers, health impairments, occupational hazards, toxic environment

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