

CHILD RAG PICKERS IN ANDHRA PRADESH (A Case Study In Vijayawada City)

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ABSTRACT

Rag pickers are well coordinated in their method of working. Among themselves, they have a good understanding for operating by area. Each group takes specific items from the bins. It has been observed that more children and women are getting involved in the business of rag picking. This is a matter of concern as these children who should be spending their time in schools either studying or playing are instead putting themselves at risk by handling waste. While picking through waste, the rag pickers put themselves at a great risk and is

always prone to disease as the waste that they rummage through can be infected. The present study is focused on the socio-economic, health and working conditions of the child rag pickers in Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh.

KEYWORDS

Child Rag Pickers; Socio-Economic Conditions; Uhygienic Urbanization

INTRODUCTION

India's booming urbanization brings the problem of waste management. As more people are migrating towards the cities, the amount of waste is increasing at a high pace and waste critical management is likely to become an issue in the coming years. The childhood is a formative and tender age, is meant to be spent on activities, conducive for the overall development of the children, by making readily available to them facilities of qualitative education and training as well as sufficient time to play and rest. The situation on the ground, however, is quite dissimilar and discomforting.

Children are the most important assets of the society and the future of a nation depends upon how the children are educated and trained and how their mental and physical development is taken care of. It is indeed unfortunate that the energy of the growing children which should go into their mental and physical development is exploited by owners of capital asset owing to unfavorable socio-economic setting in the country. Unless something is done to help them, they will not come out of a vicious circle of drudgery and poverty, which has been going on from generation to generation (Sen Raj Kumar and Dasgupta Asis 2003). A significant number of children in this world are found to be engaged in various economic activities like

newspaper selling, shoe shining, hawking, helpers in tea shops, rag picking etc. extremely different, even hostile environment, which takes away their childhood privileges and poses serious threat to future development of society.

Rag pickers in the cities had very poor health due to the consumption of unhygienic food and working in polluted environment and suffered from diarrhoea, cold and scabies. They were highly exposed to tetanus and other infections caused from cuts by sharp metal pieces, broken glass and other solid wastes. Waste pickers were reported to have headache to have at many dump sites.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To find out the socio-economic background of child rag pickers in Vijayawada Municipal Corporation of Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh;
- 2) To assess the working conditions and exploitation of the child rag pickers; and
- 3) To understand the nature and magnitude of the problem of rag pickers in the study area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research setting for the field study was Vijayawada Municipal Corporation of Andhra Pradesh, which is one of the major cities in Coastal Andhra Pradesh. The city is spread over 110.44 sq.km; covering 136 slums, consisting of 59 wards with a density of population of 294 persons per sq.km. The city is the second largest city in the State, while in respect to area it occupies 11th position. Of the total population, the urban population comprises 44.20 lakhs. The district's literacy rate is 60.6 percent.

UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE SIZE

The study is taken up in Vijayawada City of Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, which has 136 slums. The study is confined to Vijayawada City which consists of 59 wards/divisions. Out of these, 8 divisions are connected to the inner city and mostly the rag pickers stay in this locality and collect the rags around the city. The study is purposively conducted in Vijayawada City. In the entire 8 slums nearly 678 child rag pickers are available as per the list provided by the Assistant Labour Commissioner, Department of Labour Government of Andhra Pradesh, Vijayawada. Out of this list, the researcher identified 30 child rag pickers both male and female from each slum and a total of 240 from eight slums are selected by using simple random sampling method for this study. The slums are shown in the table. Child rag pickers 5 to 16 years of age group who are engaged in this work constitute the universe of the study. Hence, the sample for the study is 240 child rag pickers. Field visits and data collection was organized during May and June 2016.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The working conditions of child rag pickers which explain the prevailing conditions in the deployment of rag picking work. Mostly the rag picking work is multi-dimensional aspect and it is dehumanizing activity. Often child rag pickers are work in harsh conditions and they are prone to attack multiple diseases. In this circumstances, it is discussed about the various issues such as working hours, age at entry into this work, different forms of exploitation at junkyard, abuses at work place, health problems etc.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF CHILD RAG PICKERS

The personal and socio-economic conditions of the rag picking children such as age, sex, residence, religion, caste, family composition, education, mother education, occupation, father education, occupation and income and other social aspects has been discussed in this study. The micro-analysis of these issues will reflect the status of rag picking children in Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, Andhra Pradesh.

Table 1
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by Age

S. No.	Age	Frequency	Percent
1	<5	5	02.1
2	6 to 9	38	15.8
3	10 to 13	94	39.2
4	14 to 16	103	42.9
Total		240	100.0

Mean Age () = 12.35 Years

In the study, the age of the child rag pickers ranges from 5 to 16 years. In order to facilitate further analysis, four age group categories have been developed. The Table 1 reveals that the majority of the child rag picking respondents were belonging to age group of 14 to 16 years are 42.9 percent, 10 to 13 years of age group are belongs to 39.2 percent and followed by 6 to 9 years of age group belongs to 15.8 percent. Thus, making a majority of 14 to 16 age groups and the mean age is 12.35 years.

Table 2
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by Sex

S. No.	Sex	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	169	70.4
2	Female	71	29.6
Total		240	100.0

The Table 2 indicates sex wise distribution of the respondents; the male child rag pickers who were constitute 70.4 percent and female child rag pickers who are constituted 29.6 per cent. It is observed from the table that there are more male children among the female children who are majority engaged in the rag picking work.

Table 3
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by Education

S. No.	Education	Frequency	Percent
	Illiterate	182	75.8
	Literate	58	24.2
Total		240	100.0

Most of the child rag pickers are found poor in terms of education and literacy development. Even, 75.8 percent of child rag picker respondents are reported as they are illiterate. Illiteracy was found more pronounced in these children for rag picking. Importantly, educated children respondents were reported in primary education about 24.2 percent.

Table 4
Percentage distribution of the Respondents how long work as Rag picker by Sex

S. No.	How long work as Rag pickers Vs	Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
1	<2 Years	46	1	47
		97.9%	2.1%	100.0%
2	3 to 4 Years	22	26	48
		45.8%	54.2%	100.0%
3	5 to 6 Years	37	2	39
		94.9%	5.1%	100.0%
4	7 to 8 Years	43	23	66
		65.2%	34.8%	100.0%
5	>9 Years	21	19	40
		52.5%	47.5%	100.0%
Total		169	71	240
		70.4%	29.6%	100.0%

$X^2=49.171, df= 4, P < 0.000$, Significant at 0.01

The chi-square test shows that the respondents how long they working as a rag pickers and its association to sex. There is a significant difference in the experience of doing this job between males and females. In compare to both sexes female are more long service i.e. 7 and above years than the males. It is statistically significant and the P value is 0.000 at 0.01 levels. It indicates that girls are not given preference traditionally in India to send school and they are more neglectful in providing all the needs.

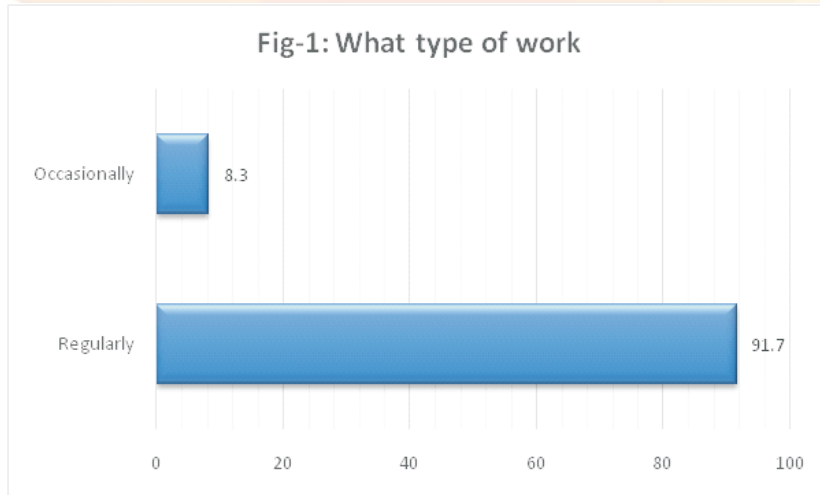
Table 5
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by what type of rags do you pick

S. No.	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Plastic	42	17.5
2	Paper	25	10.4
3	Plastic & Paper	110	45.8
4	All Items	63	26.3
Total		240	100.0

As regards to Table 5 displays that what types of rags do you collect. It reveals that 45.8 percent of the respondents are collect plastic and paper, whereas 26.2 percent of the respondents are collect all item that means plastic, cardboard, paper, tin etc. followed by 17.5 percent collect plastic alone and 10.4 percent paper collect by the child rag pickers. Khurana Indrajit et al (2001) in their studies reveals that child rag pickers gathered all the material of Plastic, Paper, and metal items.

Table 6
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by what type of work

S. No.	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Regularly	220	91.7
2	Occasionally	20	08.3
Total		240	100.0



The Table 6 and Figure 1 explain that do you engage in collecting rags whether regular or occasional. The majority (91.7 percent) of the respondents are engaged in this job regularly. About 8.3 percent of the respondents are engage in this job occasionally. Thus, it is indicates that the children who are engaged regularly in this work are neither drop outs nor never attended the school.

Table 7
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by how many hours do you work

S. No.	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	<2 Hours	10	4.2
2	3 to 4 Hours	32	13.3
3	5 to 6 Hours	86	35.8
4	7 to 8 Hours	69	28.8
5	>9 Hours	43	17.9
Total		240	100.0

The data shows that how many hours are working the child rag pickers in a day. The Table 7 reveals that majority (35.8 percent) children working 5 to 6 hours for a day followed by 28.8 percent and 17.9 percent 9 hours and above are working for a day for rag picking respectively. The remaining 13.3 percent 3 to 4 hours and 4.2 percent 1 to 2 hours are very short time and in due course they engage some part time work in a remaining day. Thus, the majority children are engaged in rag picking very long hours to get their livelihood. Kshitiji (2003) found that the majority of the child rag pickers work more than 10 hours per day.

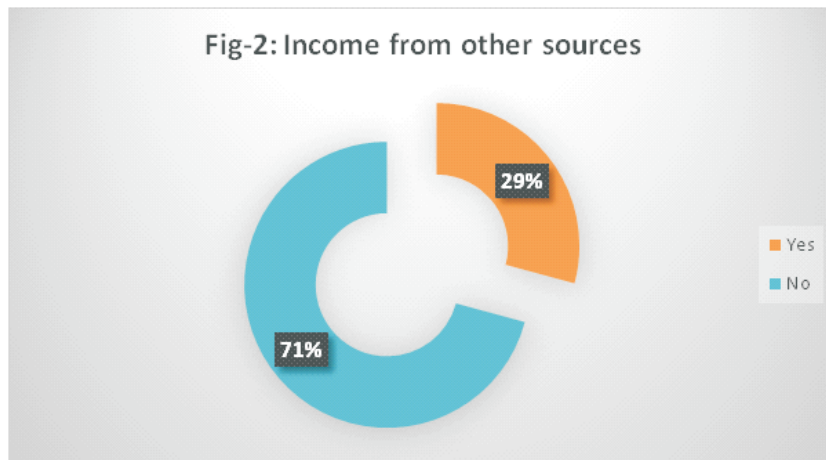
Table 8
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by how much do you collect

S. No.	Variable (KGs)	Frequency	Percent
1	<10	52	21.7
2	11 to 20	87	36.2
3	21 to 30	40	16.7
4	31 to 40	61	25.4
Total		240	100.0

The Table 8 depicts that how much you collect for a day. The majority respondents 36.2 percent are 11 to 20 KGs collect from various sources, followed by 25.4 percent collect 31 to 40 KGs and 21.7 percent are collect below 10 KGs of the rags. The children’s who are collect 30 to 40 KGs are frequently getting health problems while carrying the weight on their shoulders in the whole day.

Table 9
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by income from other source

S. No.	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	70	29.2
2	No	170	70.8
Total		240	100.0



It is clear that the child rag pickers gaining some additional income besides the rag picking work. In the mean time they engage in part time work and earn some amount. The table 9 and figure 2 observed that 70.8 percent are not doing any part time work, whereas 29.2 percent work as part time and earning some additional income.

Table 10
Percentage distribution of the Respondents do you face any problems by their age

S. No.	Age	Do you face any problems		Total
		Yes	No	
1	<5 Years	4	1	5
		80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
2	6 to 9 Years	32	6	38
		84.2%	15.8%	100.0%
3	10 to 13 Years	74	20	94
		78.7%	21.3%	100.0%
4	14 to 16 Years	88	15	103
		85.4%	14.6%	100.0%
Total		198	42	240
		82.5%	17.5%	100.0%

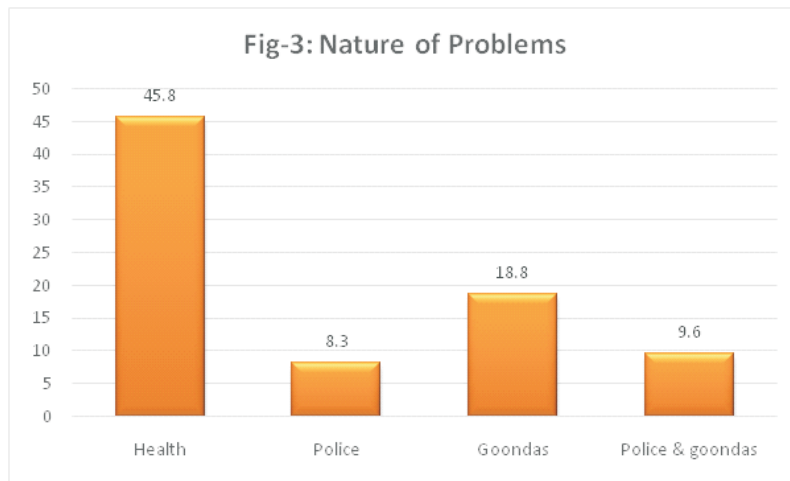
$\chi^2=1.643$, $df=3$, $P<0.650$, Not Significant at 0.05

The Table 10 portrays that do you face any problems vs. their age. It shows that the problems faced by child rag pickers during the rag picking as well as selling the collected items. The majority out of 240 respondents, 198 child rag pickers face the problems while they are collecting the rags. About 88 child rag

pickers face the problems in the age group of 14-16 years followed by 74 child rag pickers in the age group of 10-13 years also face the problems. Remaining a negligible number of age groups 6-9 and below 5 years are 32 and 4 child rag pickers facing the problems. Hence, there is statistically no significant association between the do you face problems and by their age.

Table 11
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by nature of problems

S.No.	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Health	110	55.6
2	Police	20	10.1
3	Goondas	45	22.7
4	Police & Goondas	23	11.6
Total		198	100.0



As shown in the Table 11 reveals that nature of problems by child rag pickers. A majority 45.8 percent of the respondents faced health problems. About 18.8 percent of the respondents face with goondas while collecting the rags. By and large 8.3 percent were problems faced by police in way of harassing for collecting money. Girls are more vulnerable than boys by facing the problems.

Table 12
Percentage distribution of the Respondents by type of exploitation

S. No.	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Cheating at sales point	62	48.8
2	Collecting money by municipal worker	20	15.7
3	Collecting money by goondas/police	45	35.5
Total		127	100.0

n=127

As regards to Table 12, there are many types of exploitations have been experienced by the child rag pickers; this is all due to that they are children and vulnerable group. The tables indicates that 48.8 percent respondents are facing cheating at sales point followed by 35.5 percent respondents are facing collecting

money by goondas and police and remaining 15.7 percent respondents are facing collecting money by municipal workers. Thus, the majority child rag pickers are exploiting by various forms during their rag picking work.

CONCLUSION

A situation that has been created due to the existing social, political, and economic pressures in society and needs to be addressed at the root of the problem, through an attitudinal change in the society. Government as well as other national and international non-government organizations are working and implementing various plans for child welfare in the country but it has not been successful to improve their condition. It seems that child labour in other sector has been discouraged but in reality it is still not satisfactory.

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