

Working Conditions, Work Hazards and Job Satisfaction: A Study of Informal Child Rag Pickers in Patiala District, Punjab (India)

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Abstract

Background: Informal rag picking is a dead-end job pursued by a number of urban poor due to poverty, unemployment, easy access to waste or poor waste management in developing countries etc. Young children of rag pickers, street vendors, rickshaw pullers and other petty workers start rag picking due to several reasons. Child rag pickers face more occupational challenges than adult rag pickers owing to tender age and lack of work experience.

Objective: To explore working conditions in terms of working hours, place of work, use of protective measures, occupational hazards and job satisfaction among child rag pickers.

Methodology and study area: The present study is based on primary data on 300 child rag pickers in Patiala district of Punjab (India). 300 child rag pickers aged 6-14 years from the five Tehsils of district Patiala were chosen through simple random sampling technique. Since the sample size is of 300 respondents, therefore, 60 child rag pickers from each of the five Tehsils in the district were contacted. Semi-structured interview schedule was applied to gather data from the respondents after pre-testing the interview schedule.

Findings: The study presents that majority of the respondents, i.e., 60.67 percent go for rag picking at dump sites whilst 36 percent of them pick the rags from streets including community containers as well. It is described that more than half of the respondents, i.e., 56.67 percent do not use separate clothes or any protective equipment during work, and all of the respondents never use gloves, masks and long rubber boots. The study further explores that 72.67 percent child rag pickers work for 6-10 hours a day without having any rest. However, they work in dreadful conditions but a large majority of the respondents such as 74.33 percent reported to be satisfied with their work.

Conclusions: The current study depicts the work place, working hours and working conditions of child rag pickers. They work for long working hours in hazardous working conditions but three fourth of the respondents were found to be satisfied despite onerous working conditions.

Key words: Child Rag Pickers, Informal Recycling, Occupational Hazards, Working Environment, Protective Measures, Punjab.

1. Nature of job pursued by child rag pickers

Rag picking is hazardous as well as long working hours activity and both the conditions are prohibited for children according to International Labour Organization (ILO). Although such activities have been prohibited by ILO, but the evidences of children engaged in rag picking are pervasive in developing countries (Bhaskaran & Mehta, 2011). Category wise regular rag pickers are those workers who go for work daily without missing a day and occasional rag pickers who go for rag picking randomly with their mothers or group of friends. Generally occasional rag pickers work for joy and are not in acute need for work. They work usually after the school timings or in holidays. There are various differences between the regular and occasional workers regarding accessibility to educational opportunities, entertainment or leisure time activities as well as access to health care services. Therefore, it is important to look into the category of rag picking. Table 1.1 comprises the findings regarding nature of job of the respondents.

Table: 1.1 Nature of job performed by child rag pickers

Do you work regularly or occasionally?		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Regular	220	73.33
Occasional	80	26.67
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

As depicted in Table 1.1, majority of the respondents, i.e., 73.33 percent of the respondents work on the regular basis whereas 26.67 percent of the respondents were occasional workers. Findings of current study are corroborated with an empirical study conducted by Devi et al. (2014) in Hyderabad municipality (India). It was observed that majority of the respondents, i.e., 65 percent were working for full time whereas 35 percent were working part time work. Moreover, in Bijapur district of Karnataka (India), it has also been observed that a large majority of child rag pickers, i.e., 84.8 percent were doing rag picking regularly and rest of them, i.e., 15.2 percent were going for rag picking occasionally. All the regular rag pickers were not taking any formal education (Bhosale & Korishetti, 2015). However, conversely, Eve Naftalin (2004) found that child rag pickers of

Baranagar station Kolkata (India) do not go for rag picking on a regular basis. They go occasionally for work and on an average, they work for three to four days approximately in a week.

2. Type of material collected by child rag pickers

Rag picking is a labour-intensive activity in which child rag pickers collect recyclable and reusable items from waste material. These items have resale and reuse value which provides the livelihood to a large section of poor people (Joshi & Ahmed, 2016). Municipal solid waste, hospital waste, industrial waste and e-waste comprise such recyclable and reusable items which lures the child rag pickers. Plastics and metal ingredients including tin, iron, aluminium, brass, copper etc. are first preference by child rag pickers in order to collect recyclables because these items provide better earning than paper, cardboard or clothes. Accessibility of recyclable material also tempts the rag pickers to collect specified items such as iron and tin because iron and tin are easily found in comparison to aluminium, brass and copper. Moreover, items of aluminium, brass and copper are assumed as theft material rather than collected by rag pickers (KC, Gurung, Adhikari & Subedi, 2001), thus child rag pickers collect these items carefully. Furthermore, reusability of material attracts the pickers to collect the demanding material such as disposable needles/syringes and drugs found in waste. It is found that reuse of disposable needles and syringes is common practice in Pakistan therefore, rag pickers are allured to collect these items from hospital waste (Rauf et al., 2013), even though scavenging of medical waste is not a very viable option for rag pickers because it is very hazardous for health (Patwary, O'Hare, Karim & Sarker, 2012). In the current study, the participants collect all types of material but some of them collect plastics or iron scraps solely. Moreover, the respondents were asked for recyclable items which they generally pick and findings have been presented in Table 1.2.

As depicted in Table 1.2 majority of the respondents, i.e., 69.33 percent collect all type of material as plastic bags, paper, bottles, cardboard, tin and iron scrap, needles, syringes and drugs etc. along with this, a number of respondents collect only single type of waste as plastic items or iron scrap. A little less than four fifth, i.e., 19.33 percent of the respondents collect only iron objects followed by 11.34 percent of the respondents collect plastic items.

Table: 1.2 Type of material collected by child rag pickers

What type of things do you mostly pick?		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Plastic items	34	11.34
Iron scrap	58	19.33
All types of material	208	69.33
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

Findings of the current study are consistent with a study conducted in Bijapur city of Karnataka, India. It reflects that majority of child rag pickers, i.e., 72.4 percent collect all recyclable and reusable items followed by 16 percent of the respondents plastic, 6.4 percent of the respondents tin, 4.8 percent of the respondents cardboard and 0.4 percent of the respondents collect only paper. Plastic is the most common material collected by child rag pickers as it is widely used (Bhosale & Korishetti, 2015).

3. Place of rag picking/work

Rag pickers pick up recyclable material from community containers, garbage heaps, river banks, road sides, residential areas, drains, dumpsites or landfills and from hospital/clinics as well (da Silva, Fassa, Siqueira, & Kriebel, 2005; Rauf et al., 2013). Community containers for dumping the solid waste are usually placed close to the residential colonies, marketplaces and other commercial points. Household use these containers to dump solid waste. Apart from that, door to door waste collectors usually hired by the municipal authorities collect the waste from authorized/posh colonies, marketplaces and commercial points and dump it in community containers. Thus, municipal solid waste is dumped in community containers for provisional storage. After that, municipal vehicles pick the waste from such temporary containers and transport it to the large dumpsites which are mostly situated outside the city. Most of the street rag pickers use to pick recyclable and reusable items from community containers and dumpsite rag pickers from large dumpsites/landfills (Maciel, 2010). Some of the rag picking families start living close to the permanent dumpsites or landfills in temporary shacks. Since a large volume of the waste material is dumped here in routine. A number of rag pickers also go to landfill sites for rag picking by walking long distances (Suthar, Rayal &

Ahada, 2016). It can be instanced that health of the landfill rag pickers is more in danger who reside near the workplaces and education and housing facilities are lacking along with inadequate living arrangements altogether (Parizeau, 2015; Shibata et al., 2015). Moreover, place of work of child rag pickers is also relevant to understand the socialization of children within the given environment (Bansal & Banerjee, 1993). Therefore, it is significant to ask for place of work of the respondents and the results have been presented in Table 1.3.

Table: 1.3 Places where the child rag pickers go for rag picking

Where do you go most frequently for rag picking?		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Dumpsites rag pickers	182	60.67
Street rag pickers	108	36
Work at home	10	3.33
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

As shown in the Table 1.3, majority of the respondents, i.e., 60.67 percent go for rag picking at dump sites whilst 36 percent of them pick the rags from streets including community containers as well. There is 3.33 percent of child rag pickers who sort the waste material collected by their siblings or parents at home and are usually girls. They go for rag picking occasionally. The study explores that migrant children were more to be involved in working at home. Findings of the current study are corroborated with the study carried out by Uplap and Bhate (2014) in Mumbai, India. It is observed that majority of rag pickers work on dumpsites or landfills, i.e., 53.6 percent followed by 32.7 percent of the respondents were street rag pickers and 13.7 percent were door to door waste collectors. There were not found any medical waste pickers particularly in the current study however some respondents admitted that they pick medical waste when they get chance. Place of rag picking is decided by the rag pickers according to availability of rags and waste.

4. Use of equipments and separate clothes by child rag pickers during work

Use of personal protective equipments (PPEs) while working is highly concerning issue. It deals with the occupational health of child rag pickers. Manual handling and sorting of waste is dangerous in view of the fact that most of the rag pickers do not use PPEs such as gloves, masks, long rubber

boots and sticks while working (da Silva, Fassa, Siqueira & Kriebel, 2005; Ravindra et al., 2016). A number of rag pickers usually work with bare hands and feet. They do not use long rubber boots for rag picking and they wear rubber slippers/sandals usually picked up from trash (Ray et. al, 2004). Besides, they do not wear separate clothes for rag picking as well and furthermore it is an issue of general hygiene (Joshi, 2017).

A little percentage of child rag pickers use sticks or other gadgets to sort the recyclable items from waste but a large number of child rag pickers never use gloves, masks and rubber boots during work as they have not been educated about the adverse impacts of working with bare hands, feet and mouth (Hunt, 1996). Health of waste pickers is exacerbated due to absence of protective gears. During the sorting of recyclable items children are more likely to be subject of getting needle pricks or cuts with sharp objects. But occupational health risks may be reduced with the help of using protective gears. For keeping it in mind, child rag pickers were probed about using the separate clothes and protective equipments during work and the results have been presented in Table 1.4.

Table: 1.4 Use of equipments and separate clothes during work by child rag pickers

Do you use any equipment or separate clothes for rag picking?		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Mask and gloves	0	0
Long rubber boot	0	0
Wooden stick	38	12.67
Iron rod	39	13
Separate clothes	53	17.67
Never use	170	56.67
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

Table 1.4 shows that more than half of the respondents, i.e., 56.67 percent do not use separate clothes or protective equipments during work. It has been found that child rag pickers under the current study never use gloves, masks and long rubber boots and they think that use of gloves decreases their work productivity. Such dangerous practice of rag picking among children poses a serious physical threat. They collect the waste with bare hands and feet and with open mouth. Almost similar situation is being occurred in waste pickers in Karachi (Pakistan). Findings of the study reported that, only 16 percent of the respondents out of 141 respondents used to wear gloves

during garbage collection which were reused, dirty and torn and 30 percent of the respondents had no slippers or sandals to wear (Rauf et al., 2013). However, 17.67 percent of child rag pickers in current study have been using separate clothes while working and they put off these clothes after finishing the day activity. A little number of child rag pickers, i.e., 13 percent use wooden stick to sort the recyclable items from garbage followed by 12.67 percent use iron rod for collecting tin or ironical objects as well. Some child rag pickers walk in the streets with a piece of magnate fixed with an iron rod. Iron objects cling to magnate. In the evening they detach these objects from magnate and sell to the junk dealers.

5. Working hours of child rag pickers

Rag pickers usually work for 8 to 10 hours on an average per day. It has been observed that informal recyclers in Brazil work for more than eight hours per day and six or seven days in the week and the scenario is almost similar in all developing countries (Gutberlet & Baeder, 2008; Suthar, Rayal & Ahada, 2016). Earlier it has been discussed that rag pickers work in the street and at the landfills. There is found a difference between the working hours of street pickers and dumpsite pickers as street pickers spend 10 hours a day whereas dumpsite pickers work for 7 hours. It must be noticed here that recyclable material cannot be found easily in the streets, therefore, child rag pickers have to work for long hours to collect a good volume. On the other hand, dumpsite workers get plenty of material at the dumpsite, therefore, work at dumpsite is not a time consuming (Asim, Batool & Chaudhry, 2012). As per discussion the child rag pickers were probed for working hours which they spend and the responses have been presented in Table 1.5.

Table: 1.5 Working hours of child rag pickers in a day

How many hours do you work in a day?		
Responses	Number	Percentage
4-6 hours	81	27
6-8 hours	110	36.67
8-10 hours	108	36
10-12 hours	1	0.33
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

As far as working hours of child rag pickers are concerned, Table 1.5 shows that 36.67 percent of the respondents work for 6-8 hours a day followed by 36 percent of the respondents who work for 8-10 hours and 27 percent of the respondents who work for 4-6 hours a day respectively. There was only one respondent, i.e., 0.33 percent who was working for 10-12 hours in a day. It is terrible to notice that 72.67 percent child rag pickers below the 14 years of age work for 6-10 hours a day without having any rest. A study carried out by Preeti Soni (2014) in Delhi, India reported that girl child rag pickers work for long hours as 63 percent of the respondents work 11-12 hours a day followed by 29 percent of the respondents work for nine to ten hours, five percent of the respondents work for 7 to 8 hours and only two percent of the respondents work for 5 to 6 hours a day. The findings of the study show that children occupied in rag picking in Delhi spend more time in the activity than in Patiala district comparatively. It might be due to working conditions of cities as Delhi is the metro city of India whereas cities of Patiala district are less populated and non-industrial.

6. Average volume of rag collected by a child rag picker in a day (in kgs)

Earning of rag pickers only depends on the quality and quantity of recyclable and reusable material collected by them. In order to enhance the quantity of material rag pickers must walk long distances and work for long period of time because valuable material is no longer available in the street bins, markets or commercial areas where they work as usual. Due to this, rag pickers prefer landfills for rag picking where ample material exists at a single place (Medina, 2000). Variety of material is determined by place of work as mixed items of waste, i.e., paper, plastic, glass can be found in residential areas and in markets cardboard is more likely to be available. However, on the landfills all types of material is available including metal ingredients, bones, medical waste and e-waste as well. Weight of material also depends on the type of waste as paper, cardboard and plastic bottles are light in weight but glass, tin and metal objects are heavier in weight. The study stated that a rag picker in Delhi, India can easily collect approximately five to fifteen kg plastic, ten to fifteen kg paper or cardboard and some amount of glass (Sarkar, 2003). The experience of workers also plays a chief role in the quantity and quality of the material collected. Thus, it could be stated that the amount of material collected by child rag pickers depends on various factors and it largely affects

their income. Therefore, it was important to jot down the responses of the respondents on this very issue and data has been presented in Table 1.6.

As explored in Table 1.6, majority of the respondents, i.e., 54 percent collect 10-20 kg recyclable material per day followed by 30 percent of the respondents collect 20-30 kg, 13.67 percent of the respondents collect up to 10 kg and a marginal proportion, i.e., 2.33 percent of the respondents collect 30-40 kg a day respectively.

Table: 1.6 Average volume of rag collected by a child rag picker in a day

How much rag do you collect in a day? (in kilograms)		
Responses	Number	Percentage
0-10	41	13.67
10-20	162	54
20-30	90	30
30-40	7	2.33
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

It is evident that material collected by rag pickers decides their earnings of the day. There are several variables causing increase and decrease of amount of material which include place of work, availability of material and work experience. Along with this, seasonal variations have also been observed as an important impact factor in the quantum of material. In the study of women rag pickers of Mumbai, India Uplap and Bhate (2014) reported that majority of the respondents, i.e., 54.1 percent collect less than 10 kg of material a day followed by 35.7 percent who collect 11-20 kg and 10.1 percent collect 21-30 kg of material per day. The study explored that almost 90 percent of respondents collect up to 20 kg material a day that may be sign of low earning among rag pickers. Almost similar findings were reported in another study of rag pickers in Vijayawada city of Andhra Pradesh (India) as 85 percent of the respondents collect 0-25 kg material a day and 15 percent of the respondents collect 25-50 kg in a day (Niloufer et al., 2013).’

7. Place of selling of recyclable material

Rag pickers cannot approach directly to the manufacturing industry therefore, they are utterly reliant on middlemen for selling their collected material. Due to this, middlemen always try to exploit the value of material and maximizing their own profit which affects the income of rag pickers. Usually child rag pickers sell the collected material to junk dealers, brokers, contractors or shopkeepers close to their living and working places. Junk dealers set a place for purchasing the rags near landfills or living places of child rag pickers, hence most of child rag pickers sell their collected material to junk dealers. Some of the scrap brokers give the money in advance to child rag pickers. Thus, they have control over some child rag pickers for buying the material. Some of the rag pickers work under the contractors and therefore they sell the material to these contractors also (Hai et al., 2016). Apart from that, there are provisional stores nearby the living places of child rag pickers. The owners of these stores also purchase material from child rag pickers and make profit by selling it to brokers. It is evident that place of selling material impacts the income of child rag pickers. Thus, keeping in mind the importance of place of selling of recyclable material, the respondents were probed about it and their responses have been jotted down in Table 1.7.

Table: 1.7 Place of selling of recyclable material by child rag pickers.

Who do you sell the collected material?		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Junk dealers	179	59.67
Brokers	22	7.33
Contractors	48	16
Shopkeepers	51	17
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

Table 1.7 shows the places where the child rag pickers sell their collected material. As shown in above Table, majority of the respondents, i.e., 59.67 percent sell material to junk shops followed by 17 percent of the respondents sell their material to petty shopkeepers usually situated nearby their residential areas. Moreover, 16 percent of child rag pickers work under the contractors and sell their collected material to them and rest of the respondents, i.e., 7.33 percent sell their material to brokers. It must be noted that all of child rag pickers cannot access the brokers or wholesale merchants and

manufacturing industry directly hence they sell the material to junk dealers, petty shopkeepers and contractors. These people play the role of middlemen who buy recyclable items from rag pickers and sell it to large scrap dealers or manufacturing industry. They make their profit as an intermediary from buying and selling the rags. It reduces the income of child rag pickers since they are at the bottom of trade hierarchy (Wilson et al., 2006). It has been observed that rag pickers use various strategies to sell the material for enhancing their income. Some rag picking families collect the material and store it for a week or a month then they sell it to large scrap dealers. Thus, they make a good earning and it is helpful in money saving as well. But the individual rag pickers sell their rags on daily basis to junk dealers.

8. Perceptions of child rag pickers regarding working conditions in general

Working conditions of rag pickers are hazardous, filthy and foully in nature and they become more unfavourable in rainy season. Adverse weather conditions like extreme hot and cold make their work more difficult. Thus, rag picking is an onerous activity performed by children in ruthless, uncomfortable and often physically unsafe environment which is destructive for their growth and development. They work in inhuman circumstances beyond their physical capacities and they have to carry heavy loads on their shoulders all day. Rag pickers perceive their work harsh in nature because of exposure to dangerous elements and other challenges they face while working (Satapathy, Sahu, Behera & Naraslmham, 2005; Schenck & Blaauw, 2011). It is noteworthy that harsh working conditions of rag pickers bring multiple health challenges and also lead them into addictive behaviour as they want to escape psychologically from the harsh reality of their work (Uplap & Bhate, 2014). However, working conditions of child rag pickers are unfavourable and harsh but some of the respondents perceive it moderate. It depends on the specificity of their work place, working hours, and social support system. Child rag pickers were asked for their perception towards working conditions and the findings have been presented in Table 1.8.

Table: 1.8 Perceptions of child rag pickers regarding working conditions in general

How do you find the working conditions?		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Moderate	68	22.67
Harsh	232	77.33
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey

As shown in Table 1.12, a little more than three fourth, i.e., 77.33 percent of the respondents reported harsh working conditions and 22.67 percent respondents reported that their working conditions are moderate. The current study shows that majority of respondents feel that their working conditions are dreadful in nature. However, Article 32 in India demands check on working of children under 14 in hazardous conditions but it is hard reality of child rag pickers (Sekar, 1997).

9. Job satisfaction among child rag pickers

Work is a key component of happiness amongst seven areas of life satisfaction as explored by Cummins (1996). In order to look for job satisfaction in rag pickers it is important to consider work place, earnings, timings of work, modes of entertainment and obstacles confronted by them and so on. Rag pickers are subjugated of utmost poverty and their working conditions are onerous and dangerous in fact. It is important to keep all the components in mind to analyse job satisfaction of the respondents (Vázquez, 2013). Rag pickers face various adversities during work and their income is very low. But they prefer rag picking due to several reasons. It has been observed in a study conducted in Bangalore (India) with 100 child rag pickers by Caroline Hunt (1996) that more than one third of the respondents thought that rag picking is a better option at least it provides them food, however, they are unaware about the ill effects of the occupation. In another study carried out in León (Nicaragua), it was found that only 12 percent of the respondents were very unhappy and just 5 percent were anxious towards their future out of 99 rag pickers. Surprisingly, majority of the respondents felt satisfied despite having various difficulties due to extreme poverty, adverse working conditions and social stigma attached with rag picking. Moreover, most of them were confident to lead a good future with hard work (Vázquez, 2013). It is significant to note that fair employment provides a feeling of satisfaction but inadequate job makes a person disappointed or dissatisfied. For

keeping it in view the respondents were asked for job satisfaction and the findings have been presented in Table 1.9.

As shown in Table 1.9, a large majority of the respondents, i.e., 74.33 percent reported to be satisfied with their work whereas 25.67 percent of the respondents were not satisfied with their work. Findings of the current study suggest that child rag pickers are satisfied with their occupation by and large. In another study of female rag pickers carried out in Kerala (India), it was found that 60.3 percent of the respondents in a sample of 146 rag pickers were satisfied with their work owing to several reasons. Among them, 57.7 percent of the respondents said that earning from waste picking is helpful in removing their incurred debts and 37.7 percent reported that timings of work are convenient and they can look after their children along with their work (George, 2015). A completely different viewpoint was put forwarded by another study conducted in Hyderabad, (India). It was found that a large majority of the respondents, i.e., 97 percent out of 150 rag pickers were not satisfied with their work due to hazardous working conditions, low income and long working hours (Devi et al., 2014). Similar evidences were reported in another study conducted in Chandigarh (India), in which a large majority of rag pickers, i.e., 70 percent (out of 47 subjects) were found dissatisfied with their present working conditions. Most of them have tried to change their occupation but they could not pursue new job due to irregular employment (Ravindra et al., 2016).

Table: 1.9 Job satisfaction among child rag pickers

Are you satisfied with this job? (N=300)		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	223	74.33
No	77	25.67
Total	300	100
If yes, why? (N=223)		
Responses	Number	Percentage
Interest in work and earning	190 (85.20)	190 (85.20)
No skill required	4 (1.79)	4 (1.79)
To help family	18 (8.07)	18 (8.07)
Utilization of time	11 (4.93)	11 (4.93)
Total	223 (100)	223 (100)
If no, why? (N=77)		
Responses	Number	Percentage
No interest	16	20.78
See no future	10	12.99
Want to do study	51	66.23
Total	77	100

Source: Field survey

Reasons of job satisfaction were asked from 74.33 percent respondents, among them, a large proportion of child rag pickers, i.e., 85.20 percent reported that they like their work because of interest in work and earning followed by 8.07 percent of the respondents who thought that their work is helpful to their family, 4.93 percent of the respondents thought that rag picking is the best utilization of time and 1.79 percent respondents liked rag picking because it does not require any skill or training. It is amazing to know that majority of child rag pickers work happily without considering the hazards and challenges of the occupation.

Reasons for job dissatisfaction were asked from 25.67 percent respondents who were not satisfied with rag picking. Reasons as reported by majority of the respondents, i.e., 66.23 percent were their longing for education followed by 20.78 percent of the respondents who were not interested in rag picking due to stigma attached to it and 10.39 percent of the respondents think that there is no future in this work. The present study reveals that majority of respondents who were not satisfied with their work were more interested in education. They see their future in skilled job which can be possible only with education. Therefore, they wanted to study rather than working on the dumps.

Conclusions: The study explores that most of child rag pickers work on the dumping sites/landfills, in the streets and commercial establishments and a few of them help out their family in sorting of rags at home. It is evident that children of very young age, i.e., below 14 years of age are involved in rag piking and they work for 6 to 10 hours a day. Half of them do not use any kind of protective equipment such as wooden stick, iron rod and separate clothes and they never use masks, gloves or long rubber boots. It shows a dreadful work exercise of child rag pickers. It is surprising to find that a large majority of the respondents, i.e., 74.33 percent was satisfied with their working conditions despite having several occupational hazards.

Recommendations: The study suggested some important recommendations in order to improve the working conditions of child rag pickers. These recommendations are divided into short-term and long-term interventions as described below:

Short-term interventions:

- i. Child rag pickers should be provided with personal protective equipments (PPEs), i.e., masks, protective clothes, gloves, footwear, etc. by the governmental or non-governmental organizations in order to avoid work-related injuries and harms.
- ii. There is also a need to develop low cost and user-friendly tools to minimize the occurrence of injuries.
- iii. Awareness regarding occupational health should be spread among child rag pickers as the occurrence of musculoskeletal disorders among the respondents can be reduced by providing awareness regarding early signs of MSDs.
- iv. Adequate health care centres in the localities of the stakeholders by CBOs/NGOs should be provided with the services of a health check-up, treatment, and referral services.
- v. Vaccination against rabies, hepatitis A, B and C, Tetanus, and other infections is required to protect child rag pickers from rabies or other viral infections.

Long-term interventions:

- i. Strict implementation of the legislation is required in order to stop the employment of children in hazardous occupations, which have been banned under The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016.
- ii. Children involved in rag picking should be re-enrolled in schools for skill development and enhancing their future employment opportunities.
- iii. Needs to frame a coherent policy for generating decent work for youth so that children of next generation can be rescued from labour.
- iv. Informal recycling must be organized in India since legitimization of rag picking would provide improved working conditions to rag pickers.

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