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Assessment of personal hygiene & cleanliness practices of child ragpickers

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Abstract

Child ragpickers are a common sight in cities and towns across India. Rag picking is an off shoot of industrialization and urbanization, which is seen as a quick means of earning a livelihood by scores of untrained poverty ridden people in our country. Children as young as 5-6 years are seen to be involved in rag picking. The very nature of this activity poses a number of dangers for the young children involved in it. The current research assesses the daily personal hygiene practices and physical health status of child ragpickers. The sample for the study comprised of 200 children below 14 years of age working as ragpickers for at least past six months in and around Jammu city selected through non probability sampling technique/s. Self devised physical health checklist and interview schedule were used for data collection. Results reveal that sample ragpickers had poor personal hygiene habits and they were least interested in maintaining their physical health and hygiene. They were reluctant to even perform simple personal hygiene activities such as bathing, brushing teeth, washing hair, changing clothes on a regular basis. Cleaning of ears and nose was need based while the children were relatively more concerned about cleaning their feet and ankles. Changing clothes, cutting nails and hair were noted to receive least attention from these children. Older age group children were comparatively more concerned about their personal hygiene than the younger group. Majority of the sample ragpickers seemed unbothered about even washing hands before and after meals or even after toilet. Mostly the children washed their hands and face after finishing their work in the evening but changing clothes was not practices. There is an urgent need to improve the physical hygiene and cleanliness status of these children, as many illnesses and morbidities can be overcome through these initiatives.

Keywords: Child Ragpickers, Personal Hygiene, Cleanliness Practices

Introduction

Child labour is a concrete manifestation of violations of a range of rights of children and is recognised as a serious and enormously complex social problem in India. Working children are denied their right to survival and development, education, leisure and play, and adequate standard of living, opportunity for developing personality, talents, mental and physical abilities, and protection from abuse and neglect (NCPCR, 2008) [7].

Child labour refers to work undertaken by a child, who is below 14 years of age, for wage. Child labourers are the victims of grinding poverty fighting for survival at an early age. Child labour is significantly different from child work, as the later can be beneficial and can enhance a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development without interfering with schooling, recreation and rest. Helping parents in their household activities and business after school in their free time also contributes positively to the development of the child. When such work is truly part of the socialization process and a means of transmitting skills from parents to child, it is not child labour. Through such work children can increase their status as family members and citizens and gain confidence and self-esteem. On the contrary, child labour hampers the normal physical, intellectual, emotional and moral development of a child. Children who are in the growing process can permanently distort or disable their bodies when they carry heavy loads or are forced to adopt unnatural positions at work for long hours. Children are less resistant to diseases and suffer more readily from chemical hazards and radiation than adults.

According to UNICEF (1997) [11] ragpicking is one of the worst forms of child labour, and falls under the category of street children. Rag picking is the lowest economic rescue net to the poorest of the poor which is full of risks. Families relying in this job involve women, and children in harsh working environment and weak social protection. Rag picking is a job in

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which there are no certain limitations of age, sex and caste group. This is because rag pickers get paid according to the quality of the materials they sell to junkyards and garbage collection centers. As the market for recyclable materials has increased, urban poor have turned to rag picking as a means of survival (Dhakal, 2011) [3].

In 2001, waste-picking was included among the hazardous occupations banned under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. But apart from this very brief mention, ragpicking is ignored in legislation regarding child labour. Contrary to most child labourers, ragpickers are self-employed or working with their parents and therefore not answerable to any employer (Pratham, 2008) [9].

With this as background the present study has been designed to assess the implications of ragpicking on the physical self of the young children involved in it. Jammu is a fast developing city which has witnessed industrial development coupled with high influx of migrants in search of livelihood. There has been a steady increase in the number of children working as ragpickers in highly unhygienic conditions.

Objectives

- 1) To study daily personal hygiene practices of child ragpickers.
- 2) To assess the personal cleanliness practices of sample child ragpickers.

Research Methodology

Sample Description: The sample for the study comprised of 200 children below 14 years of age working as ragpickers for at least past six months in and around Jammu city. Half of the selected children were boys and rest girls. The sample children were selected through purposive and snowball sampling technique.

Locale of the Study: The sample for the study was selected from known industrial hubs of Jammu located at Gangyal, Satwari and Bari Bhamana areas of Jammu. Sample was drawn from some other posh market areas such as Gandhi Nagar, Ranbir Market, Janipur.

Tool for the study: The tools used for the study were:

a. **Physical health checklist:** Self devised checklist was used for assessing the personal hygiene practices and apparent sign of physical ill health of child ragpickers.

b. **Interview schedule:** Interview schedule was prepared to collect information regarding the health hazards related with ragpicking.

Data analysis: Qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to derive the results.

Results and Discussion

1. Physical Hygiene Practices among Child Ragpickers

Table 1 to 3 depicts the physical hygiene practices followed by sample child ragpickers. Their practices related to basic hygienic such as bathing, brushing teeth, combing and washing hair, cleaning ears, nose and ankles, changing and washing clothes, cutting nail and hair were noted.

Bathing practices were found to fluctuate from daily to twice a week to weekly basis. Results show that overall, only 40% of the (42.3% male and 37.5% female) respondents bathed on a daily basis. Majority (54% overall; 53.8% male; and 54.1% female) of the respondents mentioned to take bath twice a week. Age wise, only 49% older and 30.2% younger ragpickers had the habit of bathing daily. They reported that they took water from the municipality taps as they did not have their own water connections. They were not always

able to get enough water for all their domestic needs as all the families took water from the same municipal tap. So, according to them it was mainly due to shortage of water that they did not bathe daily. Results highlight that bathing was not practiced very regularly by the sample children. FREPD (2003) [4] and Thapa *et al.* (2009) [10] had also reported that most ragpickers are irregular in taking bath daily.

During field investigation, it was found that *brushing teeth* varied between the two sexes, 53.8% male children brushed their teeth daily whereas 54.1% female children brushed their teeth twice a week. Overall, only 42% of them reported brushing daily. Age wise, more older (61.5%) than the younger (20.8%) ragpickers brushed their teeth daily. This reflects that more males and more older ragpickers practiced this habit regularly. This can be linked to their more frequent intake of tobacco products for which regular brushing was required. Thapa *et al.* (2009) [10] had also noted that the habit of brushing teeth is not prevalent in most ragpickers of Kathmandu. More so over, observations carried out reveal that even when teeth were brushed it was not satisfactory in terms of brushing material and techniques.

It was found that majority (53.8%) of male children *washed their hair* daily while most (58.3%) female children washed their hair twice a week. The difference in habit of hair washing and hair combing could be mainly attributed to the length of the hair. Age wise, older (48.1%) children preferred washing hair daily while younger ones (39.5%) favoured washing their hair twice a week. However, washing of hair usually meant for them putting water on the hair, with or without the use of soap or shampoo. As far as the habit of combing hair was concerned most of them (66%) (69.2% male and 62.5% female respondents) did it on a daily basis. Also, both older (70.2%) and the younger (61.4%) ragpickers were found particular about hair combing. According to them, looking 'smart' meant a person with well groomed and combed hair. So, they showed more interest in regular hair combing.

During the course of investigation it was observed that the habit of *cleaning nose and ear* among the sample children was rare as it was noted only in 34% of the cases (34.6% male and 33.3% female respondents). Overall, only 6% sample children practised this habit weekly. For most of them it was the least important personal cleanliness habit. Those who cleaned their nose and ear on monthly (18%) or fortnightly basis (10%) reported that cleaned them mainly when there was itching and irritation.

The sample children reported that while searching recyclable materials they had to move in and around heaps of garbage for picking rags out of them, as a result their feet directly came in contact with garbage which needed to be cleaned regularly. The findings showed that the habit of *cleaning ankles* was more prevalent in male respondents as 38.4% of them cleaned their ankles daily while majority (45.8%) of female respondents cleaned their ankles twice a week. On the other hand, age wise majority (48.1%) of older ragpickers preferred to clean their ankles twice a week while most (43.7%) younger ragpickers favoured to practice this habit once a week. This probably varied in accordance to the extent of work carried out in the field. Since more males and more older ragpickers worked for long hours in dirty garbage probably they cleaned their ankles comparatively more frequently.

As far as their *clothing* was concerned these children hardly showed any concern for what they wore. Overall, 36%

(34.6% male and 37.5% female) children changed their clothes daily while majority of them (65.3% male and 58.3% female respondents) reported that they changed their clothes twice a week. Age wise, majority of older ragpickers practiced this habit daily whereas most (78.1%) younger children performed it twice a week. No particular reason was forwarded by the children for variation in frequency of changing clothes.

Among the sample children, majority (69.2%) of the males had the habit of getting a *haircut* done once a month while only 25% female children underwent a haircut on a monthly basis. On the other hand, both the age groups (43.2% older and 53.1% younger ragpickers) went for hair cut once a month.

These children were found to be less bothered about *cutting their nails*. Overall, 86% respondents cut their nails at some time or the other. Nails were either cut on monthly (46%) or fortnightly basis (40%). Girls were found to be slightly more aware of cutting nails than the boys. Age wise, 35.5% older and 57.3% younger ragpickers practiced it once a month. Nails were either cut by nail biting or by blades found in garbage. Children who did not follow this practice recorded that their nails were brittle and hardly grew because of the nature of their work.

As compared to the other hygiene practices, ragpickers gave much importance to the habit of *washing face, hands and feet*. Overall, 94% respondents (88.4% male and 100% female respondents) reported washing their face, hands and feet daily. The same trend was followed by children of both the age groups that is; 94.2% older children and 93.7% younger children. This was the only practice which was regarded as a necessity by them but again hardly any use of soaps was noted.

Over all, it was concluded that these ragpickers had poor health habits and they were least interested in maintaining their health and hygiene. Even simple personal hygiene activities such as bathing, brushing teeth, washing hair, changing clothes were not practiced as a regular feature. Probably lack of basic amenities such as toilet or regular running water at the living sites coupled with ignorance about the need for maintaining hygiene led them to be irregular in following even the basic personal hygiene practices.

2. Personal Cleanliness Practices of Child Ragpickers

Table 4 contains data on personal cleanliness habits of child ragpickers which are significant contributing factor in maintenance of personal hygiene. During the course of investigation, it was found that child ragpickers spent most of their day hours in search of rags at various sites as a result they usually had their meals from wayside shops. On field these children gave least importance to washing hands. Results show that overall, 20% (26.9% male and 12.5% female) respondents *washed their hands always before their meals*. Majority (69.2% males and 79.1% females) of the

respondents occasionally washed their hands before having the meals. Age wise, only 27.8% older and 11.4% younger ragpickers had the habit of washing hands daily before meals. The reason may be that either they did not get water every time on the working sites throughout the day and hence they ate food with dirty hands or hunger did not allow them to wait for washing hands after coming back from work. Patriasih *et al.* (2010)^[8] carried out a study in Bandung and mentioned that only 61.6% children washed their hands before eating.

The habit of *washing hands after meals* was also found to be rare among these children. Only 38.4% male and 20.8% female children washed their hands every time after meals while majority of them (61.5% male and 79.1% female respondents) reported that they used to wash their hands occasionally after meals. More older (42.3%) children than the younger ones (16.6%) washed their hands always after the meals. According to most of the respondents, they did not feel its need as it did not affect their health at all. Moreover, they believed that their hands did not get dirty while having meals.

These children were also least bothered of *washing their hands after toilet*. Most (84.6%) male and (87.5%) female respondents occasionally washed their hands after toilet. The same trend was noted irrespective of their age as both the older (83.6%) and younger (88.5%) ragpickers washed their hands occasionally after toilet. These children reported that they did not follow this habit regularly but whenever they washed their hands after toilet they used mud or soap (if available).

These children were however, found a little regular in *washing their hands after finishing their work*. Among male children, 76.9% felt that while picking rags their hands came in direct contact with garbage which needed to be washed always after finishing this work. There were still 54.1% females who did not practice this habit frequently. No doubt these children were concerned about washing hands after their work but they were not particular for *changing their clothes after coming back from the working sites* as only 28% (30.7% males and 25% females respondents) of them reported their habit of changing dirty clothes after performing work. Again, the older (40.4%) children showed more interest in practicing this habit than the younger ones (14.5%). The reason may be that older ragpickers worked for longer hours so probably their clothes were dirtier than their younger counterparts who worked for comparatively shorter duration in a day. A study conducted by Hunt (1996) reported that some of these children had separate clothes to work in.

It was concluded that the behaviour of child ragpickers in maintaining personal hygienic condition was relatively not satisfactory and further, these children were not aware of importance of maintaining personal hygiene.

Table 1: Physical Hygiene Practices among Child Ragpickers (Total Sample)

Physical Hygiene Practices	Frequency																	
	Daily			Twice a week			Weekly			Fortnightly			Monthly			Total		
	Total																	
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
	N=104	N=96	N=200	N=104	N=96	N=200	N=104	N=96	N=200	N=104	N=96	N=200	N=104	N=96	N=200	N=104	N=96	N=200
Bathing	44 (42.3)	36 (37.5)	80 (40)	56 (53.8)	52 (54.1)	108 (54)	4(3.8)	8(8.3)	12 (6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	104 (100)	96 (100)	200 (100)
Brushing teeth	56 (53.8)	28 (29.1)	84 (42)	40 (38.4)	52 (54.1)	92 (46)	4(3.8)	4(4.1)	8 (4)	-	8(8.3)	8 (4)	4 (3.8)	-	4 (2)	104 (100)	92 (95.8)	196 (98)
Combing hair	72 (69.2)	60 (62.5)	132 (66)	28 (26.9)	36 (37.5)	64 (32)	4(3.8)	-	4 (2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	104 (100)	96 (100)	200 (100)
Washing hair	56 (53.8)	32 (33.3)	88 (44)	44 (42.3)	56 (58.3)	100 (50)	4(3.8)	4(4.1)	8 (4)	-	4(4.1)	4 (2)	-	-	-	104 (100)	96 (100)	200 (100)
Cleaning ears/ nose	-	-	-	-	-	-	12 (11.5)	-	12 (6)	12 (11.5)	8(8.3)	20 (10)	12 (11.5)	24(25)	36 (18)	36 (34.6)	32 (33.3)	68 (34)
Cleaning ankles	40 (38.4)	16 (16.6)	56 (28)	24 (23.1)	44 (45.8)	68 (34)	28 (26.9)	24(25)	52 (26)	12 (11.5)	8(8.3)	20 (10)	-	4(4.1)	4 (2)	104 (100)	96 (100)	200 (100)
Changing clothes	36 (34.6)	36 (37.5)	72 (36)	68 (65.3)	56 (58.3)	124 (62)	-	4(4.1)	4(2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	104 (100)	96 (100)	200 (100)
Cutting hair	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8 (7.6)	-	8 (4)	72 (69.2)	24 (25)	96 (48)	80 (76.9)	24 (25)	104 (52)
Cutting nails	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48 (46.1)	32(33.3)	80 (40)	28 (26.9)	64 (66.6)	92 (46)	76 (73.1)	96 (100)	172 (86)
Washing face hands and feet	92 (88.4)	96 (100)	188 (94)	12 (11.5)	-	12 (6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	104 (100)	96 (100)	200 (100)

χ^2 for physical hygiene practices across age = 2.5, df=9, table value=16.9, insignificant

χ^2 for physical hygiene practices across sex = 24.2*, df=9, table value=16.9, *significant

Table 2: Physical Hygiene Practices among Child Ragpickers (8⁺-11 YEARS)

Physical Hygiene Practices	Frequency																	
	Daily			Twice a week			Weekly			Fortnightly			Monthly			Total		
	8 ⁺ -11 years																	
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
	N=40	N=56	N=96	N=40	N=56	N=96	N=40	N=56	N=96	N=40	N=56	N=96	N=40	N=56	N=96	N=40	N=56	N=96
Bathing	16 (40)	13 (23.2)	29 (30.2)	27 (67.5)	33 (58.9)	60 (62.5)	1 (2.5)	6 (10.7)	7 (7.3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 (100)	56 (100)	96 (100)
Brushing teeth	17 (42.5)	3 (5.3)	20 (20.8)	19 (47.5)	39 (69.6)	58 (60.4)	2 (5)	3(5.3)	5 (5.2)	-	6 (10.7)	6 (6.25)	4 (10)	-	4 (4.1)	40 (100)	53 (94.6)	93 (96.8)
Combing hair	24 (60)	35 (62.5)	59 (61.4)	9 (22.5)	25 (44.6)	34 (35.4)	3 (7.5)	-	3 (3.1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 (100)	56 (100)	96 (100)
Washing Hair	28 (70)	10 (17.8)	38 (39.5)	15 (37.5)	37 (66.1)	52 (54.1)	2 (5)	1(1.7)	3 (3.1)	-	3 (5.3)	3 (3.1)	-	-	-	40 (100)	56 (100)	96 (100)
Cleaning ears nose	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (7.5)	-	3 (3.1)	4 (10)	2 (3.5)	6 (6.2)	4 (10)	14(25)	18 (18.7)	15 (37.5)	12 (21.4)	27 (28.1)
Cleaning ankles	12	5	17	6	12	18	22	20	42	9	7	16	-	3(5.3)	3	40	56	96

	(30)	(8.9)	(17.7)	(15)	(21.4)	(18.7)	(55)	(35.7)	(43.7)	(22.5)	(12.5)	(16.6)			(3.1)	(100)	(100)	(100)
Changing clothes	6 (15)	13 (23.2)	19 (19.7)	38 (95)	37 (66.1)	75(78.1)	-	2 (3.5)	2 (2.1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 (100)	56 (100)	96 (100)
Cutting Hair	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (7.5)	-	3 (3.1)	-	-	51 (53.1)	36 (90)	18 (32.1)	54 (56.2)
Cutting Nails	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19 (47.5)	10 (17.8)	29 (30.2)	-	-	55 (57.3)	40 (100)	56 (100)	96 (100)
Washing face hands and feet	34 (85)	56 (100)	90 (93.7)	6 (15)	-	6 (6.2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40 (100)	56 (100)	96 (100)

Table 3: Physical Hygiene Practices among Child Ragpickers (11+-14 YEARS)

Physical Hygiene Practices	Frequency																	
	Daily			Twice a week			Weekly			Fortnightly			Monthly			Total		
	11+-14 years																	
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
	N=64	N=40	N=104	N=64	N=40	N=104	N=64	N=40	N=104	N=64	N=40	N=104	N=64	N=40	N=104	N=64	N=40	N=104
Bathing	28 (43.7)	23 (57.5)	51 (49)	29 (45.3)	19 (47.5)	48 (46.1)	3 (4.6)	2 (5)	5 (4.8)	-	-	-	-	-	-	64 (100)	40 (100)	104 (100)
Brushing teeth	39 (60.9)	25 (62.5)	64 (61.5)	21 (32.8)	13 (32.5)	34 (32.6)	2 (3.1)	1 (2.5)	3 (2.9)	-	2 (5)	2 (1.9)	-	-	-	64 (100)	39 (97.5)	103 (99)
Combing hair	48 (75)	25 (62.5)	73 (70.2)	19 (29.6)	11 (27.5)	30 (28.8)	1 (1.5)	-	1 (0.9)	-	-	-	-	-	-	64 (100)	40 (100)	104 (100)
Washing Hair	28 (43.7)	22 (55)	50 (48.1)	29 (45.3)	19 (47.5)	48 (46.1)	2 (3.1)	3 (7.5)	5 (4.8)	-	1 (2.5)	1 (0.9)	-	-	-	64 (100)	40 (100)	104 (100)
Cleaning ears nose	-	-	-	-	-	-	9 (14.1)	-	9 (8.6)	8 (12.5)	6 (15)	14 (13.4)	8 (12.5)	10 (25)	18 (17.3)	21 (32.8)	20 (50)	41 (39.4)
Cleaning ankles	28 (43.7)	11 (27.5)	39 (37.5)	18 (28.1)	32 (80)	50 (48.1)	6 (9.3)	4 (10)	10 (9.6)	3 (4.6)	1 (2.5)	4 (3.8)	-	1 (2.5)	1 (0.9)	64 (100)	40 (100)	104 (100)
Changing clothes	30 (46.8)	23 (57.5)	53 (50.9)	30 (46.8)	19 (47.5)	49 (47.1)	-	2 (5)	2 (1.9)	-	-	-	-	-	-	64 (100)	40 (100)	104 (100)
Cutting Hair	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5 (7.8)	-	5 (4.8)	28 (43.7)	17 (42.5)	45 (43.2)	44 (68.7)	6 (15)	50 (48.1)
Cutting Nails	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29 (45.3)	22 (55)	51 (49)	18 (28.1)	19 (47.5)	37 (35.5)	64 (100)	40 (100)	104 (100)
Washing face hands and feet	58 (90.6)	40 (100)	98 (94.2)	6 (9.3)	-	6 (5.7)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64 (100)	40 (100)	104 (100)

Table 4: Personal Cleanliness Practices of Child Ragpickers

Personal Cleanliness Practices	Frequency								
	Always			Occasionally			Total		
	Total Sample								
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
N=104	N=96	N=200	N=104	N=96	N=200	N=104	N=96	N=200	
Washing hands before meals	28(26.9)	12(12.5)	40(20)	72(69.2)	76(79.1)	148(74)	100(96.1)	88(91.6)	188(94)
Washing hands after meals	40(38.4)	20(20.8)	60(30)	64(61.5)	76(79.1)	140(70)	104(100)	96(100)	200(100)
Washing hands after toilet	16(15.3)	12(12.5)	28(14)	88(84.6)	84(87.5)	172(86)	104(100)	96(100)	200(100)
Washing hands after finishing work	80(76.9)	44(45.8)	124(62)	24(23.1)	52(54.1)	76(38)	104(100)	96(100)	200(100)
Changing clothes after coming back from work.	32(30.7)	24(25)	56(28)	12(11.5)	4(4.1)	16(8)	44(42.3)	28(29.1)	72(36)
	8⁺-11 years								
	N=40	N=56	N=96	N=40	N=56	N=96	N=40	N=56	N=96
Washing hands before meals	4(10)	7(12.5)	11(11.4)	33(82.5)	46(82.1)	79(82.2)	37(92.5)	53(94.6)	90(45)
Washing hands after meals	7(17.5)	9(16.1)	16(16.6)	33(82.5)	47(83.7)	80(83.3)	40(100)	56(100)	96(100)
Washing hands after toilet	5(12.5)	6(10.7)	11(11.5)	35(87.5)	50(89.2)	85(88.5)	40(100)	56(100)	96(100)
Washing hands after finishing work	20(50)	23(41.1)	43(44.7)	20(50)	33(58.9)	53(55.2)	40(100)	56(100)	96(100)
Changing clothes after coming back from work.	12(30)	2(3.6)	14(14.5)	7(17.5)	2(3.5)	9(9.3)	19(47.5)	4(7.1)	23(11.5)
	11⁺-14 years								
	N=64	N=40	N=104	N=64	N=40	N=104	N=64	N=40	N=104
Washing hands before meals	24(37.5)	5(12.5)	29(27.8)	39(60.9)	30(75)	69(66.3)	63(98.4)	35(87.5)	98(94.2)
Washing hands after meals	33(51.5)	11(27.5)	44(42.3)	31(48.4)	29(72.5)	60(57.6)	64(100)	40(100)	104(100)
Washing hands after toilet	11(17.2)	6(15)	17(16.3)	53(82.8)	34(85)	87(83.6)	64(100)	40(100)	104(100)
Washing hands after finishing work	60(93.7)	21(52.5)	81(77.8)	4(6.2)	19(47.5)	23(22.1)	64(100)	40(100)	104(100)
Changing clothes after coming back from work.	20(31.2)	22(55)	42(40.4)	5(7.8)	2(5)	7(6.7)	25(39.1)	24(60)	49(47.1)

χ^2 for Personal cleanliness Practices across age = 2.1, df=4, table value=9.49, insignificant
 χ^2 for Personal cleanliness Practices across sex = 6.8, df=4, table value=9.49, insignificant

Conclusion

Child ragpickers have been found to be involved in dangerous activities because their work exposes them to dirt, garbage and other hazardous material. As such the rate of morbidity among these children tends to run high (Khanna, 2015; Devi, 1996) [6]. However, following some precautionary principles can help these children live a more safe life. The present study explores the physical hygiene and cleanliness practices of child ragpickers of Jammu city. On the basis of the results obtained it is concluded that child ragpickers did not follow physical hygiene practices on regular basis. Even the basic hygiene practices such as bathing and brushing teeth were performed only twice a week by the sample children. Bathing and washing hair were occasionally carried out and that in most cases without soap/shampoo. Older ragpickers did carry out brushing more frequently but the material used was mostly inappropriate. Cleaning of feet and ankles was practiced more commonly probably because of the contact their little feet made with filth and dirt. They also showed little or no concern for their clothing. Their clothes were full of dirt and smelled foul. Hair and nail cut similarly received little attention and were practiced only once in a while. Male rag pickers were found to be slightly more concerned about combing their hair well. Overall, majority of the children seemed unhygienic, especially the females and the younger lot. Similar results were found in a study sponsored by CDPS, 2001. Regarding their personal cleanliness habits it was noted that majority of these children washed their hands occasionally before, after the meals. They failed to realize the importance of clean hands at meal times. Further, it was found that most of the children did not wash their hands after toilet as well. Many

of these children attributed this to non availability of water and soap. However, many of them did wash their hands after finishing their work in the evening.

The study also revealed that majority of the sample child rag pickers failed to understand the importance of personal hygiene and cleanliness. Their living environment weren't hygienic as well, and further, the nature of their work also left them in direct contact with dirt and garbage so they probably had accepted filth as part of their lives. They were hardly exposed to a clean milieu and had received little parental guidance on hygiene therefore, being unhygienic came natural to them. But, in spite of this, there is an urgent need to improve the living and working condition of the children. They need to be taught ways and means of maintaining their own hygiene and cleanliness. This once done, will drastically reduce the burden of preventable morbidity among child ragpickers.

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