

Psychosocial and mental health needs assessment of Harwa and Charuwa bonded laborers) in South Eastern Nepal: A pilot study

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Introduction:

- Traditional form of bonded labour (Harwa-Chruwa) continue to exist though officially outlawed by Nepal Government.
- Harwa- 'ploughman' and Charuwa- 'cattle herder'.
- Working conditions and very poor socio-economic circumstances constitutes a form of modern slavery.
- About 0.08% population live in conditions of modern slavery (Walk, 2014).
- The severe impact of modern slavery on individuals' mental health and psychosocial well-being has been evidenced internationally.
- Psychosocial and mental health needs of Harwaa- Charuwa families has never been investigated.
- Aim of this study was to understand mental health and psychosocial needs in Harwa-Charuwa.

Methods:

Design: a cross section interview with selected sample population

- Sample: 103 adult respondents voluntarily attended, convenient sample from 3 districts (Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha).
- Tool: GHQ-12, Hopkinson Symptom Checklist (HSC-25), PTSD check list (Civilian version), Trauma event list, WHO-Disability Assessment Scale (DAS-II), Alcohol use disorder identification test (AUDIT).
 - Tools were adopted and used in Nepalese population already
- Procedure- all participants interviewed in private room assuring confidentiality of information.
- Ethical clearance: data protection, confidentiality and right to withdraw

Data analysis:

- ▶ 13 respondents excluded from analysis as they were not active in H-C state at the time of interview. 90 adult data used in analysis.
- ▶ Statistical differences in frequency were reported using chi squared, but in cases where assumptions were violated then Fischer's exact test was used.
- ▶ T-test was used to compare means. A well-known statistical technique known as bootstrapping was applied to look at the parameters of the sample (known as confidence intervals)

	Saptari Mean (SD)	Siraha Mean (SD)	Dhanusha Mean (SD)	Total Mean (SD)
Age	45.71 (11.76)	42.52 (11.23)	42 (11.28)	43.33 (11.41)
Family size	8.54 (3.66)	7.26 (3.16)	7.68 (2.64)	7.80 (3.17)
Number of children	2.71 (1.67)	2.94 (1.31)	2.71 (1.85)	2.79 (1.61)

Demographic result

- Sex- 58% female, 42% male
- Caste and ethnicity: **Dalit Madheshi (96%)**, other dalit (2%), and Janajati (indigenous groups; 2%).
- The majority of the participants were **married (92%)**, widowed (6%), separated (1%) or not married (1% respectively).
- Family type- Joint 76%, nuclear 24%
- **96% had no formal education**, 2% had 1-3 years of formal education, and between 9-15 years of education (2%).
- Legal ownership of house:
 - 10% owned house, 7% owned by landlord, 83% have no house in own land

Mental health and Psychosocial problems

Tools	Mean score	Cut-off	>cut off	Female	Male	χ^2	P-value
HSCL-Anxiety	1.87	1.75	46%	32%	13%	5.18	0.02
HSCL-Dep	1.95	1.75	61%	38.88	22.22	1.99	0.16
PTSD symptoms	32.76	50	18%	78.9	1.11	10.32	0.01
GHQ-12-distress level	16.07	>20-severe	24.4%	19%	6%	4.536	0.03
WHO DAS-II	7.46	10	30%	24%	6%	8.88	0.003
AUDIT	2.76	8 (WHO)	4.4%	-	4.4%		

Discussion

- Poverty and lack of basic needs were found to be both precipitating and perpetuating factors for debt bondage.
- Participants described high levels of general psychological distress, depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and impairment in day-to-day functioning:
 - 46% of respondents reported clinically significant anxiety symptoms
 - 61% reported clinically significant depression symptoms
 - 47% reported some level of suicidality
 - 18% reported clinically significant PTSD symptoms.

Discussion

- Almost one-quarter of respondents reported evidence of severe psychological distress.
- Females were more vulnerable to be suffered with mental health problems
- Stigma surrounding mental health was found to be high and this may have interfered with reporting culturally sensitive issues.
- Lack of mental health and psychosocial support services

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