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RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND GENDER NEGLIGENCE AMONG CHILDREN IN ALLAHABAD CITY OF UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Child neglect also called psychological abuse which is defined as a failure by a child's caregiver to meet a child's physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). Forms of child neglect include: Allowing the child to witness violence or severe abuse between parents or adult, ignoring, insulting, or threatening the child with violence, not providing the child with a safe environment and adult emotional support, and showing reckless disregard for the child's well-being (Child Neglect and Psychological Abuse, 2011). The present study aims to assess the socioeconomic status and gender negligence among children of Allahabad city. A total sample of 300 children comprising of 100 children each (50 boys and 50 girls) from lower, middle and upper socio economic groups were selected using stratified random sampling technique for the study. Socio Economic Status scale by Kuppuswamy (1962) revised by Gururaj and Maheshwaran (2014) was used to ascertain the socio economic status of the selected respondents. To assess the socio economic status and gender negligence, a self made questionnaire was administered to the selected children in the age group of 7-12 years. The study revealed a highly significant gender variation in neglect among respondents belonging to lower, middle as well as upper socioeconomic groups, wherein girls were subjected to higher level of neglect in case of all the three socio economic groups.

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INTRODUCTION

Child neglect is a form of child abuse, and is a deficit in meeting a child's basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate health care, supervision, clothing, nutrition, housing as well as their physical, emotional, social, educational and safety needs. Society generally believes there are necessary behaviors a caregiver must provide in order for a child to develop physically, socially, and emotionally. Causes of neglect may result from several parenting problems including mental disorders, substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment, unplanned pregnancy, and poverty. Child neglect depends on how a child and society perceives the parents' behavior; it is not how parents believe they are behaving towards their child. Parental failure to provide for a child, when options are available, is different from failure to provide when options are not available.

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Poverty and lack of resources are often contributing factors and can prevent parents from meeting their children's needs, when they otherwise would. The circumstances and intentionality must be examined before defining behavior as neglectful. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses the term *child maltreatment* to refer to both acts of commission (abuse), which include "words or overt actions that cause harm, potential harm, or threat of harm to a child", and acts of omission (neglect), meaning "the failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs or to protect a child from harm or potential harm".

METHODOLOGY

Exploratory research design was adopted for the present study and cross sectional survey method was used for collecting the data. A total of 300 children in the age group of 7-12 years, comprising of 100 children each (50 boys and 50 girls) from lower, middle and upper socio economic groups respectively were selected using stratified random sampling technique from

different schools of Allahabad city. Kuppuswamy (1962) Socio Economic Status Scale revised by Kumar and Tiwari (2014) was used to ascertain the socioeconomic status of the sample and a Self made questionnaire on child abuse was used to assess the negligence among children among children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table and Figure 1 indicates the frequency and percentage of neglect experienced by boys and girls belonging to lower socioeconomic class.

The table shows that 28 percent boys and 52 percent girls faced very high level of neglect while 14 percent of boys and 4 percent of girls endured very low level of neglect. Some of the households specially in lower communities and disadvantaged families who suffer from alcoholism / substances abuse and issues related to anger have higher occurrences of child abuse and neglect. girls particularly become the victims due to the prevalent gender bias in the India Society particularly in the rural areas as well as underprivileged families. The results are in accordance with the study conducted by Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar (2014) who concluded that gender

Table 1 Distribution of respondents from lower socio economic status on the basis of intensity of neglect

S.No	Intensity of neglect	BOYS n=50		GIRLS n=50	
		Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Very high(84-100)	14	28	26	52
2	High (68-83)	11	22	13	26
3	Average (52-67)	8	16	5	10
4	Low (36-51)	10	20	4	8
5	Very low(20-35)	7	14	2	4
	Total	50	100	50	100

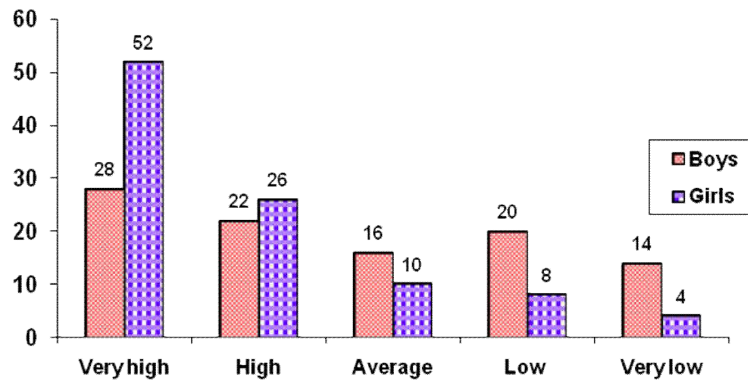


Fig.1. Distribution of respondents from lower socio economic status on the basis of intensity of neglect

Table 2. Distribution of respondents from middle socio economic status on the basis of intensity of neglect

S.No	Intensity of neglect	BOYS n=50		GIRLS n=50	
		Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Very high(84-100)	9	18	25	50
2	High (68-83)	6	12	11	22
3	Average (52-67)	7	14	7	14
4	Low (36-51)	15	30	3	6
5	Very low(20-35)	13	26	4	8
	Total	50	100	50	100

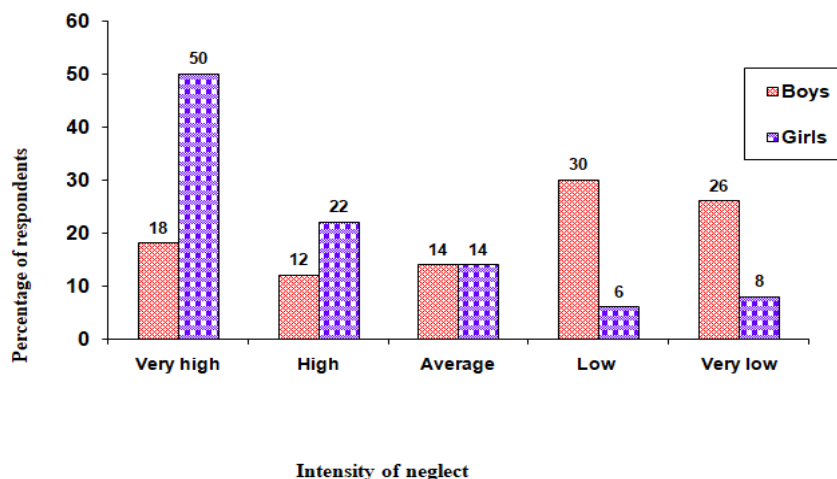
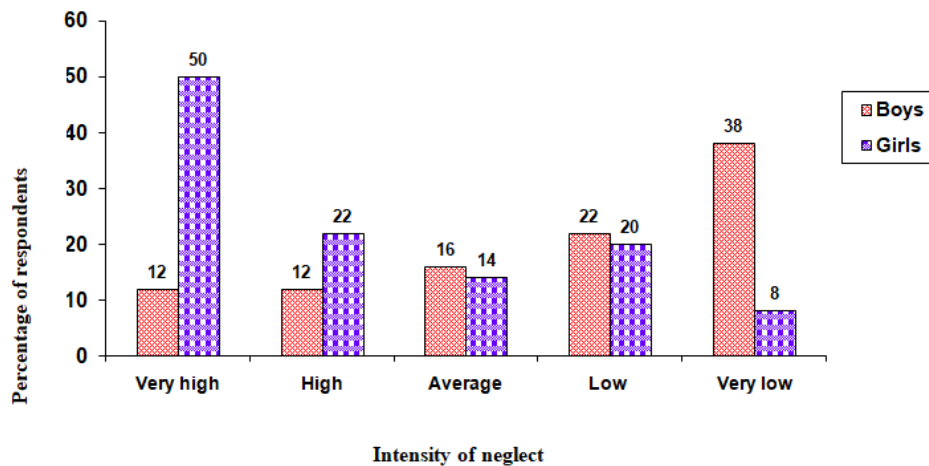


Fig. 2 Distribution of respondents from middle socio economic status on the basis of intensity of neglect

Table 3. Distribution of children from upper socio economic status with reference to intensity of neglect

S.NO	Intensity of neglect	BOYS n=50		GIRLS n=50	
		Frequency	Percentage %	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Very high (84-100)	6	12	18	36
2	High (68-83)	6	12	11	22
3	Average (52-67)	8	16	7	14
4	Low (36-51)	11	22	10	20
5	Very low (20-35)	19	38	4	8
	Total	50	100	50	100

**Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents from upper socio economic status on the basis of intensity of neglect**

based discrimination against female children is pervasive across the world. It is seen in all the strata of society and manifests in various forms. As per the literature, female child has been treated inferior to the male child and this is deeply engraved in the mind of the female child. Some argue that due to this inferior treatment the females fail to understand their rights. This is more predominant in India as well as other lesser developed countries. Sex selection before birth and neglect of the female child after birth is very commonly seen in India. According to Ngwira *et al.* (2011) who presented a social development report in 2010 to the World Bank and UNDP, found that the time a female child and a male child spends on various activities is similar, with the exception of domestic work and social/resting time; a female child spends nearly three fourth of an hour more on domestic work than a male child. Table and figure 2 represents the data on neglect of children in middle socio economic status. The table reveals that 18 percentage of boys and 50 percent of girls were assessed to have very high level of neglect and 12 percent of boys as well as 22 percent girls were found to have endured high level of neglect. It was observed that girls percentage was high in comparison to boys. The table also showed that 26 percent of boys and 8 percent girls were subjected to very low level of neglect.

The table further clarifies that girls are subjected to more neglect as compared to boys. The female child's status is the product of general societal attitude towards women at large in India. Girls in India face higher risks of malnutrition, disease, disability, and retardation of growth and development. They have no access to or control over the resources because their work towards raising a family and in the household chores is undervalued. According to a global study, India is the fourth most dangerous country for a female child in the world. Senger *et al.* (1987) conducted a study on abuse and neglect in middle class family.

The results revealed a significant association between violence and neglect within the family and social psychological measures of self interaction patterns and perception of parents. The overall results indicated that the dynamics of abuse and neglect are similar regardless of social class contest. Table and figure 3 represents the distribution of children belonging to upper socio economic status on the basis of neglect encountered by them. Neglect can be physical, educational or emotional. Physical neglect can include not providing adequate food or clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision or proper weather protection. The table reveals that 12 percent boys and 36 percent of girls experienced very high level of neglect i.e. not being provided proper care, facilities and supervision. High level of neglect was faced by 12 percent boys and 22 percent girls. It was observed that girls percentage was high in comparison to boys with reference to the level of neglectful behavior experienced by them. The table also shows that 38 percent boys and 8 percent girls experienced very low level of neglect or maltreatment. The table further clarifies that girls are subjected to more neglect as compared to boys. The results are in accordance with the study carried out by Mullins (2011) pointed out that when a boy is born in most developing countries, friends and relatives exclaim congratulations. A son means insurance. He will inherit his father's property and get a job to help support the family. When a girl is born, the reaction is very different. Some women weep when they find out their baby is a girl because, to them, a daughter is just another expense. As a result, girls miss out on life-giving nutrition during a crucial window of their development, which stunts their growth and weakens their resistance to disease. Statistics show that the neglect continues as they grow up. Young girls receive less food, healthcare and fewer vaccinations overall than boys. Cawson *et al.* (2000) shows that boys are allowed more freedom than girls and are subjected to less supervision, again reflecting cultural norms in gendered socialization.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the present study that, there is a significant gender difference in the level of neglect among children belonging to upper, middle, and lower socio economic group. The study indicates that girls are subjected to more neglect as compared to boys belonging to all three socio economic groups. The result of the study clearly highlights the gender discrimination prevalent in the Indian society

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