

## Perception of Adult Child Interaction of Domestically Working and Non Working Girls

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The aim of the study was to explore adult child interaction in domestically working and non working girls. The study investigated perceptions of the environmental factors, use of the problem approaches, and their emotional expression. The sample consisted of 50 girls (non working = 25, domestically working = 25) with age range of 9 to 12 years. Adult child Interaction test was used and chi square analysis was done to compare the two groups. The results showed that domestically working girls perceived their environment as hostile and used indirect problem approaches as compared to non working girls. The emotional expression of the domestically working girls was found to be negative. The results of the study indicated that there is a need of more serious efforts from the society to protect and safeguard the emotional well being of domestically working girls.

*Key words:* Perception, adult-child interaction, domestically working, non working girls

Child labor is a global issue which is affecting the world both directly and indirectly. According to a survey, in several Asian countries manpower consists of child labor by the ratio of 1:10. In Pakistan alone, there are 8 million children between the ages of 10 to 14 who are forced to work. In India the number is 44 million and in Bangladesh the statistics have reached to 8 to 12 million children working as child laborers (Child Labor in Pakistan, 2013). The survey further states that 3.8 million out of 40 million children are child laborers in Pakistan who fall in the age range of 5 to 14 years. These statistics point towards the alarming situation of child labor in Pakistan.

Child labor in Pakistan is due to many reasons. The most basic amongst all is poverty. People are bound to send their children to work as they do not have enough means to earn on their own. Another major cause of child labor is overpopulation. Large families are a prominent feature of Pakistani society. Poorer families, who are unable to feed their children, give birth to many of them, in order to send them to work and earn. Apart from these factors, natural calamities and national crises play an important role in increasing child labor. Earthquakes, floods and terrorist activities make children homeless and orphan, leaving no option for them but to work on their own and make a living. With every disturbing incident the resources of the country are used for relief and not for development. This ignores the basic necessities to be fulfilled by the state and gives an obvious rise to the number of child laborers (Anonymous, 2013).

The ongoing scenario does not only have impact on the child laborer but also have great impact on the society. Children earn for their families and skip school which leads to

increase in illiteracy. This represents a failure to enhance production and potential earning capacity of new generation. Child laborers grow into adults who will remain low wage earners throughout their lives and will in turn give birth to a generation that would be bound to become laborers since their needs would not be fulfilled. This makes child labor a generation to generation transferred problem giving rise to poverty. There are also links of child labor with adult unemployment. The adult unemployed members are a burden on the economy of the society (Rogerro, Mangiaterra, Bustreo, & Rosati, 2007).

Child labor has taken many forms. Hiring children for domestic labor is another form of child labor. Domestic worker is the term used for children hired for household chores. They complete household services for a family or an individual. All over the world many children work as domestic laborers. They undertake tasks as cleaning, cooking, ironing, gardening etc. These children remain ignored from the eyes of the society and live a life unnoticed and completely deprived of the basic necessities as they are not given a chance to go to school, play or even rest properly. It is also seen that domestic workers are often abused. These children are often under paid (ILO, 2013).

Working at a young age has many deleterious effects on the development of a child. A research suggests that long working and employment duration affects the weight of the children and as a consequence their body mass index also gets affected. In male child laborers genital development gets delayed (Ambadeker, Wahab, Zodepy, & Khandait, 1999). Further, in a study by Suryahadi (2012) it is suggested that the development of basic skills also gets affected in children working as laborers.

Apart from physical problems that arise as a result of increased work duration and work load, children also face emotional and relationship problems. An Australian report informs that children feel secure and loved in good family relationships (Raising Children Network, 2013). This research

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signifies that children who work away from their families and loved ones face difficulties in building new relationships as the already existing relations face distance and distortion. This mostly results in negative emotions and frustration.

Different theoretical and empirical evidence clearly indicates that harsh treatment and negative interaction patterns shape and color children's perceptions. Children who experience rejection from their caregivers are more likely to view the world in a negative way as Bowlby (1969) puts in "a negative working model of self and others". Such children are likely to view themselves as unworthy of love affection and care and the world as rejecting and not a safe place to live in. Domestically working children also experience rejection from their parents mostly at a very young age and thus are more likely to develop negative working models of self and others.

Thus, it appears that Child labor has a deteriorating effect not only on the physical health of children but also on their mental health. Despite this fact it is ironic that hiring children for labor i.e. both domestic and commercial is still practiced commonly. An Indian audit report has found that laws against child labor are defied because of the impunity by the government and not only this but also the lack of resources and implementation of strategies to rescue and rehabilitate such children is encouraging the unlawful custom (Dhawan, 2014). In this respect Morley (2015) explains that the reason of child labor law violation is basically because countries do not get at par with the means required to enforce them. Variations in culture, differences in educational roots and legal ambiguities bring in the variations in law enforcement for some countries.

Due to the negligence and loop holes in law enforcement child laborers face negative adult child interactions. They are distanced from their families and lack a secure base. The study is aimed at exploring the perception of the children who undergo such adversities. In order to explore their perceptions of interaction patterns and environment, a projective test Adult child interaction was used. The purpose was to elicit in-depth information without threatening the child and to over ride the possible resistance. Current article throws light not only on how the domestically working children view adults in their environments, and their problem solving approaches but also give a comparison of how their perceptions are different from the school going and non working girls.

## Method

### Phase I: Pilot Study

The pilot study was done to rule out any problems regarding the administration of the tool or overall administration process. The sample of 2 girls was taken. Both of them were domestically working girls between the ages of 9 to 12 years. The demographic information was collected and after that Adult Child Interaction test was administered.

It was asked from the subjects if they had any queries regarding the entire administration process.

### Phase II: Main Study

The purpose of the main study was to explore the perception of the domestically working and non working girls. It was aimed at exploring their perception of the environment, problem approaches used by them and their emotional expressions.

### Sample

The research sample comprised of 50 girls with 25 domestically working girls and 25 non working girls. The age range was between 9 to 12 years. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw the sample. Non working girls were taken from the government schools of Lahore while domestically working girls were taken from different slums in Lahore city.

### Instrument

**Adult Child Interaction Test.** Adult Child Interaction Test (Alexander, 1952) was administered on the subjects. The test aims at exploring perceptive experience of children and adults in reference to each other. Further it also explains the individual's self-perception in any kind of interaction process. The test comprises of total 8 cards with each card showing some figures. The subjects make stories from those figures giving a proper start, middle and end to the stories. Each story is then interpreted on the use of problem approaches, emotional experiences or actions and perception of external forces as either beneficent or hostile through chart analysis. The chart analysis provides the compilation of the comprehensive information about the child's perception and individuality.

### Procedure

Before administering the test, parents of children were contacted and were briefed about the purpose of the study and were assured about the confidentiality of the information taken from these children. Written informed consent was taken from the parents of the children. Later, the subjects were also instructed about the nature of administration to be done with them. After that, rapport was established using discussion on general topics and drawing activities. Adult child interaction test was then administered individually. After administration, debriefing was done.

## Results

### ACIT Analysis

In order to analyze the stories of ACIT, chart analysis was carried out and the two groups were compared on the dimensions of problem approaches used, emotional expression and perception of their environment using Chi square analysis.

**Hypothesis 1**

Domestically working girls would use more direct problem approaches than non working girls.

Table 1  
*Observed Frequencies and Chi Square Value of the Problem Approaches of Domestically Working (n=25) and Non Working Girls (n=25)*

Variable	Domestically Working Girls	Non Working Girls	$\chi^2$
Problem Approaches			
Direct Problem Approaches	2	6	2.38*
Indirect Problem Approaches	23	19	

\* $p < .05$ ,  $df=1$

Table 1 show that the non working girls used more direct problem approaches than domestically working girls. Indirect problem approaches were being more frequently used by domestically working girls. The overall comparison shows that the results are significant indicating that the non working girls use more direct approaches than domestically working girls.

**Hypothesis 2**

The emotional expression of non working girls would be more positive than domestically working girls.

Table 2  
*Observed Frequencies and Chi Square Value of the Emotional Expressions of Domestically Working (n=25) and Non Working Girls (n=25)*

Variable	Domestically Working Girls	Non Working Girls	$\chi^2$
Emotional Expressions			
Positive	4	12	5.88**
Negative	21	13	

\*\* $p < .01$ ,  $df=1$

Table 2 represents that the emotional expression of the non working girls was highly positive as compared to the domestically working girls who had more negative emotional expressions. The overall comparison shows that the results are significant which indicates that the emotional expression of the non working girls would be more positive than the domestically working girls.

**Hypothesis 3**

Non working girls will perceive external forces to be more beneficial than domestically working girls.

Table 3  
*Observed Frequencies and Chi Square Value of the Environmental Forces of Domestically Working (n=25) and Non Working Girls (n=25)*

Variable	Domestically Working Girls	Non Working Girls	$\chi^2$
Environmental Forces			
Beneficial	13	20	4.36*
Hostile	12	5	

\* $p < .05$ ,  $df=1$

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of environmental forces by the two groups. Domestically working girls perceive environmental forces to be more hostile. The overall comparison showed significant result indicating that the non working girls perceive the environmental forces to be more beneficial than domestically working girls.

**Discussion**

Children are said to be the building blocks of a society. A society progresses on the shoulders of its young members. Children reflect the culture in which they are born and brought up. The ways in which children are raised provides foundation for their personalities as adults and has influence on how the society will function collaboratively (Carlyle, 2003). Those children who do not receive appropriate upbringing grow into individuals with various problems that not just affect them but also have impact on the society. The training of the children determines their destiny (Adekoya, 2012).

The domestically working children face hard times, tough routines and difficult situations. One aim of the current study was to explore the problem approaches used by the domestically working girls and to compare them with non working girls. The results revealed that domestically working children use more indirect problem solving approaches than non working children. The study results can be supported by the fact that non working children learn fundamental skills like problem solving from their direct contact with parents and teachers. A study shows that children who get mothers attention and scaffolding have stronger basis for success and have better self-regulatory capabilities. They tend to be more self-dependent and have better groomed skills (Neitzel, & Stright, 2003). On the other hand domestically working children who are deprived of parental attention as well as lack teacher's supervision have limited skills. They are more shy and hesitant and the continuous negligence makes them use inappropriate methods to deal with routine problems hence using indirect problem solving approaches like avoidance, dependence or aggression.

Apart from adults guidance, non working children also interact with peers at school. They interact with friends and come across many problems. It is from these interactions

that they learn to confront challenges and use a direct method to solve problems. The research work has shown that peer interaction may facilitate collaborative learning in a child and thus may help them in using direct problem solving approaches (Soller, Lesgold, Linton, & Goodman, 1999). The educational and academic exposure is yet another way of learning to face problems and build decision making abilities. Domestically working girls are at a disadvantage that they do not have such kind of exposure.

It must also be kept in mind that the sample of the current study comprised of girls only and in a collectivistic and interdependent culture like ours, it is not unusual for authority figures to curb independent thinking in girls (Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Thus leaving them with no choice else than adopting indirect ways of escape, avoidance etc to solve daily life problems.

Domestic workers face continuous criticism, malnutrition, violence, abuse, fear and economic pressures. They cannot come up with positive emotions when their experiences comprise of limited love, support, care and guidance. The results of the current study reveal that domestically working girls perceive their environment as hostile as opposed to non working girls who perceived their environment as beneficial. It is known that domestically working girls belong to economically stressed families and the studies show that child's emotional identification and perception gets effected due to economic pressures (Kagan, 1999). Other than this, the mishandling of child laborers, abuse and neglect drive them to perceive the world as a negative place. The negative experiences of these domestically working girls may have led them to develop a negative working models of the world in the words of Bowlby (1969).

On the contrary non working girls have strong economic backgrounds and have positive experiences which contribute to their thinking of the world as beneficial. The constant guidance that the non working girls receive from their adults and the love of the family gives rise to positivism and the sense of security from the surroundings. Apart from this the non working girls have the security of future through their education. On the whole, the factors of familial support, peer interaction, economic stability and future security-among other factors- contribute in building the perception of non working girls as beneficial.

The study results also point towards an important aspect of these children's development i.e. emotional expression. It was found that domestically working girls have more negative emotional expression than non working girls. It is not surprising for children who have distant relations with their parents and who are exposed to all types of abuse at their workplace to have negative expression.

It seems that psychological absence of parents may have made these girls more emotionally weak and

subsequent negative experiences with other adults may make them more revengeful and thus leading to negative emotional expressions. Previous research has also shown that children who experience rejection in any form from their parents and other significant people are likely to manifest their distress by using aggression, emotional instability, resentment and other emotional problems (Rohner, 2004).

### Conclusion

On the basis of results of the current study, it can be concluded that the domestically working girls use indirect problem approaches, have negative emotional expression and they perceive the world as hostile. Furthermore the non working children have a positive perception of the world, they have positive emotional expression and use direct problem solving approaches. The results of the study highlight the importance of positive parenting practices and the need to protect the rights of such socially disadvantaged children; so that their mental health can be safe guarded and they can also become the effective members of the community.

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