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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ASSESSMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN GARBAGE PICKING CHILDREN: CHILDHOOD SALVAGED OR SABOTAGED?

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Abstract

Children working at landfills, picking up and sorting out garbage, are presumed to be a neglected part of the society. This cross-sectional study aims to explore presence of symptoms in such children that could point to their underlying health and social concerns. Our study found that a significant number of these children were reportedly exposed to corporal abuse, substances of abuse, and showed symptoms of conditions such as hepatitis, worm infestation, skin conditions and tetanus.

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Objectives:-

1. To determine the prevalence of disease symptoms in garbage picking children of age 4 to 14.
2. To determine the prevalence of drug, sexual and corporal abuse in garbage picking children.

Methodology:-

A Cross-sectional study was conducted in the dumps of Karachi from March 2012 to October 2012. A sample size of 284 was drawn through non-probability purposive sampling. The age group was 4 to 14 years. The study was based upon a pre-tested structured questionnaire. The data was collected and analyzed on the SPSS version 16.0 with a confidence interval of 95% and the margin of error was 5% and P-value of 0.05.

Result:-

Out of 284 garbage picking children, 41.2% started picking garbage at an age between 4 and 6 years (0.000). 66.5% work a minimum of eight hours every day (0.000). 35.20% earned Rs.200 daily (0.000). 23.94% (0.001) used niswar, cigarette, charas and/or heroine. 39.78% (0.000) agreed that these substances were easily available. Corporal punishment was 61.61% (0.024). 19.71% (0.648) were sexually abused. 81.33% (0.045) were hurt by a rusted metallic object (risk of Tetanus). 25.70% (0.070) witnessed death from muscle cramps, irritability, or lock jaw. 69.71% (0.004) had high grade fever and chills. 57.04% (0.002) had itchy patches on skin. 44.71% (0.005) had increased itching at night. 43.30% (0.048) had cough and low grade fever. 45.77% (0.041) had pale feces and dark urine. 38.73% (0.054) had worms in stool.

Table 1:-1 Frequencies and P-values of the data collected with confidence value

S.no	Questions Asked	Frequency %			Confidence Value (95%)	
		yes	no	p-value	CI value	
1	Use of niswaar, cigarette, charas or heroine	23.94%	76.05%	0.001	0.000(0.000-0.010)	

2	Easily availability of niswaar, cigarette, charas or heroine	39.78%	60.21%	0.000	0.000(0.000-0.010)
3	Corporal punishment at home or work	61.61%	38.38%	0.024	0.018(0.002-0.033)
4	Sexual abuse	19.71%	80.28%	0.648	0.687(0.633-0.741)
5	High grade fever and chills after mosquito bite	69.71%	30.28%	0.004	0.003(0.002-0.004)
6	Itchy patches of white/ red/ dark brown color	57.04%	42.95%	0.002	0.002(0.001-0.003)
7	Increased itchiness at night	44.71%	55.28%	0.005	0.004(0.003-0.005)
8	Cough and a low grade fever for over 2 months	43.30%	56.69%	0.048	0.041(0.037-0.045)
9	Injury with rusted metallic objects	81.33%	18.66%	0.045	0.047(0.043-0.052)
10	A co-worker's death after metal inflicted injury with lock jaw	25.70%	74.29%	0.070	0.070(0.065-0.075)
11	Vomiting with jaundice	44.01%	55.98%	0.172	0.172(0.165-0.178)
12	Pale feces & dark urine	45.77%	54.22%	0.041	0.036(0.033-0.040)
13	Worms in stool	38.73%	61.26%	0.054	0.048(0.044-0.053)

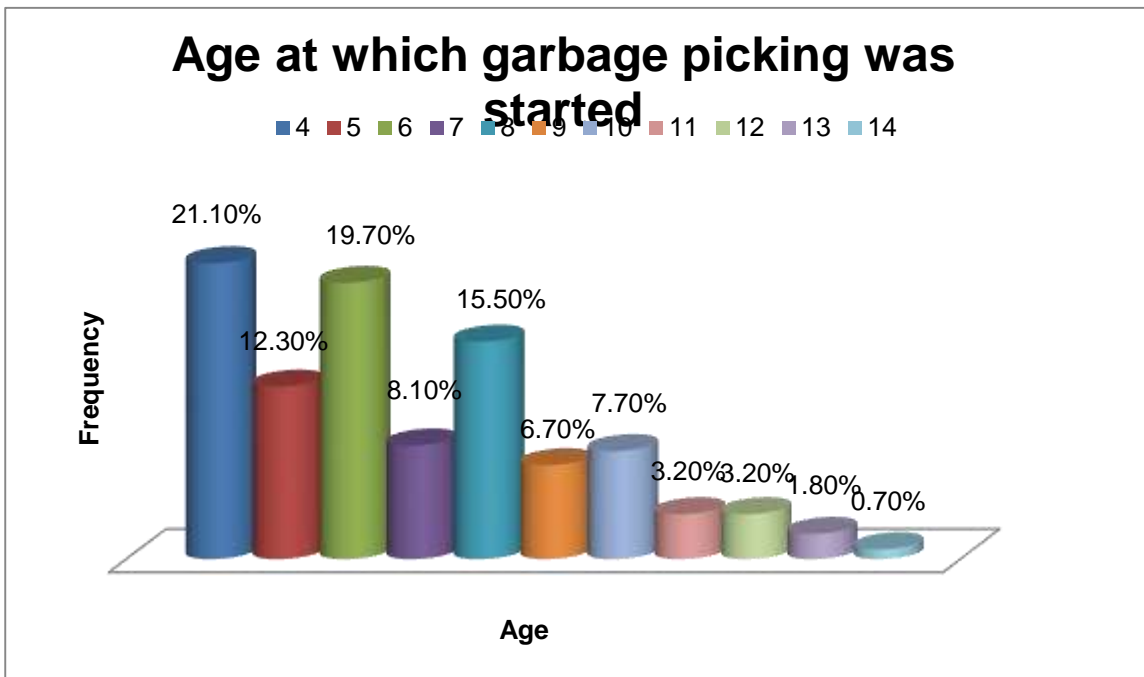


Figure: 1:2:- Frequencies of age groups in Garbage Picking children

Figure 1:3:- Proportions of age groups in Garbage picking children

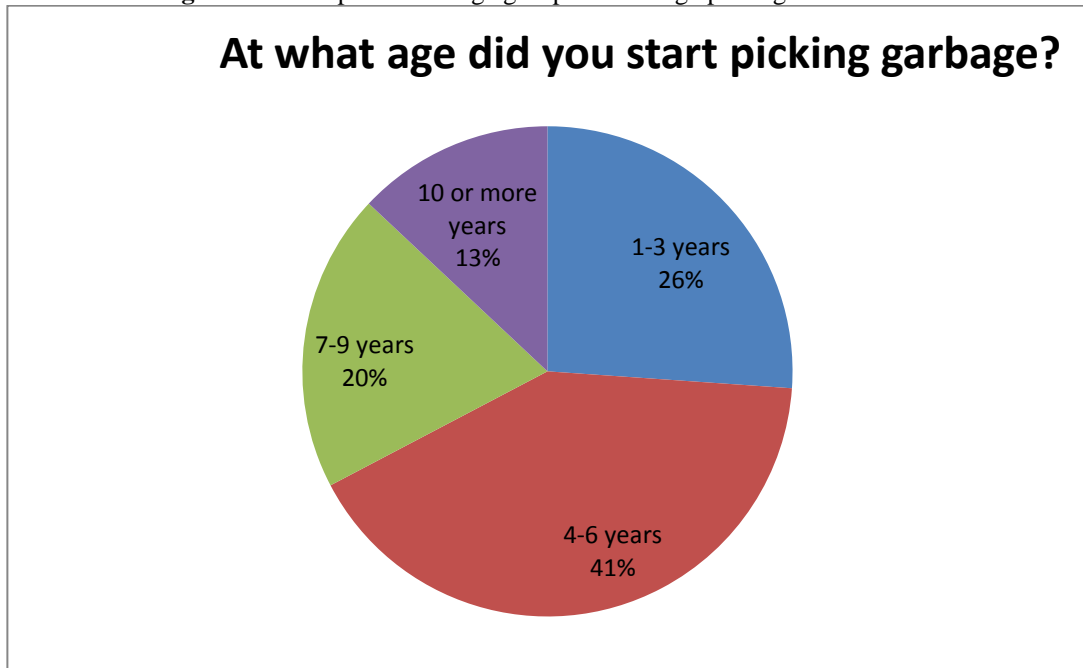


Figure 1:4:-Frequency of hours/day work by Garbage picking children

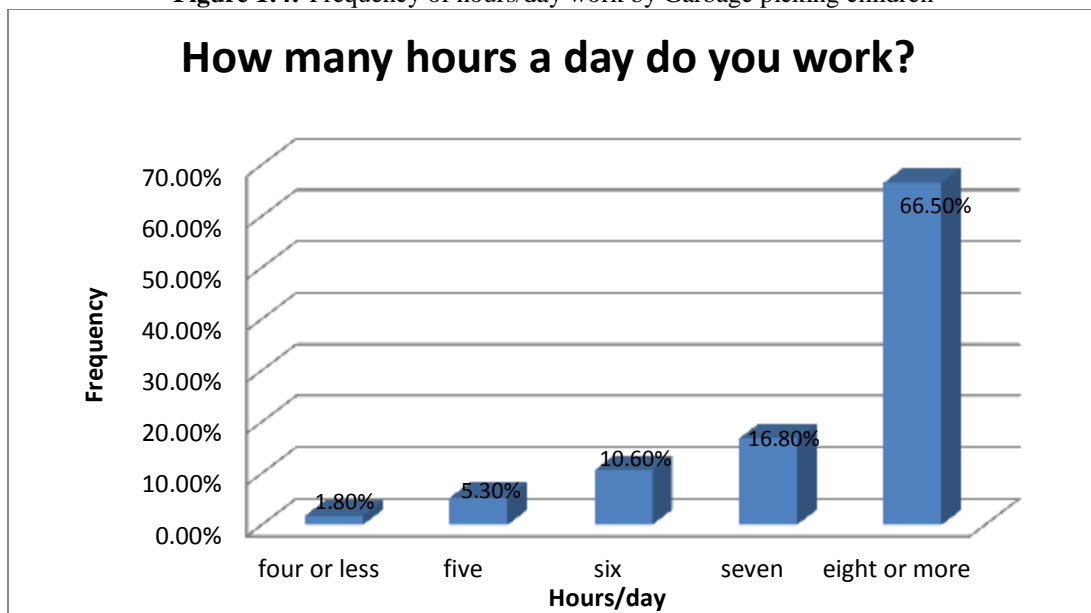


Figure 1:5:-Frequency of daily earning of Garbage picking children

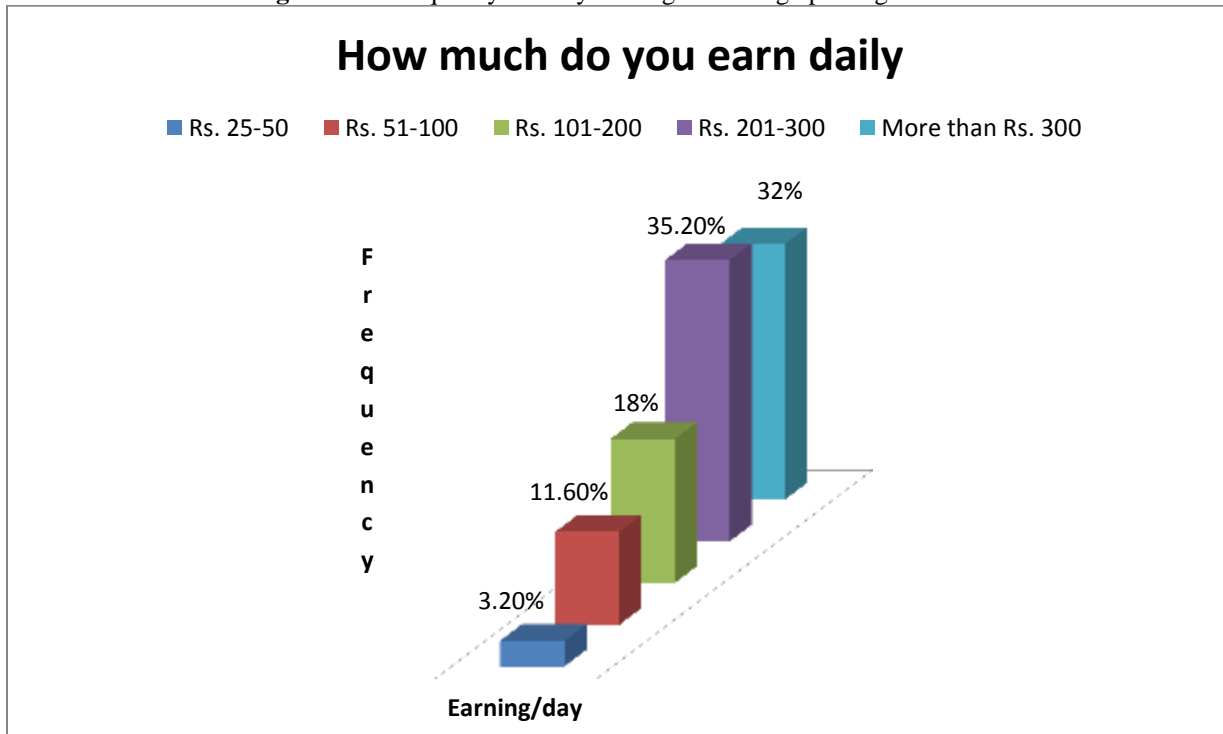


Figure 1:6:-Frequencies of drug abuse and availability to garbage picking children

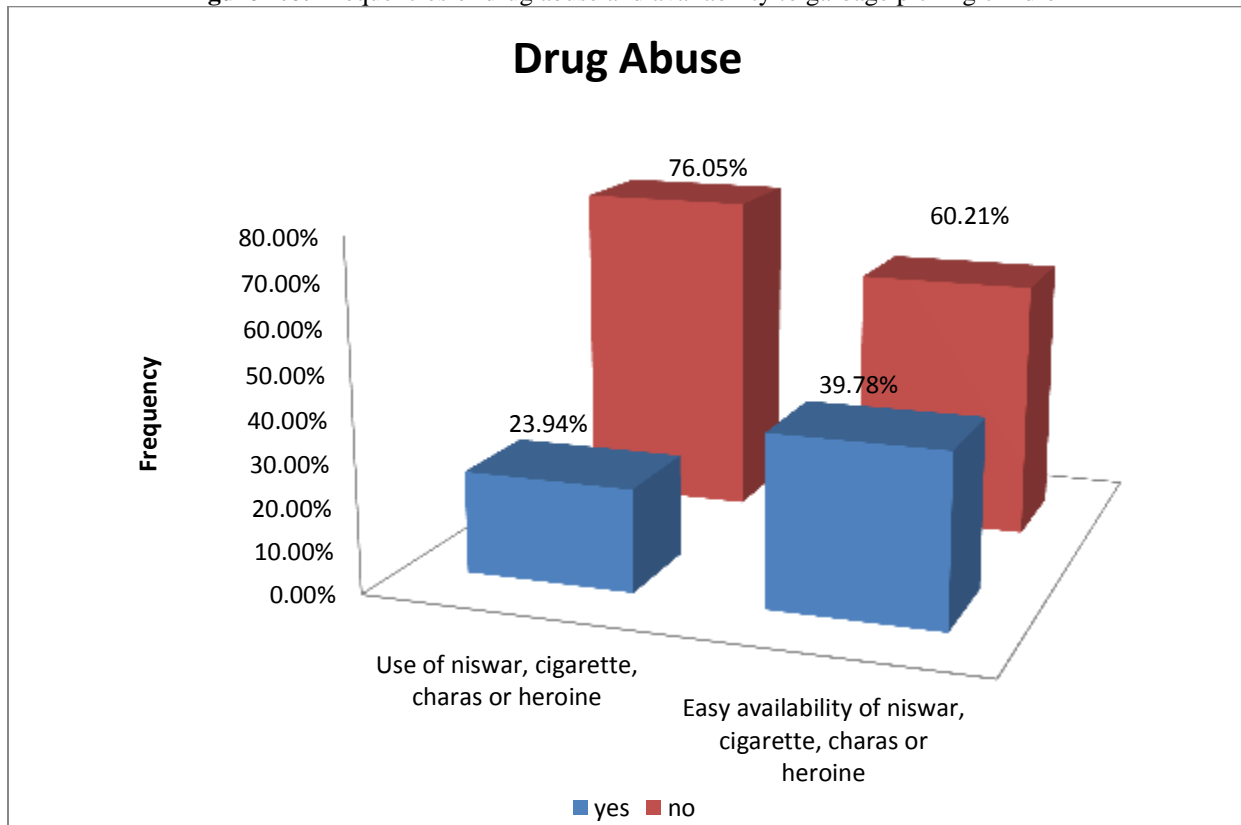


Figure 1:7:-Frequencies of corporal and sexual abuse in Garbage picking children

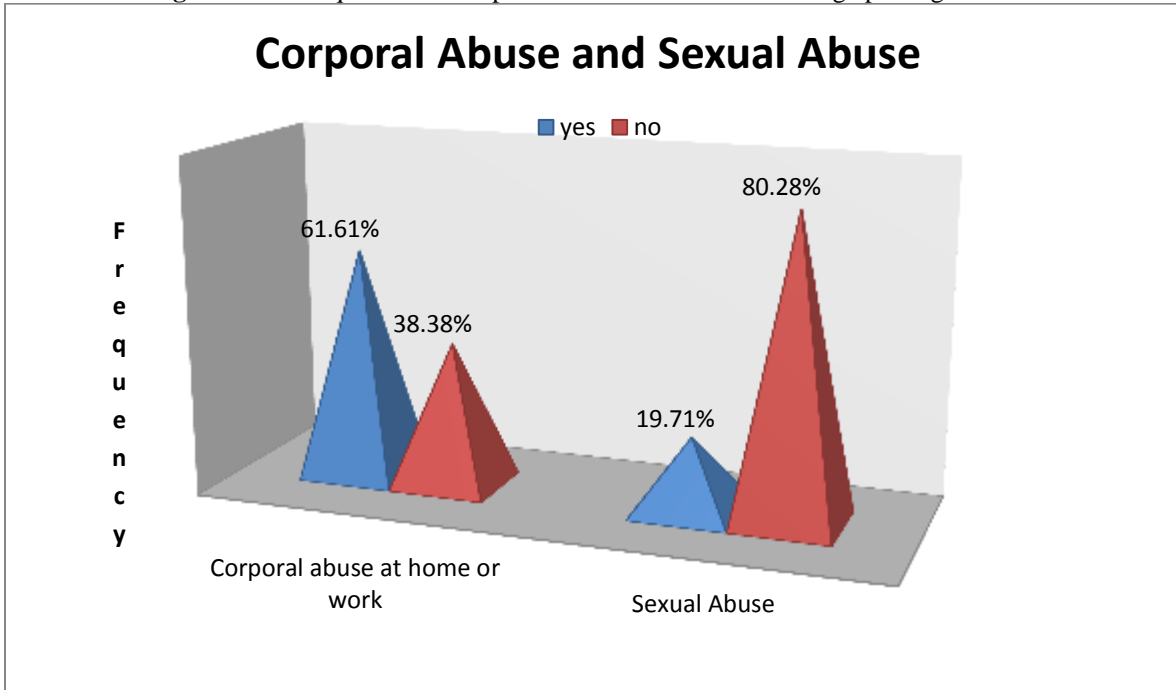


Figure 1:8:-Frequency of metallic injury and Tetanus in Garbage picking children

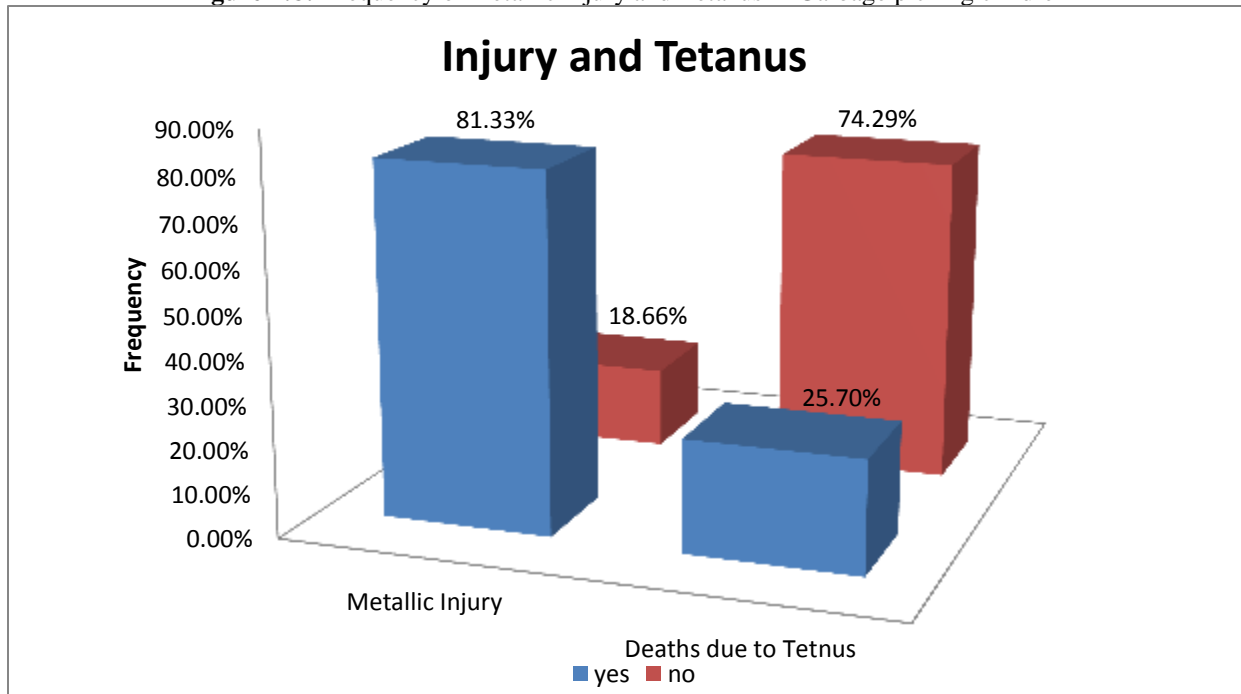


Figure 1:9:-Frequency of Malaria in Garbage picking children

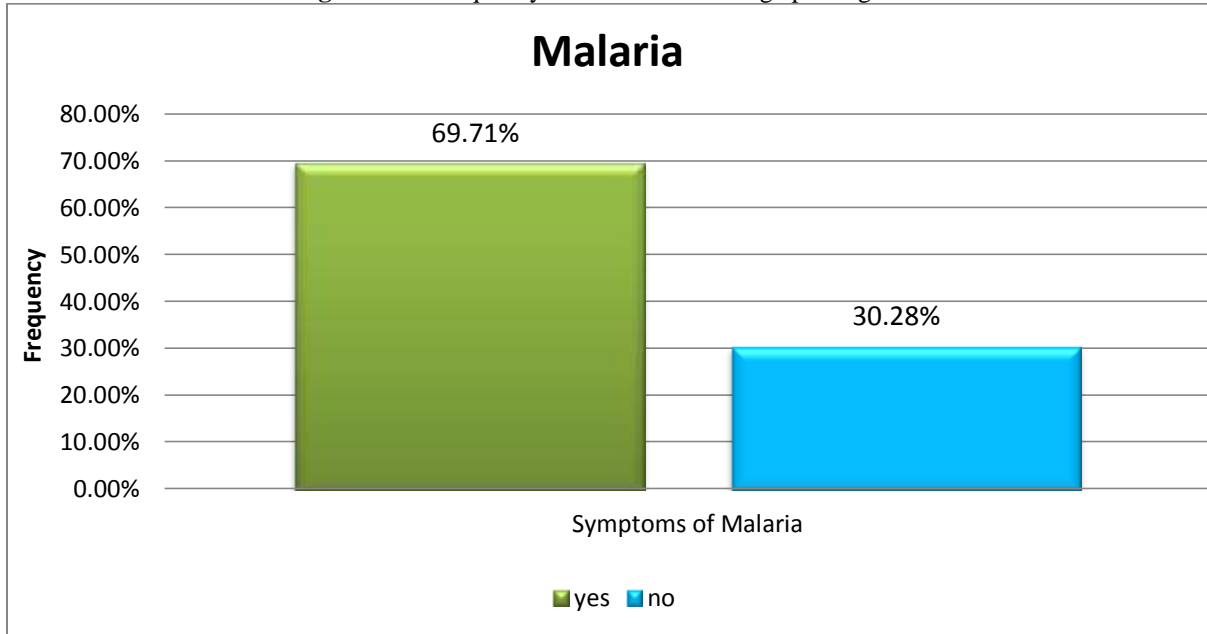


Figure 1:10:-Frequencies of Skin Infections in Garbage picking children

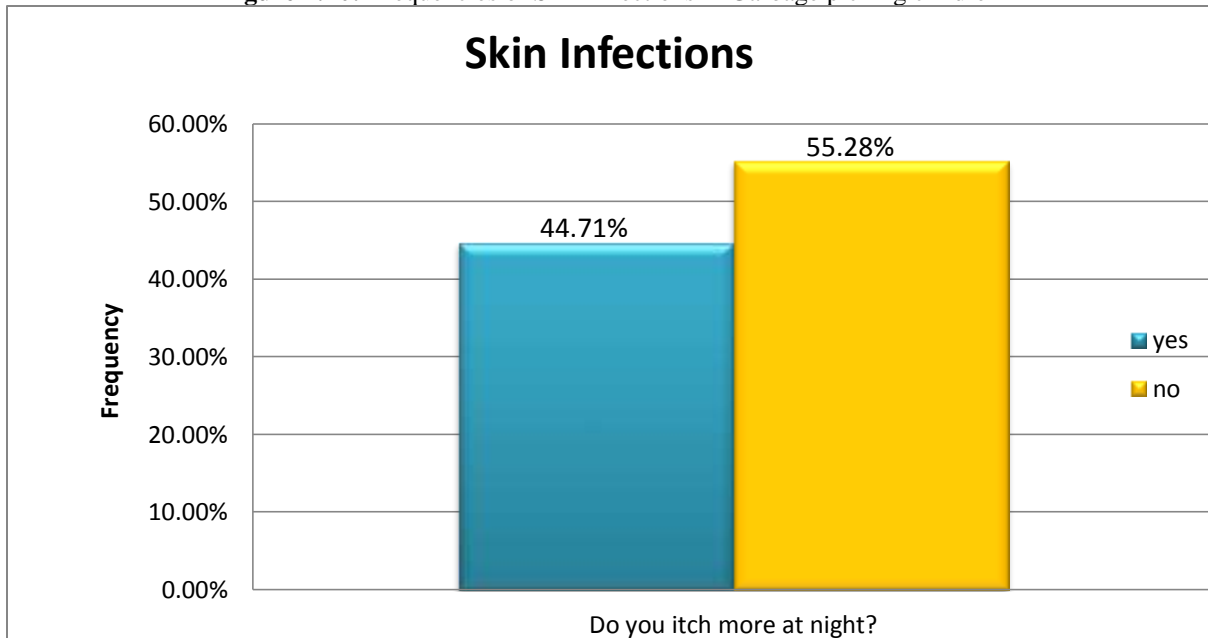


Figure 1:11:- Frequency of Tuberculosis in Garbage picking children

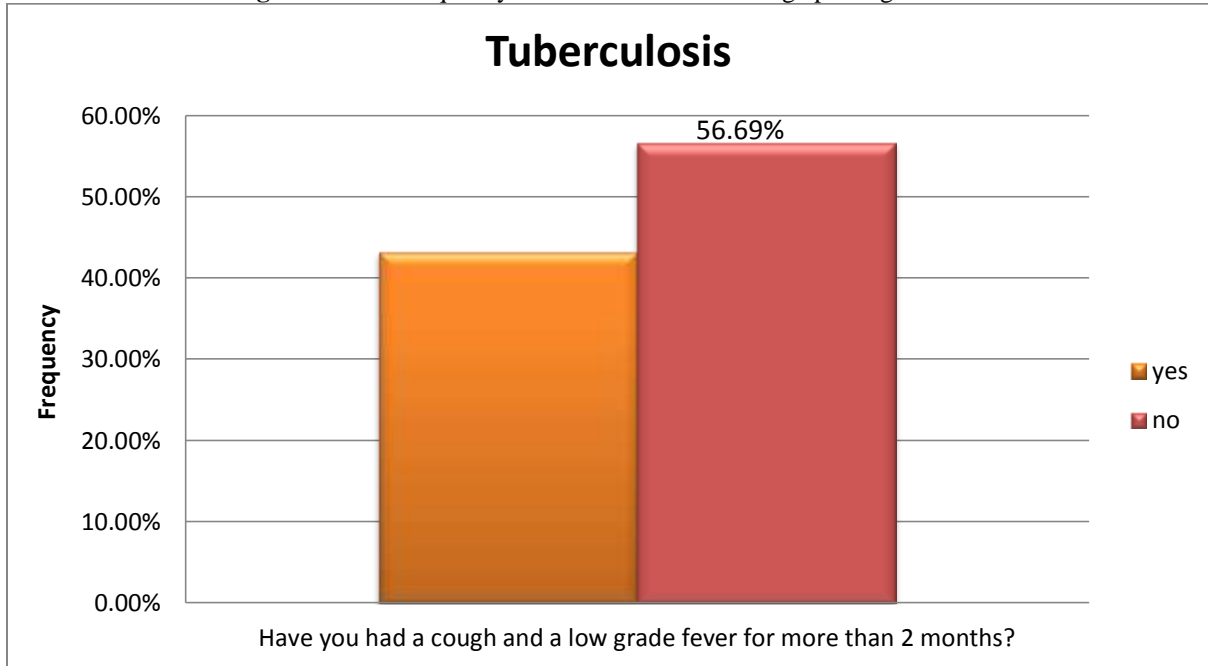


Figure 1:12:-Frequency of Jaundice in Garbage picking children

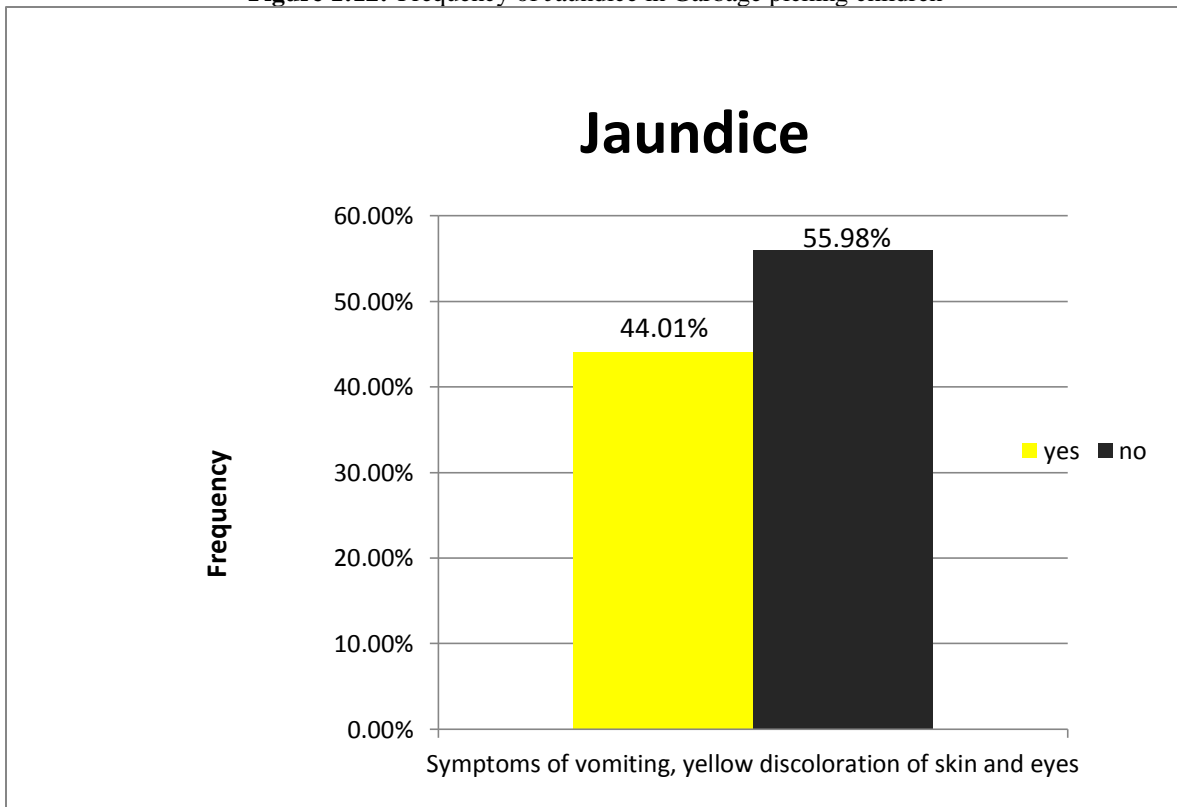


Figure 1:13:-Frequency of Hepatitis in Garbage picking children

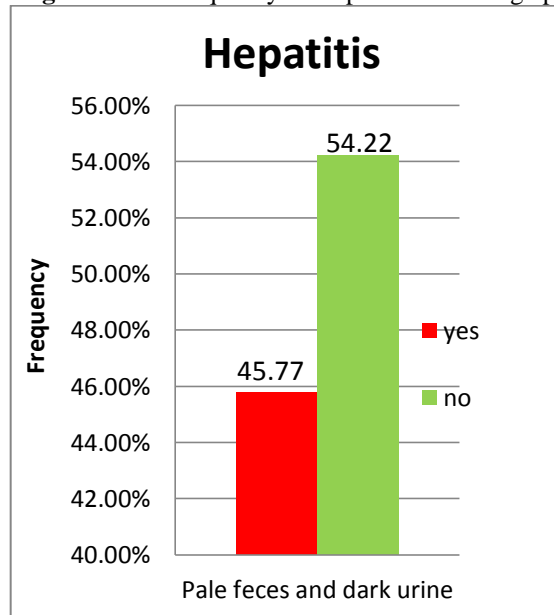
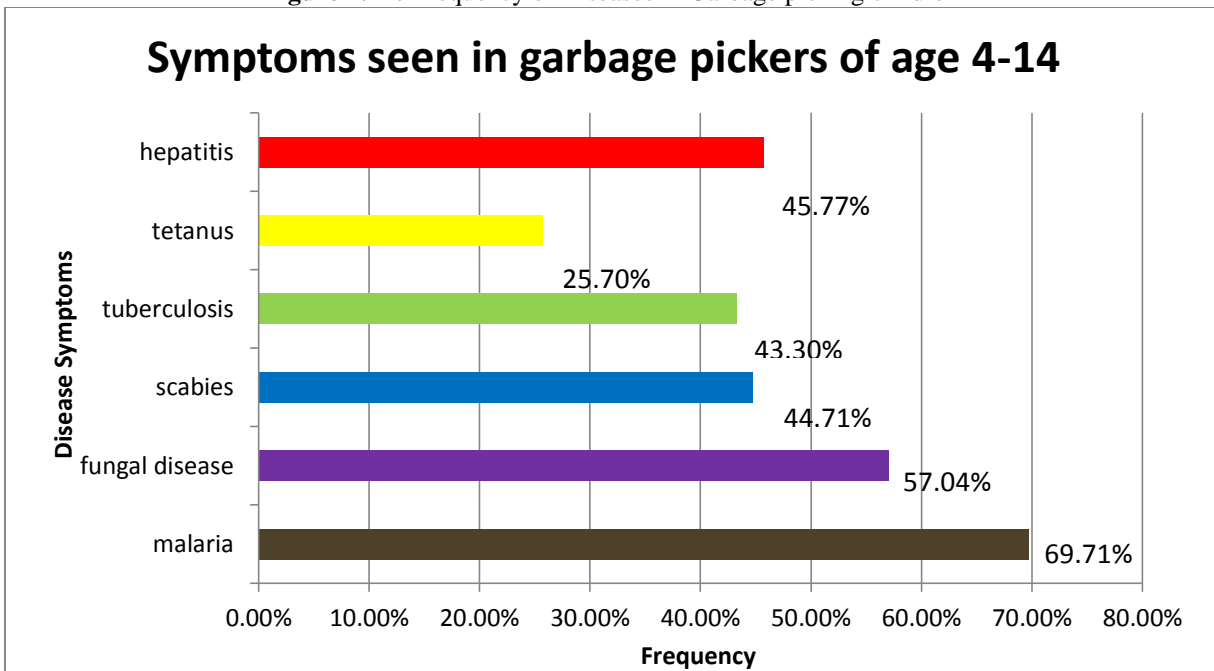


Figure 1:14:-Frequency of Diseases in Garbage picking children



Conclusion:-

The study concluded children working in the dumps showed an increased prevalence of symptoms of infectious diseases Malaria, Tuberculosis, worm infestation, scabies, tetanus, and hepatitis. They are also at a higher risk of drug, sexual, corporal abuse. It stands indubitable that garbage picking children are yet to be provided with a safe environment away from the dumps for the betterment of the whole society.