Predicting the possibility of children falling ill or facing injuries in child labour

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The International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of the worst forms of child labour includes work that is likely to jeopardise health and safety. Effective management of child labour damaging to health requires both conceptual understanding and empirical evidence of the interferences between child labour and health. In Sri Lanka too, statistics provide evidence of health hazards faced by children engaged in child labour. However, the significance of the association between the type of working condition and the condition of health of children has not been the focus of many studies. The work reported here emphasizes the requirement of an in-depth study of this aspect.

The objective of this study is to predict the possibility of falling ill or facing injuries due to work when children engage in child labour. The data is collected from the Child Activity Survey, 2008 conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics. The sample concerned consists of 334 children.

The T-tests and Chi-square tests for significance indicate that variables including the employment status, the industry of employment, age and gender have significant associations with illness or injury due to work. Moreover, certain working conditions such as exposure to dust/fumes and carrying heavy loads are also found to be associated with the health condition of children engaged in child labour. The logistic model included employment status, carrying heavy loads, exposure to extreme cold or heat, handling dangerous tools and chemicals and the type of industry, and can be used to predict the possibility of a child falling ill or facing injuries. Furthermore, 69% of the actually fallen ill children were correctly classified using a validation test, indicating a good model fit. Findings of this research will help to educate the public about the consequences of employing children in harmful working conditions and also to develop policies to safeguard the children.