



The Psychological Issues of Bonded Labour in Fuel Smuggling as Modern form of Slavery in Makran Division of Balochistan

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Abstract

Debt bondage, or bonded labor, is increasingly recognized as modern form of slavery, particularly in fuel smuggling. In the context of fuel smuggling, individuals find themselves coerced into servitude due to debts incurred through illegal means, such as exploitation by smugglers and recruiters. The study discovers psychological issues faced by victims of bonded labor within the fuel smuggling trade in the Makran division of Balochistan, Pakistan. This qualitative study emphasizes on 14 participants who are involved in fuel smuggling-related bonded labor. Using in-depth interviews as the study approach, data was collected through snowball sampling, which allowed the identification of persons enslaved in the cycle of debt bondage. The findings suggest that the fuel smuggling sector, like other forms of bonded labor, causes extreme psychological distress to individuals involved. They are caught up in a vicious cycle of debt repayment under dangerous and exploitative conditions and situations that they feel, they are always anxious, depressed, stressed and traumatized. Their work comes with its own risks, but the additional social and legal dangers associated with fuel smuggling or its consequences exacerbate the psychological problem. The research calls to address bonded labor in fuel smuggling, by implementing not only the legal framework to end the illegal fuel trade but mental health to safeguard the victims. Along with the poverty alleviation from debt bondage, there is a greater need for societal, institutional and psychological support systems in the fight and eradication of debt bondage.

Keywords: Modern Slavery; Debt Bondage; Debt Bounded Labourers; Fuel Smuggling

Introduction

Bonded labor, a type of modern slavery, trap individuals into working to pay off debts under conditions that often perpetuate an environment that promotes exploitation and discrimination. This practice falls under a broader term modern slavery that also includes forced labour, human trafficking and other exploitative labour practices (Boersma & Nolan, 2022; Critchley & Lloyd-Howells, 2024). Globally, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that approximately 21 million people are ensnared within these conditions, with many resorting to work

exploitation and labor victims -- especially among marginalized groups like ethnic minorities and migrants (Altuwaijri, 2023). Bonded labor is itself, by definition, an alleged coerced act done under the invisible whip of something akin to lifelong servitude, where financial masters have ensnared their human chattel in debt through numerous deceptive schemes (Hai, 2023; Walden, 2023). Comprehensive remedies are necessary to address this abuse and the persistence of bonded labor in their supply chains is reflective of the system-wide nature of these problems which requires intervention beyond a single company to the global supply chain in labor (Boersma & Nolan, 2022).

Bonded labor is the society's new age slavery and is still followed in many areas across the globe today and involving millions in degrading working conditions. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 9.5 million are in debt bondage in South Asia alone, as a result of limited employment opportunities and inadequate implementation of policy measures to tackle it (Jamshed et al., 2023). According to the United Nations, this contributes to 40.3 million people currently living in modern slavery globally including 24.9 million being exploited in the private sector (Jardine, 2023). One study estimates that there are as many as 40 million workers living under slavery-like conditions, a staggering amount (Nolan & Boersma, 2019). These estimates point to the extent of bonded labor, which takes place in the hidden corners of the industry and in supply chains. Bonded labour is pervasive in agriculture, construction, manufacturing and domestic work. Agriculture especially in Pakistan and India is a leading area of bonded labor in South Asia. As documented in Punjab, Pakistan, agricultural labourers frequently operate in precarious circumstances, where they struggle with the inadequate application of labour laws and restricted access to basic necessities (Jamshed et al., 2023). Likewise, bonded labor in India has deep roots in the caste system, where people and families are bound under humiliating conditions and psychological distress in sectors such as brick kilns and construction (Dallaet al., 2025; Kara, 2012). Another industry that has a high prevalence of bonded labor is construction. Workers, particularly migrant laborers, are easily lured with false promises of good wages and working conditions but end up in exploitative circumstances. Most prevalent in South Asia, where lacks law enforcement facilitates rising practices (Anton, 2014; Kara, 2012). The manufacturing sector, which includes apparel and electronics, is also implicated in modern slavery, as workers are forced to produce in sweatshops with coercion and intimidation (Hasan, 2019; Nolan & Boersma, 2019). Bonded labor is also rife in domestic work, particularly for women and children. Many migrant domestic workers end up working under debt bondage (Anton, 2014), working long hours without minimum wage or legal protections. Bonded labor also underpins the global supply chains of commodities ranging from cocoa and tea to shrimp; indeed, workers are often subject to conditions of forced labor (Kara, 2012). The fight against bonded labour and modern slavery demands a three-pronged approach stringent implementation of labour laws, consumer awareness and corporate responsibility. But insufficient global attention on bonded labor is still one of the major challenges against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal aimed at the promotion of decent work and the ending of modern slavery (Dallaet al., 2025). According to various studies focused on human trafficking and forced labor, the long-term impact of bonded labor on mental health among bonded labor victims is both severe and multidimensional. The psychosocial impact is long lasting, and bonded labour victims are prone to experience depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) even post-release. Empirical studies on trafficked women in Ghana reveal that sexual violence pervaded the experience of violence and abuse in enslaved conditions in that part of the world, with known long-lasting effects such as depression and PTSD appearing well into the future of decades ago (Edgemon et al., 2024). The systemic nature of bonded labor results from socio-economic deprivation and lack of social protection (Muntaner et al., 2010), which further exacerbates these mental health problems by

creating conditions associated with extreme stress and insecurity. As a result, bonded laborers in India are treated with humiliation and physical violence and suffer great psychological trauma (Dallaet al., 2025). In the case of male bonded laborers in south India, Arunkumar (2016) also found the same observations for lack of access to health care services, state of living, etc. In addition, the impact of bonded labor is not only limited to adults, but also affects child laborers who are prone to mistreatment and overlook, as well as long-term psychosocial impairment such as internalized problems and attention problems (Ahad et al., 2024).

As children are growing, these experiences can become into symptoms of hyper arousal and intrusive memories in adult which could affect their relationships and well-being (Torgah, 2024) Survivors of bonded labor also experience stigma and lack of social support, making the journey to rehabilitation and reintegration into society even more challenging (Ali, 2023). Consequently, the mental health needs of bonded labor survivors must be met in a holistic, trauma-informed manner that encompasses the interrelatedness of socio-economic factors, violence and chronic psychological effects (Gezie et al. 2018; Scholte et al. 2017). While little studied, bonded labor in fuel smuggling is an important and growing dimension of trafficking and smuggling operations. In places like Makran Division of Balochistan, Pakistan, people are caught in debt bondage, subjected to forced labor under the thumb of smugglers and traffickers. Typically poor and marginalized, the persons are forced to work for no pay, ensuring their debts keep ballooning and trapping them. None of the study conveys that how devastating the psychological effects of these victims are, many of whom suffer from helplessness, anxiety, stress, depression and despair. In this respect, this study will discuss psychological challenges and issues of the people when they are in such case, their mental and emotional health. There are many such individuals who are marginalized to the extent that they have no access even to basic health care: psychological trauma, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are common, and only a limited number of people receive any type of support. The study emphasizes the need for interventions to help mitigate the psychological harms of being in debt bondage. This study's goal is to help shine light on these issues and build awareness and drive action to alleviate the suffering these individuals endure while being forced into the world of fuel smuggling operations. The broader aim is to facilitate a greater understanding of human trafficking and its psychological impact, particularly on vulnerable groups in Pakistan.

Material and Methods

The current study uses a qualitative research design to provide insights regarding the psychological struggles faced by bonded laborers working in the fuel smuggling business of Makran Division, Balochistan. In this study, the snowball sampling method was used and 14 participants were identified and interviewed, who suffered directly from debt bondage due to debt enslavement. The interviews were semi-structured to elicit detailed, textured data about their experiences of daily living. The trajectory of thematic analysis was applied on the way the data was viewed, emphasizing primary concerns such as the mental health problems of depression, anxiety, stress and trauma. These materials and methods have permitted an in-depth exploration of the psychological logic of debt bondage in the fuel smuggling industry, and provide valuable insights into mental health risks and issues experienced by bonded labour victims in fuel smuggling.

Data Analysis and Discussions

Psychological Trauma of Bounded Labour Enslaved in Fuel Smuggling in Balochistan

On the flip side, individuals caught in the fuel smuggling business in Balochistan's Makran Division mostly belong to lower income households and constitute a huge section of bonded labor

in the region. They find themselves in a spiral of deprivation, one that questions more than just their economic situation but takes a toll on their mental wellbeing. The trauma these people face is complex and multi-modality, starting with the endemic poverty that causes them to fall through the cracks in the first place and therefore find themselves in debt bondage. As these women engage in fuel smuggling, they experience torture and abuse on a scale that is portioned into a cup, causing them to run out of coping mechanisms to escape the horrific cycle of abuse that ensnares them. Many of these victims, as the study participants shared, fall prey to bonded labor due to poverty. They're from families with poor financial footing or the means to pay for even their most basic needs and they're desperately hungry for a job, an ability to sustain themselves and families. Often they are drawn into the fuel-smuggling trade, a way out from poverty. But once they get into this sector, they are very quickly caught up in debt bondage, they are working in a context which is not only physically exhausting, it's psychologically damaging as well. Their original decrepitude puts them in a desperate state of affairs that can only threaten to devolve into a gnawing malaise as any sparks of hope go snuffed out and any paths away lead only into a life of servitude.

It is relentless, and accumulative, the trauma of those people. Fuel smuggling is a hazardous, dangerous and uncertain business, and then there is caste complicating it further. Fuel smuggling, however, often comes with the risk of perilous conditions, at treacherous roads that run between Iran and Pakistan, where workers face a constant threat from both authorities and criminal gangs. They risk their lives every day crossing dangerous territory and avoiding law enforcement. Such life-threatening experiences become a part of the cumulative trauma that workers endure, living from one moment of fear and anxiety to the next, constantly worrying for their safety. The dangers of fuel smuggling are both physical and psychological. Participates added that working in this sector are often under considerable emotional pressure because they battle the risks that accompany the trade. Doing work under threat of arrest or violence combined with the stress of being in debt and working for little or no money is a recipe for a toxic environment for mental health.” Relying on slavery means that one becomes subject to some of the most inhumane and extreme of domestic control methods on the planet, including (but not limited to) physical and psychological coercive methods that further the trauma experienced, Further explaining the awesome control that these workers endure. Their life is so vulnerable, they do not have a stable income, they are afraid of violence or being sued, so they live in fear, incapable of doing anything.

Trauma of fuel smuggling industry bonded laborers' is often compounded by the reality of working for very low often, below minimum wage pay. It is dangerous work to be sure, but these men have no choice but to take the work at slave wages, and half the time what they make doesn't even cover living expenses. The worse financial strain combined with the emotional and physical labor they put into their work, culminates in a pervasive sense of hopelessness and helplessness. As they are coerced into labour at impoverished salaries, while simultaneously exposed to dire situations that threaten their lives, their psychological distress is likely to multiply. Besides the individual trauma confronted by the workers, the helplessness and vulnerability of their families lead them towards mental illness as well. Most of these workers are the only breadwinners of their families, and domestically, they depend on the few pennies they bring home. As if that stress wasn't enough, they feel responsible for the safety and security of family members, friends and co-workers. In many cases, the participants said, the families of such workers are also at risk of exploitation and abuse at the hands of those who run the bonded labor racket. This and other contextualization create helplessness and guilt: laborers can't protect their families from the exploitation they endure.

Bonded labor in the fuel smuggling industry is quite a complex matter, and trauma is not easily left inside the belly of a truck. It begins with the deep psychological scars of poverty and economic deprivation, and becomes even more barbarous in the lethal workplace of the smuggling business itself. The threat of violence is ever present, and without a credible prospect of escaping debt bondage, the trauma continues day after day, deepening the toxic atmosphere. Those forced into bonded labor experience both physical violence, and psychological harm that will haunt them forever. The work itself, the associated risks and sheer emotional weight of being their families' only provider in such an uncertain situation it all creates an overwhelming, hard-to-shake sense of trauma. Full coverage must address the underlying causes of bonded labour and the immediate psychological needs of those involved.

Psychological Depression of Bounded Labour Enslaved in Fuel Smuggling in Balochistan

Psychological depression is a common chronic disorder that causes significant impairment and distress; mainly due to different socio-economic and environmental stressors. For some more vulnerable populations, poverty is a major cause of psychological depression. People from very poor families, who are slaves to their employers, are also at high risk of chronic depression. These people are often caught in a socio-economic trap, struggling in their mental health that would further lock them into cycles of poverty and exploitation. The complexity of this relationship is especially evident in bonded labourers working in hazardous practices like fuel smuggling which constitute a modern form of slavery.

The victims of debt bondage shared that these appalling practices include bonded labour or debt bondage, a form of modern slavery that keeps his vulnerable workers in conditions of extreme coercion under the pretext of repaying a debt. The debt is often gamed to the point where there's no way for the workers to ever escape it. For those who belong to poor households, their poverty leads to their extreme vulnerable environment. They are frequently starving in search of any source of life and therefore are to reply in an exploitative and treacherous employment contracts that claim the semblance of a wage for meager livelihood. Participants added that the depression that the people experience is complex. It is only the ignorance of poverty and the absence of means to escape that fills them with a sense of hopelessness and despair. Inside cycles of extreme poverty, people often feel both worthless and hopeless. Chronic mental health issues like anxiety and depression are the by-product of this constant struggle to survive with no real way out of their plight. These are often overlooked and go untreated as the fundamental need for survival comes to supersede such emotional and psychological challenges.

Those who enter bonded labour face a nightmarish predicament in unregulated, dangerous sectors such as fuel smuggling, participants said. Fuel smuggling is a profitable business on the Iran-Pakistan border, particularly in Makran where workers risk their lives to earn a living. These workers are subjected to back-breaking physical labor, long hours and dangerous environments. Almost no or no safety equipment or safety protocols. Factories could even be basic shelters that expose people to the exploitative elements. It can only imagine how the psychological toll of this high-pressure environment is high. Also fear of death or injury as part of their job also become chronic anxiety trauma and raising psychological depression. They labored incredibly long hours, often more than 12-hours per day, but had no legal protections regarding their circumstances. In the meantime the workers find themselves already saddled with debt, shackled by their own situation: the possibility of violence or punishment, or continuing debt makes it almost impossible for them to break such a cycle.

This at one level adds another layer of risk into an already significant mental health cost these workers carry, and on another level epitomizes the treacherous nature of the route taken when petroleum streams from the windy and dangerous hills of Makran division. The trails used for fuel smuggling are usually rugged and also extremely precarious, given that they run the risk of being ambushed by either border forces or other groups that are involved in the fuel smuggling industry. Workers are at risk for trauma-based disorders (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD) based on one's exposure to the potential for danger from both nature and human elements. Psychologically, the weight of working in such an environment increases when these workers have to confront the mechanics of death on a daily basis.

The families of bonded labourers working in fuel smuggling usually also bear the brunt of psychological depression on account of the risky job of their spouses. That leaves families constantly vulnerable, forced to worry every single day about whether their family members will even come back safe to them, while also coping with the mental health crisis they experience simply by virtue of seeing their loved ones trapped within a system of exploitative work. Many of these families don't possess the financial resources or other systems of support they need to maneuver through the mental fallout of their fate. But the depression of the workers also was accompanied by that of their families, who have to live under conditions of uncertainty and fear, worsening all the mental health status of these populations. Interlinked with the exploitation and the resulting impact of psychological depression is, arguably, one of the most significant aspects of this relationship in the dynamic of modern slavery and being 'bonded' to labour is a defining expression of this. Modern slavery in itself is a breach of human rights a contributing factor in the escalation of mental health issues such as depression. Economic exploitation, bodily peril and psychological trauma converge to create the perfect storm of suffering for those people whose mental health takes an additional hit when they tread owlsh politics of life and death. Bonded labour and psychological depression is an evident phenomenon. Those trapped in bonded labour, particularly in such dangerous occupations like fuel smuggling, suffer mental health problems. The life threat and exploitation of the work results in hopelessness, despair and chronic depression. It is when patients are suffering that family is most vulnerable to see that suffering, and bear the emotional and psychological burden of the ordeal. Understanding this relationship is essential to explain the larger implications of bonded labour and solutions to enable these men, women and their families to escape from, or shatter, the cycle of exploitation and psychological toll.

Psychological Anxiety of Boded Labour Enslaved in Fuel Smuggling in Balochistan

Psychological anxiety is a serious mental health condition that can negatively impact daily life and wellbeing. It comes in response to someone having too much worry, anxiety, or fear, often with no clear or imminent causing event. Many, if not all, of the above contribute to or exacerbate a person's level of anxiety including socio-economic situations, life experiences, and environmental stressors. Few things lead to greatest psychological dread as poverty because it results in continual worry and dread. Bonded labourers, especially those hailing from household void of even minimum provisions are susceptible for deep rooted perpetual psychological anxiety. To comprehend bonded labourers and their sufferings, one has to know the links of poverty and exploitation, and mental health. According to victims of debt bondage, debt bondage or bonded labour is a modern slavery form of work where they are compelled to work for what is claimed to be 'repaying debt'. They are left in a bind that these very debts are fictitiously created or pumped up by their workers. For those who come from disenfranchised homes with neither the resources nor the validation to be able to step outside the cyclical nature of exploitation, the risks are far

worse.” Those people, he says, suffer psychological distress that starts with the stress of poverty. With few prospects of escaping the daily grind of extreme poverty, they often have to take dangerous or degrading jobs to make ends meet. This right to live a dignified life under these conditions suggests a continuum of mental distress and the potential threat of anxiety as to whether they will be able to care for themselves and their families.

This burden of poverty only compounds when such individuals are subjected to systems of bonded labour. The majority of people are constrained by exploitative work under conditions beyond their control. The perpetual reaction to unreasonable wants, coupled with a fear of punishment or sinking even further into debt breeds anxiety. In a way, bonded labourers always carry a psychological burden of uncertainty about what their future will be, wherever they are. Added to that is an all-pervasive anxiety that they can't meet their demands at work or worse still, they get punished for that, adding to a sense of helplessness and anxiety. Bonded labourers being forced into risky and illegal work (like fuel smuggling) feel psychological anxiety from participation even more acutely. The trafficking of refined fuel petrol, or gasoline (such as fuel smuggling) is a risky business from Iran to Pakistan, especially in the Makran division. Those who take on this work have to grapple not just with the physical dangers of it but also with a constant fear of being arrested by police or other paramilitary actors. And the routes that have to be taken to smuggle the fuel are lengthy and notoriously perilous, with many of the workers having to trudge over hazardous ground in the worst weather conditions. The peril of this work brings a new level of mental strain, with workers fearing for their lives every day.

The fear of bonded labourers in fuel smuggling has several causes. There's the ever-present risk of injury or death in the line of duty, attendees shared. The routes are usually unmarked and treacherous, and often are policed by military forces or armed groups. Workers might risk being caught up in land disputes, fighting violent brawls and accidents or risk a natural hazard, like an avalanche or severe weather. Getting turned out is a regular risk, and the full torment of that risk is suffocating. Additionally, participants added that the laborers who do the work of horrifying communities are usually compensated very little for such a risky job. Although the activity is extremely risky, they are seldom compensated more than a very small amount of the profits, which puts them in a dire financial situation. This financial uncertainty, coupled with the psychological and emotional strain of the job, breeds a sense of hopelessness and despair. And the everyday anxiety of not being able to afford their or their families' basic needs is a huge mental burden. Plus, workers are often cut off from any sort of support network and have no means to relieve their stress or seek help.

Victims of debt bondage expressed that the exploitative relationship with the employers is another reason that increases psychological anxiety among such bonded labourers. In many instances, workers are manipulated and coerced, often with the pretext of paying off a debt. That keeps them perpetually anxious without an escape route from their current situation. The use of power is a tool used in instances like these, repeating this cycle of anxiety for these workers who are forced to comply with the demands they are given, placing them in a position of powerlessness and vulnerability. They can't question their situation or claim their rights, and this only amplifies the anxiety and insecurity they experience. The factors of psychological anxiety are not restricted to the bonded labourers alone but have far-reaching effects on their families as well. The families of bonded labourers have been left living in fear and anxiety with their loved ones engaged in dangerous work. The workers can't just "go back" to their family, and hence there is helplessness in the unit. Families now receive no help and fearlessly live in the sense of never knowing where their loved ones are and under what conditions? The pressure of survival, and the fear of an

emotional and mental bomb imminent, or even as things settle covers and warps the minds of defense of entire families for 10, 20 years or more.

Psychological apprehension can be found everywhere in victims of bonded labour particularly those working near hazardous working places like fuel smuggling. The uncertainty these people feel is grounded in their poverty, the exploitative nature of their jobs, and the ever-present threat to their physical safety. In the form of modern slavery, bonded labour further enhances anxiety by entangling people into a whirlwind of exploitation and fears. The workers contend with the fraught anxiety of simply surviving within a hostile and dangerous landscape, with the unknown of their own future looming large. Their families are trapped in this webs of anxiety as well as they bear witness to the suffering and danger their loved ones face. The current existing social status of bonded labourers and their families should be acknowledged, as called-out from their actual psychological anxiety to break the cycle of exploitation and direct psychological intervention can improve the well-being and mental health of this population as well as empower their own families.

Psychological Stress of Bounded Labour Enslaved in Fuel Smuggling in Balochistan

Psychological stress a major mental health condition. It significantly influence the emotional, physical and psychological health of people. It occurs when people feel that the pressures put on them exceed their capacity to manage or respond to those pressures. Such stress can manifest itself in many ways, including anxiety, depression, or even impaired physical health. Impoverishment is one of the leading causes of psychological stress; human beings live hand to mouth, optimizing their effort but also trapped in a struggle for survival. Bonded labourers, especially those belonging to extremely poor families, are conditioned by their socioeconomic realities to undergo chronic psychological stress, and such anactus as a catalyst to their bondage. The psychological and emotional stress encountered by bonded labourers in hazardous activities such as fuel smuggling is even greater as their work places them in an environment where they are at high risk of dangers and possibly cause serious mental health problems.

Bonded labour is a modern form of slavery, as in this system, people are forced to work for debt payment. Participants shared that the debts are manipulated or inflated so much that it makes it near impossible for the workers to ever pay it off. Bonded labourers are usually from very poor backgrounds with little or no chances of economic progress. These people are shown to be forced into exploitative labour in situations where they have no real way out except through survival. The first one is the psychological toll of poverty, which is a huge mental stress on its own. People are constantly battling the fear of being unable to provide food, shelter, clothes and healthcare. Victims of bonded labour said that mental pressure grows when caught in bondage. Bonded labourers are always afraid of darkness falling, their fate is in limbo. The workers are often unskilled and unprotected: little is done to promote the safety, rights or welfare of the workers. As for the case of workers in bonded labour, they are constantly under the gun to meet premium demands, with long-term punishment, or falling deeper into debt, looming over them. This generates a psychological environment of constant agitation in which the workers can never escape the weight of external expectations. When they have almost no power over their working conditions or any other aspects of their lives it fosters a sense of hopelessness and despair. So, this relentless pressure makes work an experience under bondage, a complete rudimentary and emotional harassment which in turn makes people more fodder to simply to get out of bonded labour.

There is further psychological stress especially among people involved in fuel smuggling where places such as the Makran division are no exception, the victims added. Fuel smugglers on the Iran and Pakistan border have made a life, but one teetering between physical and mental peril. The paths to smuggle fuel are perilous, forcing workers to traverse treacherous terrain and dodge police or armed group. The fear of being caught/arrested or attacked by border forces leads to a potentially chronic mental state of violence. These laborers understand that their lives are on the line with each day of work, and the ominous specter of accident or death looms over their heads like a noose.

In addition to the physical risk, workers who engage in fuel smuggling aren't compensated enough for the dangerous job they do. And low-paid work just adds to their psychological strain, and their invisibility. The workers are then forced to work long hours in dangerous conditions and for little or no financial return. And as indicated above, this financial instability adds even more intensity to this pressure, where lives become tied to unsustainable situations, because one must repay their debt, and there is no realistic option of alternative income. The constant warning of impending financial trouble, like many of these workers experience, creates a continual sense of uncertainty and stress. Participants revealed that the psychological pressure on bonded labourers involved in fuel smuggling was compounded by isolation. They are so frightened, workers are often so isolated from any support network they can't afford to ask anyone for assistance. The constant threats of violence, retaliation, or renewed exploitation keep them imprisoned at a point from which no relief is on the horizon.' Such an atmosphere has a huge psychological impact on the workers and makes a huge work on the mental health of the workers. This type of stress will eventually lead to burnout, physical fatigue and deterioration of mental health, such as anxiety disorders, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Bonded labour have psychological pressure also on families of bonded labourers engaged in fuel smuggling there are several families where fear is at play whether their families are safe or not. The psychological stress of the workers spills over to their families, who live through uncertainty if their relatives will return home alive each day. Apart from the income instability which comes with the nature of their work being unsteady and the emotional pressure, victims said it is an additional stressor for families when they know that a member of their family is involved in dirty work." Their situation is equally fraught, trapped in a heartbreaking loop of anxiety, since they can do nothing to alter that reality or protect their loved ones from harm. This makes workers who are dealing with these types of families' even more vulnerable, adding basic psychological stress. The problem of psychological stress among fuel smuggling bonded labours for higher psychological need. The process of contributing them in the labour and risk under situations of higher penalties. The outcome is bad to lives rife with exploitation and peril, a perfect recipe for stress, anxiety, and fear. So it is not the psychology per se but the burden to survive, the possibility of injury and permanent physical or metabolic death that makes psychological stress a meteorological cloudburst. For these workers, lack of agency, job insecurity, and the threat of punishment or more exploitation trap them in a cycle of stress. Even their family members, who are vulnerable and fearful of their loved ones' safety and health, are also implicated in the psychological injury. The psychological trauma bonded workers have endured must not only be surfaced as an urgent issue that must be addressed immediately but requires a comprehensive, layered response to ensure their liberation is achievable, sustainable, and lasting.

Conclusions

Through this nuanced study, we expose a nefarious psychological malaise of bonded labour ensnared by the fuel-smuggling industry in the Makran division of Pakistan's Balochistan

province. These workers are being forced into servitude through market abuses and gulag-like debts and suffer from high rates of anxiety, depression, stress and trauma, the research found. The psychological suffering is compounded by the petty cash system which is never-ending, and the fact that fuel smuggling has to be dangerous as well as illegal. Though strategies to address the economic and legal aspects of bonded labour are not futile however the study underlines the vital requirement of mental health interventions in the rehabilitation process of the victims. While legal instruments to prevent individuals from being exploited and deal with the illegal trade of fuel are imperative, they must be complemented by integrated mental health programmes to counter the trauma and psychological challenges the bonded labourers face. The ramifications of the findings re-iterate the necessity for a multifaceted approach to dealing with modern slavery in fuel smuggling, pointing at legal action that is effective as well as an appropriate social legislation that abolishes both debt bondage and demand, whilst indicating the requirement of tactical intervention in the form of psycho-social victim support for the two post-trauma re-entering societal integration. If it were to get a long-term out of it, to find a permanent solution to all-time prepared approach of providing just-in-time solutions against bonded labour in fuel smuggling, this generic strategy is the only lamb to the slaughter.

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