



Hazardous Working Conditions and Employers Perception Regarding Child Laborer: A Study at Sylhet City of Bangladesh

Md. Abdul Ahad^{1*}, Farjana Eleen¹ and Mitu Chowdhury¹

¹*Department of Rural Sociology and Development, Sylhet Agricultural University, Sylhet-3100, Bangladesh.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author MAA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author FE collected data and managed the analyses of the study. Author MC managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/SAJSSE/2018/v2i125822

Editor(s):

(1) Dr. Wichien Prechathamwong, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kasetsart University, Bangkok Campus, Thailand.

Reviewers:

(1) M. Mudasir Naqshbandi, Amar Singh College, IGNOU, India.

(2) Ozoh Joan Nwamaka, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.

*Complete Peer review History: <http://prh.sdiarticle3.com/review-history/26330>

Original Research Article

Received 1st July 2018
Accepted 13th September 2018
Published 20th September 2018

ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, children are working under hazardous condition due to the necessity that pushes them to labour. The present study is an attempt to explore the socio-economic conditions of child labourers, working conditions as well as employer's views regarding child labours of Sylhet city. The study was conducted through personal interview with 70 child labourers and 50 employers. The simple random sampling procedure was used to select respondents. The study reveals that 48% cannot read and write. In case of occupation, 20% are automobile worker, 18% are rickshaw puller and 13% are domestic labor. About 64% of child labourers are landless, and 40% of the child labourer's monthly income ranges from 600-1000 Taka as well as 40% are dependent on employer's convenience. About 45% child labourer's working in hazardous environment and 76% are working 11 or more hours per day. Safeguard and medical facilities from owner's side are not satisfactory. According to employers view, 32% and 28% recruit child labourers because of their obedience and availability of child workers respectively. Most of the employer's (46%) recruit child labourer through

the help of worker's parents/relatives. Almost all of the employers revealed that they do not provide medical, transportation, even training facilities to the child labourers. But 84% of the employers provide foods during work time. The above data are clearly reflecting the hazardous circumstances of child labourers. Finally, areas and context-specific data are essential to raise awareness against child labour and also for future policies and effective surveillance initiatives.

Keywords: Hazardous; working environment; employer; child laborer; Sylhet City and Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

Child labor is a serious social problem found in most of the developing countries throughout the world. UNICEF and ILO acknowledging an estimated 168 million children aged 5–17 worldwide, were involved in child labour in 2013 [1]. UNICEF defines child labor as any activity that affects a child's health and education. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 1996), children aged ten to fifteen, full time economically active, may be defined as child worker [2]. Bangladesh also possesses an enormous number of child labour, counting 6.8 million or 12.6% of children aged 5 to 14 in the work force [3]. Intolerable forms of child labour, as categorized by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2006), are domestic service, slavery or near slavery, hazardous occupations, and sexual exploitation. All of these forms are practised in Bangladesh [4]. Child labour has been increasing in Bangladesh even though child labour is on a declining trend in other South Asian countries [5]. Children are engaged in over 300 different types of work activities of which 49 are considered harmful to their physical and/or mental well being. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern in 2009 that many Bangladeshi children continue to work in five of the worst forms of child labour, namely welding, auto workshops, road transport, battery recharging and tobacco factories [6]. Children working in agriculture perform a variety of tasks and may be exposed to risks such as dangerous machinery and tools, harmful pesticides and heavy loads [7]. A lot of reasons are associated behind this fact. Extreme poverty in many families forces parents to put their children to work instead of sending them to school [8]. Most of the studies indicate that the economic pressure is the important feature which forces the children to earn by working inside the home [9]. The working children had to provide their parents some amount of their earning as well as assist in daily household chores. Iftekhhar M. Shafiqul Kalam [10] added that child labour cannot be completely eliminated unless Bangladesh's economy is developed sufficiently

to create job opportunities for the vast majority of its adult work force and that poverty alleviation is a pre-condition to eliminate or at least minimization of child labour [10]. A report based on UNICEF [11], on Elimination of Child labour, revealed that unemployment of adult family members leads children to work. Maan et al. (2005) found that the behaviour of the employer towards the working children was harsh. A large majority (83%) of the respondents got physical and mental punishment when they committed any mistake [12]. The working conditions of these child workers are not uniform and vary according to their vocations. There is neither any standard guideline nor any yardstick for their work. In majority of garages there are not any safeguards, no any type of precautions, carefulness on the part of the child is only his safety. Apart from physical hazards involved and unclean nature of their jobs they may also face elements of exploitation. These children are required to work to the satisfaction of their employers which occasionally goes beyond their capacities. The child laborers in the organized or unorganized sector are paid poorly for each completed job and often are not paid on one pretext or the other [13].

Bangladesh is the home to more than five percent of world's working child population [14]. Many of the jobs that these children in Bangladesh perform are considered hazardous, and put their physical and mental development at risk, which will put negative effects on their long-term health and earning potential. Sylhet is also not free from this curse. The destitute and unemployed people of country side area used to come in remarkable rate in Sylhet town for searching work and earning money. They often influence their child to engage in work force for participation in family earnings. That is why, the existence of child labour is enormously found in this city too. Their tendency of involving in hazardous work force is also increasing at an alarming rate. But most surprisingly political parties, administration, City Corporation apparently are not concerned about the problem. Beside, a current bigger issue is the increase in

killing and kidnapping of working children in urban areas. So it is demand of time to investigate the current situation of the children working in Sylhet deeply and thoroughly. The findings of the study in Sylhet city may reflect the real picture of child worker and it may be helpful for the different GO's and NGO's to adopt effective strategies and policies.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To assess the socio-economic background of the working children
2. To explore the nature of employment and working environment.
3. To analyze the employers perception regarding child laborers.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The present research has taken considering Pathantula, Amberkhana, Shahi Eidgah, Shibgang and Court Point (Bondor) areas of Sylhet city, because child laborer are much available in these areas. Children living in the selected areas under the age of 18 years who were involved in different job sectors and their employers have constituted the universe of the study. The snow-ball sampling procedure was used to identify the respondents. Data were collected from seventy (70) child labourers as group one and fifty (50) employers as group two by using personal interview technique. Keeping in view of the major objectives of the study, a draft interview schedule was prepared. The draft schedule was tested and finalized after necessary correction, modifications and adjustments. Primary data were collected by the researcher from the selected areas through face-to-face interview using a structured questionnaire. At this stage utmost attempt was applied to become intimate with child labourers through gossiping, exchanging greetings, general discussions etc. After completing each interview, the questionnaires were checked and verified to be sure that answer to each question was properly recorded. Hence, all possible efforts have been made by the researcher in order to ensure that the collected data were reasonably accurate and reliable. The data and information were collected from the sample respondents from January to March, 2016. However, some secondary data was also used from the secondary sources like Government report, book, numerous journals, thesis paper and so on. To analyze and interpret the data descriptive

statistics were used. Moreover, data were also analysed using MS Word and Excel. Then data were also presented in tabular form with significant interpretations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-economic Characteristics of Child Laborers

Table 1 gives a short description of the socio-economic variables considered in the study. The prevalence of child labour is high in the age groups 9-11 and 12-14, which is 20% and 64% respectively. Study shows that 92% of the child labourers were unmarried. In case of literacy, highest 48% revealed that they cannot read and write, while 28% can only read. Study also found that, highest 20% were automobile worker, 18% were rickshaw puller, and 13% were domestic labour. About 88% were living in extended type of family while only 12% were living in nuclear family. In case of nature of guardianship, study shows that 72% are male headed family, while 8% were living without any guardianship. About 64% of child laborers were landless while only 36% own only homestead land. Table 1 shows that 20% of the child labourer's household income ranges from 2501-3000, while highest 60% respondents household income is above 4000. In contrary, 40% of the child labourer's monthly income ranges from 600-1000 and 40% income level fixed up in only convenience. Highest 44% gives whole income to their parents for family expenses, while 32% gives a part of total income to their parents. From the Table 1, it was also found that 64% of the respondents revealed that their father was illiterate and 88% of the respondents said that their mother was illiterate. In addition, 56% respondents said their fathers were involved in no-agricultural sectors, while 72% revealed that their mothers were housewives.

3.2 Nature of Employment and Working Environment

Nature of employment and working environment expose the domination as well as hazardous working pattern. The present study comprises mode of payment, working environment, working hours, safety measure, treatment facilities, training facilities, leisure hours, etc to examine the nature of employment and working environment. The present study revealed that 46.67% child labourers were getting their salary

monthly, whereas 40% only get conveyance cost. About 55% of the respondents revealed that their working environment is favourable for them, while rest 45% found the working environment as hazardous. Table 2 shows that 76% of the child labourers worked 11 or more hours per day. On contrary, only 8% worked 7 to 8 hours per day. Alongside, 87% revealed that precaution or safety measure in the working place was not satisfactory. About 64% of the respondents said that there were high probabilities of a happening accident in the workplace and 3% did not show any response in this aspect.

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of the child laborer

Item		Percentage (%)
Age	6-8	12.00
	9-11	20.00
	12-14	64.00
	15-15+	4.00
	Total	100
Marital Status	Married	8.00
	Unmarried	92.00
	Total	100
Education	Can read only	28.00
	Can write	16.00
	Both read and write	8.00
	Cannot read and write	48.00
	Total	100
Occupation	Factory workers	8.00
	Rickshaw puller	18.00
	Sweeper	8.00
	Domestic aide	13.00
	Hawker	6.00
	Automobile worker	20.00
	Construction labour	8.00
	Hotel/Restaurant worker	11.00
	Porter (Coolie)	8.00
	Total	100
Family size	Nuclear	12.00
	Extended	88.00
	Total	100
Nature of guardianship	Male-headed	72.00
	Female-headed	20.00
	Without guardian	8.00
	Total	100
Possession of land	Homestead land	36.00
	Landless	64.00
	Total	100
Household Income (Taka/Month)	2000-2500 (TK)	12.00
	2501-3000 (TK)	20.00
	3001-3500 (TK)	8.00
	3501-4000+ (TK)	60.00
	Total	100
Income of the child worker (Taka/Month)	600-1000 ((TK/Month)	40.00
	3000+ ((TK/Month)	12.00
	Only conveyance	40.00
	No fixed salary	8.00
	Total	100

Expenditure of child workers	Give whole amount to parents	44.00
	Give a part of income to their parents	32.00
	Day to day needs	24.00
	Total	100

Parents Level of Education

Level of Education	Father (Percentage)	Mother (Percentage)
Primary	16%	4%
Secondary	12%	0
Can only read & write	8%	8%
Illiterate	64%	88%
Total	100	100

Parents Level of Occupation

Father's occupation	Percentages	Mother's occupation	Percentages
Non-agricultural labour	56%	Housewives	72%
Small trade	8%	Day labourer	8%
Agricultural labour	24%	Hotel worker	4%
Subsistence farming	12%	Domestic servant	16%
Total	100		100

Table 2. Nature of employment and working environment

Item		Percentage (%)
Mode of payment	Only conveyance	40.00
	Weekly payment	13.33
	Monthly payment	46.67
	Total	100
Working environment	Favourable	55.00
	Hazardous	45.00
	Total	100
Working hours	7-8	8.00
	9-10	16.00
	11 or more	76.00
	Total	100
Precaution/Safeguard	Satisfactory	13.00
	Not Satisfactory	87.00
	Total	100
High probability of happening accident	Yes	64.00
	No	33.00
	No response	3.00
	Total	100
Type of dangers at workplace	No any Problems	27.00
	Injuries / eye injuries	9.00
	Electric Shock	11.00
	Other dangers	53.00
	Total	100
Treatment facility in workplace	Yes	3.00
	No	97.00
	Total	100
Leisure hour	Yes	88.00
	No	12.00
	Total	100
Training facility for child laborer	Yes	6.00
	No	94.00
	Total	100

Table 3. Employers perception regarding child labor

Item		Frequency of employers	Percentage (%) of employers
Reason for recruiting child worker	Obedience	16	32.00
	Good performance	8	16.00
	Lower wage	12	24.00
	Availability of child workers	14	28.00
	Total	50	100
Methods of recruiting child worker	By parents/relatives of workers	23	46.00
	Personal contact of employer	11	22.00
	Deliberately by the worker	16	32.00
	Total	50	100
Medical facilities given by owners	Yes	5	10.00
	No	45	90.00
	Total	50	100
Transportation facilities	Yes	32	64.00
	No	18	36.00
	Total	50	100
Food supply during work	Yes	42	84.00
	No	8	16.00
	Total	50	100
Workshop/training facilities	Yes	9	18.00
	No	41	82.00
	Total	50	100

The present study demonstrates that 27% of children have stated that, they have not to face any dangers while working. Highest 53% children have stated that the various other dangers such as accidents, blackening of hand and face due to smoke of diesel, congested work place, handling of delicate tools, oil spill, heavy work load, low light etc. Almost all the respondents (97%) said that they never get treatment facilities when they face any physical problem in the workplace. About 88% revealed that they do not get any leisure hour during the working schedule. It was also found from the study that 94% of the total child labourers did not get any sorts of training facilities in their total working span.

3.3 Employers Perception Regarding Child Labor

Employer's view regarding child labour is crucial to find out the root cause of child labour as well as employers services for the child labourers. The present section of the study covers the reason and method of recruiting child labourers and services they provide like medical, transportation and training/workshop facilities, food supply in the workplace, etc. It was found from the present research that 32%, 28% and 24% of the employers said they hired child labourers because of their obedience, availability of child workers and lower wages respectively.

Besides, Table 3 shows that 46% of the employers recruited child labourer through worker's parents/relatives, while 32% said that worker's were directly made contact with them for job. About 90% of the employer's revealed that they did not provide any medical facilities to workers. About 64% of the employers stated that they provide transportation facility through providing additional wages for this, while 36% did not provide this facility. In addition, 84% of the employers said that they supply foods during the time of work. The present study also shows that highest 84% of the employers did not offer any training or workshop facilities for workers.

4. CONCLUSION

Child labour is now an important social concern both nationally and internationally. Children's workings in hazardous sectors are at high risk of health hazard. They are also suffering from various forms of exploitation and abuse. The present research explored their deteriorated situation in some extent. From the present study, it is obvious that their socioeconomic condition is reasonably vulnerable. They are neglected by their rights and duties. Most of them are working in hazardous sectors. Most of their parents are illiterate. Their income depends on the convenience of the owner. Most of them only get travel cost although works for more than eleven

hours. The risk of a happening accident is higher at the workplace but precaution or safeguard equipments and treatment facilities from workplace are not acceptable. Most of them do not get spare time during working schedule. They do not get training facility before or after starting their respective jobs. The study also covered the owner's perceptions. Most of the employers recruit child worker because of effortless availability, obedient and lower wages. They only look at their own economic profit. Most of them confessed that they do not provide medical, transportation and training facilities as well as very limited number of employers disclosed that they only supply foods during work time. The above findings clearly state that child labourers of our country are working in very unfavourable and hazardous environment. So, it is high time to take urgent policies and recommendations to protect child labourers from all harmful factors and also work for their legal rights.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, written participant's consent has been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. To eliminate child labour, attack it at its roots, UNICEF says. UNICEF; 2013. Available:http://www.unicef.org/media/media_70610.html (Accessed Mar 21, 2013)
2. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Report on national child labor survey in Bangladesh. Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; 2003. Available:C:/Users/bc/Downloads/Bangladesh_CL_Survey_2003_en_NEW.pdf
3. The United Nations Children's Fund Report. Child Labor in Bangladesh; 2010. Available:https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Child_labour.pdf
4. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Baseline survey for determining hazardous child labour sectors in Bangladesh 2005. Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; 2006.
5. Khanam R. Child labor in Bangladesh: Trends, patterns and policy options. Asian Profile. 2006;34:593-608.
6. Ashagrie, Kebebew. Statistics on working children and hazardous child labour in brief. Geneva: ILO; 1997.
7. Rahman K. M. Mustafizur, Islam Towfiqua Mahfuza, Tareque Md. Ismail. Socio-economic correlates of child labour in agricultural sector of rural Rajshahi District, Bangladesh. International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology. 2010;2(6): 109-117.
8. Salauddin, Khaleda. Aspects of child labor in Bangladesh. In "Disadvantaged Children in Bangladesh-Some Reflection" Women for Women, Dhaka. 1981;85.
9. Mia Ahmadullah. Child labor in Dhaka City. Institute of Social Welfare and Research, University of Dhaka. 1970;79.
10. Kalam I. M. Shafiqul. Glimpse on child labor: A study on child labor situation in Dhaka City Corporation Area. BRAC University Journal. 2007;4(1):19-29.
11. Violation of child rights in Bangladesh; 2015. Available:<Http://Www.Assignmentpoint.Com/Arts/Law/Violation-Of-Child-Right-Bangladesh-Perspective.Html> (Last Visited, 31-03-2015)
12. Mann AA, Mahmood S, Tabasom N, Niaji SK. Sociological issues in child labor at automobile and engineering workshops. Journal of Agriculture and Social Sciences. 2005;55:1813-2235.
13. Chand, Raja. An explanatory study of fifty children working in auto workshops. Department of Social Work, University of the Punjab, Lahore; 1983.
14. The Daily Star, 2011. No to Domestic Help Under-12, February 16, [online]. Available:<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/newsdetails.php?nid=174411>

© 2018 Ahad et al.; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Peer-review history:

The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
<http://prh.sdiarticle3.com/review-history/26330>