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## Victims of Child Labor and Delinquency: An Empirical Study in Tangail City

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### ABSTRACT

Child labor is one of the alarming and concerning issues throughout the world. The child labor issue is a major challenge for developing countries like Bangladesh the country has been facing poverty, high population growth, rising unemployment, and so on. The objective of this paper is to find out the vulnerabilities of child laborers in Bangladesh in terms of their victimization at workplace as well as their involvement in anti-social activities. The data have been collected from child workers aged between 10-18 years working in various workplaces in Tangail town, Bangladesh. This study shows that most of the respondents have been involved in child labor due to poverty (95%). About 68.3% of respondents are aged between 15-18 years and 91.7% of them have joined in child labor at the age of 10-14 years. In terms of education, about 83.3% of respondents left school at primary level. Most of the respondents (75%) have experienced different types of torture and exploitation in workplace while 60% experienced mental torture. The study finds that 93% of respondents have been involved in delinquent activities and 61.7% of them have informed that they have learned about drug abuse from their peer groups. The child laborers are mostly very poor and get fewer opportunities and support from the government and even from their own families. Their family status is too low to stop them from working as they are one of the important earning members in their family. Therefore, a well-organized plan should be taken where the government and the society will play prime roles to ensure a child friendly working atmosphere, fair salary, reduce exploitation and provide other types of opportunities to enrich their educational, social, familial and professional condition.

**Keywords:** Labor, Victims, Children, Poverty, Victimization, Working atmosphere, and Delinquency.

### INTRODUCTION:

Child laborers are more likely to be victimized than the others for several reasons like dependency, poverty, less cognitive maturity, less self-protection capability etc. A child is a person who is under the age of 18 years (UNCRC, 1989). On the other hand, in Bangladesh the person is not attaining the age of 18 is considered as child (Bangladesh Children Act, 2013).

There is a different between benevolent child work to develop self-responsibilities and destructive child labor which are harmful for the natural development of the child (Bhuiyan, 1998). Child work is to be called as child labor when they have to work full time at too early an age; spending more times on working; working with physical, social or psychological stress; working on the streets in bad conditions; inadequate salary; take

huge responsibility; which hampers access to education and is endanger to full social and psychological development and that undermines dignity and self-esteem (US Congress, 1994). According to ILO standards, child laborers are those below 12 years of age working in any economic activities, those aged between 12 and 14 engaged in more than light work, and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labor (UNICEF, n,d; Hossain, 2020).

Child victimization means that to all forms of physical and emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, negligent, bullying, forced labor, assault, exposure to violence, exploitation, maltreatment, etc (Finkelhor, 2008; WHO, 2013). Similarly, workplace victimization can be several types such as physical, psychological, emotional, financial deprivation, health injury, educational deprivation etc. When children are forced to work; they are also exposed to situations that make them vulnerable to trafficking, abuse, violence and exploitation. Children work in both formal and informal sectors. Almost 93.3% of working children's are engaged in the informal sector (Kamruzzaman and Hakim, 2018). So the children are mostly working in a vulnerable condition and leading a miserable life with unsecured future which increases frustration among the child and result in delinquent activities.

The International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international community consider child labor as abusive and exploitative. The working conditions in the RMG sector are below standard according to the ILO as well as this lack of social compliance (Ahmed, 2013). The significant and positive gender coefficient suggests that girls are more likely to combine schooling with work and the children of the household-head, as opposed to being relatives living in the household are more likely to combine study and work but less likely to specialize in work (Khanam, 2008). Child laborers are more at risk for victimization than are adults, for several reasons like poverty and lower family status (50%) is one of them (Save the Children, May 2009).

Besides, the aver-age age of child laborer is between 11-13 years (38.2%), about 74.5% respondents have informed that they had joined work for poverty and about 49.50% of them work in hazardous condition

whose salary (38.9%) is below 1500 Most of them have to work and undergo torture from masters and parents (physical torture 64.1%, sexual harassment 20.4%) for work (Alam and Hossain, n.d). The children working in closed door (homemade) has to undergo more torture than the others (UNICEF, 1997). On the other hand, they are depriving of basic human rights as a social being.

The study generally focus on the child labor situation in Bangladesh, the statistics indicate that; around 1.3 million children are engaged in hazardous jobs, 70% of whom are also involved in criminal activities due to poverty. Besides, around 44% of the street children in the country are involved in drug peddling, 35% are involved in picketing, 12% in mugging, 11% in human trafficking and 21% in other criminal activities (Dhaka tribune, 2016). Another concerning matter is that, the national proportion of children working in Bangladesh varies from about 10% to 44% depending on the definitions and the type of sampling (Ahmed and Quasem, 1991). The children who are involved in criminal activities due to poverty need proper treatment like beneficiary child work otherwise they will be bound to do criminal activities even after taking rehabilitation (Bhuiyan, 1998). Basically child labor victimization and delinquency is a complex issue as child labor can't be stopped in short period and on the other hand delinquent behavior depends on several issue which are mostly depend on family matters, poverty, lack of support, frustration, social status, maltreatment, exploitations, peer pressure etc. So, the root causes of child labor should be found out and take necessary steps to prevent it as well as the victimization and risk of involvement in criminal activities of the child laborer. The present study attempts to find out the root cause of child victimization and figure out the necessary measures to prevent vulnerability of involving in criminal activities.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this paper is to find out the nature of victimization of child laborer and identify its relation with juvenile delinquency in the context of Bangladesh. The specific objectives are –

- 1) To find out the status of working condition of children.

- 2) To explore the nature and types of victimization, and
- 3) To identify the cause and nature delinquent activities in working place.

**METHODOLOGY:**

The researcher have chosen Tangail town as research area considering the availability of child laborers involving in various types of works like saloon, welding, mechanical workshop, tea stall, glossary shop, transport worker and so on. Quantitative research methods have been used. The researchers have followed non-probability sampling method because the total number of population (male child labor) was unknown. Male child involving in labor were the respondents of this study. After considering all factors purposive sampling method has been selected for the survey. The researcher has conducted 60 face to face interviews following a structured survey questionnaire to collect required data for the study. Both the open ended and close ended questions were used in the questionnaire. After collecting the data from the respondents, the researchers have used Statistical Package Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) for data processing and analysis.

Finally, descriptive analyses, frequency distributions, percentage have been used as statistical tools to analyze the findings of the study according to the objectives.

**RESULTS:**

The study findings have been discussed from four different dimensions like socio-demographic related, work related information, victimization related and delinquent activities related information. All the findings are demonstrated and discussed below.

**Socio-Demographic Information**

The respondent of the study were the child laborer aged between 10-18 years. Among them most of the child (68.3%) were aged between 15-18 years while about 32% were aged between 10-14 years. In terms of educational level, (83.3%) laborer left study in the primary education level while 15% child left study in secondary education level. The study finds that 26.7% child laborers have 1 to 4 family members and 73.3% have 5 to 8 members. It is clear from the findings that most of the child laborers live in a large family. In terms of family income, monthly income of most of the respondents (45%) belongs to 8001 to 12000 taka while about 28.3% respondents have informed that their family monthly income belongs to 4000 to 8000 tk., 23.3% monthly income belongs to 13000 to 16000 taka. So most of the child laborers have come from poor family and the paper also finds that poverty is the root cause of involving in child labor and there are many families where the child are directly or indirectly forced by the family member to involve in child labor due to poverty. The same findings have been supported by the study of Burra, (1996).

**Table 1:** Socio-Demographic Information of the Child Labor.

Age level	Frequency	Percent
10-14	19	31.7
15-18	41	68.3
Total	60	100
Educational Qualification		
Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Primary	50	83.3
Secondary	9	15.0
Higher Secondary	1	1.7
Total	60	100
Number of Family Members		
Family Member	Frequency	Percent
1-4	16	26.7
5-8	44	73.3
Total	60	100
Fathers' Occupation		

Fathers' Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Rickshaw Puller	11	18.33
Day Laborer	26	43.33
Small Trading	6	10
Farmer	10	16.67
Others (Dead)	7	11.67
Total	60	100
Family Income		
Income Group	Frequency	Percent
Below 8000 Taka	17	28.3
8001-12000 Taka	27	45.0
12001-16000 Taka	14	23.3
16001-20000 Taka	2	3.3
Total	60	100

On the other hand, the family status of the child laborers is very low as 43.3% fathers of the respondents are day labor, 16.7% are farmer, 18.3% are rickshaw puller and 10% are small traders. Another study shows that, about 47.1% child laborers of Bangladesh belong to the age group of 10-14 years while 36.62% fathers of the respondents are rickshaw pullers and 49.33% mothers are housewives (Kamruzzaman, 2015). So, the family status and social status of the child laborers are very low and most of them have involved in child labor due to family problems and poverty.

### Information about the Working Condition and Experience

In this section, the nature and types of workplace of the respondents have been discussed. The working experiences of the respondents have also been indicated.

### Types of Workplace of the Respondents

Most common types of workplace for child laborer are welding (25%); mechanical (23%) and tea stall (18%). On the other hand 12% workers are working in restaurant and in shop; another 5% are working in transport work and in saloon (Fig. 1).

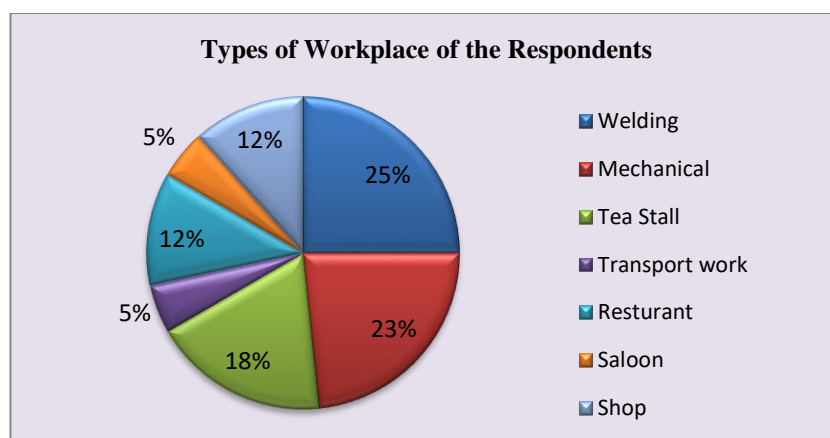


Fig. 1: Types of Workplace of the Respondents.

To work in welding and mechanical industries is not so easy especially for the children this is very risky and non-hygienic. But, most of the child are working in welding and mechanical sectors and are being paid very low salary.

### Working Hours in a Day

From this research it is found that, 60% child laborers have to work above 8 hours in a day and 40% have to work 5-8 hours in a day. So the child laborers have to work a long period of time in a day which is also a type of exploitation of the child laborers (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Working Hours in a Day.

Working Hours	Frequency	Percent
5-8 hours	24	40
Above 8 hours	36	60
Total	60	100

**Reasons for Joining as Child Labor**

The study has given a clear idea that poverty (95%) is the prime cause of child labor as most of the children become bound to work for the family and livelihood. Some children have also informed that their family members have forced or influenced them to join work due to poverty as they also have to contribute to the family survival. On the other hand broken family is also another cause of child labor as the children of broken family never get proper support and opportunity to continue study and search better job in suitable age. They have to stop their education and involve themselves in working for the sake of family (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Reasons for Joining in Child Labor (60).

Reason of Joining	Frequency	Percent
Poverty	57	95.0
Broken Family	3	5.0
Others	0	0
Total	60	100.0

Most of the child laborers have to experience cycle of poverty and exploitation and can't change condition (Bhuiyan, 1998). According to "The cycle of poverty" a child sometimes become bound to involve in child labor due to family problems like poverty, lack of support and opportunity, lack of experience, lack of a job, etc. Sometimes the family members also force their children to earn money to support family.

**Joining Age of the Respondents as Worker**

This paper shows that the children had to join in work in very tender age as about 92% of them have informed that their age was between 10 to 14 years when

they first entered into the job. On the other hand about 8% respondents have entered into the job when their age was between 15 to 18 years.

**Table 4:** Joining Age in Work (60).

Joining Age	Frequency	Percent
10-14 years	55	91.7
15-18 years	5	8.3
Total	60	100

**Information about Victimization of Child Laborer**

The child laborers have informed their experiences of being victimized during working. In this section (Table 5) this issues have been discussed. From this research it has found that 75% child laborers have experienced torture in workplace and 25% didn't face torture in workplace, 60% child workers have faced mental torture in workplace, 10% child workers have faced physical and mental torture in workplace and 5% child workers have faced physical torture in workplace. The child workers get tortured by their owner/master (30%), senior workers (25%), supervisors (8.3%) and another 11.7% child labors have been tortured by their owner and senior workers. So, most of the child labors have experienced torture, exploitation from their masters or senior workers. The child laborers also informed that, they also get victimized mentally or physically from their family members. Different research and current news have revealed that, the child laborers are mostly punished and tortured by their masers due to simple causes. The child laborers working in different sectors like welding, carpentry, rickshaw pulling and automobile repair have to do lots of dangerous works (Rahman, 2010). While producing these goods, they face dangers like working with hazardous chemicals and sharp objects in non-hygienic conditions with low lighting for long hours. On the other hand children working in hotels and restaurants face long working hours and potential abuse (US Department of State, 2012).

**Table 5:** Victimization of Child Labor.

Faced Torture in Workplace (60)		
Face Torture	Frequency	Percent
Yes	45	75
No	15	25
Total	60	100
Nature of Torture (45)		



Types of Tortures	Frequency	Percent
Physical	3	6.67
Mental	36	80
Physical +Mental	6	13.33
Total	45	100
Person Tortured the Child (60)		
Person Tortured the Child	Frequency	Percent
Owner	18	30
Supervisor	5	8.3
Senior Worker	15	25
Owner +Senior worker	7	11.7
Total	60	100

On the other hand, the children are also victimized by their masters/owners by giving very poor salary. The employers are willing to exploit for their profit considering the poverty and illiteracy of the child laborer and prefer children for their easy manipulation and low cost and force them to do hard work (Bhuiyan, 1998). Besides, most of the working children do not have the minimal opportunity for education and go to school. The children are treated as a cheap labor and easy finding. The working children also face various types of problems like bad working condition, unfixed salary, lack of recreation, mental physical and sexual harassment as well (Bashir *et al.*, 2015). So the child laborers are being victimized by their masters, seniors and even by their family members which should be stopped for the sake of future of the country.

**Delinquent Activities of the Respondents**

The child laborers are mostly involved in different types of delinquent activities as 93.3% respondents have informed that they are involving in delinquent activities while only 6.7% have informed no involvement (Table 6). This finding shows that the child laborers become bound to commit delinquent activities due to various causes and poverty is the leading factors of child labor and delinquent activities.

**Table 6:** Involvement in Delinquent Activities (60).

Involvement in Delinquent Activities	Frequency	Percent
Yes	56	93.3
No	4	6.7
Total	60	100

The most common types of delinquent activities are fighting, theft and drug trafficking. Among the 56 respondents, most of them are involved in fighting

(42.8%) and theft (25%). On the other hand about 28.6% respondents are involving in both fighting and theft (Table 7).

**Table 7:** Name of Delinquent Activities (56).

Delinquent Activity	Frequency	Percent
Theft	14	25
Fight	24	42.8
Theft +Fight	16	28.6
Drug Trafficking	1	1.8
Others	1	1.8
Total	56	100

Another concerning fact is that, about 62% child laborers are involving in drug abuse which is also a causal factor for many other crimes (Table 8). On the other hand about 38% children are not involving in drug abuse. The main causes of delinquent activities are family problem like poverty, non-payment of minimal wages to the parents, dependency on child’s ‘income (Shituma Zaman, 2014). On the other hand the children have to meet their own and family survival and commit illegal activities like drug trafficking, theft, etc (Shituma Zaman, 2014; Alam, 2011).

**Table 8:** Involvement in Drug Abuse (60).

Drug Abuse	Frequency	Percent
Yes	37	61.7
No	23	38.3
Total	60	100

**Table 9:** Types of Drugs (37).

Types of Drugs	Frequency	Percent
Opium(Heroin/Yeaba)	6	16.20
Cannabis (Ganga)	8	21.63
Others (Drinks)	23	62.17
Total	37	100.0

The most common types of drugs taken by the child laborers are ganja (21.63%), heroin & Yabba (16.20%), smoking or drinking (62.17%), etc (Table 9). This finding also reveals that, almost all types of drugs are available in this area and the children can also collect the illegal drugs easily. So, this issue can't be ignored that the child laborers are also involving in different delinquent activities. They sometimes become bound to conduct criminal activities due to poverty, poor salary, support family and self-survival etc.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:

Child victimization issue has become a global problem in the contemporary segment. Poverty plays the main role for involving large number of child in labor. This study finds that poverty plays a significant role for the involvement of the child in child labor. The concerning factor is that about three fourth of the child laborers have experienced torture (mental and physical) by their owners, masters, seniors and even by their family members. The working condition of the child laborers is very poor and unhygienic rather the children have to work for a long time. The child workers are also involving in many dangerous works like welding, mechanicals, etc. The child laborers are also deprived of education. Another concerning fact is that majority of the respondents have confessed they are involving in different types of delinquent activities. Among the delinquent activities drug abuse, fighting, theft are common. To control or recover this situation some laws, rules and cooperation should be taken from both the policy makers and the owners. Family insolvency should be removed. Besides, educational and recreational opportunity should also to be given so that every child can take proper education and moral development. Different media like television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, etc can play an important role to decrease and discourage child labor in the country to a considerable extent. The labor laws and promoting welfare facilities must be adopted and enforced.

The owner should change their attitude to-wards the child workers in workplace so that the workers feel comfortable in workplaces. Proper guide-lines for types of works, working hours and salary range should be developed and enforced as soon as possible for the prosperous development of any country.

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#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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