

Child Labourers in Bangladesh

Master's Thesis in
Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research
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Abstract

Aim: The study was intended to investigate working life in a sample of children in Bangladesh.

Method: A questionnaire was completed by 150 working children (46 girls, 104 boys). The mean age was 12.6 years ($SD = 2.4$) for girls, and 12.3 ($SD = 2.0$) for boys.

Results: For girls, the average number of years of education was 2.7 ($SD 2.0$) and for boys it was 2.6 ($SD 1.8$). The differences between girls and boys regarding reading and writing skills were not significant. For girls, the number of working hours per day varied between five and fourteen, 63.1% worked between eight and ten hours per day. For boys, the number of working hours varied between six and sixteen per day, 32.7% worked ten hours per day. The most common occupations of the girls were cleaning, household chores, and garment work, and the most common occupation of boys was selling things. The work environment of the girls was hot, dirty, and polluted, and some girls had to walk long distances, while others worked in noisy congested factories. The work environment of the boys was mostly dangerous and unsafe, unhealthy, polluted, dusty, and crowded. Girls scored significantly higher than boys on avoiding behaviours. No significant sex difference was found for diseases and health problems or maltreatment at work. Maltreatment at work correlated significantly with diseases and health problems.

Conclusions: The children in the sample had a low level of education. They worked extremely long days. The work environment was very poor for both girls and boys.

Keywords: working children, Bangladesh, working hours, work environment, education

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the Study

The study investigates working life in a sample of children in Bangladesh. It describes the level of education of the working children, their reading and writing skills, their working environment, their daily working hours, the occupations of girls and boys, maltreatment at work, diseases and other health problems.

1.2 Historical Background of Child Labour

Childhood is a crucial time for development as rapid growth happens in this stage that includes physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. Bornstein et al. (2012) compared this process with building blocks which may impact later growth. These multiple stages are interlinked (Elder Jr & Shanahan, 2007). For instance, a balanced diet during the early years is necessary for children's healthy physical construction and enhances cognitive and socio-emotional growth (Currie, 2000; Leavitt, Tonniges, & Rogers, 2003). In developed countries, child health status is quite satisfactory according to the multistage development, whereas in less developed countries, it is not pleasing (Currie, 2000; Williams et al., 2004). Due to lack of population control and an unequal distribution of wealth, children are forced into uneven growth (Humphrey, 2009; Lichter, 1997; Solomons, Mazariegos, Brown, & Klasing, 1993; Wolfe & Behrman, 1982). After the mid-twentieth century, several international organizations approached to assist these countries in terms of child development, and some of them also introduced child right laws (Myers, 1992; Woll, 2001). For instance, the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC, 1990) is a treaty which proclaims the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children.

In addition, child labour can be considered a consequence of uneven growth (Grootaert & Kanbur, 1995; Manzo, 2005). Historically, child labour incidents were very common. However, after the nineteenth century the child labour ratio declined, and in the twentieth century, most of the developed countries almost completely overcame this situation (Cunningham & Viazzo, 1996). For example, in Italy the percentage of child labour of children between 10 and 14 years of age had declined from below 70% to below 5% in the period of 1881 to 1961 (Toniolo & Vecchi, 2007). Contrarily, in the United States of America, the child labour slowed down from 11.66% to 2.46% in the period of 1890 to 1930 (Long, 1958). On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, the child labour declined from 36.6% to 18.3% (Cunningham & Viazzo, 1996) from 1851 to 1911. In addition, according to International Labor Organization (ILO) the world child labour declined from 16% to 10.6% between 2000 and

2012 (ILO-IPEC, 2013). However, after the Second World War (WW II) several countries achieved independence and achieved third world status. The scenario of child labour in these countries is not equal to the so called first world countries. For instance, in Somalia, 1,012,863 (39.8%) of the children between five and 14 years are child labourers, whereas in Pakistan 13% of the children are child labourers (Nag, 2019). Over 200 million child labourers have been identified over the past few decades and most of them are found in Sub-Saharan Africa and south Asian countries (The World Counts, 2014).

The commercialisation of children began with the Industrial Revolution (Humphries, 2010). Because of the industrialisation, children were forced to work in family farms, in factories, in tending crops or in food preparation. The industry required labour and the capitalists required cheap labour and children were the best option for cheap labour. Now children perform dangerous and deadly work, not only in the industry, but also in homes and in marketplaces (Basu, 1999). In the contemporary society, poverty forces children to engage in the work force. Thus, child labour is a matter of development both in the national and international sphere. The developed nations have overcome this state, but developing countries, for example Bangladesh, is fronting this problem till now, as a development challenge because the problem is due to rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption, and low wages (Bass, 2004).

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2002), child labour is defined as “the work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development”. The National Child Labor Elimination Policy (2010) defines a child labourer in the Bangladesh Labor Act (2006) as a person who has attained the age of 14 but is below the age of 18. However, in Bangladesh, it is impossible for a poor parent, especially when trapped into persistent poverty, to keep his children safe. Subsequently, many children start selling their labour as workers in hotels, restaurants, factories, workshops, and as domestic workers. They are also engaged in loading and carrying at the market, they work as potters, beggar, rickshaw puller, puller of hand carts and so on (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2010). Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2017) has estimated that 3,450,369 children are working children, and among them 1,280,195 children are involved in hazardous child labour. These children are faced with dismal, deplorable and abject working conditions, unfixed wages, health hazards, lack of recreation, and they are exposed to mental, physical and sexual harassment (Aktar & Abdullah, 2013).

1.3 Child Right Protecting Instruments

Child labour is as a global phenomenon which is a result of poverty and lack of education. Many National and International organisations work to protect the children. Several programs to protect the child labourers have been launched, for example, the instruments of ILO (2014) entitled the Cash and In-kind Transfer Programme, the Public Employment Programme, social health protection, maternity benefits, social protection for people with disabilities and those who suffer from employment-related injuries or diseases, income security in old age, and unemployment protection. According to ILO (2014), lack of social protection is the main cause behind child labour. The ILO's child labour protection was designed by a social protection activity (ILO, 2014). Similarly, the World Bank (WB) has focused on increasing primary education enrolment and decreasing child labour (Betcherman, Fares, Luinstra, & Prouty, 2004). The World Bank provides loans and policy recommendations, for instance, improving incentives for children to go to school, removing constraints stopping children from going to school, using legislation to encourage schooling and discouraging child labour (Betcherman et al., 2004). In addition, a special policy recommendation for child labour provides protection and rehabilitation services for working children including removal of children from hazardous and the worst forms of child labour, enforcing health and safety and other employment standards, providing access to education and health services, vocational training and other rehabilitation services (Betcherman et al., 2004). Similarly, the UNICEF (2014) works for the child labour elimination with multiple actors both the national and international donors, and the civil society. At a national level UNICEF (2014) assists in developing a policy to protect child labourers. Several international programmes have undertaken to end child labour. One of the largest programmes was The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC 1992) which operated in 88 countries. The programme collaborated with international and government agencies, NGOs, the media, and children and their families to end child labour and provide children with education and assistance (ILO, 2019c). Conferences were also organised to identify the obstacles and to assess progress. These conferences were in Oslo (1997), the Hague (2010), Brasil (2013), and Buenos Aires (2017) (Betcherman et al., 2004; ILO, 2019a, 2019b, 2019d).

In Bangladesh, a different type of legislative and policy work has been done to eliminate child labour in accordance with the suggestion of international agencies. Aktar and Abdullah (2013) have critically discussed the protecting instruments of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh's constitution, the Articles 14 and 15 of the constitution stipulate the rights of children and the right to social security. Articles 17, 27, 28, 29, 31, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 41 partially or directly forbid the forced labour (Aktar & Abdullah, 2013). However, there are strong domestic laws on national child labour

elimination policy (2010). These are the Bangladesh Labour Act (2006), the Children's Act (1933), the Employment of Children Act (1938), the Tea Plantation Ordinance (1962), and the Mines Act (1923) (Aktar & Abdullah, 2013). International agreements have also been signed for example, the ILO minimum age convention 138 (C138) (1973), the UN convention on the rights of the child (CRC) (1990), and the ILO child labour convention 182 (C182) (1999) (Aktar & Abdullah, 2013). These instruments work well to eliminate child labour nationally and globally, but they are not working as fast as needed.

1.4 Global Child Labour

Currently the world has more than 200 million child labourers, of them 120 million are engaged in hazardous work, and about 73 million children are below 10 years old. The Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest number of child labourers (The World Counts, 2014). These children engage mostly in cocoa, coffee, cotton, rubber and other crops. About 20 million child workers are also employed in factories or industrial productions, e.g., garments, carpets, toys, matches and hand-rolled cigarettes. In addition, over the last decade the number of children in armed conflicts has risen to 300,000 (The World Counts, 2014).

Nag (2019) has presented the top ten countries where the situation of child labour is the worst. In Somalia, it had been estimated that 1,012,863 (39.8%) children between five and 14 are found to be child labourers. Most of the children in Somalia engage in both agriculture, construction, mining and even in armed conflicts and anti-national activities due to lack of social, economic and political security (Nag, 2019). In Pakistan 13% of the children work as child labourers, and of them, 76% work in agricultural sectors. A large number of children are also found in restaurants, tea stalls, transportation, garbage scavenging, and risky industries. According to the International Labor Organization, 17.2% of the population live below the poverty line in Pakistan, which forces the children to do work. Nigeria, an African country on the Gulf of Guinea, suffers from a different situation of child labour. In this country girls are more vulnerable than boys (Adepoju, 2005; Nag, 2019). Most of the girl children engage in domestic work from a very early age. Instead of attending school, both girls and boys are involved in agricultural work, street hawking and street begging, mining and construction work, shoe shining, car washing, auto repair, conducting minibuses, and numerous other activities. Overall 15 million Nigerian child workers are below the age of 14 (Nag, 2019).

Poverty has forced about 1.5 million children aged between 10 and 17 to be involved in agriculture and small craft industry in Myanmar (Nag, 2019). Due to lack of a labour law and injustice, Liberian

children have been engaged in the labour force. About 30% of the children in Liberia are child labourers (Nag, 2019). Furthermore, India, the second most populated country in the world, has 33 million child labourers (Nag, 2019). Unlike other countries, the growing economy of India has pushed the child labourers from rural to urban areas. Nag (2019) mentions that despite governmental initiatives, the child labour ratio in Ethiopia has not decreased. Half of the Ethiopian children found in the labour force were brought from underdeveloped regions to Addis Ababa to do shoe shining, vending, mining, and even unpaid labour. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, children are forced to work in gold, wolframite, and coltan mines. In addition, armed force engagement and sexual exploitation also exist in eastern Congo. In Congo, 3,327,806 children work as child labourers. Invalid birth registration and lack of citizenship proof force children into child labour (Nag, 2019). In Chad, most school-aged children are found in the agricultural sector or trafficked into oil producing countries. Despite poverty, the adverse impact of climate change has forced children into the labour force (Nag, 2019).

1.5 Child Labour in Bangladesh

Studies on value statements have examined the poor health condition, the working environment, working hour and salary of child labourers. A study (2000) has shown that about 5.4–7.9 million children work as child labourers, and most of them are involved in the agricultural sector in order to contribute to their family income (Salmon, 2005). Similarly, a cross sectional study has found that 89% of the children were involved in the labour force to support their families (Rahman & Hakim, 2016). Another study has shown that children were not only involved in the agriculture sector, but also in industrial and manufacturing plants, small scale factories, metal works, construction, and in many other different activities (Uddin, Hamiduzzaman, & Gunter, 2009). A survey in Sylhet found that the child workers suffered from many physical and psychological problems, and that they received medical assistance from local non-qualified persons (Uddin et al., 2009). Another study of Kamruzzaman (2015) found the worst victimization of child labourers at workplaces in Bangladesh. This study also presented that common physical assault included beating (13%), pulling hair (7.5%), and sexual abuse, including rape (14.1%) and sexual perversions (16.5%).

Unlike the above, a report of the ILO (2006) presented that there were approximately two million domestic child labourers in Bangladesh. Apart from this report, few other studies have shown that domestic child labour includes physical, mental, and even sexual abuse by employers (Islam, 2010; Kamruzzaman & Hakim, 2016, 2018; Kamruzzaman et al., 2016). In some cases, domestic workers have even died because of severe torture and injury. They were tortured for simple reasons, for

example, for not performing in their duty properly, delay in work, or simply breaking a glass (Islam, 2010; Islam, 2013). Physical aggression included slapping, kicking, punching, beating, hitting the head against the wall, burning with cigarettes or metal stuff, and non-payment of salary. Girls are often victimized from sexual abuse by male members of their households (Islam, 2013; Kamruzzaman, 2015; Kamruzzaman & Hakim, 2016, 2018; Kamruzzaman et al., 2016).

Child labourers in Bangladesh work more than eight hours a day (Kamruzzaman, 2015). Kamruzzaman (2015) has shown that 42.4% of the respondents worked 5-8 hours per day, and that 30% of the children worked more than eight hours. Hakim and Talukder (2016) made a quantitative study of street children by random sampling in Tangail. They found that 85.5% of the children had three meals a day and 14.55% had meals twice a day. They also found that 85.3% of the children washed their hands before eating, and 57.5% took a bath daily. Furthermore, they found that 66.67% of the respondents were underweight and that 59.8% of them had suffered from diseases in the last three months prior to the study (Hakim & Talukder, 2016). Similarly, Hakim and Rahman (2016) analysed the effect of child labour on child health in Bangladesh. They found that 60.42% were underweight, 6.25% were overweight, and 63.75% had three meals per day. Furthermore, the hygiene of the children was not good.

The educational level of child labourers is also low in Bangladesh (Islam, 2010). A study by Islam (2010) showed that domestic child labourers failed to obtain a formal education, and only 79.2% received a non-formal education because of the poverty. In addition, he found that 73.3% did not have a full day off during the week, 21.7% received only three to four hours rest, and 19.2% did not get any rest during the day. Rahman, Hakim, Hanif, Islam, and Kamruzzaman (2016) provided a link between health and educational background of child labourers in Dhaka and Chittagong city in Bangladesh. They found that 37.3% were malnourished. They found no link between the educational level and malnourishment. Some child labourers worked for low payment and sometimes only for food (Sumon, 2007). Of the children 45% received a fixed salary (Rahman & Hakim, 2016).

Salmon (2005) and Rahman and Hakim (2016) found that most child labourers were engaged in agriculture. However, Uddin et al. (2009) showed that they were not only involved in agriculture, but also in other sectors. Similar to Uddin et al. (2009), Kamruzzaman (2015) also found high victimization of child labourers at workplaces in Bangladesh. Unlike them, Islam (2010), Kamruzzaman and Hakim (2016), and Kamruzzaman et al. (2016) found that domestic child labourers were frequently physically, mentally and sexually abused by their employers. Kamruzzaman (2015), Hakim and Talukder (2016), and Hakim and Rahman (2016) used quantitative methods. They found a relationship between working hours, diet and health. Islam (2010) and Rahman et al. (2016) found a relationship between poverty, educational level and health. However, different national and

international organizations have adopted different types of instruments to abolish and protect child labourers in Bangladesh. One of them is The National Child Labor Elimination Policy (2010).

1.6 Research Questions

The following research queries were investigated:

1. Number of years of education of working children
2. Differences between girls and boys regarding their reading and writing skills
3. Working hours of girls and boys.
4. The most common occupations of girls and boys.
5. The work environment of the girls and boys.
6. The sex difference for diseases and health problems and maltreatment at work.
7. The relationship between maltreatment at work and diseases and health problems.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

A questionnaire was completed by 150 working children, 46 girls and 104 boys living in five districts; Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet. The age range of the respondents was between seven and 16 years. The mean age was 12.6 years ($SD = 2.4$) for girls, and 12.3 ($SD = 2.0$) for boys, the age difference not significant [$t_{(148)} = 0.76, p = ns$]. Of the respondents, 86.7% were Muslims, 10.7% were Hindus, 1.3% were Buddhist, and 0.7% something else.

Number of years of school attendance are presented in Table 1. Of the respondents 15.3% had no education at all, while the maximum number of years at school in the sample was seven (2%). For girls the average number of years of education was 2.7 years ($SD 2.0$) and for boys it was 2.6 years ($SD 1.8$). The sex difference was not significant.

Table 1
School Attendance of the Respondents in the Sample (N = 150)

Years at School	N	Percent
0	23	15.3
1	22	14.7
2	32	21.3
3	26	17.3
4	15	10.0
5	23	15.3
6	6	4.0
7	3	2.0

2.2 The Instrument

The questionnaire included scales for measuring diseases or health problems of the children (4 items, $\alpha .75$), maltreatment at work (6 items, $\alpha .74$), and avoiding behaviours (3 items, $\alpha .85$).

Avoiding behaviours were observed by the researcher while interviewing the children. All response alternatives were on a five-point scale (for the two first scales, never = 0, very often = 4; for the last scale, not at all = 0, very much =4). For single items of the scales see Table 2.

Table 2

*Single Items of the Scales in the Study (N = 150)**Diseases or Health Problems*

Have you suffered from any disease or health problem?

Do you suffer from health problems because of your work?

Have you ever consulted a doctor?

Do you take any medicine?

Maltreatment at Work

Has someone shouted at you

Has someone called you bad names

Have you been hit with the hand

Have you been hit you with an object

Has someone forced you to do sexual things

Has someone taken your money from you

Avoiding Behaviours

Shy

Silent

Poor eye contact

The questionnaire also included items for measuring reading and writing skills, sleeping places, occupations of the children, working hours per day, and work environment.

2.3 Procedure

A paper-and pencil questionnaire was administered to the children by the researcher and a research assistant. The field work was done in February 2019. No incentives or gifts were provided to the respondents.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The study was completely confidential; the names of the children were not recorded. The study adheres to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), as well as guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012).

3. Results

3.1 Working Hours per Day

For girls, the number of working hours per day varied between five and 14 hours, 63.1% worked between eight and ten hours per day (Table 3). For boys, the number of working hours varied between six and 16 hours per day, 32.7% worked ten hours per day.

Table 3
Number of Working Hours per Day
(*N* = 150)

Number of Working Hours per Day	Girls %	Boys %
5	2.2	0
6	2.2	3.8
7	2.2	4.8
8	19.6	16.3
9	26.1	11.6
10	17.4	32.7
11	2.2	2.9
12	15.2	16.3
13	4.3	1.0
14	8.7	9.6
15	0	0
16	0	1.0

3.2 Reading and Writing Skills

Among the girls, 30.4% could not read at all, 43.5% could read a little, and 26.1% could read very well. Among the boys, 29.8% could not read at all, 48.1% could read a little, and 22.1% could read very well. Among the girls, 52.2% could not write at all, 34.8% could write a little, and 13.0% could write very well. Among the boys, 53.8% could not write at all, 39.4% could write a little, and 6.7%

could write very well. The differences between girls and boys regarding reading and writing skills were not significant.

Reading and writing skills were added together to form one variable. Reading and writing skills correlated positively with age ($r = .51, p < .001$). When keeping age as a covariate it was found that reading and writing skills correlated negatively with frequency of maltreatment at work ($r = -.17, p = .045$). It did not correlate with avoiding behaviours or frequency of diseases and health problems.

3.3 Age

Avoiding behaviours correlated significantly negatively with age ($r = .36, p < .001$). Age did not correlate with diseases or health problems or with maltreatment at work.

3.4 Sleeping Places

Of the children in the sample, 28 girls and 91 boys slept at home with their parents, seven girls and six boys slept in their workplace, and one girl slept in the street (Table 4).

Table 4
Sleeping Places of the Participants (N = 150)

	With parents	In the workplace	In the street	Elsewhere
Girls	28	7	1	10
Boys	91	6	0	7
Total	119	14	1	17

3.5 Occupations of the Children in the Sample

The most common occupation of the girls in the sample was cleaning and household chores, and garment work (Table 5). The most common occupation of boys was selling things (Table 6).

Table 5
Occupations of Girls in the Sample

<i>N</i>	Activities	
10	Cleaning and household chores	Clean the house/shop/toilet, I sweep the floor, I make beds, mopping, dusting, sweeping, washing clothes, washing dishes, cooking, I keep things in place, I take care of baby
9	Garment workers and operating sewing machine	I do hand embroidery, cutting thread from the product, I separate faulty products, operating a sewing machine
4	Preparation of fish	I work in process of shrimp, cut fish, remove inside things and dry them
4	Tea preparation	I pick the bud and leaf from the tea tree, dry them, serving tea for the customers
3	Beauty	Eyebrow plucking, haircut, hair colour, hair massage, manicure, pedicure, facial massage
3	Selling	I sell tea in the park, and public places, I sell polythene bags in the kitchen market
2	Make and sell	I make flower garland for brides and for different occasions and sell them
2	Delivery	I deliver food to the offices, help packing the food
2	Supplying water	I supply tap water to the shop in coastal market
2	Stone worker	I break brick for construction with a hammer
2	Begging	I push beggar's cart and beg for money from the pedestrians
1	Waste picking	I look for things in garbage and waste bin roadside

Table 6
Occupations of Boys in the Sample

<i>N</i>	Activities	
24	Selling	I ask every person to buy ice-cream, I buy and sell books both old and new, I buy and sell old shirt pant, I buy wallet and sell them outside the market, I carry some snacks and go from a person to another, I carry tea in a thermo flask and sell, I collect ticket and sell, I cut the meat into pieces, weigh them, sell them, I go from person to person for selling newspaper, I organize the fruits, sell them, weigh them, I push the sugarcane in the machine, mix ice with juice, I screen the pest from dry fish, selling the fish, Selling pens in front of schools and public places, I sell battle leaf, cigarette seller, tea, I sell bottled cold water, I sell chocolate in front of school, in the park, I sell green chilli, carrot, cabbage, tomato and so on, I sell peanut and pulse, I sell pickle, I sell toys, Sell cold drink in the public places
8	Shop	I clean the shop, keep books in place, arrange and decorate the shop, sell to customer, I fold saree, show them to customers, bring tea for customer, show dress to the customer, make the display

7	Bakery	Baking and packing, I bake biscuit, cupcake, I help everyone and learn, I help making dough, baking, cleaning
7	Restaurant	I clean the table, refill jugs, and bring food to the customer, I help the chef, I work as an assistant of the chef, serving food, Wash fish, vegetables, meat, clean the kitchen
7	Transportation	I call passenger, collect fare, help them get in and get out, drive vehicle with passenger, help passenger
6	Farming	Digging soil, irrigate crop, I feed the pets, take care of them, I give food for fish, take care of hatching process, I give food to the chicks and do cleaning, I put seeds, screen the pest, take care of the crop, Take care of the cows, feed them, bathe them
5	Fish and fish processing	I cut fish, I do fishing. Also, I process fish to make dry fish, I process dry fish, Paddling boat, help in fishing
4	Car	I paint car, I refill petrol, CNG, octane to vehicles, repairing car, changing mobil
4	Cleaning	I clean motor bike, car, I clean the compartments of train, I clean the floor, empty trash bin, I sweep the road and clean the drains
4	Construction	I help a massion, I mix cement and sand, carry bricks, I carry stuffs from down to top
4	Rickshaw pulling and repairing	Pulling rickshaw and van with passengers and goods, I repair the damage of rickshaw
4	Welding	I make window grill, welding, repairing and spraying
3	Housemaid	Cleaning garden, watering the plants, cleaning house, washing cloths and dishes, take care of a baby
2	Salon	I do haircut, shaving beard and armpit, massage
2	Bedding	I make pillow, buster pillow, blanket, covers
2	Book binding	Book binding, spiral binding
2	Office peon	I clean the table, do photocopy, deliver mail inside the office, Make tea
2	Other	Carrying goods, I collect cow dung from houses and farms
2	Photocopy	I make copy of papers
2	Ward boy	I collect the dust pan, dirty bowl, clean them and give the necessary things to the patient
1	Laundry	I receive the cloths from customer, iron them
1	Machine operating	I operate the grinding machine
1	Operating sewing machine	Hand embroidery, sewing

3.6 Work Environment

The girls in the sample reported that their work environment was hot, dirty, and polluted (Table 7). Some girls had to walk long distances, while others worked in noisy congested factories.

Table 7
Work Environment for Girls (N = 46)

<i>N</i>	
6	Hot and under the sun, overheated, suffocating, noisy, dirty bad smell, polluted
4	I go from office to office, the tap is far away, I have to walk a lot. Not good environment, I am on my foot for the full working time
2	It is a small factory behind the shop, six persons work in a congested place
2	Too much electric machines and lights, warm, noise
2	I work on footpath, there is dust and dirt
1	Chemical use, noise of hair dryer
1	Work without gloves
1	Hard
1	Quiet
1	Family environment

The work environment of the boys in the sample was mostly dangerous and unsafe, unhealthy, polluted, dusty, and crowded (Table 8).

Table 8
Work Environment for Boys (N = 104)

<i>N</i>	
15	Acute odour, dirty, dust, very warm, unsafe, unhealthy
12	Unsafe and unhealthy, very unclean, too much greasy thing, dirty and polluted environment
11	Dangerous, no safety measure, gear, no hand gloves or mask. Sometimes dust goes with breathing
10	Nice official environment. I like the environment, Good environment, air-conditioned shop
9	I sell them in bus/footpath shop, public places, park, footpath, in front of school. I work in a footpath shop, dust and pollution
8	Under the sun, open place, no shed, high temperature, humid, sweating all the time
8	Warm, dirty, congested and suffocating place
7	Crowded, dirty, noisy, thousands of buses and people
5	I stand at the door of the bus, tempo It is risky, very risky environment. Boat might sink any time
3	Very busy environment, no chance to sit, always on move
3	Hospital environment - blood everywhere, bad smell, sick people are around. not a good feeling
3	Inside a fish/kitchen market - acute smell, noisy, crowded

-
- 2 No toilet, common toilet for thousands of people
 - 2 Hard job/work
 - 2 I go from car to car and person to person and ask to buy my product
 - 1 I cannot describe
 - 1 I work in a family environment. The employer family behave well.
 - 1 Not good not bad
 - 1 Village environment
-

3.7 Correlations between Scales

Maltreatment at work correlated significantly with diseases or health problems ($r = .37, p < .001$), but not with avoiding behaviours. Diseases or health problems correlated negatively with avoiding behaviours ($r = -.17, p = .037$).

3.8 Sex Differences

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with sex as the independent variable and the three scales as dependent variables. The multivariate test was significant (Table 9, Fig. 1). The univariate tests showed that girls scored significantly higher than boys on avoiding behaviours. No significant sex difference was found for diseases or health problems or maltreatment at work.

Table 9
Results of a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with Sex as Independent Variable and Three Scales as Dependent Variables (N = 150)

	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> ≤	η^2	Group with higher mean
Effect of Sex					
Multivariate analysis	9.80	3, 145	.001	.169	
Univariate analyses					
Diseases or Health Problems	0.12	1, 147	<i>ns</i>	.001	-
Maltreatment at Work	0.08	“	<i>ns</i>	.001	-
Avoiding Behaviours	27.62	“	.001	.158	Girls

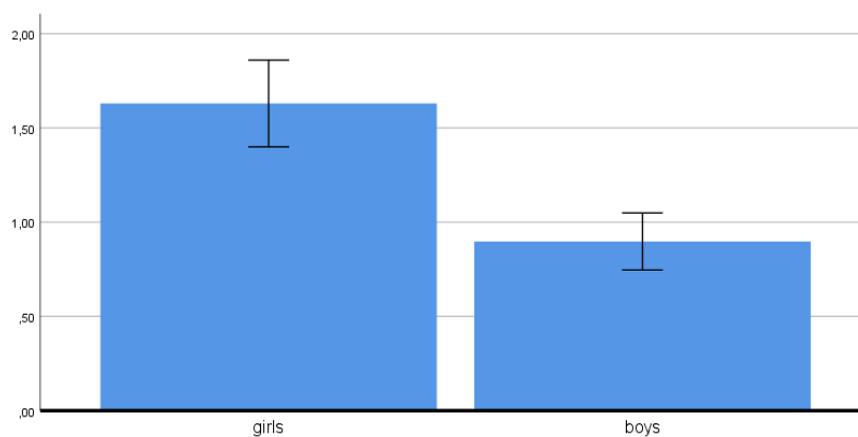


Figure 1. Mean values on avoiding behaviours for girls and boys ($N = 150$).

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of Findings

The study describes the working life of a sample of Bangladeshi working children. Similarly, to a previous study (Islam, 2010), it was found that the number of years of education among the children was very low. The average number of years of education was 2.7 for girls and 2.6 for boys respectively. Around one-third of the children could not read at all, and more than half of them could not write at all. The differences between girls and boys regarding their reading and writing skills were not significant. The reading and writing skills correlated positively with age. It has previously been found that the reading and writing skills did not correlate with the frequency of diseases and health problems (Rahman et al., 2016).

The study reveals that the number of working hours per day of child labourers in Bangladesh was more than eight hours per day. The result shows that 63.1% of girls and 60.6% of boys worked between eight and ten hours per day.

The study found that most girls in the sample worked with cleaning, household chores, and garment work, whereas most of the boys were involved in selling different types of goods. This is in contrast with findings by Salmon (2005), Uddin et al. (2009), and Rahman and Hakim (2016), who found that Bangladeshi child labourers were mostly engaged in the agricultural sector. The difference is probably due to the living location of the children, where the children were working.

The working environment of the girls was hot, dirty, and polluted, and they had to walk long distances, while others worked in noisy congested factories. The working environment of the boys in the sample was dangerous and unsafe, unhealthy, polluted, dusty, and crowded. In accordance with other studies, it was found that girls scored significantly higher than boys on avoiding behaviours (Islam, 2013; Kamruzzaman, 2015; Kamruzzaman & Hakim, 2016, 2018; Kamruzzaman et al., 2016). This study did not find any significant sex differences regarding diseases and health problems or maltreatment at work. In accordance with two other studies (Islam, 2010; Kamruzzaman, 2015), it was found that maltreatment at work correlated significantly with diseases and health problems.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study was the small sample size. A larger number of respondents as well as an instrument including several scales are needed to better investigate the working life of children. Since the child labourers were not located in a definite area, interviewing a larger sample would have been

more time-consuming. To find an equal number of girls and boys was also difficult. Differences between children working in urban and rural areas could also be studied.

4.3 Implications of the Study

The literacy status of the child labourers needs to be addressed as well as the status of the rest of the population. Education is the base of the development. The poor implications of the educational policy in Bangladesh may be causing this situation. Based on the findings, policymakers and the developing agents could rethink the educational development in order to meet the national goal. In addition, effective incentives could be introduced focusing especially on the education of working children.

In terms of working hours, the study revealed that child labourers were treated in the same way as adults, and in some cases, they had to work longer hours than adults. These findings will hopefully help the child labour protecting agents to take necessary steps against employers of working children. It has been recommended that there should be a legitimate working hour for children, and a regulatory cell should monitor this activity in each district of the country. Similarly, this regulatory body is planned to not only focus on working hours, but also on the working environment.

Furthermore, the study revealed that maltreatment of child labourers at work correlated with diseases and health problems. Free medical facilities could improve the health of child labourers. Mass-oriented media coverage could be launched in order to convey a message to health care providers, schools, religious institutions, and other groups in the community. Without a mutual understanding and the support of a variety of actors, the situation of working children cannot be improved.

4.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The reasons for children working have not been investigated in this study. In future studies these could also be included. Employers of children could also be interviewed, as well as other key informants. There is a number of national and international instruments intended to protect child labourers. Nevertheless, the situation of child labourers seems to remain the same. Further studies are needed to underpin the weakness of both the policy and its implications.

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