



Short Review Paper

## Occupational injuries among children in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

The specific objects are to know the source of income and employment status of the children at work, to investigate the types of injury that affect the working child of the child laborer and to explore the hazardous work places and abuse of the working children. The study conducted with the secondary data of Bangladesh Labor Force Survey (ILO), 2013. SPSS software were used for finding the result. It is found that the predominating income source of the working child was service sector and child labor mostly were self-employed. 18.5% child were engaged with hazardous work, 2.3% working child had experienced various types of and almost 8.5% had subjected to insult, physically or sexually abuse. Most of the child don't like their work and working environment that have adverse physical and emotional effects on children's health. Public and private sectors should maintain child labor rules and regulations, arrange awareness program for child safety.

**Keywords:** Occupational, injuries, children, Bangladesh.

### Introduction

While most nations has achieved a significant improvement in economic sectors in last decades, child labor still remains a global concern. There are approximately 218 million children under the age of 18, are trapped by various form of child labor whereas largest number belongs to Asia and Pacific region<sup>1</sup>. Though, child can contribute to family earning by laboring, it has devastating effect on health as well as emotional development of young workers<sup>2</sup>. Despite child labors being declined, the number of child laborer under hazardous condition is dramatically increasing<sup>3</sup>. It is seen from a study that almost 58% of working children had to work in hazardous environment<sup>2</sup> and this percentage can be measured by a wide range of occupational sectors<sup>2,4</sup>.

South Asia is a highly populated region, providing about 22% of the world's population and its economy heavily depends on agriculture<sup>5</sup>. It is estimated that about 16.7 million children (5-17 year old) in South Asia are involved in earning sectors in which 5 million Bangladeshi children involve on child labor<sup>1,6</sup>. Bangladesh is one of the largest populous country with 160 million people and about 31.5% of its total population suffer from intense poverty<sup>7</sup>. Hence, it is simple that parents are engaging their children in working sectors to support their poor family. Besides poverty, the contributing factors to child labor might be industrialization, demand for child labor, rapid society growth, low standard of living and poor educational institution<sup>8,9</sup>.

These working child often work in hazardous but low-wage job sectors, for example, they are often engaged in construction sector, garment industry, agriculture, brick kilns, waste-picking,

transportation sectors, and so on<sup>10</sup>. Children in urban areas are mostly involved in commerce and construction sector, in contrast, the rural counterpart are typically working in agriculture<sup>11</sup>. However, these children often suffer from occupational injuries. From a survey from Peru, it is revealed that almost forty percent of the child labor had suffered from occupational injuries<sup>12</sup>.

It is reported on the basis of 'Child labor survey, 2013' data that about 39.7% child labor are engaged in agriculture sector, about 29.4% child labor work in various type of industries in Bangladesh. Rest of the child labors are involved with service sectors including domestic work, transportation sectors, repairing automobiles shops etc.<sup>13-15</sup>. In the perspective of involving in hazardous sectors, Bangladeshi child had the highest percentage (75%) in South Asia<sup>1</sup>. Such deleterious working place is significant factors of the incidences occupational injuries, crushing accidents, amputations and fractures.

In Bangladesh, injury is a leading cause of child death. About 7% children had reported that they were suffering from some form of injury where falls (2%) had the predominant place<sup>16</sup>. A study identified the main factor as responsible behind the children involvement at work in ship breaking industry in Chittagong, Bangladesh, was poverty. Beside the poverty, landlessness, disappearance of the father, indebtedness of the family are other causes for children' involvement in ship breaking industry. Most of the child workers come from the rural areas and they are poor family backgrounded. Children get involved at work through the family line of father, brother or by other relatives. The study provides that, only male children are involved at work and they are the age group of above 10 years

in average. Most of the child workers are involved in heavy loaded work and have to pay more strength in their types of work. Thus they have to face unwilling and unwanted abuse and exploitation. Children don't have any voices or organized action ever to reduce their problem. Almost 12 hours of a day, children had to pay labor in ship breaking industry. In ship breaking industry there is not a single day without disease, injury or even death<sup>16</sup>. It is still a major problem in Bangladesh. The objectives of the study is to find out the types of injury that affect the working child.

The specific objectives of the study also are: i. To know the source of income and employment status of the children at work. ii. To investigate the types of injury that affect the working child of the child laborer. iii. To explore the hazardous work places and abuse of the working children.

### Methodology

The study conducted with the secondary data of Bangladesh Labor Force Survey (ILO), 2013<sup>17</sup>. A two-stage stratified cluster sampling design was adopted and the sample size was 36242 through the whole country. Descriptive statistics were used for finding the result.

### Results and discussion

Table-1 demonstrates that the predominating income source of the working child was service sector (54.1%), and agriculture (33.4%) was in second position. It is revealed that there were 40.8% child labor were self-employed, 11.2% were employee, and 35.1% were day labor.

It is shown from Table-2 that 18.5% child were engaged with hazardous work, 2.3% working child had experienced injury and 79.1% had to absent from work place due to injury. The injury type were superficial injury (49.6%); fracture (4.7%); dislocation, sprain, strain, amputation (33.3%); concussion, internal injury (3.1%); burn, corrosion, scalded, frostbite (4.7%) and acute poisoning, infection (1.4%). About 28.7% child exposed to hazards at work (i.e. dust, fumes, fire, gas, extreme cold or heat etc.) and almost 8.5% had subjected to insult, physically or sexually abuse.

**Discussion:** Despite the significant progress in poverty alleviation, poverty rates is still high in Bangladesh which mainly leads child to engage in employment. Because of the utmost poverty facing families, reduction of child labor is challenging. It is found that 33.4% children were engaged in agriculture and a study shows children engaged in agriculture sector are more likely to health hazards<sup>18</sup>. It is found that injury rates is low in Bangladesh, but it is not determining that work is beneficial for children. We have found that children were suffered from different types of injury and health hazards. These adverse childhood experienced were reported as risk factors for many adverse health outcomes<sup>19</sup>. It is found from a meta-

analysis that working child are more likely to mortality and morbidity than general children<sup>20</sup>. We have found that 28.7% child exposed to hazardous work, 8.5% had subjected to insult, physical or sexual abuse. Most of the child don't like their work and working environment that have adverse physical and emotional effects on children's health. As, child labor is significantly correlated to conductive sexual behavior and with infectious diseases among children, reduction of child labor might bring direct blessings.

### Conclusion

Being a poor and developing country, Bangladesh is unable to ensure safety in terms of socio-economic and health status determinants of the children who are at work. It should be keep in mind that there are much physical differences between adult and children. More working children have greater need for food and rest and they are greater risk of fatigue, injury, accident and illness. Health related awareness program should arrange frequently to increase public awareness. Sustain economic, proper education systems, public awareness, maintain child labor rules and regulation can gift child labor free Bangladesh. So government and other sectors should try to fulfill these requirements for child safety.

**Table-1:** Source of income and employment status of working children<sup>17</sup>.

Categories		Percent (%)
Main Source of Income	Agriculture	33.4
	Industry	4.8
	Service	54.1
	Income recipient	3.5
	Remittance	1.6
	Others	2.6
Status in employment	Employed	.6
	Self-Employed (Agriculture)	12.4
	Self-Employed (Non-Agriculture)	28.4
	Contributing Family Helper	8.3
	Employee	11.2
	Day Labor (agriculture)	28.4
	Day Labor (Non-agriculture)	8.9
	Others	1.8

**Table-2:** Type of injury and percent of hazards sectors<sup>17</sup>.

	Categories	Percent
	Injured	2.3
	Absent due to injury	79.1
	Hampered Work	18.5
Type of injury	Superficial Injury	49.6
	Fracture	4.7
	Dislocation, sprain, strain, amputation	33.3
	Concussion, internal injury	3.1
	Burn, Corrosion, Scaled, Frostbite	4.7
	Acute Poisoning, Infection	1.6
	Other injury	3.1
She/he exposed to	Dust, Fumes, Noise or Vibration	14.6
	Fire, gas, flames	0.7
	Extreme cold or heat	1.4
	Dangerous tools	7.1
	Work underground or at heights	2.2
	Work in water	1.3
	Workplace too dark or confined	0.4
	Chemicals/ explosives	1
Is she/he ever been subjected to	Constantly shouted/ insulted, Beaten Physically, Sexual abused	8.5

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