

Unravelling the Factors and Remedies of Violence against Child Laborers in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Child laborers in Bangladesh face multidimensional violence rooted in poverty, neglect, and institutional weakness. Addressing the issue requires coordinated efforts involving families, communities, schools, and the government, ensuring protection, education, and dignity for vulnerable children. Child labour remains a critical socio-economic and human rights concern in Bangladesh, where poverty and structural inequalities force millions of children into exploitative work environments, exposing them to widespread abuse and violence. The study aims to explore the diverse forms of violence against child laborers in Bangladesh, identify the root causes behind such exploitation, and propose practical recommendations for effective prevention and protection.

Keywords: Children, Child Labourer, Physical Violence, Emotional Abuse, Verbal Harassments

1. Introduction

Children are universally acknowledged as the foundation of a nation's future, the torchbearers of progress, and the architects of tomorrow's society. Ensuring their well-being, protecting their rights, and providing them with opportunities for holistic development are therefore fundamental responsibilities of any state (Hossain, 2023). Childhood is a critical phase in which the foundations of physical, mental, and emotional growth are laid, and this period requires security, nurturing, and an enabling environment for healthy socialization. When this process of socialization is disrupted through poverty, neglect, exploitation, or violence, the very essence of childhood becomes compromised (GPI, 2024). In Bangladesh, the situation of many children remains deeply concerning. Street children, child laborers, abandoned children, and those growing up in orphanages, brothels, or other marginalized spaces are frequently denied the basic rights and care that ensure a safe and dignified life. Their lives are marked by misery, vulnerability, and exclusion from mainstream society (Dautova, 2020).

Recent national surveys shed light on the scale of the problem. The *Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) Survey on Street Children 2022* reported that there are over 1.2 million street children across the country, surviving in dire circumstances with little or no family or institutional support. At the same time, the *National Child Labour Survey 2022* found that out of the total child population of 39.96 million, approximately 3.54 million are engaged in child labour (BBS, 2022). These figures highlight the alarming prevalence of children who are deprived of adequate protection, nutrition, education, and emotional security. They

represent not merely statistics, but millions of childhoods robbed of joy, safety, and potential. The reality of child labour in Bangladesh is even more distressing when examined in terms of the nature of work that children are compelled to undertake. According to Section 40 (3) of the *Bangladesh Labour Act 2006*, there are 38 categories of work formally recognized as hazardous for children (BILA, 2018). Yet, children particularly those from the streets and impoverished families are routinely engaged in such occupations. They work as domestic help, street vendors, transport assistants, and laborers in hardware shops, restaurants, and garment factories. Many are found in highly perilous industries such as ship-breaking yards, glass and brick kilns, and in the production of soap, cigarettes, footwear, furniture, jute, leather, and textiles (Hoque, 2024). Others survive by garbage collection, vending, begging, rickshaw-pulling, or load-carrying. These jobs, while economically exploitative, also expose children to serious health hazards, physical strain, and frequent accidents. More importantly, child laborers and street children are exposed to alarming levels of violence, exploitation, and abuse in their daily lives (Hossain, 2023). Violence against child laborers in Bangladesh manifests in multiple forms: physical, psychological, verbal, sexual, and structural. Many children endure beatings, harassment, humiliation, and verbal abuse from employers, strangers, or even family members. Sexual violence and harassment are often silenced by fear and stigma, leaving children traumatized and vulnerable. Economic exploitation, denial of education, and hazardous working conditions also represent systemic forms of violence that rob children of their rights and futures (Islam, 2018). Disturbingly, recent trends indicate that violence against children has become normalized in Bangladesh, with cases of abuse reported even among children as young as two or three years old. This normalization perpetuates a cycle of impunity where violence against children is neither adequately prevented nor effectively punished. Although Bangladesh has made commendable progress in developing legal and policy frameworks to safeguard children, implementation remains a pressing challenge (Zohir et al., 2024). Laws such as the *Children Act 2013*, the *National Children Policy 2011*, and the *Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act* aim to ensure the safety, rights, and welfare of children. Internationally, Bangladesh is also a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, which under Article 19 obligates states to protect children from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.” However, the persistence of violence against child laborers under scores the gap between legal commitments and actual practice. Weak enforcement mechanisms, limited institutional capacity, entrenched poverty, and prevailing socio-cultural norms often undermine the effectiveness of these protective frameworks (Hoque, 2024).

The causes of violence against child laborers in Bangladesh are multi-dimensional. Poverty and economic vulnerability compel families to send children into work, where they are exposed to exploitative employers and unsafe environments. Social norms that condone corporal punishment or perceive child labour as inevitable further exacerbate the problem. Institutional weaknesses, such as inadequate monitoring, corruption, and lack of accountability in law enforcement, allow violence to persist unchecked (UNICEF, 2025). Moreover, children from marginalized backgrounds such as orphans, abandoned children, or those living on the streets are particularly vulnerable, as they lack both familial protection and institutional safety nets. Addressing violence against child laborers is not merely a matter of legal enforcement; it requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach that tackles the root causes while providing immediate protection and remedies for victims. Preventive measures must include poverty alleviation, social protection schemes, accessible education, and community awareness campaigns. Equally, robust child

protection mechanisms, institutional accountability, and stronger law enforcement are essential to ensure that perpetrators are held responsible and children are safeguarded (World Bank, 2025). This research has been undertaken to unravel the forms, causes, and remedies of violence against child laborers in Bangladesh. It seeks to explore the lived realities of these children, identify the underlying drivers of abuse, and examine the effectiveness of existing legal and institutional mechanisms. Most importantly, the study aims to contribute to the formulation of realistic and actionable recommendations that can prevent violence and foster an environment where children can grow up safely, with dignity and opportunities for development. By shedding light on this pressing issue, the research underscores the urgent need for a collective response from the state, civil society, and communities to protect the most vulnerable members of society ‘the children’ whose well-being is synonymous with the nation’s future.

2. Research Methods

Research Approach and Method

This study employed a *mixed-method approach*, combining both *quantitative* and *qualitative* methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of violence against child laborers in Bangladesh. The quantitative approach was adopted to generate statistical evidence and identify broad patterns of violence, while the qualitative approach enabled deeper insights into the lived experiences of child laborers. Quantitative data was collected through structured surveys, whereas qualitative data was gathered using *case studies* and *focus group discussions* (FGDs). Together, these methods ensured both breadth and depth in capturing the multifaceted realities of child laborers, allowing for triangulation of findings to enhance validity and reliability.

Study Area and Location

The research was conducted in four divisional city corporation areas of Bangladesh, selected through purposive sampling due to their high prevalence of child labour and urban socio-economic diversity. These included *Dhaka City Corporation* (North and South), *Khulna City Corporation*, *Rajshahi City Corporation*, and *Chattogram City Corporation*. These areas represent both metropolitan and divisional urban contexts where child laborers are frequently engaged in hazardous and informal employment sectors. The urban setting also facilitated access to diverse stakeholders such as government officials, NGOs, human rights activists, and media representatives who play crucial roles in addressing child labour issues.

Sample Design and Respondents

Given the estimated population of approximately 3.54 million child laborers in Bangladesh (BBS, 2022), purposive and convenience sampling techniques were applied to select respondents. For the *quantitative survey*, a total of 120 child laborers were interviewed, with 30 respondents chosen from each of the four selected city corporation areas. For the qualitative component, eight (08) in-depth *case studies* were conducted, one from each city corporation area, focusing on child laborers engaged in hazardous or exploitative work. In addition, four (04) FGDs were carried out (one per study area), with participation from multiple stakeholders including child laborers, government representatives, social service officers, NGO officials, human rights activists, journalists, and local government representatives. This sample design ensured that data was collected directly from affected children while also capturing broader institutional and community perspectives.

Table 1: Data Collection Techniques and Sample Size in the Research Areas

Division	Unit	Survey	Case Study	Focus Group Discussion
Dhaka	Dhaka City Corporation	30	02	01
Khulna	Khulna City Corporation	30	02	01
Rajshahi	Rajshahi City Corporation	30	02	01
Chattogram	Chattogram City Corporation	30	02	01
Total		120	08	04

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

For the survey, a *semi-structured interview schedule* was designed in Bengali, containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions to capture socio-demographic information, work conditions, and experiences of violence. The instrument was pre-tested to refine its reliability and validity. For the case studies, a *case study guideline* was developed to document the life histories, experiences of violence, coping mechanisms, and aspirations of child laborers. Each case study included detailed narratives supported by direct quotations to reflect authentic voices. The FGDs were guided by a structured *FGD guideline*, ensuring systematic discussions around the forms, causes, and remedies of violence against child laborers. FGDs included 8–10 participants per group, representing both child laborers and relevant stakeholders. Discussions were recorded through audio and video devices, with transcripts later prepared for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. For the quantitative data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed. This facilitated statistical classification, tabulation, frequency distribution, percentage calculation, and cross-tabulation to identify patterns and relationships between variables. Measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) were also calculated to highlight key trends. For the qualitative data, Nvivo software was used to conduct narrative and the matic analyses. Case study transcripts and FGD data were coded to identify recurring themes, categories, and patterns related to violence, its causes, and potential remedies. Finally, findings from both approaches were compared and integrated using the data triangulation method, which enhanced the validity of results by cross-verifying information from multiple data sources.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the study and the vulnerability of child laborers, strict ethical standards were maintained throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and in cases where children were under legal age, consent was sought from their guardians or responsible adults when available. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in reporting, and all identifying information was removed from transcripts. Discussions and interviews were conducted in safe and child-friendly environments to minimize discomfort and psychological stress. Researchers were trained to approach children with empathy and sensitivity, ensuring that no harm—physical, emotional, or social—was caused by their involvement in the study. Finally, ethical approval was obtained from the concerned institutional review body prior to commencing fieldwork.

3. Results

Table 2: Socio-Economic, Demographic, and Family Conditions of Child Laborer

Socio-Economic, Demographic, and Family Conditions	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Age Group (Years)		
02-05	6	5.00
06-09	14	11.67
10-13	53	44.17
14-18	47	39.16
Education Level		
Illiterate	87	72.50
Primary	21	17.50
Secondary	9	7.50
Higher Secondary	3	2.50
Gender		
Boys	146	60.80
Girls	94	39.20
Type of Income-Generating Activity		
Begging	12	10.00
Selling food as hawkers	18	15.00
Selling goods/ items as hawkers	12	10.00
Selling flowers as hawkers	9	7.50
Collecting garbage	3	2.50
Transporting goods	6	5.00
Furniture making	8	6.67
Collecting and sellings crap materials	7	5.83
Pullingvan	8	6.67
Rickshaw driving	8	6.67
Domestic work	8	6.67
Small Business	5	4.16
Teast all operator	9	7.50
Selling intoxicating substances	3	2.50
Prostitution	4	3.33
Monthly Family Income (BDT)		
1,000 to 5,000	12	10.00
5,001 to 10,000	56	46.67
10,001 to 15,000	46	38.33
15,001 to 20,000	4	3.33
Above 20,000	2	1.67
Monthly Family Income (BDT)		
1,000 to 5,000	12	10.00
5,001 to 10,000	56	46.67
10,001 to 15,000	46	38.33
15,001 to 20,000	4	3.33
Above 20,000	2	1.67
Monthly Family Expenditure (BDT)		
1,000 to 5,000	10	8.33

5,001 to 10,000	50	41.67
10,001 to 15,000	40	33.33
15,001 to 20,000	12	10.00
Above 20,000	8	6.67

Table 02 presents the socio-economic, demographic, and family conditions of 120 child laborers. The majority belong to the 10–13 years (44.17%) and 14–18 years (39.16%) age groups, indicating that most child laborers are in their early to mid-adolescence. Educational attainment is alarmingly low, with 72.5% being illiterate, and only a very small proportion reaching secondary (7.5%) or higher secondary (2.5%) levels. Gender distribution shows a higher share of boys (60.8%) compared to girls (39.2%). Child laborers are engaged in a variety of informal and hazardous income-generating activities. The most common forms include selling food (15%), begging (10%), selling goods/items (10%), and working in small trades such as tea stalls (7.5%) and domestic work (6.67%). A small proportion are involved in high-risk activities such as prostitution (3.33%) and selling intoxicating substances (2.5%). Regarding family economy, most families have very limited income, with 46.67% earning between BDT 5,001–10,000 per month, followed by 38.33% in the BDT 10,001–15,000 range. Expenditure patterns mirror income levels, with 41.67% spending between BDT 5,001–10,000 and 33.33% between BDT 10,001–15,000. These figures highlight the severe poverty that compels children into labour, with family earnings and expenditures tightly concentrated in lower ranges.

Inqualitative findings,

Case 02 noticed that *“I am only 12 years old, but I have been working at least all for the last two years. I wanted to go to school, but my father said we cannot afford it. Our family earns about 8,000 taka a month, and after paying for food and rent, there is nothing left. That’s why I sell tea instead of studying. Sometimes customers scold me if I make mistakes, but I cannot stop working because my family depends on this money.”*

FGD Participant said that *“Most of us children here are boys, and we have to work on the streets or in shops. I sell food as a hawker, and many of my friends beg or collect garbage. We know it is dangerous, but what else can we do? Our parents cannot earn enough-most families live on 10,000 taka or less. If we do not work, our families cannot eat.”*

Table 3: Forms of Violence Against Child Laborer in Bangladesh

Forms of Violence Against Child Laborer	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Types of Violence		
Physical abuse	108	90.00
Psychological or emotional abuse	104	86.67
Verbal abuse	106	88.33
Sexual abuse/assault	22	18.33
Disrespectful or neglectful behavior	86	71.67
Encouraged to engage in theft, robbery, or pick pocketing	20	16.67
Forced addiction to drugs	18	15.00
Forced rape of girl children	12	10.00

Incited to attempt suicide	14	11.67
Forced involvement in criminal activities or murder	16	13.33
Forced participation in political rallies	20	16.67
Used for destruction of government property	14	11.67
Forced into child labor	82	68.33
Types of Physical Violence* (N=108)		
Beaten severely with sticks, rods, or whips	88	81.48
Burned with cigarettes, matchsticks, or hot water	76	70.37
Attacked with sharp objects or knives	56	51.85
Strangled or suffocated	84	77.78
Locked in a cupboard or dark room	8	7.41
Violently shaken or shaken as an infant	12	11.11
Punched or slapped	72	66.67
Kicked or pushed	72	66.67
Pulled by ears or hair	82	75.93
Types of Psychological or Emotional Abuse* (N=104)		
Use of insulting or humiliating language	78	75.00
Shaming or making feel a shamed	68	65.38
Excessive criticism or mockery in public	76	73.08
False accusations or slandering	40	38.46
Social isolation or cutting off communication	22	21.15
Scolding or reprimanding harshly	38	36.54
Disclosure of private or confidential matters	24	23.08
Restriction on movement	34	32.69
Deprivation from basic or deserved rights	65	62.50
Unjust confiscation of personal belongings	36	34.62
Threatening or intimidating behavior	67	64.42
Discriminatory treatment	65	62.50
Ridiculing or mocking	72	69.23
Forms of Verbal Abuse or Violence* (N=106)		
Shouting loudly at the child	84	79.25
Using offensive or abusive language	80	75.47
Labeling the child as foolish, ugly, or using derogatory names	78	73.58
Threatening or intimidating the child	85	80.19
Constantly blaming the child for everything	46	43.40
Telling the child that none loves them	36	33.96
Forms of Sexual Abuse or Exploitation* (N=22)		
Being asked or forced to engage in sexual acts	16	72.73
Exposure to an adult's genitals	20	90.91
Being shown sexually explicit images	18	81.82
Being told sexually explicit stories	14	63.64
Experiencing unwanted sexual touching	9	40.91
Being raped or having their genital touched inappropriately	8	36.36

*Multiple responses were counted.

Table 03 illustrates the different forms of violence faced by child laborers in Bangladesh. The majority experience physical abuse (90%), verbal abuse (88.33%), and psychological

or emotional abuse (86.67%), showing that most children endure multiple types of violence simultaneously. Other significant forms include disrespectful or neglectful behaviour (71.67%) and being forced into child labour (68.33%). A smaller but alarming proportion are subjected to sexual abuse (18.33%), being encouraged to commit crimes (16.67%), or even forced into drug addiction (15%). Within physical violence, the most common acts include severe beatings (81.48%), strangulation (77.78%), and pulling by ears or hair (75.93%), along with lapping, kicking, and burning. Psychological abuse often involves insults (75%), public mockery (73.08%), ridiculing (69.23%), and threatening behaviour (64.42%), with frequent deprivation of rights and discriminatory treatment. Verbal abuse manifests mainly through threats (80.19%), shouting (79.25%), and derogatory labelling (73.58%). Sexual abuse, though affecting fewer children, includes serious violations such as exposure to adult genitals (90.91%), being shown pornography (81.82%), forced sexual acts (72.73%), and rape (36.36%).

FGD Participant (Human Rights Activist) described that “*These children live in a cycle of exploitation. The data shows that more than 9 out of 10 child laborers are beaten or verbally humiliated, which destroys their sense of dignity. What is more worrying is the silent crimes nearly 20% are sexually abused, and some are even pushed into drugs or petty crimes. We see in our legal work that perpetrators are rarely punished, and the children’s voices are silenced by fear. Unless strong community monitoring and strict law enforcement are ensured, these forms of violence will continue to trap children in trauma for life.*”

Table 4: Underlying Causes of Violence Against Child Laborer in Bangladesh

Causes of Violence Against Children	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Family-Related Causes of Abuse/ Violence*		
Economic instability as a cause of violence toward the child	78	65.00
Alcoholism and drug addiction increase violent behavior toward child	65	54.17
Family violence causes mental and physical harm to the child	58	48.33
Lack of education can lead to negligence toward the child	82	68.33
Mental stress increases violence against the child	78	65.00
Lack of mutual understanding between parents	80	66.67
Unemployment of parents	45	37.50
Not attending school	70	58.33
Disobedience of the child	64	53.33
Always busy with useless activities	38	31.67
Social Causes of Abuse/ Violence*		
Poverty and social instability	86	71.67
Social discrimination and inequality	78	65.00
Lack of parental responsibility	84	70.00
Lack of awareness about children’s rights	76	63.33
Prevalence and tradition of child labor	76	63.33
Culture of family or social violence	54	45.00
Lack of importance given to children in society	65	54.17
Normalization of criminal behavior and violence	47	39.17
Guardians’ mental instability or immaturity	52	43.33
Bad company/peer influence	78	65.00

Economic Causes of Abuse/ Violence*		
Poverty and financial crisis	78	65.00
Financial pressure due to child labor	58	48.33
Guardians' low income leading to failure in meeting children's basic needs	64	53.33
Unemployment and lack of job opportunities	82	68.33
Increased family mental stress due to debtburden and financial difficulties	84	70.00
Use of children ascheaplabor	80	66.67
Poorfamiliesunabletoinvestin education	78	65.00
Financialworriescausingviolenceorneglecttowardchildren	68	56.67
Unemployment	74	61.67
Dependenceonothers	75	62.50
Lack of income earners in the family	65	54.17
Political Causes of Abuse/ Violence*		
Weak government law enforcement and child protection systems	88	73.33
Lack of effective policies against child labor and trafficking	82	68.33
Corruption and improper implementation of laws	78	65.00
Political instability and lackof government commitment	64	53.33
Insufficient attention and services from local administration	82	68.33
Wrong political perception treating child labor associally acceptable	56	46.67
Negligence by political parties regarding child rights	64	53.33
Concealmentofchildabuse/violencecasesunderpolitical influence	48	40.00
Forced orprevented participation in political rallies	35	29.16
Forced or prevented posting of political materials	36	30.00
Forced or prevented participation in public meetings	42	35.00

*Multipleresponseswere counted.

Table 04 reveals that violence against child laborers in Bangladesh stems from a complex mix of family, social, economic, and political factors. Within families, lack of education (68.33%), poor mutual understanding among parents (66.67%), and economic instability or mental stress (65%) often trigger neglect and abuse. Socially, widespread poverty and instability (71.67%), lack of parental responsibility (70%), discrimination, and peer influence (65%) normalize children's victimization. Economically, unemployment and job scarcity (68.33%), debt-related family stress (70%), and the use of children as cheap labour (66.67%) reinforce cycles of exploitation. Politically, weak law enforcement (73.33%), insufficient policies against child labour and trafficking (68.33%), corruption (65%), and negligence by local administration (68.33%) expose children to systemic abuse. Overall, the table demonstrates that child laborers are subjected to violence not only because of household crises and social neglect but also due to entrenched poverty and ineffective governance, making their vulnerability deeply structural.

Case 05 noticed that *"My father lost his job last year, and my mother cannot work because of illness. There is constant tension at home, and my parents often argue. Sometimes, when I cannot bring enough money, they scold or beat me. I want to go to school, but we need every coin I earn. Life feels unfair, and I don't think adults understand what we go through."*

FGD Participant (Lawyer) demonstrated that “*Child laborers face violence not only at home but from society and the system. Poverty and social neglect affect nearly three-quarters of children, while weak law enforcement and lack of effective policies leave them unprotected. Corruption and negligence by local authorities are rampant. Unless we address these structural issues, these children will continue to be exploited.*”

Table 5: Targeted Recommendations for Preventing Violence Against Child Laborer in Bangladesh

Recommendations for Preventing Violence Against Child Laborer	Child Laborers (Number)	Child Laborers (%)
Ways to Prevent Violence*		
Providing opportunities for normal developmet of the child	78	65.00
Enrolling the child in school	86	71.67
Treating the child kindly	87	72.50
Fulfilling the child’s basic needs	90	75.00
Caring for or phansat government service centers	65	54.16
Role of Parents/ Guardians/ Family in Preventing Violence*		
Ensuring fulfilment of the child’s basic needs	88	73.33
Sending the child to school despite financial difficulties	87	72.50
Understanding and spreading awareness about the harmful effects of child labor, abuse, and trafficking	62	51.67
Avoiding family violence	82	68.33
Creating a loving and safe environment for the child’s development	86	71.67
Ensuring the child’s sense of security and mental stability	68	56.67
Teaching self-defense, values, and ethics	71	59.16
Creating employment opportunities for poor families to prevent sending children to work	75	62.50
Taking prompt legalaction incase of violence	65	54.16
Seeking help from local administration and child protection agencies	58	48.33
Raising awareness among neighbors and community about children’s rights	54	45.00
Taking social measures to prevent discriminatory behavior and abuse	69	57.50
Role of Teachers/ Educational Institutions in Preventing Violence*		
Creating awareness about the harmful effects of violence on children	72	60.00
Identifying abused childrenand providing counselling and support	68	56.67
Initiating efforts to reintegrate children who dropped out of school	65	54.16
Treating children kindly and avoiding any form of abuse	71	59.16
Providing free education and scholarships for street children and child laborers	68	56.67
Establishing complaint boxes and monitoring systems in schools to prevent violence	72	60.00
Coordinating with local administration to combat child labor and abuse	68	56.67

Organizing workshops and campaigns to raise awareness	70	58.33
Providing rehabilitation and legal assistance for victims of violence	65	54.16
Government Role in Preventing Violence/ Abuse*		
Enact and enforce strict laws	78	65.00
Implement monitoring systems to stop child labor and abuse	68	56.67
Ensure shelter, education, and healthcare services for street children	76	63.33
Provide financial support and employment opportunities for poor families	84	70.00
Conduct public awareness campaigns through media and social outreach	74	61.67
Enforce compulsory primary education to eliminate child labor	78	65.00
Provide counselling and rehabilitation for abused children	68	56.67
Require law enforcement agencies to take effective steps to prevent child abuse	68	56.67
Coordinate with NGOs and international organizations	53	44.16
Establish helpline and complaint mechanisms to prevent child abuse and trafficking	74	61.67

*Multipleresponseswere counted.

Table 05 highlights child laborers' targeted recommendations for preventing violence, emphasizing family, education, community, and government roles. At the individual level, fulfilling basic needs (75%), kind treatment (72.50%), and school enrolment (71.67%) were seen as crucial. Families are urged to prioritize education (72.50%), avoid domestic violence (68.33%), create a safe environment (71.67%), and secure livelihoods (62.50%) to reduce child labour. Teachers and schools are expected to raise awareness (60%), provide counselling (56.67%), reintegrated ropouts (54.16%), and offer free education or scholarships (56.67%), while also monitoring abuse through complaint systems (60%). Government action is strongly emphasized, with calls for financial support to poor families (70%), strict law enforcement (65%), compulsory primary education (65%), and ensuring shelter, healthcare, and education services (63.33%). Overall, the table suggests a holistic prevention strategy where meeting children's basic needs, strengthening family and school support, and ensuring effective state intervention collectively work to protect child laborers from violence and exploitation.

Case 06 noticed that *"I wish I could go to school like other children. My parents now try to send me to class whenever they can, and they encourage me not to work too long at the tea stall. They also provide food and care for me properly. This makes me feel safer and more confident. If families like mine continue supporting children this way, I believe we can avoid getting hurt or forced into dangerous work."*

FGD Participant (Teacher) noted that *"Prevention of violence requires collective action. Families must secure livelihoods and avoid domestic abuse, schools should provide awareness, counselling, and reintegration programs, and the government must enforce strict laws and support poor families. When we implement these strategies together, children will have safer environments and better opportunities for education and development."*

4. Discussion

This study finds that most child laborers are between 10–13 years (44.17%) and 14–18 years (39.16%), indicating that children enter work at a very early age and continue through adolescence. Educational attainment is alarmingly low, with 72.5% illiterate and only 7.5% reaching secondary level, reflecting a cycle of poverty and exclusion. These findings are consistent with UNICEF (2025), which reported that in Bangladesh, nearly half of working children are below 14 years and the majority either never attended school or dropped out due to poverty (UNICEF, 2025). Similarly, GPI (2024) noted that child labour in South Asia disproportionately affects early adolescents, with most being school dropouts compelled to work in informal sectors (GPI, 2024). The current study reinforces this global trend while highlighting the particularly severe educational deprivation of Bangladeshi child laborers. Gender distribution in this study shows a higher proportion of boys (60.8%) than girls (39.2%), and most children are engaged in informal trades such as food selling (15%), begging (10%), and domestic work (6.67%). A smaller but concerning share are involved in prostitution (3.33%) and drug-related activities (2.5%). This aligns with findings by Hossain (2023), who observed that boys are more visible in street-based work, while girls are often hidden in domestic labour or sexual exploitation (Hossain, 2023). Similarly, a UNICEF (2025) study emphasized that while boys dominate public forms of child labour, girls remain underreported due to the invisibility of household and sexual exploitation (UNICEF, 2025). Thus, while this study reveals a male majority, it also points to the under-recognized vulnerabilities of girls in more concealed and exploitative labour sectors. Family economic conditions in this study show that most households survive on meagre incomes, with 46.67% earning only BDT 5,001–10,000 per month, and expenditures closely aligned with earnings. This demonstrates that child labour is structurally tied to family survival. Comparable evidence was reported by Zohir et al. (2019), who found that poverty-stricken Bangladeshi families rely on children's earnings to meet subsistence needs, creating an intergenerational cycle of deprivation (Zohir et al., 2024). Globally, Uddin (2018) similarly argued that child labour is directly correlated with household income shocks, with poor families often choosing children's work over education (Uddin, 2018). The current study reaffirms that economic necessity, rather than parental neglect alone, drives children into hazardous work. The study further shows that child laborers are subjected to multiple and overlapping forms of violence: 90% face physical abuse, 88.33% verbal abuse, and 86.67% psychological abuse, while 18.33% experience sexual abuse. These figures illustrate that violence is a near-universal feature of child laborers' lives. Findings resonate with Zohir et al. (2019), who documented wide spread physical and verbal abuse of working children in Dhaka slums, often justified as "discipline" (Zohir et al., 2024). The present findings not only confirm but also deepen understanding by detailing specific violent practices such as strangulation, insults, threats, and forced exposure to pornography.

Underlying causes of violence in this study are linked to family disorganization (e.g., lack of parental education 68.33%, poor understanding 66.67%), social neglect (poverty 71.67%, peer influence 65%), economic instability (unemployment 68.33%, debt 70%), and weak governance (poor law enforcement 73.33%). These results echo the framework of UNICEF (2025), which stresses that child exploitation emerges from intersecting structural vulnerabilities—poverty, dysfunctional households, and weak institutions (UNICEF, 2025). Hoque (2024) similarly argue that governance failures and corruption in Bangladesh perpetuate the cycle of child labour by weakening enforcement of child protection laws. Compared globally, the BILA (2018) reports that countries with high corruption and weak legal systems see persistently high rates of child exploitation,

supporting the structural interpretation of this study (BILA, 2018). Finally, this study highlights children's own recommendations to prevent violence, including fulfilling basic needs (75%), ensuring kind treatment (72.5%), promoting education (71.67%), and government intervention through financial support (70%) and strict law enforcement (65%). These perspectives strongly overlap with findings from World Bank (2025), where children in South Asia emphasized education, safety, and state accountability as the most important safeguards. Similarly, research in Latin America shows that cash transfers to poor families, combined with compulsory schooling, significantly reduce child labour and associated violence (Salmon, 2005). Thus, this study underscores those children themselves recognize multidimensional solutions involving families, schools, communities, and the state, confirming global evidence that holistic strategies are most effective.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic conditions, forms of violence, causal factors, and possible preventive measures concerning child laborers in Bangladesh. The findings clearly demonstrate that child labour is largely rooted in poverty, low parental income, and limited access to education, compelling children mostly between the ages of 10 and 18 into hazardous and exploitative work environments. Alarming, a vast majority of child laborers remain illiterate or dropout at a nearly stage of schooling, which not only limits their opportunities for upward mobility but also perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Furthermore, the study reveals that child laborers are not only deprived of basic rights but also exposed to wide spread abuse, including physical, verbal, psychological, and in some cases, sexual violence. The normalization of such maltreatment in both households and workplaces highlights deep-rooted social and cultural acceptance of child exploitation. In addition, the analysis identifies multi-layered causes behind the persistence of violence against child laborers, spanning family neglect, social indifference, economic deprivation, and weak governance. While families struggle under financial stress, social and institutional mechanisms often fail to protect children. Weak enforcement of child rights laws, corruption, and inadequate monitoring systems further perpetuate this vulnerability. However, the study also highlights the aspirations of child laborers themselves, who emphasize the need for education, financial security, and supportive family and community environments to prevent violence and exploitation. Their recommendations point towards a holistic approach involving families, schools, communities, and the state to effectively address the issue. Overall, the study concludes that tackling child labour and associated violence requires a multi-pronged strategy focusing on poverty reduction, universal access to education, awareness generation, strict law enforcement, and the establishment of social safety nets. Only through coordinated family, societal, and governmental efforts can the rights, dignity, and future of child laborers in Bangladesh be safe guarded.

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