

Research Article

Prevalence and Risk Factors Associated with the Psychological Maltreatment and Neglect of Child Laborers in Rural Bangladesh

Md. Abdul Ahad ^{1,2}, Yvonne Karen Parry ², Eileen Willis ^{2,3} and Shahid Ullah ⁴

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

²College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University, Adelaide 5042, SA, Australia

³School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Sciences, Central Queensland University, Brisbane 4710, Queensland, Australia

⁴College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University, Adelaide 5042, SA, Australia

Correspondence should be addressed to Md. Abdul Ahad; ahad0005@flinders.edu.au

Received 17 June 2023; Revised 7 December 2023; Accepted 26 March 2024; Published 8 April 2024

Academic Editor: Qing-Wei Chen

Copyright © 2024 Md. Abdul Ahad et al. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Globally, child labor and maltreatment are considered serious public health concerns. Many child laborers in the informal sector are subjected to psychological abuse and neglect that is often akin to slavery. Our study examined the prevalence of these two forms of maltreatment among child laborers in rural Bangladesh, as well as the associated risk factors. Based on the snowball sampling technique, this study surveyed 100 child laborers employed in agricultural and domestic work in rural areas of the Sunamganj district, Bangladesh. The structured questionnaire utilizes the ICAST-CH instrument. To analyze the data, both simple and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted using two statistical software packages, SPSS and STATA. The study concluded that more than half of the child laborers have experienced psychological maltreatment “sometimes” in the form of being screamed at and insulted over the past year. In the past year, over 40% of respondents indicated they were “sometimes” deprived of food and drink and were not well cared for when they became ill. Multivariate analysis demonstrated that parents of psychologically maltreated child laborers had low educational backgrounds. A higher risk of neglect was observed among child laborers who worked for extended hours for their employers and whose families possessed limited land. In spite of the high prevalence of psychological maltreatment and neglect of child laborers in Bangladesh, the issue appears to be ignored. More comprehensive and rigorous scientific studies are required to bring about policy change.

1. Background

Child labor is widespread. In recent years, the proportion of child laborers aged below 18 years has dramatically increased. The International Labor Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2021) have reported that it accounts for almost 1 in 10 children worldwide. Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, the number of child laborers around the world was 160 million, as reported by the ILO in 2020. Approximately 70% of child laborers work in agriculture, while only 19.7% and 10.3% work in services and industry, respectively. Notably, 122.7 million of the 160 million children are employed in

rural areas [1–3]. The ILO estimates that almost 17 million children in South Asia are engaged in unauthorised labor, with India having the highest number (5.8 million) of child laborers followed by Bangladesh (5.0 million), Pakistan (3.4 million), and Nepal (2.0 million) [4]. In Bangladesh, more than 31% are employed in the agriculture sector while around 273,000 children are involved in domestic labor [5, 6]. However, most of the existing studies emphasize on the economic aspect of child labor and occupational health within the workplace [7]; delap, 2001; [8]. In addition to physical injuries, child laborers in developing and least-developed countries are at considerable risk of mental illnesses [9]. While child labor itself generates a number of

health risks, intentional maltreatment exacerbates this situation [10, 11]. This study focused on the psychological abuse and neglect of children who are in labor.

Child psychological maltreatment (CPsyM) denotes inflicting emotional harm which may include repeated verbal abuse of a child in the form of shouting, threats, confinement, and degrading or humiliating criticism, while child neglect involves depriving the child of necessities or denying their human rights [12, 13]. A number of studies have estimated the prevalence of these types of maltreatment of children across countries and cultures. A recent meta-analysis reported that globally, around 39% of children have experienced CPsyM in 2023 [14]. Another study estimated that globally, 16.3% of children are physically neglected and 18.4% have experienced emotional neglect [15]. In comparison to the global prevalence, studies in the context of South Asia reveal that child maltreatment is highly prevalent in South Asian regions [13, 16]. The rate of CPsyM and child neglect in India was observed to be more than 73% and 66.9%, respectively, in a study conducted by Kumar et al. [13]. Likewise, in Bangladesh, the lifetime prevalence of CPsyM was found to be more than 97%, and child neglect is estimated at 78% [17].

There are numerous studies on child abuse, but the question remains, which group of children is most likely to be maltreated? According to prior studies, the workplace is often cited as one of the most vulnerable environments for children to suffer abuse [18, 19]. In two different studies in Turkey, the rate of CPsyM among child laborers was estimated at more than 50% [20, 21]. Nearly 66–79% of Pakistani child laborers experience CPsyM [22]. Child laborers who work in the informal sectors of Bangladesh, such as agriculture or third-party domestic households, are more highly prone to CPsyM than other forms of maltreatment [19, 23]. While research on the estimation of CPsyM is abundant, similar studies on the neglect of child laborers are largely unexplored, although Pandey et al. [24] found that more than 17% of Indian children with work histories are deprived of basic necessities. Domestic child laborers in Bangladesh are deprived of access to education and health care [6].

Since children who experience abuse in the workplace are typically different from children in general, the causes are also more diverse. Child labor is indisputably an outcome of poverty which is also a result of the parents' occupation or unemployment [25]; Delap, 2001 and; [26]. Apart from household financial instability, parental illiteracy also fuels the risk of children experiencing abuse [17]. Research findings on child labor abuse show that the children's internal vulnerabilities are also responsible for their exposure to psychological maltreatment and neglect. This includes their young age, dropping out of school, a lack of technical skills, living arrangements at work rather than home, extended working hours, and low wages [19, 21, 27, 28]. Bangladesh's informal economy hosts a large number of child laborers, and it is likely that their experiences of psychological abuse and neglect present different risk factors than those experienced by children in the general population [5, 29]. It is also presumed that the systematic exploration of

these factors will assist in policy formulations for eradicating child labor. Therefore, the present study aimed to assess the prevalence and possible risk factors associated with the CPsyM and neglect of child laborers in rural Bangladesh.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Setting. This cross-sectional study was conducted in three Upazilas (subdistrict) of Sunamganj district, Bangladesh, namely, Bishwambarpur, Dharmapasha, and Doarabazar. A census report revealed that 69.65% of the 7- to 14-year-old population in the district had dropped out of secondary school, and 15% of the children work in the labor market. Based on three criteria, including higher illiteracy rates, poverty rates, and agricultural holdings, the three subdistricts were purposefully selected for the study [5, 30].

2.2. Participants. The snowball sampling method was utilized to collect data from 100 child laborers aged 10 to 17 years engaged in agricultural and third-party domestic labor. Following the definition provided by the ILO and UNICEF, child labourers were selected for this study if they were aged between 5 and 11 years who works at least 1 hour for a wage, or 28 hours in domestic work per week, or children aged 12 to 14 years who work at least 14 hours of economic activity, or 28 hours in domestic work per week, or aged 15 to 17 years who work 43 hours of economic or domestic work per week [31]. Our survey included child laborers who were working at the time of the survey in order to obtain the most up-to-date information. Due to the fact that the participants are marginalized children, snowball or chain referrals were used since it may have been difficult to reach them randomly [32]. As per the method proposed by Lwanga & Lemeshow [33] [$n = P \times (1 - P) \times (z/E)^2$], the sample size was determined based on the parameters such as the proportion of child maltreatment (P) (82.41%) in Bangladesh [34], a 95% confidence interval (z), and an absolute precision of 7% (E). This resulted in 114 child laborers. Later, the dropout rate was 20%. This sample size calculation was based on an exact Clopper–Pearson two-sided confidence intervals for one proportion. PASS software was used to calculate the sample size [35]. Children over the age of 10 were selected since they are capable of understanding and responding to the questions [36].

2.3. Data Collection Tools. A structured questionnaire was administered in the field to collect data. In line with the explanatory variables identified and measured in previous studies [19, 21, 37], the present study collected data on a range of sociodemographic, economic, and health characteristics of child laborers. This study focused on age, education, occupational status, parental educational and occupational background of child laborers, and drug abuse in the household and workplaces. It is noteworthy that the structured questionnaire contains a number of items from the validated ICAST-CH tools relating to the psychological maltreatment and neglect of children. The ICAST instrument was developed by the International Society for the

Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) as gold standard measures of child maltreatment. Several studies have confirmed that this tool is reliable and valid in various national and cultural contexts of South Asian countries [13, 17, 38]. According to Chang et al. [39], the internal consistency level of the ICAST-CH items ranges between 0.71 and 0.89.

There has been no specific version of the ICAST questionnaire designed for child laborers. Nevertheless, the maltreatment items included in the ICAST-CH were considered relevant and sufficient for assessing the degree of maltreatment at work and home [40]. As part of the ICAST-CH questionnaire, eight psychological items and six items related to neglect were included in the structured questionnaire [13, 41, 42]. These items were considered applicable to the Bangladeshi context [17]. Children were asked to rate their experiences of psychological abuse and neglect over the past year on four criteria: “many times in the past year,” “sometimes in the past year,” “not in the past year, but this has happened,” and “never.” The rank order of these responses is 3, 2, 1, and 0, respectively. For each participant, the mean score for each item of psychological maltreatment or neglect ranged between 0 and 3. In each case of psychological maltreatment and neglect of child laborers, participants had the option of choosing one of these responses.

The English questionnaire was translated into Bengali and then translated back into English for comparison. The translation was carried out by three bilingually certified transcribers and verified by two academic research experts. We tested the Bengali translation of the questionnaires on three children aged 10 to 17 years and found them to be understandable.

Additionally, child laborers reported data in this study revealed an accepted level of reliability for the item scales of both psychological maltreatment and neglect of the ICAST-CH instrument. This study found that the Cronbach alphas for these item scales related to psychological maltreatment and neglect ranged between 0.60 and 0.81.

2.4. Collection of Data. Child laborers were surveyed face-to-face using the structured questionnaire. The survey was conducted by three field investigators (data collectors) due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 outbreak [43]. Field investigators were trained over the course of three days by the principal researcher, who explained the survey and provided techniques for approaching young child laborers. Training was provided to data collectors on how to establish rapport, obtain consent, maintain confidentiality, avoid conflict, and respond appropriately. Three face-to-face questionnaire surveys were conducted with child laborers as a trial and to determine the suitability of the questionnaire. In order to resolve any issues that occurred during data collection, the principal researcher regularly communicated with data collectors via Skype. Surveys were conducted between April 2021 and June 2021. The data was regularly checked by the data collectors and uploaded to a password-protected Google Drive. In order to analyse the collected

data, the data were transferred into an Excel sheet and then also exported to SPSS after the data collection was completed.

2.5. Data Analysis. The children’s sociodemographic characteristics were expressed as absolute and relative frequencies. We calculated the mean of psychological maltreatment and neglect items for each participant. A normal Q-Q plot and a frequency histogram were used to verify the normality of the data. To determine the risk factors associated with psychological maltreatment and neglect as a whole, we performed both simple and multivariable linear regression analysis. A noteworthy feature of the study was that proximal variables with a significant value of less than or equal to 0.2 in simple linear regression models were selected as candidates for inclusion in the extended analysis and entered into the multivariate analysis simultaneously. It is evident that some insignificant predictor variables from the univariate analyses can have substantial significance if they are examined in a more comprehensive manner (i.e., multivariable analysis) [44]. To provide a more accurate understanding of explanatory factors, these potential variables were included in the multivariable regression analysis. We tested the assumptions of the model by examining the linear relationship between independent and dependent variables, the normality of residuals, the multicollinearity, and the homogeneity of variances. Adjusted R-squared was used to determine the model’s goodness of fit. A two-sided test was performed for all analyses with a significance level of less than 0.05. The statistical analyses were carried out according to the study objectives using IBM SPSS software version 26 and Stata software version 16.1.0.

2.6. Ethical Consideration. For the purpose of conducting this study, formal ethical approval was obtained from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of the University (inserted on acceptance). In addition, permission was sought from a Bangladeshi university to conduct the study.

The data collectors presented the study description and purpose to the child laborers and ensured that they gave their consent to participate in the survey. In the course of the survey session, it was explained to them that they could withdraw from answering any questions. For their participation, the children were assured of confidentiality and compensated with \$2.5AUD (157 BDT). In view of the fact that many of them may not have been literate, the data collectors read out the questions and filled out the form on their behalf.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Child Laborers. Child laborers recruited in this study ranged in age from 10–17 years, with the majority (68%) falling between the ages of 13 and 15 years. More than 60% were not enrolled in schools. Seventy percent of child laborers worked in the agricultural sector, and above 58% were earning less than BDT2000 per

month. The exploitative nature of employment is reflected in the estimation of working hours, with more than 63% of the child laborers working at least 5–8 hours a day followed by above 30% who toiled more than 9 hours a day. Around 35.7% of child laborers were accommodated at their employer's house or workplace at night.

More than 76% of child laborers reported that their mothers had no formal educational qualifications. Nearly half of child laborers stated their father was a farmer, and above 15% said they were unemployed. Over 77% of child laborers indicated that their families did not own land outside of their household. Furthermore, above 40% of child laborers responded that their coworkers were addicted to drugs, and nearly a similar proportion of child laborers revealed that their family members were drug addicted. These demographic data are presented in Table 1.

3.2. Prevalence of Psychological Maltreatment and Neglect of Child Laborers

3.2.1. Prevalence of Psychological Maltreatment of Child Laborers. Table 2 shows that almost all child laborers reported enduring loud and aggressive screaming (96%), with 52.1% of them sometimes experiencing this CPsyM behaviour. Over half were sometimes victimised by being called names, cursed, or had nasty comments said to them sometimes in the past year, while nearly 45% of child laborers experienced emotional bullying (teased or embarrassed) by others sometimes in the past year which made them feel sad or bad. Likewise, above 42% felt ashamed or embarrassed in front of others sometimes in the past year. Additionally, a considerable proportion of child laborers were sometimes (35.4%) locked out of their homes for an extended period in the past year.

3.2.2. Prevalence of Neglect of Child Laborers. As shown in Table 3, in the past year, above 45% of child laborers were sometimes deprived of adequate food and drink, while more than 43% reported not being treated well sometimes when they were ill in the past year. Furthermore, over 40% of child laborers have worn dirty and torn clothes or shoes sometimes in the past year.

3.3. Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Risk Factors Associated with the Psychological Maltreatment and Neglect of Child Laborers. According to Table S1 (Supplementary Table S1), child laborers whose mothers studied up to primary education had a 0.28 scores lower risk of experiencing CPsyM compared to those whose mothers had no formal education. The children in families with additional land outside the household tended to be more psychologically maltreated compared to those in families without additional land. The findings of Table S2 (Supplementary Table S2) indicate that older child laborers have had a reduced risk of being neglected by a score of 0.24 in comparison to those of younger ages. Table S2 also revealed that child labourers who were enrolled in schools were more

likely to be neglected than children working without schooling. Moreover, compared to child laborers in the agricultural sector, domestic child laborers had an increased risk of being neglected by a score of 0.25. These potential variables assisted in developing multiple linear regression models.

3.3.1. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Risk Factors Associated with the CPsyM of Child Laborers. Figure 1 illustrates that both the mothers' level of education and land ownership patterns are significant predictors of CPsyM of child laborers. There is an inverse relationship between the CPsyM and the educational level of mothers.

Child laborers whose mothers who studied up to primary level had a reduced risk of being neglected by a score of 0.29 ($\beta = -0.29$, 95% CI = $-0.52, -0.07$, $p = 0.01$) as compared to those with mothers who never attended school. Family land ownership patterns also posed a risk of CPsyM of child laborers as the study revealed that it increased by 0.24 scores among child laborers when their family, owned additional land outside of their household land ($\beta = 0.24$, 95% CI = $0.02, 0.47$, $p = 0.03$) compared to those who had no additional land outside of their household land.

3.3.2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Risk Factors Associated with the Neglect of Child Laborers. Figure 2 demonstrates that both extended working hours and additional land ownership patterns are significantly associated with the neglect of child laborers. Child laborers who have been working for extended hours (5–8 hours/day) were at an increased risk of being neglected by a score of 0.51 ($\beta = 0.51$, 95% CI = $0.14, 0.88$, $p < 0.01$) compared to those who worked 1–4 hours/day. Furthermore, the risk of neglect among child laborers reduced by a score of 0.27 ($\beta = -0.27$, 95% CI = $-0.53, -0.01$, $p = 0.04$) among those whose families owned additional land outside their household land compared with those whose families had no additional land.

4. Discussion

Globally, child labor is on the rise [3]. Regardless of sectors, these children are more likely to be maltreated than any other group of children [18, 19]. Maltreatment compounds the health risks of child laborers, making it a critical public health concern. This study examined CPsyM and neglect of child laborers in the agricultural and domestic sectors of rural Bangladesh. The study is supported by previous research on the rising prevalence of maltreatment of child laborers [18, 24, 45]. According to our study, over 86% of agricultural and domestic child laborers in the past year have been psychologically maltreated (e.g., screaming, and called names or cursed), while over seventy percent have been neglected in terms of lack of access to food and water.

The findings of the current study show that child laborers in Bangladesh are more likely to be subjected to CPsyM than child laborers in many other countries. For example, Dhakal et al. [45] and Pandey et al. [24] estimated that less than half of child laborers in Nepal and India have been subjected to

TABLE 1: Sociodemographic and economic characteristics reported by child laborers aged 10–17 years.

Characteristics	Categories	(%)
Age	10–12 years	32
	13–15 years	68
Current school enrolment	Yes	38.4
Type of occupation	Agriculture	70
	Domestic	30
Income of per month	≤BDT2000	58.6
	BDT2001–5000	24.3
	BDT5001–8000	17.1
Working hours	1–4 hrs/day	6.6
	5–8 hrs/day	63.2
	≥9 hrs/day	30.3
Living arrangements	Return to home	64.3
	Sleep at employer’s house/workplace	35.7
Mother’s education	Primary	23.1
	No educational qualification	76.9
Father’s occupation	Farmer	48.5
	Driver	20.6
	Businessman	15.5
	Unemployed	15.5
Land ownership	Yes	22.1
Drug abuse among co-workers	Yes	40.2
Drug abuse among family members	Yes	38.3

Note. Sample size (N) = 100, (US\$1 = BDT107 at time of printing).

TABLE 2: Prevalence of emotional maltreatment of child laborers aged 10–17 years.

Maltreatment categories	Many times	Sometimes	Not in the past year but happened	Never
Screamed very loudly and aggressively	34.4	52.1	10.4	3.1
Called names, said mean things, or cursed	34.4	52.1	7.3	6.3
Made you feel ashamed/embarrassed in front of other people	27.6	42.9	8.2	21.4
Said that they wished you were dead/had never been born	9.7	26.9	7.5	55.9
Threatened to leave forever or abandon	7.1	33.7	5.1	54.1
Locked out of the home for a long time	9.4	35.4	8.3	46.9
Threatened to hurt or kill, including invoking evil spirits	13.4	19.6	5.2	61.9
Bullied (teased, embarrassed) so that you feel sad or bad, by another child at home or the workplace	21.4	44.9	4.1	29.6

Note. Sample size (N) = 100, (data presented as % unless stated otherwise).

TABLE 3: Prevalence of neglect reported by child laborers aged 10–17 years.

Maltreatment categories	Many times	Sometimes	Not in the past year but happened	Never
Deprived of enough food and drink	24.7	45.4	4.1	25.8
Had to wear dirty, torn clothes and shoes	17.0	40.0	12.0	31.0
Not taken care of when you were sick	20.2	43.4	10.1	26.3
Felt that you were not important	21.0	39.0	6.0	34.0
Nobody looked after you, supported you or helped you when you most needed it	23.5	39.8	7.1	29.6

Note. Sample size (N) = 100, (data presented as % unless stated otherwise).

CPsyM, respectively. However, Moayad et al. [28] reported a 70% prevalence of CPsyM among child laborers in Iran. In addition, studies that have utilized ICAST instruments demonstrate that children, in general, are most likely to be

subjected to shouting, screaming and being called insulting names as a form of CPsyM [13, 17, 41, 46]. This is echoed in this study for child laborers. Children in the Bengali community are frequently humiliated by the use of offensive

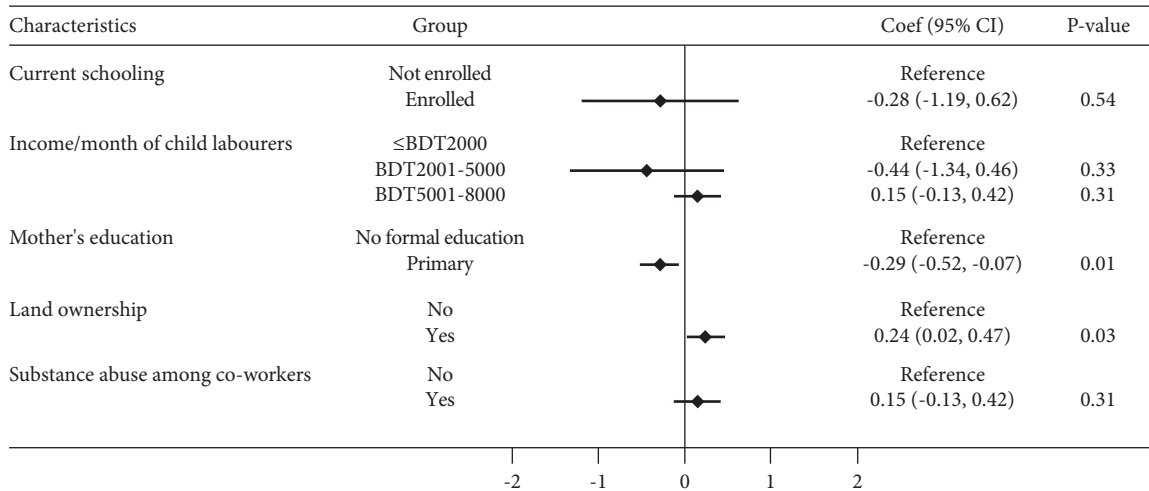


FIGURE 1: Forest plot presenting the risk factors associated with emotional maltreatment reported by child laborers aged 10–17 years. Note: Coef—unstandardised coefficient, CI—confidence Interval, P—Level of significance at $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, and $p < 0.001$.

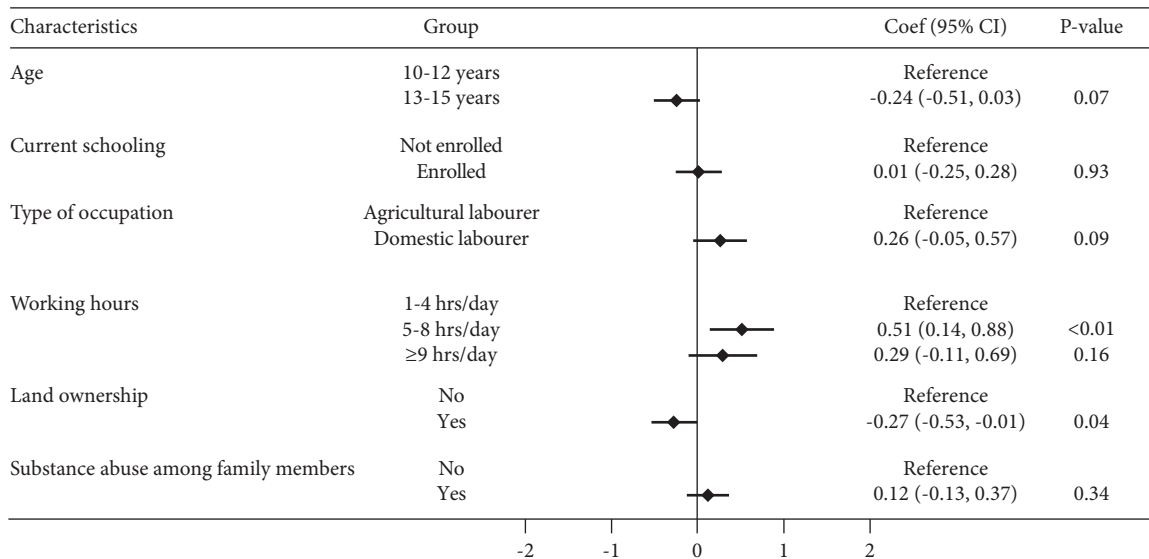


FIGURE 2: Forest plot presenting the risk factors associated with the neglect reported by child laborers aged 10 to 17 years. Note: Coef—unstandardised coefficient, CI—confidence Interval, P value significant at $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, and $p < 0.001$.

language [47]. Haque et al. [17] reported that 66.7% of Bangladeshi children were subjected to shouting, yelling, or screaming during the past year, followed by 32.5% who were insulted and called names, and 20% were cursed.

Compared to other forms of abuses, child neglect has received less attention in the area of child protection [48]. There are no previous studies that have examined neglect among child laborers, despite the fact that it is a frequent form of abuse [49]. The current study estimates that nearly 70% of child laborers have been deprived of food and safe drinking water in the past year. This indicates that child laborers are more neglected than children in general [13, 50]. A global meta-analysis revealed that worldwide, 16.3% of children are victims of physical neglect [48] while a study carried out in Bangladesh estimates that 11% of children, in general, are neglected [17]. Pandey et al. [24] found that

nearly 17.4% of children in labor are neglected in India, which is two-three times lower than those of the current study. While children, in general, are highly affected by unmet medical needs, care, and feelings of lack of worth [13, 17, 41], child workers are mostly vulnerable to deprivation of food and safe drinking water. For child domestic workers in Bangladesh, neglect takes the form of a lack of education, leisure activities, days off, and few facilities within the workplaces [29, 51].

Our study confirms that family factors such as maternal education and land ownership patterns reinforce the possibility of CPsyM among child laborers. These are also echoed by prior studies [16, 26, 52]. Children usually have a reduced risk of experiencing maltreatment when their parents are educated, a finding supported by previous research [16, 52]. Illiterate parents in Bangladesh are forced to

ignore the developmental needs of their children using them as a source of income [53, 54], leading to an increase in maltreatment [16, 55].

In this study, the land ownership patterns of families had both a positive relationship with the CPsyM and an inverse relationship with the neglect of child laborers. The lack of land ownership reflects poor economic resources in households. A decrease in family resources may increase the risk of CPsyM [16, 19]. However, the current study found that child laborers in families with additional land resources were more prone to emotional victimization. Contrary to this, another study argues that children from land-rich households are often motivated to engage in child labour, which may result in abuses [56]. We also found that neglect is reduced among children who live in land-rich households similar to several prior studies [16, 19]. Research has shown that families with greater economic resources have a lower likelihood of maltreatment and neglect of their children [16, 17, 57]. As is evident, many child laborers from poor families work long hours, often beyond eight hours per day [58, 59]. In the informal sectors, of Bangladesh, children may work long hours for very low wages [60]. The current study estimated that these child laborers are significantly neglected from fundamental rights both at home (such as being deprived of food or drinking) and at work (such as a lack of training for apprentices), which is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Öncü et al. [21]. Pinzon-Rondon et al. [61] also found that extended working hours are associated with a higher incidence of workplace abuse and neglect of child laborers.

A number of internal vulnerable traits of child laborers were identified as significant risk factors for neglect from the simple linear regression analysis. The young age of child laborers is a contributing factor. Several previous studies have also demonstrated the risk of neglect among younger child laborers both at home and in the workplace [16, 28, 62]. These children are most likely to work for extended working hours, which further leads to dropping out of school [63]. Our study found that neglect is significantly prevalent among out-of-school child laborers, similar to many prior studies [19, 64]. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2013), 69% of child laborers in Bangladesh do not attend school [5, 65]. The school dropout rate is higher among domestic child laborers in Bangladesh [29]. Among domestic child laborers, neglect is significantly prevalent. Many previous studies show that children in domestic labor are deprived of education, medical care, leisure, or actual wages [29, 66, 67], findings consistent with the current study.

Addressing the issues of child labor maltreatment requires strong policy responses. Primarily, sufficient work needs to be done on the agricultural labor and service front to address the hazardous conditions that children confront in these areas. One major initiative would be to strengthen policies that support school attendance. A motivator would be to tie financial support to school attendance. If poor families were encouraged to send their children to school through financial incentives, this would go some way to addressing the issue. A second approach would be to address

labor laws. Currently, the national labor laws of Bangladesh do not take into account children working in informal settings [68, 69]. As a result, young children continue to work excessive hours in many informal labor markets and are subjected to maltreatment. Relevant reforms of existing labor laws or the development of new labor regulations that set the permissible working hours for children in Bangladesh that were enforced would go some way toward ameliorating child labor maltreatment. Both restrictions on the hours children might work, in tandem with incentives to attend school would go some way to alleviating the psychological maltreatment and neglect among child laborers. Although to be effective these policies need to be policed.

4.1. Limitations of the Study. This study is limited to child laborers employed in agriculture and domestic households in one region of Bangladesh. Only children aged between 10 and 17 years were surveyed. Given that the largest proportion of children in Bangladesh fall under the age group of 6–11 years, but this population was not captured [5]. The study was limited to 100 participants on account of the difficulties encountered in reaching them as a result of various public health measures imposed during the COVID-19 outbreak. The quantitative data were also collected through retrospective self-reports, which may lead to an under-reporting of child labor maltreatment due to recall difficulties.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that CPsyM and neglect are highly prevalent among child laborers. Illiteracy, lack of land ownership, and extended working hours of child laborers are all significant predictors of both CPsyM and neglect. The study suggests specific initiatives that need to be taken to combat maltreatment and neglect among children employed in agricultural and domestic labor.

Data Availability

The cross-sectional data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Acknowledgments

All the authors equally contributed to this article. The first author prepared the first draft of the manuscript. The first, second, and fourth authors designed the methodology and assisted in the analysis in the study. The first and third author contributed to the discussion section of this study. The work was supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship (AGRTP).

Supplementary Materials

Table S1: a simple linear regression analysis of risk factors associated with the psychological maltreatment of child laborers. Table S2: a simple linear regression analysis of risk factors associated with the neglect of child laborers. (*Supplementary Materials*)

References

- [1] M. A. Ahad, Y. K. Parry, and E. Willis, "Spillover trends of child labor during the coronavirus crisis- an unnoticed wake-up call," *Frontiers in Public Health*, vol. 8, no. 488, 2020.
- [2] ILO, *Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and Trends, 2012-2016*, G. International Labor Office, Geneva, Switzerland, 2017.
- [3] ILO and Unicef, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward*, International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, Geneva, Switzerland, 2021.
- [4] S. Khan and S. Lyon, *Measuring Children's Work in South Asia: Perspectives from National Household Surveys*, International Labour Organisation, Geneva, Switzerland, 2015.
- [5] BBS, *Report on Child Labor Survey (CLS), Bangladesh 2013*, BBS, Schiltach, Germany, 2015.
- [6] M. R. Islam, "Abuse among child domestic workers in Bangladesh," in *Global Ideologies Surrounding Children's Rights and Social Justice*, I. Tshabangu, Ed., pp. 1–21, IGI Global, PA, USA, 2018.
- [7] K. Basu and V. Pham, "The economics of child labor," *The American Economic Review*, vol. 88, no. 3, pp. 412–427, 1998.
- [8] I. A. Nuwayhid, J. Usta, M. Makarem, A. Khudr, and A. El-Zein, "Health of children working in small urban industrial shops," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, vol. 62, no. 2, pp. 86–94, 2005.
- [9] S. Sturrock and M. Hodes, "Child labour in low- and middle-income countries and its consequences for mental health: a systematic literature review of epidemiologic studies," *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 25, no. 12, pp. 1273–1286, 2016.
- [10] S. Ahmed and R. Ray, "Health consequences of child labour in Bangladesh," *Demographic Research*, vol. 30, pp. 111–150, 2014.
- [11] K. Goel, S. Ahmad, R. Bansal, P. Parashar, B. Pant, and P. Goel, "The social and occupational health problems of child labour: a challenge the world is facing," *Indian Journal of Community Health*, vol. 24, pp. 53–57, 2012.
- [12] R. Gilbert, C. S. Widom, K. Browne, D. Fergusson, E. Webb, and S. Janson, "Burden and consequences of child maltreatment in high-income countries," *The Lancet*, vol. 373, no. 9657, pp. 68–81, 2009.
- [13] M. T. Kumar, N. Kar, and S. Kumar, "Prevalence of child abuse in Kerala, India: an ICAST-CH based survey," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 89, pp. 87–98, 2019.
- [14] H. Lee and E. Kim, "Global prevalence of physical and psychological child abuse during COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 135, 2023.
- [15] M. Stoltenborgh, M. J. Bakermans-Kranenburg, L. R. A. Alink, and M. H. van Ijzendoorn, "The prevalence of child maltreatment across the globe: review of a series of meta-analyses," *Child Abuse Review*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 37–50, 2015.
- [16] M. P. A. Lakhdir, S. Farooq, U. R. Khan et al., "Factors associated with child maltreatment among children aged 11 to 17 Years in community settings of Karachi, Pakistan, using Belsky ecological framework," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 36, no. 1-2, pp. 297–313, 2021.
- [17] M. A. Haque, S. Moniruzzaman, S. Janson, A. F. Rahman, S. R. Mashreky, and U.-B. Eriksson, "Children's exposure to psychological abuse and neglect: a population-based study in rural Bangladesh," *Acta Paediatrica*, vol. 110, no. 1, pp. 257–264, 2021.
- [18] R. Das and A. Chen, "Towards a theoretical framework for understanding capitalist violence against child labor," *World Review of Political Economy*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 191–219, 2019.
- [19] A. Hadi, "Child abuse among working children in rural Bangladesh," *Public Health*, vol. 114, no. 5, pp. 380–384, 2000.
- [20] S. S. Celik and M. S. Baybuga, "Verbal, physical and sexual abuse among children working on the street," *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 14–22, 2009.
- [21] E. Öncü, A. Ö. Kurt, F. I. Esenay, and F. F. Özer, "Abuse of working children and influencing factors, Turkey," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 37, no. 5, pp. 283–291, 2013.
- [22] A. A. Hyder and F. A. Malik, "Violence against children: a challenge for public health in Pakistan," *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 168–178, 2007.
- [23] M. Islam, "Situation of domestic child workers in Dhaka city," *Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum*, vol. 13, 2010.
- [24] R. Pandey, S. Gupta, A. Upadhyay et al., "Childhood maltreatment and its mental health consequences among Indian adolescents with a history of child work," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 54, no. 5, pp. 496–508, 2020.
- [25] D. K. Brown, A. V. Deardorff, and R. M. Stern, *The Determinants of Child Labor: Theory and Evidence*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2002.
- [26] K. Khatab, M. A. Raheem, B. Sartorius, and M. Ismail, "Prevalence and risk factors for child labour and violence against children in Egypt using Bayesian geospatial modelling with multiple imputation," *PLoS One*, vol. 14, no. 5, p. e0212715, 2019.
- [27] M. U. L. Banday, S. Chakraborty, P. D'Cruz, and E. Noronha, "Abuse faced by child labourers: novel territory in workplace bullying," in *Indian Perspectives on Workplace Bullying: A Decade of Insights*, P. D'Cruz, E. Noronha, A. Mendonca, and N. Mishra, Eds., Springer, pp. 173–204, Singapore, 2018.
- [28] S. Jalili Moayad, S. H. Mohaqeqi Kamal, H. Sajjadi, M. Vameghi, G. Ghaedamini Harouni, and S. Makki Alamdari, "Child labor in Tehran, Iran: abuses experienced in work environments," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 117, 2021.
- [29] S. Ara, T. Iqbal, and K. Alam, "From open fields to secluded households: child domestic workers in Bangladesh," 2011, <https://laborrights.org/sites/default/files/publications-and-resources/AMRfreportFromOpenFieldstoSecludedHouseholds.pdf>.
- [30] BBS, "District Statistics 2011 Sunamganj," 2013, <https://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/DistrictStatistics/Sunamganj.pdf>.
- [31] N. O. Enebe, J. T. Enebe, C. C. Agunwa et al., "Prevalence and predictors of child labour among junior public secondary school students in Enugu, Nigeria: a cross-sectional study," *BMC Public Health*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 1339–1412, 2021.
- [32] K. E. Tenzek, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, SAGE Publications Inc, CA, USA, 2017.

- [33] S. K. Lwanga and S. Lemeshow, *Sample Size Determination in Health Studies: A Practical Manual*, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 1991.
- [34] Bbs and Unicef, "Child well-being survey in urban areas of Bangladesh, key results," 2016, https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/CWS_in_urban_areas_Key_Findings_Report_Final_04122016.pdfCited13January2017.
- [35] Ncss and Llc, *Power Analysis and Sample Size Software (PASS)*, Kaysville, Utah, UT, USA, 2022.
- [36] I. M. Hein, M. C. De Vries, P. W. Troost, G. Meynen, J. B. Van Goudoever, and R. J. L. Lindauer, "Informed consent instead of assent is appropriate in children from the age of twelve: policy implications of new findings on children's competence to consent to clinical research," *BMC Medical Ethics*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 76, 2015.
- [37] M. A. Haque, *Child Maltreatment In Bangladesh: Perceptions, Prevalence And Determinants* Karlstad University, Karlstad, Sweden, 2019.
- [38] J.-Y. Feng, C.-C. Chen, Y.-T. Chang, H.-Y. Chang, and C.-L. Shih, "A psychometric analysis of a short form of the Chinese version of the ISPCAN child abuse screening tools – children's home version (SC-ICAST-CH) using multidimensional item response theory," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 109, 2020.
- [39] H.-Y. Chang, C.-L. Lin, Y.-T. Chang, M.-C. Tsai, and J.-Y. Feng, "Psychometric testing of the Chinese version of ISPCAN child abuse screening tools children's home version (ICAST-CH-C)," *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 35, no. 12, pp. 2135–2139, 2013.
- [40] P. O'Leary, C. M. Cameron, A. Lakhani et al., "Violence against children in Afghanistan: concerns and opportunities for positive change," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 76, pp. 95–105, 2018.
- [41] M. A. Al-Eissa, F. S. AlBuhairan, M. Qayad, H. Saleheen, D. Runyan, and M. Almuneef, "Determining child maltreatment incidence in Saudi Arabia using the ICAST-CH: a pilot study," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 42, pp. 174–182, 2015.
- [42] M. F. Sahaimi, M. N. Mat Pa, and F. Taib, "A Malay version of the international society for the prevention of child abuse and neglect screening tool for children: a study of its validity and reliability," *Malaysian Journal of Medical Sciences*, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 97–107, 2020.
- [43] T. Bratan, H. Aichinger, N. Brkic et al., "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ongoing health research: an ad hoc survey among investigators in Germany," *BMJ Open*, vol. 11, no. 12, 2021.
- [44] S. K. Lo, I. T. Li, T. S. Tsou, and L. See, "Non-significant in univariate but significant in multivariate analysis: a discussion with examples," *Changcheng yi xue za zhi*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 95–101, 1995.
- [45] S. Dhakal, S. Niraula, N. P. Sharma et al., "History of abuse and neglect and their associations with mental health in rescued child labourers in Nepal," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 53, no. 12, pp. 1199–1207, 2019.
- [46] C. May-Chahal and P. Cawson, "Measuring child maltreatment in the United Kingdom: a study of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 29, no. 9, pp. 969–984, 2005.
- [47] S. Deb and S. Modak, "Prevalence of violence against children in families in Tripura and its relationship with socio-economic factors," *Journal of Injury and Violence Research*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 5–18, 2010.
- [48] M. Stoltenborgh, M. J. Bakermans-Kranenburg, and M. H. van Ijzendoorn, "The neglect of child neglect: a meta-analytic review of the prevalence of neglect," *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 345–355, 2013.
- [49] M. Caesar-Leo, "Child labour: the most visible type of child abuse and neglect in India," *Child Abuse Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 75–86, 1999.
- [50] S. S. Abbas and T. Jabeen, "Prevalence of child abuse among the university students: a retrospective cross-sectional study in University of the Punjab, Pakistan," *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 125–134, 2020.
- [51] E. Islam, K. Mahmud, and N. Rahman, "Situation of child domestic workers in Bangladesh," *Global Journal of Management and Business Research Finance India*, vol. 13, no. 7, pp. 25–34, 2013.
- [52] O. G. White, N. Hindley, and D. P. Jones, "Risk factors for child maltreatment recurrence: an updated systematic review," *Medicine, Science & the Law*, vol. 55, no. 4, pp. 259–277, 2015.
- [53] S. Amin, M. S. Quayes, and J. M. Rives, "Poverty and other determinants of child labor in Bangladesh," *Southern Economic Journal*, vol. 70, no. 4, pp. 876–892, 2004.
- [54] E. delap, "Economic and cultural forces in the child labour debate: evidence from urban Bangladesh," *Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 1–22, 2001.
- [55] P. Sidebotham, "An ecological approach to child abuse: a creative use of scientific models in research and practice," *Child Abuse Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 97–112, 2001.
- [56] S. Bhalotra and C. Heady, "Child farm labor: the wealth paradox," *The World Bank Economic Review*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 197–227, 2003.
- [57] S. M. Stith, T. Liu, L. C. Davies et al., "Risk factors in child maltreatment: a meta-analytic review of the literature," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 13–29, 2009.
- [58] B. Audu, A. Geidam, and H. Jarma, "Child labor and sexual assault among girls in Maiduguri, Nigeria," *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics*, vol. 104, no. 1, pp. 64–67, 2009.
- [59] C. Hirschman and I. Voloshin, "The structure of teenage employment: social background and the jobs held by high school seniors," *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 189–203, 2007.
- [60] C. Salmon, "Child labor in Bangladesh: are children the last economic resource of the household?" *Journal of Developing Societies*, vol. 21, no. 1-2, pp. 33–54, 2005.
- [61] A. M. Pinzon-Rondon, J. C. Botero, L. Benson, L. Briceno-Ayala, and M. Kanamori, "Workplace abuse and economic exploitation of children working in the streets of Latin American cities," *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 150–157, 2010.
- [62] N. Hindley, P. G. Ramchandani, and D. P. Jones, "Risk factors for recurrence of maltreatment: a systematic review," *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, vol. 91, no. 9, pp. 744–752, 2006.
- [63] A. Admassie, "Child labour and schooling in the context of a subsistence rural economy: can they be compatible?" *International Journal of Educational Development*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 167–185, 2003.
- [64] M. A. Ahad, Y. K. Parry, and E. Willis, "The prevalence and impact of maltreatment of child laborers in the context of four South Asian countries: a scoping review," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 117, 2021.

- [65] M. Quattri and K. Watkins, "Child labour and education – a survey of slum settlements in Dhaka (Bangladesh)," *World Development Perspectives*, vol. 13, pp. 50–66, 2019.
- [66] J. Gamlin, A. Z. Camacho, M. Ong, and T. Hesketh, "Is domestic work a worst form of child labour? The findings of a six-country study of the psychosocial effects of child domestic work," *Children's Geographies*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 212–225, 2015.
- [67] A. M. Thi, C. Zimmerman, N. S. Pocock, C. W. Chan, and M. Ranganathan, "Child domestic work, violence, and health outcomes: a rapid systematic review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 19, no. 1, p. 427, 2021.
- [68] S. M. Shahidullah, "Criminalization of child abuse and violence against children in South Asia: law and legal advances in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh," in *Crime, Criminal Justice, and the Evolving Science of Criminology in South Asia: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh*, S. M. Shahidullah, Ed., Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 109–144, London, UK, 2017.
- [69] R. Siddiqua, "Laws relating to child labour in Bangladesh and their shortcomings," *Bangladesh Journal of Law*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2003.