

A Study on Girl Children Working in the Household at Chittagong, Bangladesh

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Abstract: *The study responds to the requirement of conducting the situation of girl children domestic help in Chittagong region. It humbly attempts to assess the actual scenery of child housemaid in Bangladesh, their socio-economical backgrounds, education, and recreational facilities. It will also try to provide a brief suggestion regarding eradication of this profession. The research considers the girl children between 6-18 years for giving data for the study. The data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS-20). For analysis, simple percentage, average and linear regression models have been used throughout the study. Findings of this study reveal that the education level of girl children domestic helper is very poor and the major portion of them (55.7 per cent) has no formal education. It also shows that girl child domestic helper spend on an average 9.16 hours a day. The findings from the multiple regression analysis indicate that age, education, family member, food and nutrition and general happiness were found to have significant effect on the problems faced by their household work.*

Keywords: *Girl Children Domestic Help, Their Education, Chittagong, Bangladesh*

I. Introduction

A girl child domestic help is a person who works within the employer's household. Domestic helper perform a variety of household chores for an individual or a family, from providing care for children and elderly dependents to housekeeping, including cleaning and household maintenance. Other responsibilities may include cooking, laundry and ironing, shopping for food and undertaking other household errands (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

There are a larger number of children in Bangladesh who work as domestic workers. A survey research (jointly conducted by ILO and UNICEF in 2007) shows that approximately 420,000 children are engaged in domestic work in Bangladesh, of which 83 percent are girls. Average working hours of the child domestic workers is 14 hours and average wage is BDT 509 (less than 7 US \$) per month. It is reported that children engaged in domestic work are often exposed to abuse, exploitations and violence, which in most cases remain unheard and unnoticed. In Bangladesh, still child domestic workers are not protected by any national law, including the Bangladesh Labour law (amended) 2013. Also the child domestic work is not included in the list of hazardous work (recently formulated by the Bangladesh Government), though it has been a demand of human rights organizations for a long time. International Labour Organization (ILO) also support that child domestic work is a risky form of work.

UNICEF defines 'Child Domestic Worker' as children under the age of 18 who works in other people's households, doing domestic chores, caring for children and running errands, among other tasks. According to the Children Act 2013 of Bangladesh, all individuals under the age of 18 will be considered as children. The document will follow the UNICEF definition of child domestic workers which complies with Bangladesh's national standard and the Child Domestic Workers Convention 2011 (C 189). Thus, in our case study below 18 years of age in domestic work will be considered as a child domestic worker. This study will help to evaluate the scenario of girl children domestic help in Bangladesh.

II. Literature Review

Save the Children (2010) shows that 92% children are engaged in work as domestic workers due to poverty as poor parents are unable to bear their family expenditure because of big family size, no land for cultivation and sickness of main earning members. It is indicated that parents compelled 50% of the children to work as domestic in the bigger cities whereas the other half were engaged through middlemen. It shows that 36% of child domestic workers work in average 9-12 hours a day. 30% work 13-15 hours and as many as 16% works 16-18 hours. 18% works 1-8 hours in a day and less than 1% works 19 hours and above. These figures prove the precariousness of their jobs. Long working hours is one of the major indicators for worst form of child

labour as stated by ILO convention. Due to long working hours, they are deprived of physical and mental development (Save the Children, 2010). Recent ILO estimates are based on national surveys and/or censuses of 117 countries, place the number of domestic workers at around 53 million. But the ILO itself states that "experts say that due to the fact that this kind of work is often hidden and unregistered, the total number of domestic workers could be as high as 100 million". The ILO also states that 83% of domestic workers are women and many are migrant workers.

Khaleda Salauddin undertook a study named "Aspect of Child Labour in Bangladesh". She explored the different aspects of child labour in urban and rural economy. Her study work is mainly based on the pattern of child labour of both boys and girls in both the formal and informal sectors. She showed about 19% of the girls and 76% of the boys had identified their families' impoverished conditions lead them to take up the job of domestics. Majority of the child household workers fell within the age group of 11-13 years both for girls (38%) and boys (396%).

Helen Rahman in her study-"Situation of child domestic servants" conducted on 224 child domestics from five residential areas of Dhaka city, identified the following crucial reasons for a child to become child domestic, when a child does not have parents or a relative to take care of him/her with the hope that their employers would help them to attain a better future through a better job or through marriage and to support their families economically (Rahman- 1992). Ahmed and Quasem in their study "Child Labour in Bangladesh" conducted in four villages of Bangladesh shows; children contribute 22% of total labour supply. Some boys worked as much as the adults (261 man-days), but on average girls spent more time in productive work than boys (Ahmed and Quasem-1991).

III. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To investigate the socio-economic and demographic profile of the girl domestic workers;
- ii. To know the educational level of girl children domestic help;
- iii. To examine the social problems being faced by them;
- iv. To Know the entire features of their livelihoods.

IV. DATA and Methodology

Methodology is an important part of social science research. A successful research depends on rational research methodology. The study was based on primary data collected from the different areas of Chittagong Division. 210 randomly selected domestic servants were interviewed from April to June -2015. For the purpose of data collection, a well designed interviewing schedule was used. An interviewing schedule is a set of questions which are asked from the respondents in a face to face situation. It was developed in the light of the objectives of the study. The questions in interview schedule were mostly structured. The interview schedule was prepared in English but questions were asked in Bangla. Simple arithmetic tools like percentage, average etc. have been used throughout the study. To analyse the significant of variables like age, education, family member, food and nutrition, general happiness regression model has been fitted. The specification of the model is:

$$Y_i = B_0 + B_1 X_{1i} + B_2 X_{2i} + B_3 X_{3i} + B_4 X_{4i} + B_5 X_{5i} + U_i$$

Where, Y_i = Facing problems due to their work

X_{1i} = Age

X_{2i} = Education

X_{3i} = Family member

X_{4i} = Food and nutrition

X_{5i} = General happiness

U_i = Random disturbance term.

V. Limitations of the study

For conducting any social research some difficulties are often faced by each researcher at the time of data collection as social research study the human beings and human behaviors. The field experience during data collection was very interesting. In many situations it was very difficult to get accurate responses from the respondents. The main difficulty experienced was that the respondents (girl children domestic help) were very busy in their work and they had no time answering for the research and they did not know the purpose and objectives of social research. The research may contain limitations as very few samples were surveyed. In most of the cases, masters were present at the time of interview which pressurized the respondents mentally. Moreover, mostly the domestic workers were illiterate and they also did not want to tell exact age and income. But the researchers tried their best to get accurate data. Therefore, much of their time was consumed in explaining the objectives of the study to the respondents.

VI. Findings Of The Study

1. Demographic and socio-economic background of the girl children domestic help

1.1 Age composition

In choosing the respondents of the study, girl children domestic help, below the age of eighteen were considered. This was done in conformity of the ILO, UNICEF and Government of Bangladesh declaration.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their age

Age group(Years)	Frequency	Percentage	Average Age
6- 13	70	33.3	14.29
14-16	95	45.2	
17 -18	45	21.4	
Total	210	100	

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 reveals that most of the girl domestic child workers (45.2%) are between 14-16 years of age. The average ages of the girl domestic workers are 14.29 years. The survey highlights represent that most of the girl child domestic helper entered in the work force at tender age because of dreadful economic necessity.

1.2 Educational Status:

The Table 2 shows the educational status of the respondents. The general educational standard of the girl domestic helper is very low. Majority percent (55.7%) of the girl domestic helper are unable to read and write, which meant that they had never been to school nor had been taught at home. 42.9 percent of the respondents are primary educated and only 1.4 percent of the respondents are secondary educated.

Table2: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their education.

Education	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	117	55.7
Primary	90	42.9
Secondary	3	1.4
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.3 Family Size

Table 3 indicates that 24.8 percent of the respondents' family members are from 1 to 5 persons, 41.5 percent of the respondents' family members are from 6 to 7 and 33.8 percent of the respondents' family members are above 8 persons. Data shows that major proportions i.e. 41.5 percent of the respondents are above 6 to 7 family members. The average sizes of the families are 6.94 persons, which are larger than the national average of Bangladesh (5.6 persons per household).

Table 3: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their family size

Family Size	Frequency	Percentage	Average Family Member
1-5	52	24.8	6.94
6-7	87	41.5	
8+	71	33.8	
Total	210	100.0	

Source: Field Survey

1.4 Mother's occupation

Parents' occupation is one of the important indications of girl children domestic help in Bangladesh. This study indicates that 433 % of the respondents' mothers are housewives. and 41 percent mothers work in houses.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their mother occupation

Mother Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Beggars	4	1.9
Day Labour	15	7.1
Maid servant	86	41.0
Unemployment	4	1.9
Housewife	91	43.3
Don't Know	10	4.8
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.5 Father's occupation

The girl child workers' fathers are involved with diverse occupations and most of their occupations are related with physical labour. It covers day labourer, agricultural labour, rickshaw puller, hawker, helper, garments worker, fishery, carpenter, blacksmith, barber, domestic worker, mosque Imam, mechanic, gate man, and tailoring. Majority of the respondents' fathers' occupation is day labour (54.3%).

Table 5: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their father's occupation

Fathers Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Beggars	2	1.0
Physical Labour	114	54.3
Unemployment	12	5.7
Farmer	32	15.2
Don't know	50	23.8
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.6 Monthly Income:

The economic conditions of Bangladesh are not sound for better life. From the income distribution Table 6, it shows that 27.6 percent respondent's monthly family incomes are Taka below Taka 1000 and 59 percent respondent's family incomes are at the range of Taka 1000 - 2000. Most of the respondent's monthly family incomes are within the range of Taka 1000 - 2000. Only 13.3 percent respondent's incomes are above Taka 2000. The average monthly wages (1601.19 Taka) are not at all satisfactory.

Table 6: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their monthly income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage	Average monthly income
Below 1000 Taka	58	27.6	1601.19
1000-2000	124	59	
2000+	28	13.3	
Total	210	100.0	

Source: Field Survey

1.7 Contributed to their household

Table 7 shows that 88.6 percent of the respondents get their wages in their families and only 11.4 percent of the respondents do not get their wages. Which indicate 88.6 percent girl helper are the only earning persons in their families.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to Contributed to their household

Get their wages	Frequency	Percentage
No	24	11.4
Yes	186	88.6
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.8 Length of work

This study gives us a fairly good picture of the working period of the girl child domestic servants. Table 8 presents the distribution of domestic servants according to their experience in this field. It reveals that 75.7 per cent of the servants had an experience of 1 to 5 years in the domestic service. 15.2 percent of the servants had a long experience of 6 to 10 years while about 8 per cent of them had an experience of less than 1 year.

Table 8: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their length of work

Length of work	Frequency	Percentage	Average duration
< 1 year	16	7.6	1.10
1-5 years	159	75.7	
6-10 years	32	15.2	
Total	210	100.0	

Source: Field Survey

1.9 Daily working hours

There is no specific working hour for the child domestic workers in Bangladesh as recorded in various researches. Generally, they are supposed to provide support according to the need and requirement of the household. For getting a specific picture of their workload it is necessary to classify them according to their

working hours per day. According to the research findings, 18.1 percent domestic workers are involved in work for 1 to 5 hours daily. About 34 percent household workers had to work 6 to 8 hours daily. 48.1 percent domestic workers had to work for more than 8 hours a day. Our studies show that girl child domestic workers spend on an average 9.16 hours per day. According to a report of UNICEF, in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines, child domestic workers spend on average 15 hours or more working each day, seven days a week, and are generally on-call day and night. In one research nearly 74 percent of child domestic workers said that they had to work for more than nine hours a day and the highest number of surveyed children work for 9-10 hours.

Table 9: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their daily working hours

Working Hours (Daily)	Frequency	Percentage	Average working hours(Per day)
1-5	38	18.1	9.16
6-8	71	33.8	
8+	101	48.1	
Total	210	100	

Source: Field Survey

1.10 Food and Nutrition

Different perspectives exist regarding the food intake and nutrition of the child domestic worker. It is evident from various researches that generally domestic workers get food three times. According to a research, 85.2 percent respondent (child worker) said that they get sufficient food for three times. Whereas another research on this issue shows that the quality of food and treatment varies in different households. For the most part child workers eat empty calories (such as large amounts of rice) and nobody monitors if the children receive a balanced diet with adequate nutrition (Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, December, 2013).

Table 10: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their Food and nutrition

Food and nutrition	Frequency	Percentage
Not Sufficient	31	14.8
Sufficient	179	85.2
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.11 Nature of Living Place

From the data found through the survey, it is observed that the significant number (49.5 per cent) of child domestic workers sleep at night in drawing rooms and only (20.0 percent) have separate rooms for staying in the house of the masters. The Table 10 also shows that a few respondents also stay in kitchens (18.6 percent).

Table 11: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their living place

Nature of Living Place	Frequency	Percentage
Separate room	42	20.0
Drawing room	104	49.5
Kitchen	39	18.6
Others	25	11.9
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.12 General happiness

Table 11 shows that 43.8 percent of the respondents are pleased with their present work. Where, 56.2 percent of the respondents are not satisfied with their present work. Data shows that majority of the respondents 56.2 percent were not satisfied with their present work.

Table 12: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their general happiness

General happiness	Frequency	Percentage
Not Good	118	56.2
Good	92	43.8
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.13 Continue the present Job

The study observed that 75.2 percent workers are not willing to continue their present jobs and they wish to get any kind of job except domestic work.

Table 13: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to continue the present job

Willing to continue the present Job	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	158	75.2
Agree	52	24.8
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.14 Facing problems due to their work

Table 13 illustrates that, 70 percent of the respondents get help in difficulties from their owners; whereas, 30 percent of the respondents do not get any help in time of need from their owners. Our analysis shows that majority of the respondents get help in difficulties from their owners.

Table 14: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to facing problems due to their work

Facing problems due to their work	Frequency	Percentage
No	147	70.0
Yes	63	30.0
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

1.15 Entertainment

Most of the domestic servants have no weekly holidays. Normally, on the occasion of Eid-festival they enjoy of holidays to meet their parents/guardians and relatives. Watching TV is their only recreational facility. In our study 92.9 % respondents reported that they get the opportunity of watching TV.

Table 15: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their entertainment

Entertainment	Frequency	Percentage
Television	195	92.9
Others	15	7.1
Total	210	100

Source: Field Survey

VII. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed in order to understand whether the background characteristics have any significant impact on the problems faced by their work. The results from multiple regression analysis are given in table below.

Table 16: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.574	.329	.277	.390

Dependent Variable: Facing problems due to their work.

Table 17: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	14.520	15	.968	6.349	.000
	Residual	29.580	194	.152		
	Total	44.100	209			

Dependent Variable: Facing problems due to their work.

Table 18: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.192	.410		2.907	.004
Age	-.031	.013	-.164	-2.499	.013
Religion	.061	.290	.013	.212	.832
Mothers Occupations	-.012	.023	-.033	-.536	.592
Fathers Occupations	.005	.017	.018	.285	.776

Family member	.025	.013	.119	1.930	.052
Experience	.068	.055	.078	1.234	.219
Monthly Income	-.076	.000	.002	.026	.979
Provide salary with parents	-.137	.089	-.095	-1.536	.126
Daily working hours	.008	.008	.065	1.067	.287
Food and Nutrition	-.257	.084	-.199	-3.048	.003
Entertainment	-.020	.055	-.021	-.357	.721
General happiness	-.245	.062	-.266	-3.949	.000
Education	-.108	.028	-.248	-3.914	.000
Willingness to continue the present Job	-.056	.065	-.052	-.856	.393
Nature of living place	.001	.031	.001	.019	.985

Dependent Variable: Facing problems due to their work.

The socio-economic and demographic variables like age (x_{1i}), education (X_{2i}), family member (X_{3i}), food and nutrition (X_{4i}), general happiness (X_{5i}) etc. To determine the dependent variable facing problems due to their work (Y_i) multiple regression models is

$$Y_i = 1.192 - 0.031 X_{1i} - 0.108 X_{2i} + 0.025 X_{3i} - 0.257 X_{4i} - 0.245 X_{5i}$$

$$SE \quad (.410) \quad (.013) \quad (.028) \quad (.013) \quad (.084) \quad (.062)$$

$$R^2 = .329$$

The regression coefficient for variables has been examined along with their respective standard errors. The results reveal that age, education, family member, food and nutrition and general happiness were found to have significant effect on the problems faced by their work. Also, we could see an inverse relationship between problems faced by their work in each of the variables except family member. The value of coefficient of determination shows that the independent variables included in the model were able to explain 33% of the variability on the problems faced by their work. The F-value 6.349, which is also significant at 0.01 ($p < 0.01$).

VIII. Conclusion

The major findings of the survey reveal that the wages of the girl domestic workers are very low which the main cause of domestic child work is. Most of the girl domestic child workers are between 14-16 years of age. The children's fathers are involved in diverse occupations and most of their occupations are related to physical labour. The job experience of the workers is for shorter period of time. The average working duration at the present house is just above one year. The findings show that girl domestic workers spend on an average 9.16 hours per day.

They live in different spaces, such as empty places of the house, drawing room, kitchen, veranda, separate room within the owners' house etc. 85 per cent of the workers state that the amount of food is sufficient for them. The recreational facilities of the domestic child workers are very limited. Watching television is the only foremost recreational facility of the girl domestic workers. The results from multiple regression analysis also shows that only age, education, family member, food and nutrition and general happiness were found to have significant effect on the problems faced by their domestic work.

Although the problem of girl children domestic help should not be possible to eliminate within a shorter period of time, it should be stopped gradually. It is true that the overall reality and cultural matters of this country are considerable in this regard. However, with a view to improving the working conditions of girl domestic workers the following suggestions are recommended:

It is one kind of interim, but preventive aspect, where some problems within continuing girl domestic child work should be looked at in various levels such as to provide education services for the domestic workers which would be compulsory for the owners to send them in a school for certain period of time, to restrict their age for such kind of work, to limit their working hours, to increase their wages, and to create community awareness programme for the parents and mass people. Before this, the government should start to register all the domestic child workers, so that they can be located easily. At the same time unregistered child cannot be involved in any kind of domestic work.

There are very few initiatives from the Bangladesh Government to address the issues of child domestic work. But as a result of advocacy initiatives of human rights Organizations, Bangladesh Government has started to take some positive initiatives to resolve the issue. Specially, the draft policy document on "Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2010" (though this is yet to be adopted) has been appreciated by the policy makers and facilitators.

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