

Causes of Child Labor in Bangladesh: A Case Study in the City of Dhaka

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Abstract

Prevalence of Child Labor is a common phenomenon in most of the least developed and developing countries, and Bangladesh is no exception. Instead of going to schools and passing the childhood days with joy, many children are compelled to work for their family and livelihood. The essential goal of this investigation is to identify and analyze the causes of child labor in Bangladesh. This study has also been conducted to evaluate the opinions of the child laborers and reflect their situation by their views on different questions. The most significant part of this study is to present the condition of child labor in Bangladesh and identify the major causes that are influencing this harmful practice still in this 21st century in Bangladesh. This study has used both the primary & secondary sources of data to identify & analyze the causes of child labor in Bangladesh. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect the primary data from children working in different working fields within Dhaka city, and the number of respondents was 30. By using the factor analysis method with the help of the software “Stata” this study has derived some useful construct like – “Adherence” & “Economic Discrimination” which include some significant variables like – reluctance of the parents due to the increased cost of education, unawareness of the families, employers’ reluctance to obey the labor law & inequity of income distribution respectively. All these variables have a strong correlation with their respective constructs and these two constructs or can be termed as two significant causes of child labor explain 73.40% of the study. Government and relative stakeholders can take necessary measures to remove the problem of adherence & economic imbalance of the nation to build a country where all the children will get the things that they deserve. Thus, Bangladesh can become a country of enriched human capital as well as a country of happiness and peace.

Keywords: Child labor, Adherence, Economic Discrimination, Bangladesh

Introduction

Child labor refers to the employment of children at regular and sustained work. This practice is considered exploitative by many international organizations and is illegal in many countries.

Child labor in Bangladesh is common, with 4.7 million or 12.6% of children aged below 14 in the workforce. Out of the child laborers engaged in the workforce, 83% are employed in rural areas, and 17% are used in urban areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2005).

In 2006, Bangladesh passed a Labor Law setting the minimum legal age for employment as 14. Nevertheless, the enforcement of such labor laws is virtually impossible in Bangladesh because 93% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2006) of child laborers are employed in the informal sector such as small factories and workshops, on the street, in home-based businesses and domestic employment.

Child labor should be eliminated and replaced by universal education, enforcement of the labor law accurately & proper income distribution because these are the ways to protect and promote the rights of children, which is the recognized obligation of states and societies.

Literature Review

Child labor is a multi-dimensional and complex issue: it is symptomatic of economic vulnerability, an inadequate legislative framework and labor laws, institutional barriers, cultural and social inequities and a remote, low-quality educational system, including the insufficient provision of technical and vocational education (TVE).

According to the Bangladesh Labor Act 2006, “a person not attaining the age of 14 is defined as a child” and “the labor provided by a child would be known as child labor.” The concept of child labor is based on the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138), 1973 that states that child labor consists of all children under 15 years including all children under 15 of age who are economically active except (i) those who are under 5 years of age and (ii) those between 12-14 years who spend less than 14 hours a week on their jobs, unless their occupations are hazardous by nature or circumstances

The incidence of child labor in Bangladesh is high. Bangladesh is a low-income country.

In 2003 the per capita gross domestic product was estimated at USD 489 (ADB, 2008) and from 1997-2006, 36% of the population lived below the poverty line with an income less than USD 1 per day (UNDP, 2005). It should be noted that nearly 83% of the population had a pay less than USD 2 (UNDP, 2005). Research has shown that in countries with a per capita income of USD 500 or less, the child labor force participation is

exceptionally high at 30-60% (ILO, 2006). Children either drop out or become irregular attendees at school, to work to augment the family income. According to Psacharopoulos (cited in Ravallion and Wodon, 2007), child labor leads to two years less schooling on average.

However, there is little systematic evidence that demonstrates that child labor is indispensable or necessary for poverty alleviation. A 'Baseline Survey for Determining Hazardous Child Labor Sectors' (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2005) states that only 8.1% of families whose children are engaged in hazardous child labor would slide into poverty if there were a loss of child labor income. However, the evidence does show that child labor hinders future economic growth and the accumulation of human capital. Children are deprived of future income-generating capacities and their lifetime earning ability is reduced by 13-20% due to entering the workforce at a young age (Ilahi, Orazem, Sedlacek, 2005). Child labor minimizes the bargaining capacity of adult workers, depresses adult wages, creates adult unemployment and underemployment, and reduces the economic competitiveness of the country thereby perpetuating the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Large numbers of child laborers in Bangladesh work in the informal sector, often in hazardous and exploitative conditions. This situation is in violation of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Minimum Age Convention (No.138) as well as ILO Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (No. 182). The decision to become a child laborer does not rest with the child but with the parents, who may not at times act in the best interest of the child or with appropriate or full information, especially when it comes to females or children with special needs. Education is both a protective and enabling right: training protects and promotes the physical, cognitive, social and moral development of children and by developing their capabilities they can live a life that they have 'reason to value' (Sen, 1995).

A triangulation of fulfillment of rights, promotion of child capability and potential, and formulation of human capital for national development strengthens the possibility to work in a broader range of policy interventions, with close collaboration and coordination among significant stakeholders to achieve the twin goal of eliminating child labor and providing them a reasonable standard of living & completing education for all.

This overall perspective has guided the work of this paper to synthesize the information; examine policies; find out the causes of such threat and how to remove this threat from our society.

Objectives of the Study:

The general aim of the research is to conduct a study on the causes of child labor in Bangladesh.

A careful review of the impacts led to the identification of following specific research objectives:

- (i) To understand the conditions of child laborers in Bangladesh;
- (ii) To suggest policy recommendations & essential initiatives for crucial stakeholders about research findings.

The methodology of the Study:

The method of the study comprises of the followings –

➤ **Unit of Analysis:**

The study approached 30 children whose ages are below 15 and earning their livelihood in different working fields within the Dhaka city.

➤ **Determination of the Sample Size:**

In this research, the population is not accurately measured. Different organizations identified the number of child labors in Bangladesh in varying quantities. And the amounts are surprisingly too vast to consider for the study. Because of these two limitations, it is decided to determine the sample size by assuming it as "Unknown."

So, the determination of the sample size can identify by computing the minimum sample size required for accuracy in estimating proportions by considering the average standard deviation set at 95% confidence level (1.96), percentage picking a choice or response (50% = 0.5) and the confidence interval (0.05 = ±5).

Formula for determining the sample size:

$$n = z^2 p(1-p) / e^2$$

$$n = ((1.96)^2 \times .5(.5)) / (.05)^2$$

$$n = (3.8416 \times .25) / .0025$$

$$n = .9604 / .0025$$

$$n = 384.16$$

$$n = 385 \text{ respondents are needed}$$

So, for this research, it's needed to take almost 385 respondents. But, because of the time and other imperatives, it's not possible to reach to such a huge number of people; therefore this research approached 30 children who are working in different working areas having an age of below 15 within the Dhaka city.

Data Collection Methods:

All the data have been collected both from Primary sources as well as Secondary sources.

➤ Primary data:

The primary data collected by designing a questionnaire and surveying that questionnaire. Each respondent was asked questions from the intended questionnaire on-the-spot basis. The question patterns in the survey are based on the research objectives and research questions as well.

➤ Secondary data:

Secondary data collected from the below-mentioned sources –

- Different Journals
- Newspapers' articles
- Different websites &
- Different books etc.

Data Analysis Methods:

All the data are analyzed throughout the report by the following methods –

- (i) Coding of data is collected from the survey for analysis.
- (ii) "Frequency Distribution" of the collected data has also been shown for analysis.

Data are mainly analyzed by "Factor Analysis Method" using the software "Small STATA 12.0 (Copyright 1985-2011 Stata Corp LP)

Findings & Analysis:

Findings:

Here, in this phase, this paper has shown all the data which gathered throughout the research survey from all the 30 respondents within Dhaka city. These findings are presented here with the use of "Frequency Distribution Method" and with some graphical representations.

- All the statements which are included in the questionnaire are presented below with the answers of the respondents exhibited through pie charts –

1. Poverty is the primary reason for child labor:

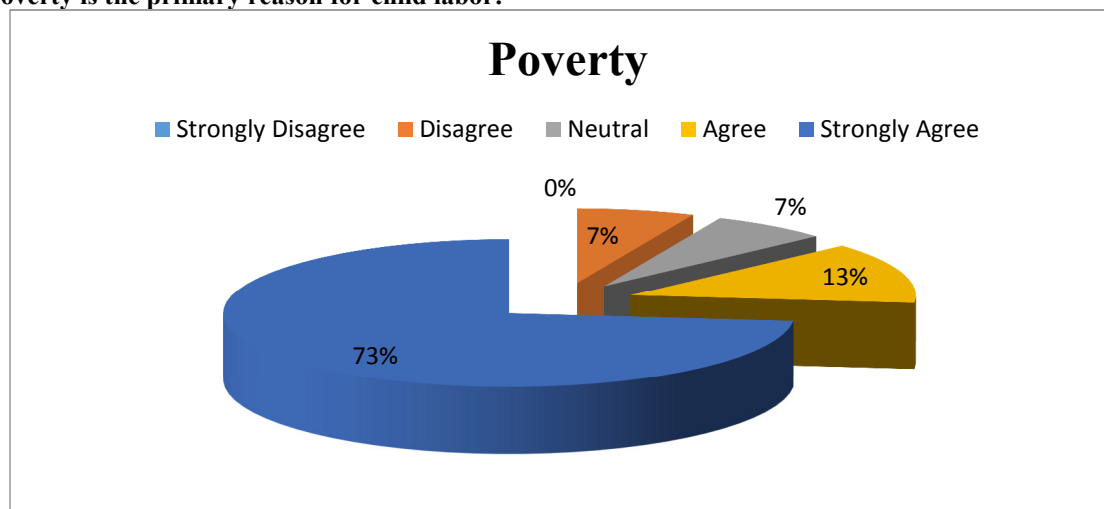


Figure 1: Poverty is the primary reason for child labor

➤ Explanation of Figure 1:

From the above chart, it shows that in response to the statement that "Poverty is the basic reason of child labor" – 73% of the respondent strongly agreed and told that poverty is the primary factor that insists them to start working for their livelihood rather than going to school for education. Here, no one actively disagreed with their opinion (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

2. Illiteracy of parents also causes child labor:

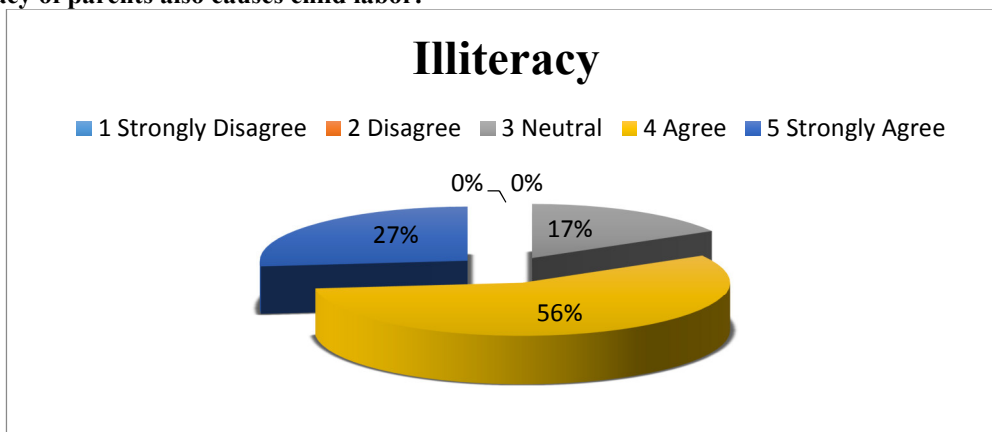


Figure 2: Illiteracy plays a vital role in increasing the rate of child labor

➤ **Explanation of the figure 2:**

Here, from the chart, it shows that 56% of the children “Agreed” that their parents’ “Illiteracy” plays a vital role in increasing the rate of child labor in Bangladesh. Here it can observe that “No” children “Disagreed about the impact of Illiteracy on child labor (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

3. Guardians are hesitant to send their children to school due to the increased cost of education:

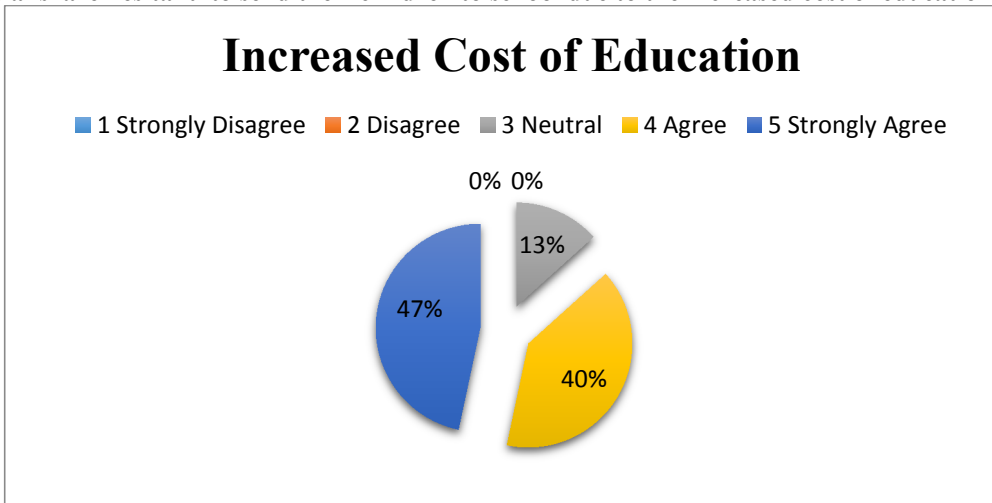


Figure 3: Guardians are hesitant to send their children to school due to the increased cost of education

➤ **Explanation of figure 3:**

From the above chart, 47% of the respondents strongly agreed that the increasing cost of education insists their parents not to allow their children to go to the school and force them to start their working life at the very early stage of life. Here, also no respondents “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” about the fact (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

4. Parents higher preference for earning livelihood rather than getting educated:

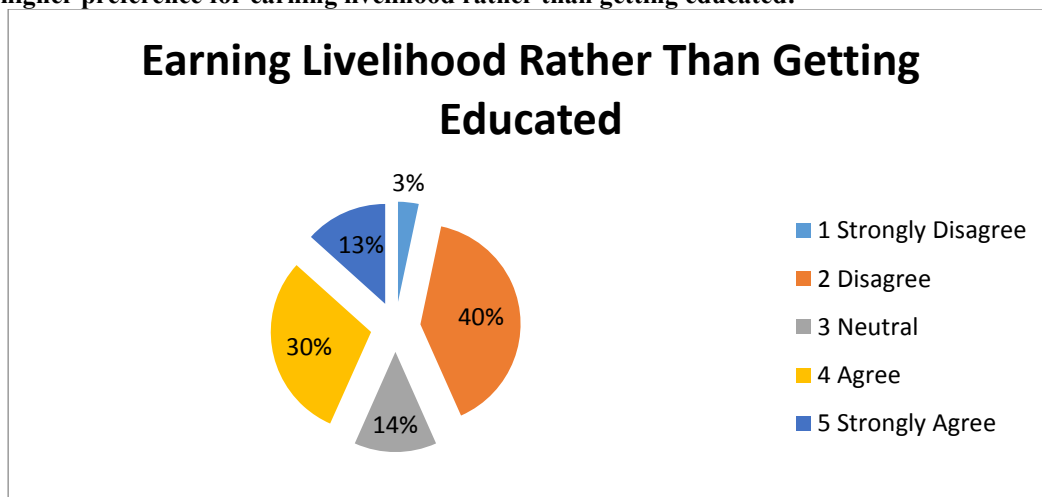


Figure 4: Parents higher choice for earning livelihood rather than getting educated

➤ **Explanation of figure 4:**

Here it shows that about 40% of respondents disagreed that their parents prefer them to be laborers than to be educated (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

5. The high fertility rate is playing a vital role in increasing child labor:

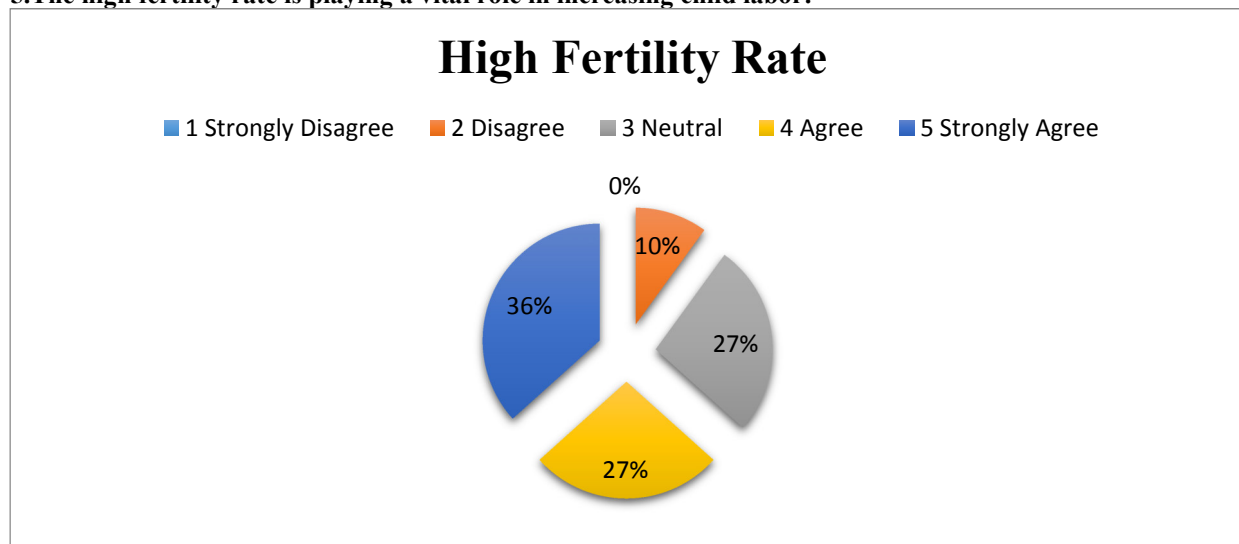


Figure 5: The high fertility rate is playing a vital role in increasing child labor

➤ **Explanation of figure 5:**

From the above chart, it shows that 36% of the respondents “Strongly Agreed” that the high fertility rate influences increasing the rate of child labor in Bangladesh. Here, surprisingly it can observe that 10% of the respondents “Disagreed” about the fact (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

6. The traditional perception of family forces children to do that work which other members of the family do:

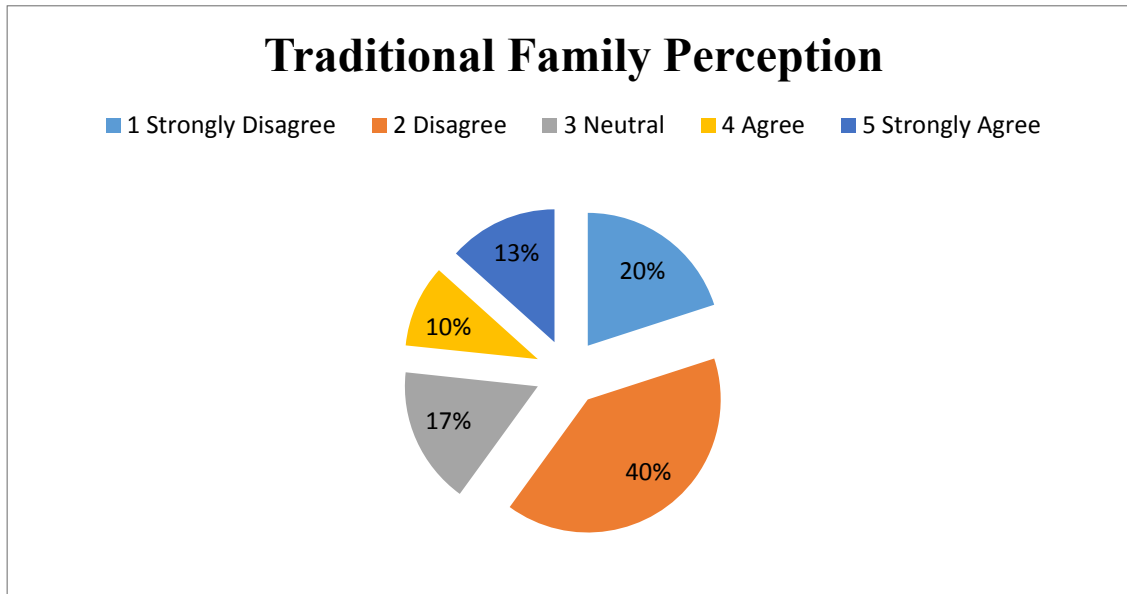


Figure 6: The traditional perception of family forces children to do that work which other members of the family do

➤ **Explanation of figure 6 :**

From the above chart, about 40% of the respondents disagreed about the fact that, their conventional family perception forces them to become laborers at the early stage of their life (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

7. Country’s economy influences the increasing rate of child labor

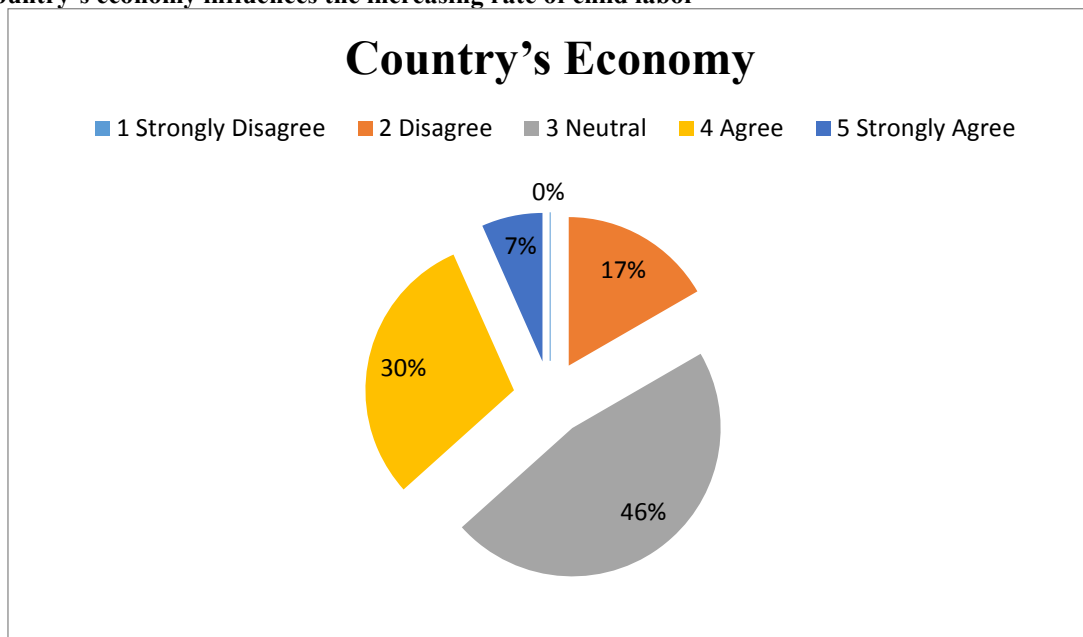


Figure 7: Country’s economy influences the increasing rate of child labor

➤ **Explanation of figure 7:**

Here it can observe that about 46% of the respondents were “Neutral” whether the economy of the country has any influence on the practice of child labor in Bangladesh. But, about 30% respondents agreed about the fact (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

8. The inequity of income distribution influences the increasing rate of child labor:

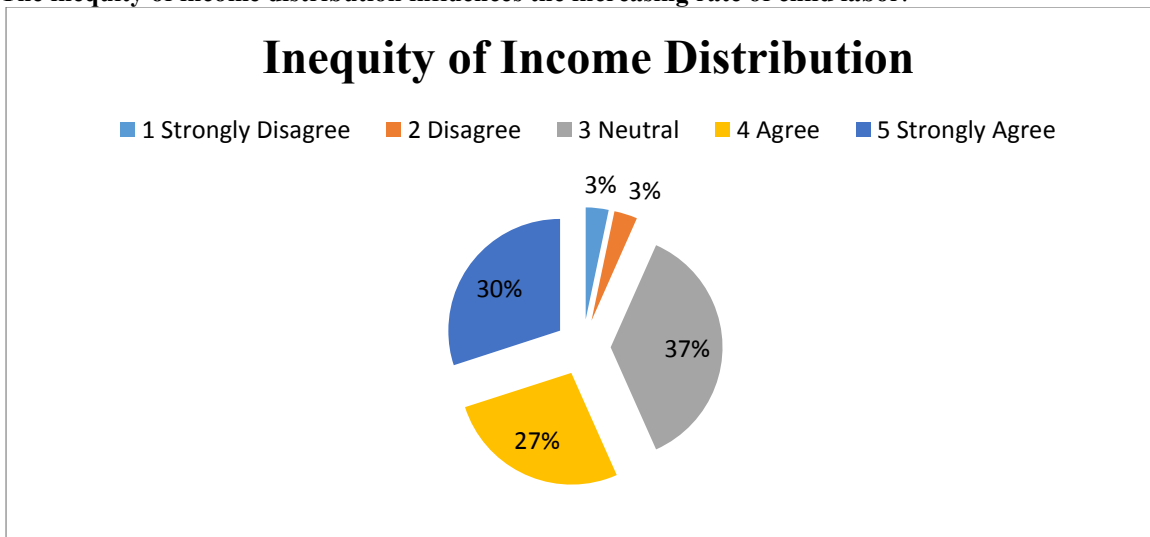


Figure 8: The inequity of income distribution influences the increasing rate of child labor

➤ **Explanation of figure 8:**

Here, it shows that 37% of the respondents are “Neutral” in their opinion that inequity of the income distribution causes child labor problem in Bangladesh. Their silence may have some inherent fear towards some invisible power. But still, 30% of them strongly agreed that this inequity is causing this child labor problem in Bangladesh (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

9. Government is not putting much concern on child labor

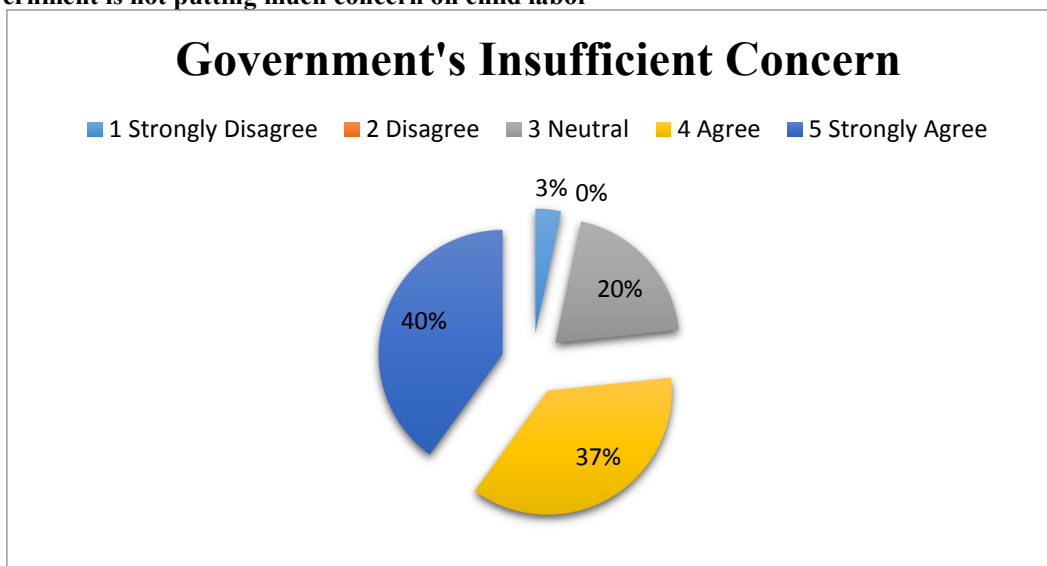


Figure 9: Government is not putting much concern on child labor

➤ **Explanation of figure 9:**

From the graph, it shows that about 40% of the respondents “Strongly Agreed” that government is not giving much concern about the wide spreading problem of child labor. But, about 3% of the respondents “Strongly disagreed” and told that government is putting much of its effort, but other impediments are vitally existed here in Bangladesh (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

10. Families who send their children to work are unaware of child labor:

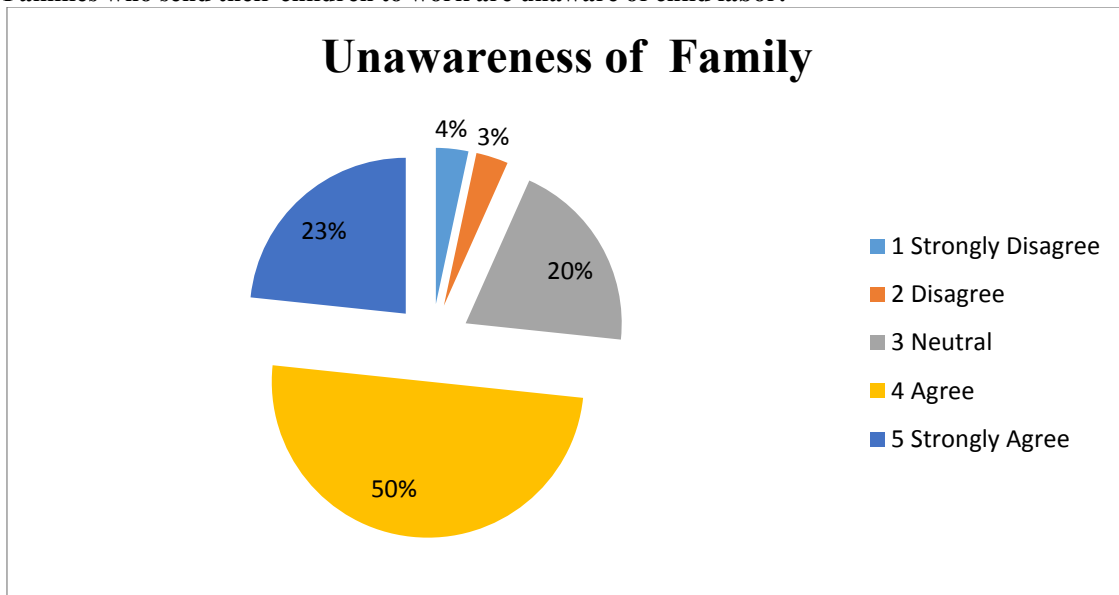


Figure 10: Families who send their children to work are unaware of child labor

➤ **Explanation of figure 10:**

About 50% of the respondents agreed that it is their family’s unawareness towards the harmful impacts of child labor in Bangladesh that is playing a vital role of increasing the rate of this practice in Bangladesh (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

11. Employers are reluctant to obey the labor law:

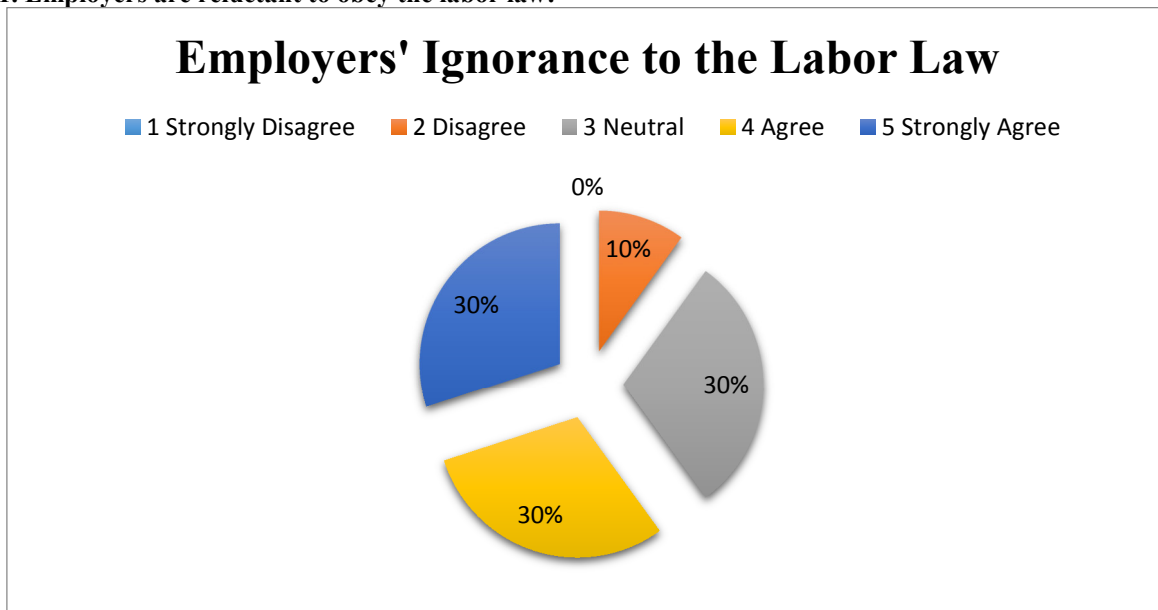


Figure 11: Employers are reluctant to obey the labor law

➤ **Explanation of figure 11:**

From the chart, it has shown that about 30% of the respondents were “Neutral” in this case of employers’ disobeying to the labor law. But, 30% of the respondents also “Strongly Agreed” that the employers are reluctant to obey the labor law and causing children to work in different unhygienic, dangerous working fields. Surprisingly, 10% of the respondents “Disagreed” with this statement (See: appendix – frequency distribution table).

Analysis of the Study:

As mentioned earlier that this study is on the causes of child labor in Bangladesh, the topic has to be analyzed by multivariate statistical analysis. This study has no dependent variable here, so it is based on independent method. As used interval data that’s why inputs are metric. And all these things are the reasons for selecting “Factor

Analysis Method” to conduct the study and analyze data.



Figure 12: Method Selection Process

Sample Summary:

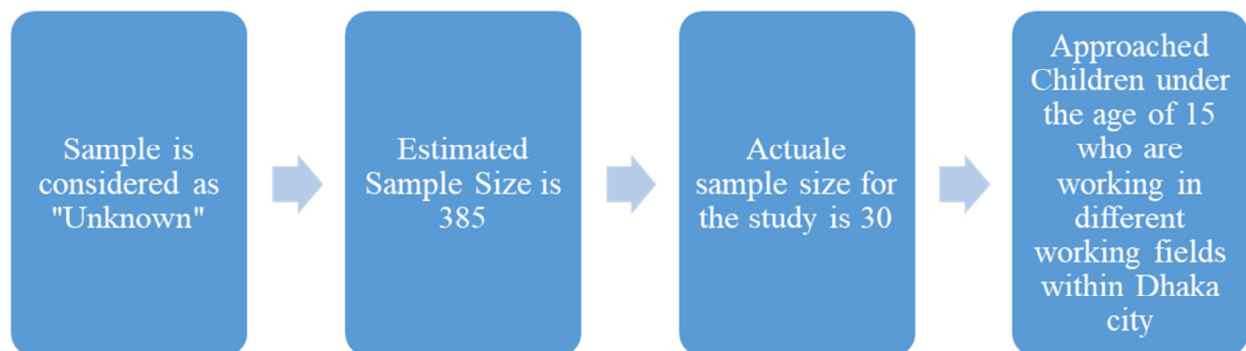


Figure 13: Sample Summary

Factor Analysis:

For conducting the factor analysis, it used the software “STATA.” After putting the data which have coded in the M.S. Excel, STATA generated the result of the investigation. This Analysis includes Two Tables with the result which are given below –

Factor analysis/ correlation
 Method: Principal factors
 Rotation : (un rotated)
 Number of observation: 30
 Retained factors: 7
 Number of params: 55

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor 1	2.00858	0.74751	0.4509	0.4509
Factor 2	1.26106	0.1938	0.2831	0.7340
Factor 3	1.06788	0.61433	0.2397	0.9738
Factor 4	0.45355	0.19469	0.1018	1.0756
Factor 5	0.25886	0.06139	0.0581	1.1337
Factor 6	0.19747	0.13504	0.0443	1.1780
Factor 7	0.06243	0.19157	0.0140	1.1920
Factor 8	-0.12914	0.02005	-0.0290	1.1631
Factor 9	-0.14919	0.05173	-0.0335	1.1296
Factor 10	-0.20092	0.17528	-0.0451	1.0845
Factor 11	-0.37620		-0.0845	1.0000

LR test: independent vs saturated: $\chi^2(55) = 72.47$ prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0573$

Table 1: Factor Analysis Initial Table

- **Number of Observation:**
This study surveyed 30 children working at different locations within Dhaka city under the age of 15.
- **Retained Factors:**
Among the 11 factors, there are 07 employed factors which carry positive eigenvalue.
- **Number of Params:**
There are 55 params in this study.
- **Eigenvalue:**

The eigenvalue is the total number of variances accounted by each factor. The sum of all eigenvalues is equal to

the total number of variables. Here, the first seven factors carry positive value & the rest four elements move negative value.

Here, the first factor accounts for the most variance, the second accounts for the next highest amount of difference, and so on. The last four eigenvalues are negative because the matrix is not of full rank. Although there are 11 variables the dimensionality of the factor space is less & that's why there are at most seven factors possible to be retained.

➤ **Difference:**

The difference column shows the actual difference between the current and following eigenvalue. Here, for example, Factor two's Eigenvalue is subtracted from Factor one's Eigenvalue (2.00858 - 1.26106), and thus the subtraction result (0.74751) is the difference between those two eigenvalues.

➤ **Proportion:**

The fourth column "Proportion" shows the percentage of variance accounted for by each of the factors. Ratio indicates the relative weight of each element in the total difference.

For example, the first factor explains 45.09% of the total variance and so as the second factor 28.31% and so on.

Cumulative

The last column which is the "Cumulative" column shows the aggregate extent of change accounted by this also calculate all the past ones. Cumulative shows the amount of variance explained by "n+ (n- 1)" factors. (Getting Started In Factor Analysis (using Stata 10)."

For example, here factor 1 and factor 2 account for 73.40% of the total variance.

Factor Loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

Table 2: Factor Loadings (pattern matrix) Table

VARIABLE	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Uniqueness
Poverty	-0.4292	-0.1420	0.4471	0.0270	0.1568	0.1416	0.1031	0.5397
Illiteracy	-0.6482	-0.2321	-0.2528	0.1190	0.0408	0.0228	0.0733	0.4403
Cost of education	0.6586	-0.0337	0.1276	-0.2992	-0.0641	0.1176	0.0705	0.4364
Parents preference	0.3121	-0.3440	-0.3809	0.1172	0.1616	-0.0287	-0.0843	0.5914
High fertility	-0.1044	-0.0237	0.3945	0.3506	0.0873	0.0351	-0.0776	0.6951
Traditional Perception	0.0757	0.3713	-0.4716	0.0766	0.2004	0.1826	0.0744	0.5491
Country's economy	-0.1050	0.4011	-0.1003	0.0091	0.0832	-0.3257	0.0888	0.6971
Inequity of income	-0.1947	0.7170	-0.1778	0.0948	-0.1568	0.1413	-0.0597	0.3592
Government	-0.3930	0.4113	0.3404	-0.2739	0.1585	-0.0245	-0.0742	0.4542
Unawareness of Family	0.5209	0.2280	0.3085	0.3497	-0.1149	-0.0324	0.0738	0.4395
Employers ignorance	0.6178	0.1816	0.1096	0.0156	0.2911	-0.0041	-0.0195	0.4880

Factor Loadings:

Factor loadings are the weights and correlations between each variable and the factor. The higher the loads, the more relevant in the factors' dimensionality are defined. A negative value shows an inverse impact on the element. That is, a negative value factor is inversely correlated with the respective variable. For example, here factor 01 carries a value of (- 0.4292) which implies an inverse correlation with the variable "Poverty."

Here, seven factors are retained because all have positive eigenvalues.

➤ **Uniqueness:**

Uniqueness is the variance that is 'unique' to the variable and not shared with other variables.

The following formula determines it:

Communality (variance that is shared with other variables)

For example, 53.97% of the difference in 'Poverty' variable is not shared with other variables in the overall factor model. On the contrary 'Inequity of Income Distribution' variable has the lowest "Uniqueness" that is most of the variables share the variances. Notice that the higher the 'Uniqueness', the lower the relevance of the variable in the factor model.

Interpretation of the Analysis:

From the table 01, this study has taken 03 Factors for estimating the correlation of the factors with the variables and thus constructing the "Factor Structure Table" and developing constructs for the research as well as classifying the variables among the constructs.

The reason for choosing only 03 factors from 11 is that only these 03 factors carry eigenvalues which are ≥ 1 . So, it is observed that Factor 1 = 2.00, Factor 2 = 1.26 & Factor 3 = 1.07, that's why this study have selected these three factors.

From the table 02, it is observed that there are variables and seven retained factors with their respective unique values. This table indicates the “Correlation between the variables and factors. Since, this study has chosen factor1, 2, 3 to construct the factor structure table; this study has used these only for comparing with the variables and identifying their correlation.

➤ The factor structure table is given below –

Table 3: Factor Structure Table

Variables Number	Variables Name	Factors		
		Factor 01	Factor 02	Factor 03
V ₃	Family’s reluctance due to the cost of education	.66	-.03	.13
V ₈	Inequity of income distribution	-.19	.72	-.18
V ₁₀	Family’s unawareness	.52	.23	.31
V ₁₁	Employers’ reluctance to obey labor law	.62	.18	.11

So, from the factor structure table, it shows that V₃, V₁₀ & V₁₁ show that these have the highest positive correlations, which carry values $\geq .5$ with the Factor 01 comparing to the two other factors. So, these variables are classified under the element 01.

Similarly, it can be observed that the rest one variable (V₈) shows that it has the highest positive correlation, which carries value $\geq .5$ with the Factor 02 comparing to the other two variables. So, this variable is classified under the factor 02.

Since the Factor 03 doesn’t contain any highest positive correlation with any of the variables instead of having an eigenvalue ≥ 1 ; it can’t include it to develop of study’s “Construct.”

Construct Development:

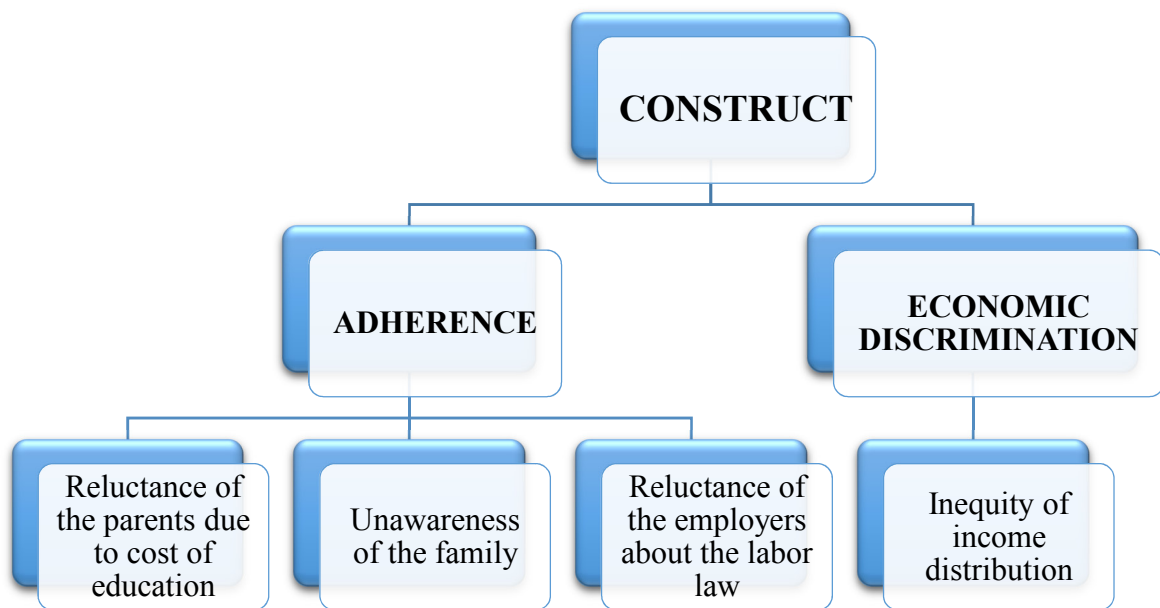


Figure14: Construct Development & Classification

Interpretation of the Analytical Findings/:

From the overall analysis, the following results can be derived –

- The construct “Adherence” includes variables like - Reluctance of the parents due to the cost of education, Unawareness of the family & Reluctance of the employers about the labor law.
- The construct “Economic Discrimination” includes the only one variable which is “Inequity of Income Distribution.”
- It can be said that these two constructs explain 73.40% (cumulative value of factor 1 & 2) of the research topic “Causes of Child Labor in Bangladesh.”
- The uniqueness of the variables included in the two constructs are given below –

Table 4: Unique Value Table

Constructs	Name of the Variables	Unique Value
Adherence	The reluctance of the parents due to the cost of education, &	0.4364
	Unawareness of the family	0.4395
	The reluctance of the employers about the labor law	0.4880
Economic Discrimination	Inequity of Income Distribution	0.3592

- So, at last, it can be said that – the practice of child labor in Bangladesh are highly reasoned for two major factors which are – “Adherence” & “Economic Discrimination.”
- “Adherence” implies peoples’ adherence towards the problem of child labor & “Economic Discrimination” implies the inequity of the income distribution that results in the creation of extreme poverty, lower social class and reduced standard of livings, lower per capita income and many other problems.

Conclusions

From the whole conducted research, it can be concluded that children are forced to start their working life at an early stage of their life because of Reluctance of the parents due to the cost of education, Unawareness of the family, Reluctance of the employers about the labor law & Inequity of Income Distribution. And all these causes can be classified as “Adherence” & Economic Discrimination.”

So, for a beautiful Bangladesh, we need to develop a robust human resource of the country, and for having such support, we need to educate our children and give them all those opportunities that they deserve. Child labor should be eradicated to achieve this goal for a beautiful country like Bangladesh.

Recommendations

Child labor is a long-term development problem that will not be resolved with short-term activities. An extraordinary bargain of work remains to be done to respond to the child labor problem and its causes efficiently. Alleviating child labor in Bangladesh and will continue to seek ways to do so over time. Adopt a definition of trafficking for use in legislation. An information collecting center should be established. Developed public and political awareness and commitment. Food for education program should introduce to every village of the country. Employers should be governed by different law enforcement agencies so that they can’t employ any child to work. Cost of education should be reduced income should be distributed equitably. Government and all the related stakeholders should take some initiatives to remove this practice of child labor from Bangladesh.

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Appendix

Questionnaire of the study:

Questionnaire
About
The Causes of Child Labor in Bangladesh: A Case Study in the City of Dhaka

- Name:
- Sex:
- Age:
- Address:
- Profession:
- Working Area:
- **Instructions: Provide your opinions below by putting only tick marks (√)**

Sl. No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Poverty is the primary reason for child labor					
2.	Illiteracy of parents also causes child labor					
3.	Guardians are hesitant to send their children to school due to the increased cost of education					
4.	Parents higher preference for earning livelihood rather than getting educated					
5.	The high fertility rate is playing a vital role in increasing child labor					
6.	The traditional perception of family forces children to do that work which other members of the family do					
7.	Country's economy influences the increasing rate of child labor					
8.	The inequity of income distribution influences the increasing rate of child labor					
9.	Government is not putting much concern on child labor					
10.	Families who send their children at work are unaware of child labor					
11.	Employers are reluctant to obey the labor law					

Frequency Distribution Table:

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Poverty is the primary reason for child labor	0	2	2	4	22
2.	Illiteracy of parents also causes child labor	0	0	5	17	8
3.	Guardians are hesitant to send their children to school due to the increased cost of education	0	0	4	12	14
4.	Parents higher preference for earning livelihood rather than getting educated	1	12	4	9	4
5.	The high fertility rate is playing a vital role in increasing child labor	0	3	8	8	11
6.	The traditional perception of family forces children to do that work which other members of the family do	6	12	5	3	4
7.	Country's economy influences the increasing rate of child labor	0	5	14	9	2
8.	The inequity of income distribution influences the increasing rate of child labor	1	1	11	8	9
9.	Government is not putting much concern on child labor	1	0	6	11	12
10.	Families who send their children at work are unaware of child labor	1	1	6	15	7
11.	Employers are reluctant to obey the labor law	0	3	9	9	9