

Exploring Determinants and Intervention Pathways of Violence against Street Children in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The street children in Bangladesh are one of the most vulnerable populations, and are often subjected to various types of violence which affect their physical, emotional and social health. This paper undertakes the exploration of the prevalence, pathogenesis and possible interventions toward the prevention of violence against street children. Using a mixed method, quantitative data was collected using 120 street children in four city corporations of Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Chattogram, and the qualitative data was collected using eight in-depth case studies and four focus group discussions with street children, guardians, NGOs, and human rights activists. Results indicate that 86.67 percent of street children were verbally abused, 85.00 percent physically abused, 81.67 percent psychologically abused and 18.33 percent sexually abused, with other forms of abuse being coerced to engage in crime (20.00 percent) and engage in politics (25.00 percent). The major causes of violence are family instability, poverty, unemployment, inadequate education, social discrimination, poor enforcement of the law, and political lapse. Qualitative accounts emphasize the cumulative nature of structure, family, and socio-economic risks on the everyday life of children. The research suggests multi-level interventions that include family support, community awareness, education access, social protection initiatives, law enforcement reform and rehabilitation services. These are set to end the cycle of exploitation, protect rights and create a situation where street children can grow in a safe and dignified environment. The study provides empirical data to policy makers, NGOs and community members aiming at formulating comprehensive and locally based approaches in ensuring that street children are not victimized in Bangladesh.

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1. Introduction

Children are known to be the future of any nation worldwide, representing the human potential and continuity of society. The state and society, therefore, have a fundamental role to play in making sure they are safe, dignified, and whole (Hossain, 2023). Childhood is a developing period that requires support, protection, as well as positive socialization in order to develop physical, psychological, and emotional abilities. Whenever this stage is broken by deprivation, neglect, exploitation, or violence, the outcomes are severe and may be irrevocable and harm individual life as well as societal progress (Global People Strategist [GPS], 2024). In low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh, such imbalances are especially eminent in children who are in extreme marginalization and especially street children. Street children form one of the best excluded and vulnerable groups in Bangladeshi society. They are living and working in the streets with no proper parental attention, permanent housing, or institutions to safeguard them, and in the constant denial of fundamental rights in the form of education, health, food, and safety. Their lives are filled with uncertainty, vulnerability to various risks, and a social exclusion process. Some of them make a living by taking to informal and dangerous jobs like street vending, garbage collection, begging, pulling rickshaws, or as casual workers, usually in exploitative conditions (Eurasian Research Institute [ERI], 2021).

The latest national statistics are showing how big this problem is. The latest survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) Survey on Street Children 2022 estimates that over 1.2 million children are living on the streets within the country, most of whom are apparently lacking any long-term family or institutional support (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2024). These children are exposed to chronic insecurity and are also exposed to an environment where violence is widespread and normalized. Meanwhile, the National Child Labour Survey 2022 estimates that some 3.54 million children are involved in child labour among a child population of 39.96 million (BBS, 2022). Quite a large percentage of street children comprise this labor force and are involved in informal and unregulated sectors of employment that leave them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Their vulnerability is further increased by the nature of work done by the street children. Street children have been observed in hazardous occupations, although the Bangladesh Labor Act 2006 has put up 38 categories of hazardous work that should not be given to children (Bureau of International Labor Affairs [BILA], 2018). They are hired in household services, transport services, small-scale workshops, restaurants, and street industries, as well as in extremely hazardous industries such as ship-breaking yards, brick kilns, and glass factories (Hoque, 2024). Some of them are still involved with the life of risks on the streets, activity-related to physical injury, long working

hours, and harsh health hazards. In addition to economic exploitation, these environments expose the street children to a consistent threat of violence by the employers, the law enforcement agencies, the criminal networks, and other members of the general population (Hossain, 2023).

Violence against street children in Bangladesh occur in several and interrelated ways. Physical violence, verbal abuse, psychological intimidation, and sexual exploitation are rampant, and they can happen in environments where children have no outlets for reporting or redress. Most of the street children are subjected to frequent harassments, beatings, and humiliation, and sexual violence is a secretive issue because of fear, stigma, and lack of child-friendly criminal justice systems. Systemic denial of education, healthcare, and legal protection is also the structural violence that supports the patterns of exclusion and vulnerability. Although it is evident that Bangladesh is committed to protecting children in the country via the national laws and international conventions, there still exist major gaps in policy intentions and actual practice. Formal protection is offered through legal acts like the Children Act 2013, the National Children Policy 2011, and the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, which assume that the state must safeguard children against all forms of violence and exploitation, and this requirement is enforced by the fact that Bangladesh ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nevertheless, they are still jeopardized by weak enforcement, insufficient institutional capacity, abject poverty, and socio-cultural attitudes (Zohir et al., 2024; Hoque, 2024). Economic deprivation, family fragmentation, social exclusion, and institutional failure are the factors of violence against street children, which are multidimensional. Children are forced to the streets due to poverty and due to social norms that condone child labor and corporal punishment; children are further exposed to abuse. The lack of proper surveillance, corruption, and low accountability in the protective institutions also enables violence to thrive unabated (Azad, 2025). The solution to this issue does not solely lie in the legal reform; it consists of combined intervention channels that include social protection, access to education, awareness in communities, and well-functioning child protection structures (Aldobrandini, 2012).

This paper examines determinants and intervention pathways of violence against street children in Bangladesh. The research aims to provide evidence-based understanding by looking at the lived experiences of street children, determining the structural and socio-economic factors that cause violence, and determining the existing protective processes.

2. Research Methods

Research Approach and Method

This paper used a mixed-method research design to investigate the determinants and intervention pathways of violence against street children in Bangladesh. The combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques was meant to make sure that both measurable patterns and in-depth lived experiences are fully taken into consideration to get a comprehensive picture of the issue. The quantitative methodology helped create the statistical data on the prevalence, forms, and patterns of violence faced by street children, whereas the qualitative methodology brought the subtle details about their everyday life, vulnerabilities, coping strategies, and their perception of protection. Structured surveys were used to collect quantitative data, and in-depth case studies and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to collect qualitative data. The collective application of these approaches allowed methodological triangulation, thus achieving a higher level of validity, reliability, and depth of analysis of the results.

Study Area and Location

The study has been carried out in four divisional areas of the city corporations of Bangladesh that are purposely selected as they have a dense population of street children and diverse urban socio-economic situations. The targeted places of study were the Dhaka City Corporation (North and South), Khulna City Corporation, Rajshahi City Corporation, and Chattogram City Corporation. These cities are the largest metropolitan and divisional urban areas where street children usually live and work in open areas, transport stations, slums, and other places of high risk. The city orientation also made it easy to engage various stakeholders, including government authorities, social welfare, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), human rights activists, journalists and local government representatives involved in child protection programs.

Sample Design and Respondents

Based on the approximate number of street children (over 1.2 million) in Bangladesh (BBS, 2022), purposive and convenience sampling strategies were used. In the case of the quantitative survey, 120 street children were surveyed and 30 respondents chosen in each of the four areas within the city corporations. In the qualitative aspect, eight (08) in-depth case studies have been done, two studies in each area, with the studies targeting street children that experienced violence, exploitation or excessive deprivation. Moreover, there were four (04) FGDs each having 8-10 participants in each research area. FGD participants came in the form of street children in addition to key stakeholders like

government representatives, government officials of NGOs, social service providers, human rights activists, journalists, and representatives of the local government. This sampling structure guaranteed both the inclusion of the voices of children and the institutional views.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

To collect the quantitative data, a semi-structured interview schedule was designed in the Bengali language using both question types: closed-ended and open-ended questions in order to collect socio-demographic variables, street-based livelihoods, living conditions, and experiences of violence among street children. When choosing the most important variables and constructing the questionnaire, this research was guided in a great number by the conceptual framework and measurement strategy applied in a recent study conducted by Islam (2025), the contextual relevance of the research and methodological consistency with the existing work in the given field. The interview schedule was piloted before the actual survey in order to gauge the clarity, cultural suitability, and reliability, and accordingly, the required changes were made to the findings of pilot interviews. In the case of qualitative inquiry, a detailed case study guide was made in order to record the life history of the children. Another source, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), was held through a structured FGD guideline to enable systematic discussions of nature, causes and remedial solutions to violence against street children. The interviews and group discussions were all done using prior informed consent of the interviewees. The audio-video recordings of the sessions were done to ascertain utmost accuracy and verbatim transcripts were prepared and thoroughly checked with the view of qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This comprised statistical classification, tabulation, frequency distribution, percentage analysis, cross-tabulation, and calculation of measures of central tendency such as mean, median and mode. Qualitative data from case studies and FGDs were analyzed using NVivo software using thematic and narrative analysis. Transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes, categories and patterns related to violence, its determinants and intervention pathways. Findings from both approaches were combined by means of triangulation to increase analytical rigor.

Ethical Considerations

Strict ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Informed consent and child assent were obtained, confidentiality was guaranteed by

anonymization, and interviews were conducted in safe and child-friendly environments. Researchers were trained in ethical and sensitive engagement with street children and ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review body before fieldwork.

3. Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To explore the nature, determinants, and intervention pathways of violence against street children in Bangladesh in order to provide evidence-based recommendations for their protection, well-being, and social inclusion.

Specific Objectives

- To examine the socio-economic, demographic, and family conditions of street children in Bangladesh.
- To identify the types and prevalence of violence (physical, verbal, psychological, and sexual) experienced by street children.
- To analyze the underlying causes of violence, including family, social, economic, and political/institutional factors.
- To provide policy recommendations for improving child protection systems and ensuring a safe and dignified environment for street children.

4. Results

Socio-Economic, Demographic, and Family Conditions of Street Children

This study explores the socio-economic, demographic and family situation of the street children comprehensively, depicting the deep-rooted vulnerabilities of the children. The age distribution shows that most of the street children (55.83%) in this study belong to the age group 10 - 13 years old, followed by the age group of 6 - 9 years (19.17%), age group 14 - 18 years (13.33%), and age group 2 - 5 years (11.67%) indicating that street children are being exposed to street life quite early. Educational deprivation is startling and 92.50% of the children are illiterate, 5.00% have primary education and 2.50% have reached secondary level. Gender composition has a greater proportion of boys (56.70%) than girls (43.30%). In terms of livelihood, street children are found to be involved in various informal and dangerous activities, significantly hawking food and goods (each 15.00%), scrap collection (13.33%), begging (10.83%), and transport related work. Family economic condition is still at a vulnerable stage where more than half (51.67%) are coming from households that are earning BDT 5,001-10,000 per month while family expenditure is mostly within the same range (48.33%) which confirms that there is pressure in the economy (Table 01).

Table 01*Socio-Economic, Demographic, and Family Conditions of Street Children*

Socio-Economic, Demographic, and Family Conditions	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Age Group (Years)		
02–05	14	11.67
06–09	23	19.17
10–13	67	55.83
14–18	16	13.33
Education Level		
Illiterate	111	92.50
Primary	6	5.00
Secondary	3	2.50
Higher Secondary	0	0.00
Gender		
Boys	68	56.70
Girls	52	43.30
Type of Income-Generating Activity		
Begging	13	10.83
Selling food as hawkers	18	15.00
Selling goods/items as hawkers	18	15.00
Selling flowers as hawkers	9	7.50
Collecting garbage	3	2.50
Transporting goods	6	5.00
Furniture making	2	1.67
Collecting and selling scrap materials	16	13.33
Pulling van	8	6.67
Rickshaw driving	8	6.67
Domestic work	8	6.67
Small business	2	1.67
Tea stall operator	0	0.00
Selling intoxicating substances	5	4.16
Prostitution	4	3.33

Monthly Family Income (BDT)		
1,000 to 5,000	14	11.67
5,001 to 10,000	62	51.67
10,001 to 15,000	40	33.33
15,001 to 20,000	4	3.33
Above 20,000	0	0.00
Monthly Family Expenditure (BDT)		
1,000 to 5,000	6	5.00
5,001 to 10,000	58	48.33
10,001 to 15,000	40	33.33
15,001 to 20,000	12	10.00
Above 20,000	4	3.33

Case 02 revealed the economic compulsion behind street life and work:

“I am only twelve years old, yet I have been working on the street at a tea stall for the past two years. I wanted to attend school, but my father said it is beyond our means. Our family earns around 8,000 taka per month, and after paying for food and rent, nothing remains. That is why I work on the street instead of going to school. Customers often scold me when I make mistakes, but I cannot stop working because my family depends on my earnings.”

Similarly, participants in the FGD highlighted the collective vulnerability of street children:

“Most of the children here are boys, and we survive by working on the streets or in small shops. I sell food as a hawker, while many of my friends beg or collect garbage. We know the streets are dangerous, but we have no other choice. Our parents earn very little usually less than 10,000 taka a month. If we do not work, our families will not have enough to eat.”

Forms of Violence Against Street Children in Bangladesh

In this paper, we have shown that violence against street children is not a one time incident or a one time event in Bangladesh; it is part of their daily routine and that they bear it in various, overlapping ways. The verbal, physical and psychological abuse against the street children remains constant since these routinely face adults, employers, peers and even the law enforcers. They are empathized with, pushed, threatened, and called in derogatory terms and gradually stripped of their sense of dignity and worth. Physical punishment

including beating, kicking, pulling of hair or ears and other forms of aversive action on a body are often incorporated with such verbal aggression to make a person feel in control, disciplined or threatened. Besides physical violence, psychological and emotional violence also prevail, being less evident but devastating. A number of children reported incidences of constant humiliation, fear, exclusion and discrimination and denial of the basic needs such as rest, food, safety and freedom of movement. Neglect and ill treatment also contribute to their vulnerability and make them feel they have been socialized in a state of abandonment. Surviving in the streets means to many getting sucked into exploitative work set ups where long working hours, no pay or poor wages and intimidation are condoned as a way of life. Worryingly, a few street children testified of being manipulated or coerced into an illegal or dangerous activity such as petty crimes, political activities or destructive activities usually at the threat or by giving false promises of payment or protection. Sexual violence and exploitation was becoming a very traumatic reality, albeit less discussed, but not only to girls. Children reported the pressure, tricking or being coerced into sexual activity, and being subjected to sexually explicit behavior, all of which resulted in residual emotional and psychological damage.

A participant in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), a human rights activist, explained:

“Street children live in a relentless cycle of exploitation. Violence becomes so normalized in their lives that many no longer recognize it as abuse. Physical beatings, verbal humiliation, and emotional intimidation strip them of dignity, while sexual exploitation silently destroys their childhood. What is most disturbing is the culture of silence-children are afraid to speak because they know there is little chance of justice.”

Case 03shared:

“If I make a small mistake at work, they beat me or shout bad words. Sometimes they lock me outside at night. I don’t know where to complain, because if I say anything, they will hurt me more.”

Case 06, described her experience of fear and exploitation:

“Men think we have no protection. They touch us or say bad things. If we protest, they threaten us. I stay quiet because I am scared and I have nowhere else to go.”

Causes of Violence Against Street Children in Bangladesh

This study summarizes the complex causes of underlying violence against street children in Bangladesh, which shows the interaction of family, social, economic

and political factors. Family related causes are prominent with family violence (68.33%), lack of education of parents or guardians (65.00%), economic instability (62.50%) coming out as major contributors. Mental stress in the family (51.67%) and bad relationships between parents (56.67%) further increase the vulnerability of children. Social factors also figure prominently especially poverty and social instability (68.33%), lack of responsibility and awareness of children's rights (both 60.00%) and normalization of forced child labour and violence (56.67%). Economic causes seem to be deeply rooted as poverty, unemployment, stress in relation to debt, and utilization of children as cheap labour affect more than 60% of the respondents. Political and institutional factors also add to the problem, particularly weak law enforcement and child protection systems (68.33%), ineffective policies (65.00%), and corruption (63.33%). Overall, the research shows that violence against street children has structural origins and is perpetuated by failures in many domains (Table 02).

Table 02

Underlying Causes of Violence Against Street Children in Bangladesh

Causes of Violence Against Street Children	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Family-Related Causes of Abuse/Violence*		
Economic instability as a cause of violence toward the child	75	62.50
Alcoholism and drug addiction increase violent behavior toward child	56	46.67
Family violence causes mental and physical harm to the child	82	68.33
Lack of education can lead to negligence toward the child	78	65.00
Mental stress increases violence against the child	62	51.67
Lack of mutual understanding between parents	68	56.67
Unemployment of parents	46	38.33
Not attending school	65	54.17
Disobedience of the child	52	43.33
Always busy with useless activities	34	28.33
Social Causes of Abuse/Violence*		

Poverty and social instability	82	68.33
Social discrimination and inequality	68	56.67
Lack of parental responsibility	72	60.00
Lack of awareness about children's rights	72	60.00
Prevalence and tradition of child labor	68	56.67
Culture of family or social violence	58	48.33
Lack of importance given to children in society	46	38.33
Normalization of criminal behavior and violence	56	46.67
Guardians' mental instability or immaturity	68	56.67
Bad company/peer influence	72	60.00
Economic Causes of Abuse/Violence*		
Poverty and financial crisis	76	63.33
Financial pressure due to child labor	58	48.33
Guardians' low income leading to failure in meeting children's basic needs	48	40.00
Unemployment and lack of job opportunities	74	61.67
Increased family mental stress due to debt burden and financial difficulties	78	65.00
Use of children as cheap labor	80	66.67
Poor families unable to invest in education	76	63.33
Financial worries causing violence or neglect toward children	68	56.67
Unemployment	76	63.33
Dependence on others	68	56.67
Lack of income earners in the family	77	64.17
Political Causes of Abuse/Violence*		
Weak government law enforcement and child protection systems	82	68.33
Lack of effective policies against child labor and trafficking	78	65.00

Corruption and improper implementation of laws	76	63.33
Political instability and lack of government commitment	65	54.16
Insufficient attention and services from local administration	68	56.67
Wrong political perception treating child labor as socially acceptable	58	48.33
Negligence by political parties regarding child rights	65	54.16
Concealment of child abuse/violence cases under political influence	56	46.67
Forced or prevented participation in political rallies	46	38.33
Forced or prevented posting of political materials	44	36.67
Forced or prevented participation in public meetings	38	31.67

*Multiple responses were counted.

Case 05 described the pressures and vulnerabilities faced on the streets:

“My father lost his job last year, and my mother cannot work because of illness. There is constant tension at home, and my parents often argue. When I cannot earn enough on the street, they scold or even beat me. I want to go to school, but we need every coin I earn to survive. Life feels unfair, and it seems adults do not understand the struggles we face every day.”

FGD Participant (Lawyer) highlighted systemic challenges affecting street children:

“Street children experience violence not only at home but also from society and institutional systems. Poverty and social neglect impact nearly three-quarters of these children, while weak law enforcement and ineffective policies leave them unprotected. Corruption and negligence by local authorities are widespread. Unless these structural issues are addressed, street children will continue to face exploitation and abuse.”

Recommendations for Preventing Violence Against Street Children in Bangladesh

Targeted and multi-level recommendations for violence prevention for street children in Bangladesh are presented in this study, and reflect shared responsibilities of families, communities, institutions, and the state. At the level of child-centered care, the fulfillment of basic needs (70.83%), the treatment of children with kindness (66.67%), and the provision of opportunities for normal development (62.50%) are revealed as important preventive measures. Family and guardian roles are especially highlighted, with preventing family violence and seeking legal action at the earliest, each receiving 70.83% support, in addition to awareness raising on child labor, abuse, and trafficking (66.67%). Educational institutions are considered to be a protective space, with a certain emphasis on coordination with local administration (60.00%), awareness campaigns (61.67%), and the creation of school-based monitoring mechanisms (58.33%). Government responsibility comes into play as key features, especially in the areas of financial support to poor families (73.33%), compulsory education (70.83%), and the provision of shelter, education, and healthcare services for street children (65.00%). Overall, the study highlights the fact that violence against street children needs to be prevented through a coordinated and rights-based approach and multi-stakeholder intervention instead of a standalone action (Table 03).

Table 03

Targeted Recommendations for Preventing Violence Against Street Children in Bangladesh

Recommendations for Preventing Violence Against Street Children	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Ways to Prevent Violence*		
Providing opportunities for normal development of the child	75	62.50
Enrolling the child in school	74	61.67
Treating the child kindly	80	66.67
Fulfilling the child's basic needs	85	70.83
Caring for orphans at government service centers	76	63.33
Role of Parents/Guardians/Family in Preventing Violence*		
Ensuring fulfilment of the child's basic needs	75	62.50

Sending the child to school despite financial difficulties	74	61.67
Understanding and spreading awareness about the harmful effects of child labor, abuse, and trafficking	80	66.67
Avoiding family violence	85	70.83
Creating a loving and safe environment for the child's development	76	63.33
Ensuring the child's sense of security and mental stability	75	62.50
Teaching self-defense, values, and ethics	74	61.67
Creating employment opportunities for poor families to prevent sending children to work	80	66.67
Taking prompt legal action in case of violence	85	70.83
Seeking help from local administration and child protection agencies	76	63.33
Raising awareness among neighbors and community about children's rights	75	62.50
Taking social measures to prevent discriminatory behavior and abuse	74	61.67
Role of Teachers/Educational Institutions in Preventing Violence*		
Creating awareness about the harmful effects of violence on children	65	54.16
Identifying abused children and providing counselling and support	58	48.33
Initiating efforts to reintegrate children who dropped out of school	66	55.00
Treating children kindly and avoiding any form of abuse	65	54.16
Providing free education and scholarships for street children	56	46.67
Establishing complaint boxes and monitoring systems in schools to prevent violence	70	58.33
Coordinating with local administration to combat child labor and abuse	72	60.00
Organizing workshops and campaigns to raise awareness	74	61.67

Providing rehabilitation and legal assistance for victims of violence	68	56.67
Government Role in Preventing Violence/Abuse*		
Enact and enforce strict laws	76	63.33
Implement monitoring systems to stop child labor and abuse	74	61.67
Ensure shelter, education, and healthcare services for street children	78	65.00
Provide financial support and employment opportunities for poor families	88	73.33
Conduct public awareness campaigns through media and social outreach	70	58.33
Enforce compulsory primary education to eliminate child labor	85	70.83
Provide counselling and rehabilitation for abused children	75	62.50
Require law enforcement agencies to take effective steps to prevent child abuse	67	55.83
Coordinate with NGOs and international organizations	59	49.16
Establish helpline and complaint mechanisms to prevent child abuse and trafficking	64	53.33

*Multiple responses were counted.

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

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

5. Discussion

This study presents compelling empirical evidence to the fact that violence against street children is pervasive and multifaceted in nature and is underpinned by socio economic, familial, political and institutional vulnerability. One of the greatest results of this research is the high prevalence of violence among the street children: 86.67% of them had verbal abuse, 85.00% were physically abused and 81.67% were psychologically abused. These figures correlate to national numbers, which suggest that approximately 82.9 percent of children on the streets are at risk of abuse or harassment by pedestrians, which shows the pervasive risk of encountering daily violence in public places (UNICEF, 2018). This alignment or congruence implies that street children in Bangladesh are victims of violence not only within the family contexts but through a much broader social interaction and community behaviors. Further, from this study, it was identified that 18.33% of street children have been sexually abused or assaulted and 20.00% of street children were forced into criminal activities, 25.00% were forcibly recruited into political participation. Although national surveys conducted by UNICEF and BBS do not disaggregate sexual violence to the precision offered here, existing research confirms that street children face high levels of harassment and harmful practices, especially at times when they may be vulnerable, such as when sleeping or working on the street (BBS, 2022). The addition of criminalization and political coercion in this study broadens the documented spectrum of street child vulnerabilities, highlighting the ways in which structural marginalization not only leaves children vulnerable to abuse but also vulnerable to exploitation by illicit networks and political stakeholders (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2019).

The socio-economic and demographic profile of street children revealed by the current study shows that the majority of street children are between the age group of 10 - 13 years (55.83%), are from the illiterate group (92.50%), and are engaged in various hazardous livelihood activities. These conditions reflect the authoritative findings of their national counterparts: the UNICEF/BBS survey found that 71.8% of street children cannot read or write, indicating a serious case of educational deprivation (UNICEF, 2018). This concurrence strengthens a well-established connection between lack of formal education and living on the streets, where education exclusion is both a consequence and a perpetrator of the marginalization of children. In a similar measure, the involvement in hazardous street-based livelihoods such as hawking, garbage collection or working in informal settings all conform to other overarching data that many street children have had to work long hours in precarious environments in order to support themselves and their families (Sayem, 2011). This paper identified poverty-related stress (e.g., economic instability, unemployment, low family income) as a key determinant of violence. These results are consistent with the local and

global literature. The research conducted by UNICEF has revealed that extreme poverty is one of the major causes that lead children to end up in the streets, as many families are unable to afford things such as necessities, children being coaxed into going to work, which is very dangerous to them to do at an early age (Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha [BSS], 2025). Similarly, other researchers have pointed out that exposure to violence and neglect by street children are attributed to settled economic difficulties, absence of social security and household stability. These findings highlight the importance of the observation that violence against street children is not merely an issue of behavior, but rather that of structure, a result of socio-economic exclusion.

Family dynamics came strongly in this study as predictors of violence against street children. For example, 68.33% of them mentioned the cause of family violence, and 65.00% mentioned the lack of educational level of parents as contributing factors. This is in resonance with previous research where it has been observed that domestic conflict, stress brought about by poverty and parental absence, is what can lead to many children migrating to the streets or increasing their susceptibility. Similarly, the identification of social discrimination, lack of parental responsibility, and the normalization of violence in our society, as reflected in this study, has parallels in the broader scholarship on how social marginalization compounds vulnerability. In literature on child protection in Bangladesh, researchers such as those reporting on the challenges for street children argue that the lack of positive family support and acceptance by the community further consolidates street children in cycles of neglect, abuse, and exclusion, reinforcing patterns of violence (Rahman, 2023). Structural and political determinants, including poor law enforcement and enforcement of effective policies, corruption, and political negligence, were identified by this study as important causes of violence. These findings are consistent with analyses of child rights and institutional capacity in Bangladesh that highlight how formal legislation, such as the Children Act, National Children Policy, and commitments under the UNCRC, frequently fail to translate into effective protection, owing to limited enforcement, administrative gaps, and structural corruption. Existing literature shows similar weaknesses in policy execution, especially in protecting the most vulnerable populations, such as street children, as their marginalization makes them invisible to protective institutions (Bromfield et al., 2023). The qualitative insights of lawyers and activists in this study give further echo to this systemic critique, focusing on the impunity that enables perpetrators of violence to evade accountability, a theme that is consistently highlighted in child rights literature.

The recommendations presented by the study highlight multi-layered prevention strategies with family, educational, community, and government involvement. These are consistent with international child protection frameworks that call for

holistic interventions that integrate social protection, access to education, legal enforcement, community engagement, and rehabilitation services. Comparable research in Bangladesh suggests that effective response systems need to combine economic support of poor families, school reintegration of street children, and institutional reforms to increase accountability within law enforcement (Zinia, 2022). The current study's focus on family awareness (e.g., no family violence and security), community awareness campaigns, and institutional monitoring mechanisms reflects this holistic approach and confirms the fact that isolated interventions are not enough without system change. While many of the findings of this research coincide with those found in other research, there are some significant extensions. For example, quantification of certain forms of violence, such as being forced to participate in political rallies (25.00%) and forced drug addiction (15.00%), is less discussed in most national reports, which mostly focus on quantification of physical and general abuse. This research, therefore, contributes to empirical clarity of nuanced forms of exploitation in the context of the street. Additionally, the focus on manifestations of psychological abuse (e.g., social isolation, humiliation) and detailed verbal abuse patterns is similar to those in research on child rights worldwide, but with specific percentages that give a greater understanding of emotional harms that are often disregarded in broader surveys (Maksud et al., 2024).

6. Conclusion

This paper brings to the fore the pervasive and multidimensional violence against street children in Bangladesh, and calls on an all-round intervention. The results show that street children have been exposed to co-occurring physical, psychological, verbal and sexual abuse and systemic negligence and economic exploitation. The underlying causes lie deep in the family turmoil, poverty, social discrimination, poor institutional systems, and political neglect. Street children fully assume their responsibility to make a living at early age, being denied access to education, security and holistic development. The study also indicates that in an effort to counter violence against street children; multi-level interventions should be concertedly tackled. Vital to breaking a cycle of abuse are family support, community engagement, strengthened law enforcement, child-friendly education, social protection, and rehabilitation services. Laws in themselves are not effective when they are not put into practice and created awareness of in the society. After all, not only is the protection of the rights and well-being of street children a moral imperative, but it is also a crucial investment in the social and economic future of Bangladesh, with the most vulnerable children in Bangladesh growing up with dignity, safety, and opportunity.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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