

Socio-economic Status of Slum Dwellers: An Empirical Study on the Capital City of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Slums living people are very poor and their socio-economic condition does not allow them to live a healthy life. They do not have access to sanitation and they cannot get safe water supply. They have to live in adverse conditions due to poor social, economic and health facilities. The main purpose of this study was to find out socio-economic condition of slum dwellers of Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh, a South Asian country. Data was collected from 315 respondents by survey research method where respondents were selected by statistical simple random sampling method. There were found that people living in slums had sad tales in living conditions. Owing to bad hygienic condition and health statuses of households were also not in satisfactory level. The morbidity rate was very high among the studied population and it was concluded that people living with low socio-economic conditions were to face different health and hygiene problems.

Keywords

Socio-economic Status, Slum Dwellers, Dhaka City, Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

Slum means a heavily populated area in city [1]. Slum is that parts of the cities which are most inhabitants are in or near poverty [2]. In the early age of industrial revaluation first slums is created in the cities not so far of the centre of the cities, close of factories' gate [3]. In the early stage of industrialization usually lowest paid worker of industrial cities of England and the United State live in slums [4]. The latter are impoverished shanty settlements created and inhabited by squatters, many of whom are relatively recent migrants [5]. Slum areas illustrate high rates of poverty, illiteracy and bad health status. Slum dwellers have low earning. Urban areas do not provide them proper jobs. They do not have any formal education facilities. Dwellers of slums engaged in informal labour through which they cannot earn much. They work in environment which is harmful to

them. This fact forces them to work in informal sectors [6].

Lower socio-economic conditions lead them to ailing life. Even though the living condition of slum dwellers are worse than that of rural dwellers. They are more vulnerable to communicable diseases and malnutrition and at the same time exposed to greater risk of accidents at work [7, 8]. Most of the slum dwellers in developing countries are living below poverty line. They do not have good source of income. An adequate supply of drinking water is basic human need [9, 10]. Unfortunately, most of the households in slums do not have access to safe water. In some areas public water supply is available but quality of water is not so good. Sanitation system is very poor in slums [11].

Their streets are narrow and unpaved; slum dwellers have to face water stagnation in rainy season. This makes the

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environment of that area very unhygienic. Such environment causes a number of diseases in slums [12]. One of the most important characteristics of slums is lack of ownership of land where they are living. Usually they make their houses on vacant government or public land, or marginal land parcels like railway setbacks or undesirable marshy land. When the land is not in productive use they get it as an opportunity and settle there. They are vulnerable to landslide, flood prone areas and unsafe environment [13, 14]

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh is an over-populated city, covering near about 350 km² and is the home of over 15 million peoples [15]. Population boom couples with unplanned industrialization and urbanization spoiled the vegetation of Dhaka, triggering urban problems such as pollution, congestion and inadequate public services [16-18]. Slum is a word, a name that reflects the miseries of deprived people who have to struggle with poverty to survive [19]. Slum is a densely populated temporary residential house build lawfully and unlawfully having no water supply, sanitation facilities or electricity supply [20, 21]. Most of these are one-roomed dwelling and extremely over-crowded [22]. There are approximately more than 5000 slum in Dhaka city. Most of the people who live in a slum are of Dhaka city is lead a so miserable life [23, 24]. The sufferings of females are more than men in that area. Another inhuman thing is female who lives in slum area of Dhaka city are considered as a lower class people and they have not any social esteem in society [25-28].

In general, slums are the products of failed policies, bad governance, corruption, inappropriate regulation; dysfunctional land markets, unresponsive financial systems and a fundamental lack of political will [29]. States parties shall recognize for every citizen the right to benefit from social security; including social insurance and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law [30]. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. In 1948, the UN General Assembly passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which referred to ensure a secured life for all [8, 31-33]. Therefore, the current study was conducted to assess the socio-economic status of the Slum dwellers in Dhaka city of Bangladesh.

2. Framework and Data Sources

2.1. Study Type

The study was a pilot study.

2.2. Population Selection

There were taken a total 315 slum dwellers from the slums of

Mohakhali, Komlapur, Mirpur, Tejgaon and Kawran Bazar at Dhaka city in Bangladesh.

2.3. Study Duration

The study was conducted from July 2013 to June 2014.

2.4. Sampling Method

The simple random sampling method was used to frame the slum dwellers from the study places.

2.5. Data Collecting Techniques

A planned questionnaire was developed containing both the closed and open ended query to collect data through face-to-face interview with the respondents. The questionnaire was pretested in areas far away from the sample areas and revised according to the feedback gained in the field level. The questionnaire was formed to obtain the relevant information considering personal, household, social and economic details.

2.6. Data Verification

The questionnaire was checked per day taking the interview and gain these were carefully rechecked after collecting all the data and coded prior the entrancing into computer technology.

The data was edited in case of sighting discrepancy (doubt entry, wrong entry etc.)

2.7. Statistical Analysis

The data were processed to undergo statistical analysis using SPSS 16 windows program. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were used to represent the tabular and chart icon.

3. Results

The study presented that 35.50% slum dwellers were between 20-24 years of age while 52.38% are female and 68.25% married. Among them 56.50% illiterate while most of them were Muslim (74.60%) and 31.11% earned livelihood as rickshaw pullers and 23.80% as beggars (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics respondents (N= 315).

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
<20	35	11.11
20-24	112	35.50
25-29	55	17.46
30-34	38	12.06
35-39	32	10.15
40-44	20	6.34
45-49	14	4.44
50<	9	2.85
Sex		
Female	165	52.38
Male	150	47.61

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Religion		
Muslim	235	74.60
Hindu	59	18.73
Christian	13	4.12
Others	8	2.53
Marital status		
Married	215	68.25
Unmarried	79	25.07
Divorced	16	5.07
Widow	5	1.58
Educational Standard		
Illiterate	178	56.50
Primary	75	23.80
Secondary	57	18.09
Graduate	5	1.58
Post Graduate	0	0
Doctoral Degree	0	0
Occupation		
Rickshaw pullers	98	31.11
Day Labours	63	20.00
Beggars	75	23.80
Small Traders	38	12.06
Garments Worker	32	10.05
Others	9	2.85

Among the respondents 45.39% came to city for the sake of poverty and 17.46% settled in slums as inheritance while 61.90% for low income. 56.19% from village and most of them (52.38%) earned 5000 to 10000 BDT per month. 53.33% family had 6 to 8 members while 35.48% had savings below 3000 BDT (Table 2).

Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Causes of coming to City		
Poverty	143	45.39
To Search work	89	28.25
Natural calamities	66	20.95
others	17	5.39
Reasons for Settling in Slums		
Inheritance	55	17.46
Near to Workplace	28	8.88
High rent in non-slum areas	37	11.74
Low income	195	61.90
Comes from		
Villages	177	56.19
Towns	138	43.80
Monthly Income (BDT)		
<5000	35	11.11
5000-10000	165	52.38
10001-15000	98	31.11
>15000	17	5.39
Family Members		
<3	27	8.57
3-5	108	34.28
6-8	168	53.33
>8	12	3.80
Possession of MobilePhone		
Yes	282	89.52
No	33	10.47
Possession of TV		
Yes	270	85.71
No	45	14.28
Amount of Savings (BDT)		
<3000	55	35.48

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
3000-5000	38	24.51
5001-8000	21	13.54
80001-10000	18	11.61
10000-12000	14	9.03
>12000	9	5.80

Most of the respondents (36.50%) lived in thatched hut while 12.69% had no electricity facility. About 85.07% get water from public tap and 66.66% had sanitary latrine while 33.33% used open place of the non sanitary latrine users. 74.36% dwellers did not take bath daily while 77.77% suffered from any disease within last two months (Table 3).

Table 3. Housing, Drinking Water and Sanitary Conditions.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Housing		
Pakka	20	6.34
Semi-pakka	85	26.98
Kacha	95	30.15
Thatched Hut	115	36.50
Availability of Electricity		
Yes	275	87.30
No	40	12.69
Source of Drinking Water		
Public Tap	268	85.07
Own Tap	47	14.92
Sanitary Latrine		
Yes	210	66.66
No	105	33.33
Type of Latrine using by non sanitary users		
Public Latrine	48	45.71
Pit Latrine	22	20.95
Open Place	35	33.33
Daily Bathing		
Yes	80	25.39
No	235	74.36
Suffered from diseases within last two months		
Yes	245	77.77
No	70	22.22

4. Discussion

Slum areas are the common phenomenon in Bangladesh as well as all over the world [16, 34]. These are the product of socio-economic and cultural conditions of a particular social system inhibiting the physical, mental, moral and social development of the individuals [35]. Recent years have seen a dramatic growth in the number of slums as urban populations have increased in the Third World. According to a 2006 UN-HABITAT report, 327 million people live in slums in Commonwealth countries, almost one in six Commonwealth citizens. In a quarter of Commonwealth countries (11 African, 2 Asian and 1 Pacific), more than two out of three urban dwellers live in slums and many of these countries are urbanizing rapidly. Bangladesh has the highest number of slum dwellers i.e., 60% of the urban population-in the South Asia [36-41]. The present study found that, Most of the slum dwellers (35.50%) were between 20-24 years of age while 52.38% are Female and 68.25% married.

Among them 56.50% illiterate while most of them were Muslim (74.60%) and 31.11% earned livelihood as rickshaw pullers, 23.80% as beggars which is supported by another study [42]. Poverty is the main companion of the slum dwellers and to earn livelihood the children also have to engage with various works [43, 44]. The study also showed that, among the respondents 45.39% came to city for the sake of poverty and 17.46% settled in slums as inheritance while 61.90% for low income. 56.19% from village and most of them (52.38%) earned 5000 to 10000 BDT per month. 53.33% family had 6 to 8 members while 35.48% had savings below 3000 BDT which are similar to another study results [45-48]. According to present study, most of the respondents (36.50%) lived in thatched hut while 12.69% had no electricity facility. 85.07% get water from public tap and 66.66% had sanitary latrine while 33.33% used open place of the non sanitary latrine users. 74.36% dwellers did not take bath daily while 77.77% suffered from any disease within last two months. While another study found that, the housing conditions in the slum present a grim scenario. About 25 percent of houses are pakka and 68.2 percent were semi pakka in notified area and non notified area, it is 6.4 and 79 percent respectively [49-52]. Dwellers of slums do not have adequate system of latrine cleanliness and sanitation is very poor in slum areas [53]. This clarifies that these people have unhygienic latrines [54]. They also found, More than 75% respondents replied that any of their household members had to face any illness in two months prior to study. This is a quite high ratio of illness in any area. This shows that this response degrades overall health status of this area. Most frequent illness that they faced was diarrhoea and at second was the fever. It depicts that diarrhoea is a problem that relates to water born ailments [55]. To explore the overall evaluation in this issue is harder enough and therefore the spatial micro simulation modelling [56-58] can be an effective tool in designing adequate policies to see the governments and NGOs about environmental and spatial effects [59-61] across different sites in the country to ensure a better life for the slum dwellers in the country as rule as their constitutional rights [62, 63].

5. Conclusion

The rapid growth of population in urban centres since the independence has led to the emergence and growth of urban slums in the country. The developmental activities in urban centres provide employment to the rural migrants as well as the local urban population. These low income groups, in the absence of proper shelter were settled in pockets of the slum areas characterized by overcrowding, dilapidated dwellings, lack of sanitation and civic amenities. Realizing the gravity of the situation governments have implemented a number of schemes and programmes to improve the living conditions of people living in slums. In a nut shell multiprolonged strategy required not only to address the needs of slum dwellers for

shelter but also the problems of urban poverty, unemployment, low incomes and lack of access to basic urban services.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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