

Socio-economic Status of Slum Dwellers: A Case Study of Uttara Periphery, Dhaka

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to assess the living status of slum dwellers at Uttara, periphery, Dhaka. A slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing, squalor, lack of sanitation services, supply of clean water, reliable electricity, and other basic services. Analysis showed that the average money spending on food and groceries was Tk.2,757.41 (44.86%) whereas the average monthly house rent including utilities was Tk.1,968.33 (32.02%). It was noted that educational expense of children was Tk.555.00 (9.03%) per month, while cost for health care per month was Tk.457.5 (7.44%). It was observed that they lived in unhygienic surroundings. In the slum area, the youngest and adult age group (0-24 years) had morbidity rate of 30.8% followed by population in the age group 35-39 years (17.9%). Morbidity was lowest (5.1%) for the population belonging to age group 30-34 years, followed by morbidity of population aged 40 and above (each group has morbidity rate 12.8%). Slum people were found to be engaged in day labourer, small job services, rickshaw pulling, and little business.

Introduction

Bangladesh, as the rest of the developing world, is urbanizing rapidly; around one-third of the country's population comprising 50 million people, live in urban areas. In recent years, urban population is growing at an increasing rate in Bangladesh (at an annual rate of between five to six per cent). Urban population has grown 5 million in 1970, 22 million in 1990, and about 52 million in 2010. Even though level of urbanization is low in Bangladesh, the magnitude of urban population (more than 50 million) is larger than the national population of many countries in the world (Australia, Canada). It has been projected that the share of urban population will be 44.3% of total population by 2030 (UN 2002), and more than 50% of the population will live in urban areas by 2050 (UN 2007).

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Historical Development of Slum Dwellers

Slums and squatters are characterized by crowded living conditions, unhygienic surroundings and lack of basic amenities such as garbage disposal facilities, water and sanitation. Generally, slum grows unsystematically in government owned or private vacant land. The walls and roofs of slum houses are generally made of straw leaves, Gunny bag, polythene paper, bamboo, a tin shed house etc. Sometimes slum houses may be a building, if it situated within the purview and environment of a slum. The physical and hygienic conditions of such houses are far below those of a common urban residential area. Generally, this segment of people are distressed and forced to live in such unhygienic condition due to economic reason.

Slums are also defined as settlements with a minimum of 10 households or a mess unit with a minimum of 25 members and predominantly very poor housing; very high population density and room crowding; very poor environmental services, especially water and sanitation; very low socio-economic status; lack of security of tenure. Usually poor people migrated from village and very poor people in urban areas live in slum. They choose the slum to live, because they are maximum landless.

Slums were common in the 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States and Europe. New York City is believed to have created the world's first slum, named the Five Points in 1825, as it evolved into a large urban settlement. More recently slums have been predominantly found in urban regions of developing and undeveloped parts of the world, but are also found in developed economies.

There were 41 urban areas in present day Bangladesh at the census of 1901 and 1911 which increased to 51 in the census of 1921, 59 in 1931, 60 in 1941, 64 in 1951, 78 in 1961 and more than 300 in 2001. Bangladesh is a speedily urbanizing country where the urban base has expanded dramatically, from less than a tenth (around 7%) of total population in 1974 to about a third of total population in 2011.

The overall population of Bangladesh will increase by 64.6 million to roughly 217.9 million people in the quarter century from 2005 to 2030 (UN-POP 2007). Three-fourths of this growth will occur in urban areas, bringing the urban population to nearly 89.5 million (from 39.4 million in 2005). The urban population would thus be more than double over this interval, while the rural population will grow by roughly 13 per cent.

The rapid urbanization of Bangladesh is likely to have profound implications for the health profile of her population. Accompanying this rapid pace of urbanization,

there has been a faster growth in the population residing in slums and squatters. It is estimated that slums represent the fastest growing segments of the urban population, which is almost double the growth of overall urban population.

According to the report of the Census of slum areas and Floating Population 1997, the largest number of slum situated in Dhaka city followed by 100-Paurashavas and 14 cities respectively. While in 2005, Dhaka remained the first followed by Chittagong, Rajshahi SMA and Barisal accordingly. In addition to that, the report confirmed that, 1579 slums and cluster were situated in Dhaka SMA whereas this figure reached at 4966 in 2005 with a broad definition of slums. The percentages of these numbers recorded as 52.9 and 54.9 respectively. Between 1997 and 2005, the percentages of slum in Chittagong SMA, Khulna SMA and Sylhet fluctuated in the range of 5 to 8. In 2005 census, 641 slums founded in Rajshahi SMA while it was only 84 in 1997.

Rationale of the study

Dhaka city is one of the most densely populated cities in the world. The city alone contains more than one-third (36.4%) of the total urban population, which is a matter of great concern. In 2001, 8.6 million people resided in Dhaka city alone. Besides, most of the headquarters of important government offices, trade bodies and other metropolitan facilities are located and that's why most of the migrants move towards this capital city in far more numbers than the other destinations. Most of Dhaka's growth is due to migration from rural areas, rapid migration is causing Dhaka's population to grow much faster than the rest of the country.

Due to mass population secure shelter is a major challenge for the urban poor. As migrants continue to arrive, they often end up in illegal settlements on precarious lands with major environmental concerns. The present study has been undertaken to study these problems. This study has also tried to identify the status of their current living conditions, and the difficulties that they face in Dhaka city.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to find out the living status of slum dwellers living in the slum areas of Uttara periphery of Dhaka. The specific objectives are:

- i) To find out the livelihood status of slum dwellers
- ii) To assess the levels and patterns of morbidity by age, gender, education and socio-economic conditions of slum dwellers
- iii) To make recommendations on the basis of the findings for the improvement of the living status of the slum-dwellers

In the present study, an attempt has been made to analyse the demographic and socio-economic conditions of slum dwellers. In this paper it has been tried to give a brief description of slum dwellers of Uttara with some policy suggestion.

Review of Literature

Review of related literature in any research is essential because it provides a scope for knowing the available stock of knowledge relevant to the proposed research. This knowledge provides a guideline in designing the future research problem and validating the new findings.

Alamgir, M. S., et al. (2009) conducted a study to determine the factors affecting the livelihood of the socioeconomic improvement of migrants and to analyze the causes of rural-urban migration in slum areas. Analysis showed that migration and taking in micro credit were beneficial for the slum dwellers. Due to participation of slum dwellers in NGOs, their economic, social and decision making improved substantially. Finding showed that 56% people migrated to Dhaka city for economic reason. The study recommended that, there is a need for proper training for sustainable results for slum dwellers in the long run.

Democracywatch (2002) conducted a study on “An Assessment on the Uprooted Slum Dwellers” in some selected slums in Dhaka city. The study was based on survey methodology and case studies. This study discovered the reasons for increasing the slum dwellers of the city and the problems they faced. The study found out that the slum dwellers are deprived of important fundamental rights like accommodation, pure water supply, education etc. They also showed that the dweller's lifestyle is a barrier for modern urban development and a sound environment.

Hossain (2005) examined ‘Livelihood Framework’ in Dhaka City, Bangladesh concluded that slum people invariably live below the poverty line and have little access to employment in formal sectors. They have failed to secure a sustainable livelihood in the city despite living for a long period of time. The poor communities are vulnerable in terms of their physical and social capital. They have little access to the city's social and political structure, which also shows their vulnerable situation. Urban government has little initiative to create opportunities for the poor sections of city's population. The poor communities cope with urban life through ‘household strategies’ such as: putting more family members into the work force, through petty trading, avoiding many basic goods, which represent luxuries to them, increasing their household size by inducting more relatives, withdrawing their children from education, constructing their own shelter, using kinship as social capital, and establishing patron-client relationships with local leaders.

Hossain, B. (2014) Investigated 28 years data for 1986-2014 periods on the living standard of slum dwellers of Bangladesh and presented the different forms of their deprivations, sufferings and miseries from basic needs including social, constitutional and economic rights. More specifically, the wretchedness of slum dwellers in housing, drinking water, sanitation, food intake, healthcare, education, employment, income patterns, social status and security, economic and public assistance has been explored. In addition, poverty scenario and services of social organization among slum people has been focused in this paper. Finally, it recommended some policies to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers in Bangladesh.

Methodology

The study is based on primary data from household survey conducted in slum areas of sector no. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 of Uttara periphery in Dhaka. A sample of 60 households living in the slum clusters have been selected for the present study. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected for the present survey. Detailed information was collected on background characteristics including education, occupation, and monthly income of respondents. We have used SPSS software for analysis of this study. The present study also used some secondary data for analysis.

Results and Analysis

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The present study is based on primary data collection in slums located in Uttara region of Dhaka city. As already mentioned, information was obtained from 60 slum households and from every household one member was interviewed. In the interview 61.7% were male and 38.3% were female respondents (Table 1). Most of the respondents were overwhelmingly poor and illiterate. Most of them belonged to households having monthly income not exceeding Tk.5000. About 75% of the interviewees were married, 21.7% were unmarried and 3.3% were divorced.

Age of the Respondents

The average age of the respondent was 33 years. Among them, 43.3% of the respondents were aged below 30 years, 23.3% of the respondents belonged to age group 30-39 years, 15% was in the age group 40-44 years, 8.3% was in the age range 45-49 years, while 10.0% of the respondents were aged 50 years and over.

Table 1: Respondents Socio-economic Characteristics

Characteristics	No.	%
Respondents sex		
Male	37	61.7
Female	23	38.3
Total	60	100.0
Marital Status		
Married	45	75.0
Unmarried	13	21.7
Divorced	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0
Age of Household Head (in years)		
Below 24 years	20	33.3
25-29 years	6	10.0
30-34 years	5	8.3
35-39 years	9	15.0
40-44 years	9	15.0
45-49 years	5	8.3
50+ years	6	10.0
Mean Age	33	

Source: Field survey

Education of the Respondents

Level of education is negatively correlated with the level of poverty. Table 2 provides distribution of the respondents by educational level. About a half (41.7%) of the respondents were illiterate, without any formal education; about a sixth (16.7%) of the respondents can sign only; about a third (33.3%) had education beyond Primary level; about twentieth (5.0%) of the respondents had education beyond High School level; and only an insignificant proportion (3.3%) of the respondents had education beyond secondary level.

Table 2: Education of the Respondents

Years of Schooling	No.	%
Illiterate	25	41.7
Can sign only	10	16.7
Primary (1-5)	20	33.3
Class 6-9 completed	3	5.0
Secondary & Higher Secondary completed	2	3.3
Graduation completed	0	.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey

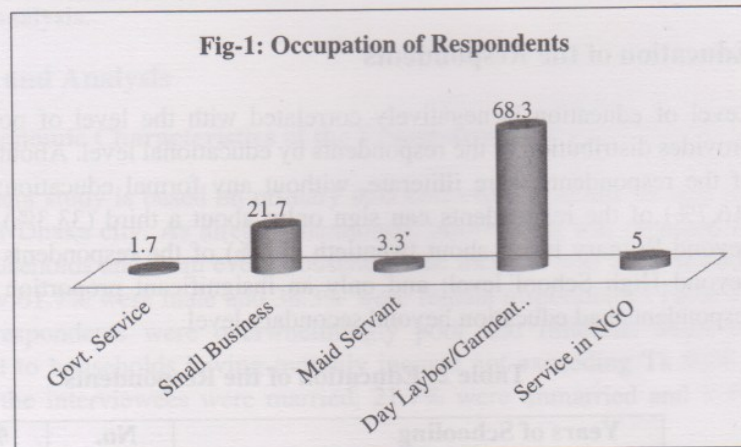
Occupation of the Respondents

The slum dwellers mostly have low-paid jobs in the informal sectors of the urban economy. There is a predominance of day labouring among this poor group of city dwellers. The highest proportion of slum households are working as Day Labour/Garment Worker (68.3%), about a fifth of the respondents (21.7%) are involved in small business; only 6.7% of the respondents are found to be salaried employees (either with the Government or in the private sector) (Table 3).

Table 3: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	No.	%
Govt. Service	1	1.7
Small Business	13	21.7
Maid servant	2	3.3
Day Labor/Garment Worker	41	68.3
Service in NGO	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey



Earning Member of the Respondents Family

Table 4 provides information on the number of earning members – 40% of the slum households have single earning member. It is evident that around 38.3% of slum households have two earning members, 18.3% have three earning members and 3.3% households have at least 4 earners per household.

Table 4: Number of Earning Members

Member	No.	%
1 member	24	40.0
2 members	23	38.3
3 members	11	18.3
4 members	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey

Information on the number of earning members helps to understand the level of income of the household as well. If assume that the household size is more or less the same, then higher number of members involved in income generating activities would indicate higher level of poverty of the households. It is because of extreme financial crisis that more and more members (especially women and children) from poorer households are forced participating in income earning activities to supplement household income.

Household Income of the Respondents

The findings show that 51.7 percent of slum households live on a monthly income, which does not exceed Tk.5000. About a third of the households (38.3 percent) live on a monthly income ranging between Tk.5,001 to Tk.10,000. On the other hand, only 1.7 percent of the households belong to the monthly income group exceeding Tk.1,5000.

Table 5: Monthly Income of Respondents

Income Group	No.	%
Up to 5,000 Taka	31	51.7
5,001-10,000 Taka	23	38.3
10,001-15,000 Taka	5	8.3
15,001-20,000 Taka	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey

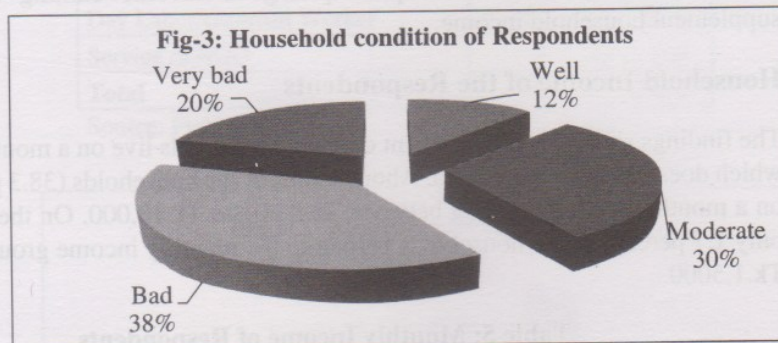
Household Condition

Table 6 shows that 88.3% of households live in rental house and 5% of them has own house (house built in govt. land-free of cost). Household condition of them was 11.7% well, 30.0% moderate, majority percent is bad (38.3%) and 20% is very bad.

Table 6: Housing Category of Respondents

	No.	%
Respondents sex		
Housing category		
Own	3	5.0
Rental	53	88.3
Others	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0
Household condition		
Well	7	11.7
Moderate	18	30.0
Bad	23	38.3
Very bad	12	20.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey



Morbidity of the Respondents

Morbidity means incidence of sickness/injury/pain affecting a person in the household. It can be measured either by clinical (observed) or self-perceived reporting. No clinical reporting would allow us to measure the pain and suffering of an individual except through self-reporting. Data was collected (by non-medical personnel) from household head/ other members of the household. Therefore, the responses to survey questions can only be taken as an approximation while estimating the burden of morbidity since some of the respondents might have little knowledge about what constitutes sickness, and in the process there is a tendency to ignore minor ailments and health problems.

In order to have an idea about the type of diseases suffered by household members in the rural area, the respondents were asked whether any member of the household suffered from any sickness during the three months prior to the survey. Information was also collected on the type of disease/ problem suffered by household member.

Table 7: Morbidity during Last Three Months

Morbidity during last three months	No.	%
Yes	39	65.0
No	21	35.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey

Table 8: Distribution of Patients: by Gender

Respondents sex	No.	%
Male	21	53.8
Female	18	46.2
Total	39	100.0

Source: Field survey

The findings show that out of the 60 surveyed slum-households covered by the survey, 65 percent of the households (39 households) had an episode of illness in their households at the time of the survey or during three months preceding the survey, while the remaining 35 percent of households did not experience any illness during the reference period.

The distribution of patients by gender shows (Table 8) that the incidence of sickness for males was higher compared to their female counterparts in slum area. In the slum area, 53.8 percent of males were sick during three month preceding the survey, the corresponding figure was 46.2 percent for females.

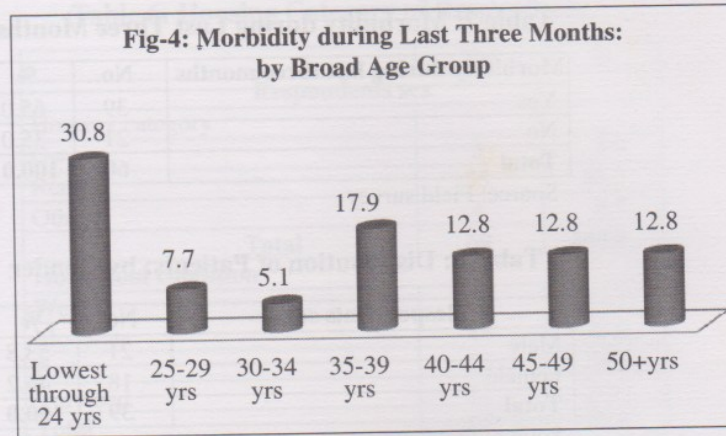
Morbidity by Age of the Respondents

In the slum area, the youngest and adult age group (0-24 years) had morbidity rate of 30.8% followed by population in the age group 35-39 years (17.9%). Morbidity was lowest (5.1%) for the population belonging to age group 30-34 years, followed by morbidity of population aged 40 and above (each group has morbidity rate 12.8%) (Table 9).

Table 9: Morbidity during Last Three Months by Broad Age Group

Respondents age	No.	%
Lowest through 24 yrs	12	30.8
25-29 yrs	3	7.7
30-34 yrs	2	5.1
35-39 yrs	7	17.9
40-44 yrs	5	12.8
45-49 yrs	5	12.8
50+ yrs	5	12.8
Total	39	100.0

Source: Field survey



Morbidity by Education of the Respondents

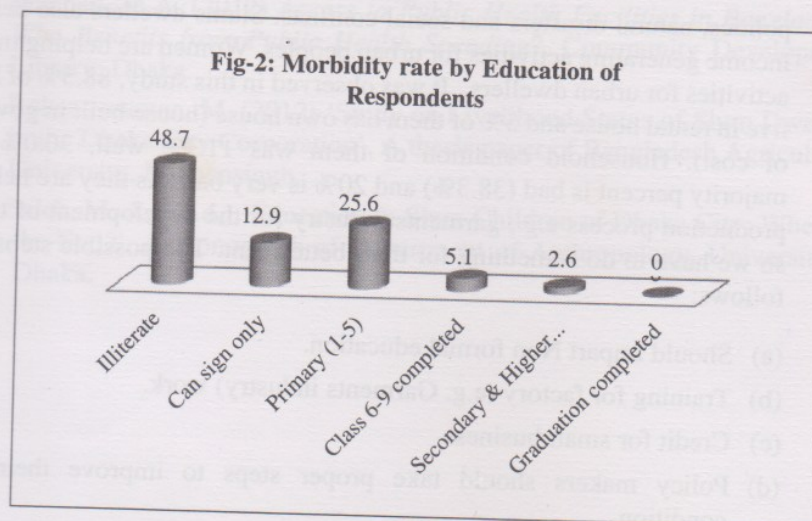
The morbidity rate in the slum area does not show any consistent pattern with regard to education of household head. Morbidity was lower for households headed by illiterate persons having no formal education, compared to those having some years of schooling. This goes against the popular notion that persons belonging to households headed by illiterate Asian Review Vol. 4, No. 1, 2015

persons are likely to experience higher rate of morbidity. This might be explained by the fact that perception of being sick and reporting of the state of health (i.e. illness) is likely to be worse for the illiterate segment of the population, because of their lack of awareness regarding what constitutes illness affecting health and well-being.

Table 10: Distribution of Population who were Sick during Last Three Months by Education of Respondent

Education of Respondents	No.	%
Illiterate	19	48.7
Can sign only	7	17.9
Primary (1-5)	10	25.6
Class 6-9 completed	2	5.1
Secondary & Higher Secondary completed	1	2.6
Graduation completed	0	.0
Total	39	100.0

Source: Field survey



Average Expenditures of the Respondents

Table 11 shows that the average money spend for food and groceries was Tk.2,757.41 (44.86%) whereas the average monthly house rent including utilities was Tk.1,968.33 (32.02%). It was note that educational expense of children was Tk.555.00 (9.03%). per month while cost for health care per month was Tk.457.5 (7.44%). It was observed that they live in unhygienic surroundings.

Table 11: Monthly Average Expenditure of Respondents

	Educational expense o children	Monthly house rent including utilities	Money spent for food and groceries	Transportation cost per month	Cost for healthcare per month	Cost for travelling to work and home
Mean	555.00 (9.03%)	1,968.33 (32.02%)	2,757.41 (44.86%)	319.83 (5.20%)	457.50 (7.44%)	88.33 (1.44%)
Std. Error of Mean	135.514	102.992	319.135	63.120	65.170	36.753

Source: Field survey

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Rural people migrate to urban areas by reason of landless and flood; some causes include economic stagnation and depression, high unemployment, poverty,

politics, natural disasters and social conflicts. Slums dwellers also help to create income generating activities for urban peoples. Women are helping in household activities for urban dwellers. It was observed in this study, 88.3% of households live in rental house and 5% of them has own house (house built in govt. land-free of cost). Household condition of them was 11.7% well, 30.0% moderate, majority percent is bad (38.3%) and 20% is very bad. As they are helping in our production process e.g., garments industry for the development of the country, so we have to do something for their betterment. The possible steps may be as follows:

- (a) Should impart Non formal education.
- (b) Training for factory (e.g. Garments industry) work.
- (c) Credit for small business.
- (d) Policy makers should take proper steps to improve their livelihood condition.

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