

Socio-economic Status of Hijra Community: A Study on Dhaka City

Bipul Kumar Sarker & Most. Tahura Pervin

Abstract

A man-made social system that determines the gender of a human being based on gender behavior, characteristics, and sexuality. The term third gender has a broad meaning. The third gender is basically what we mean by those whose gender identity or gender expression implies something different from the gender they received after puberty. The social life of third gender and his true sexual identity is the story of a life of continuous struggle. The social system of Bangladesh is changing. As well as changing the social status of the third gender in the society. In today's society, eligibility for third gender has increased. The Hijra community is now becoming a part of our society. In this case, the judgment of the court has made significant contributions. This paper attempts to outline the socio-economic status of the Hijra people in Bangladesh as well as the steps taken by the government for the Hijra community. To make this task a success, a quantitative method was chosen; specifically, a structured interview method has been followed to collect accurate data from primary sources, giving a clear picture of the socioeconomic status of Bangladesh's Hijra community. One hundred thirty five respondents were collected in Dhaka city through a non-probability sampling method using convenience technique. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Due to the shortage of time and money, this study was restricted to the surrounding area of Dhaka City only. Therefore, the first limitation of this study is to collect information only from the emissaries living in Dhaka city. Second, quantitative data was collected only from those under 60 years of age.

Keywords: Hijra, Third Gender, Demography, Socio-economic Conditions.



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Introduction:

Bangladesh is a multi-ethnic, multi-religion, multi-language and multi-cultural and diverse state. The state's policy makers must ensure their privileges through detailed and cordial discussions on the interests of the 'third gender' people. It is very important for the constitution of Bangladesh to promise that special measures will be taken for the backward people or to implement the mandate of the Bangladeshi government to ensure the SDGs or sustainable development goals of the United Nations. Although the Hijra population is only a small part of the total population of Bangladesh, it has been known as a neglected and backward group since the climate. The government has taken this program to ensure that the victims of discrimination in the society are brought to the forefront of the society by ensuring them the family, socio-economic, educational system, housing, health development and social security.

Definition of Hijra:

According to medical science, people with congenital disabilities due to chromosome defects, who cannot be excluded from any category of women or men for physical and genetic reasons. This community is known as Hijra in the society. The hijras phenomenon is not easy to define, as the idea is constituted by both individual identity and also cultural traits. In Bangladesh, Hijras define themselves as people who are neither male nor female without genitalia are socially excluded and also proclaim as people unable of sexual sensation. But Sinha (1967) defined Hijras mainly as homosexuals who join the society specifically to satisfy their sexual desires while Freeman (1979) translated to them as transvestite type prostitutes. Moreover, Nanda (2007) rightly points out the term hijra as "eunuch" and never as homosexual. In the respect of social exclusion, a Hijra is traditionally described as neither men nor women, senses such mainstream pressure to an extreme level (Safa, 2016).

Present Scenario of Hijra Community in Dhaka City:

Hijra or third gender is an integral part of our human society. On January 27, the Bangladesh Cabinet approved and listed the third gender in the government advertisement, saying: "The Bangladeshi government has recognized the Hijra community as Hijra gender". The announcement is regarded as an important step in establishing the human rights of the Hijra community of Bangladesh. A community, identified as male at birth and female later in life, feels more comfortable with their own ejaculation or a third gender. The Hijras have developed their own customs and ways of living due to lack of opportunity to participate in mainstream society: they are oppressed and deprived of society and believe that society does not treat me as a human being. So why should I care about social customs or society about me? Hijra outside the country are involved in various occupations. How beautifully it works with discipline. In our country, too, they have to engage in various professions and do so very soon.

Action Taken by the Government:

Most immigrants are not acceptable to their families and as a teenager they are separated. Due to adverse perceptions in society, their employment is limited by begging or sex acts. Some of the eunuchs work in garment factories or restaurants, but they often can't hold jobs because of satire, sexual abuse, or harassment for their 'feminine behavior'.

So when the Prime Minister's Cabinet announced the third gender of the Hijras in the 21st, the community found new hope and a year later, when the Ministry of Social Welfare announced that their field of work would be expanded according to educational qualifications. It provided a government job for 12 Hijras, which was considered one of the ways to meet their daily needs. In 2012, the Ministry of Social Welfare took up a small

program where Hijra students were trained for scholarship and workplace. Gradually the program expands and the budget increases. During the financial year, education scholarship, technical training, and adolescence were provided in 5 districts under this program. According to the Department of Social Services, the population of the Hijras community in Bangladesh is about 10 thousand.

Under the Government Scheme, the Hijras are trained in various subjects according to their qualifications. One thousand taka is given every day during training. The stipend is given to the students in the month of Tk 300. Old age is paid at Tk 500 a month. Today, the Hijras are not inheriting their ancestral property. The government has taken initiative to create a law so that they can inherit the property. The law is known to be drafted. According to the department, the work of ejaculation statistics is also being started rapidly through medical check-up. ID card will be given after the survey. Some have taken initiatives to rehabilitate the Hijras in person. On November 6, 2015, Bangladesh issued a bank lending notification stating that Hijra will receive SME (Small and Medium Business) loan facility through NGOs or at private level. The program was launched in five districts of the country as a pilot program from the year 2012-13. The six districts are Dhaka, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Patuakhali, Khulna, Bogra and Sylhet. The allocation was Rs. 72,1700. The program has been implemented in a total of 20 districts, including five new districts, in the next financial year. The total amount allocated for the financial year 2019-20 is estimated at 56,00,000 taka.

Literature Review:

The hijra society in Bangladesh remains one of the most violated and marginalized minority groups in Bangladesh. However, with latest legislative change in Bangladesh, the society has gained legal recognition of the third official. Khan et al. (2009) describes the social exclusion of hijras focusing on the corridor between sexual health and exclusion and their findings discovered that hijras are situated at the extreme margin of exclusion without any sociopolitical freedom where a hijra can lead life of a people with self-respect. Their deprivations are treated as a different gendered human being away from the male-female dichotomy. Being outside this norm has prohibited them from positioning themselves in mainstream society with human prospective and security. Chettiar (2015) identified that hijras are difficult to research, ill-treated, scorned, and callously abandoned groups in Indian Society. By Indian law hijras have few rights. They do not have the permission to vote, but have the right to own property, to marry or to claim formal recognition through any official papers such as driving license or a passport. Accessing education, healthcare or employment is also difficult. In facing such odd subjects they are forced to make money any way they can. Nowadays they are also involved in 'hijragiri', which means accumulating money from the shops in the marketplace and singing and dancing for a new-born baby boy in the urban areas. Besides, they also collect money by begging on the street as a group or as an individual. Alongside these two ways of income, most of the hijras in urban areas are also involved in sex trade (Khan, 2009b). This profession has a close connection with the Bangladeshi context and people's perception towards hijras. Bangladeshi society is considered as a conservative one that is dependent on the traditional family and societal values where both the family and the society set the role of an individual (male or female) (Bondyopadhyay, 2010). Furthermore, the notion of families' reputation and humiliation is reserved on top of everything where the males and females have to perform specific and socially defined gender roles and those need to be executed in such a way so that the families never experience humiliation in the society. As a result, the disgrace of being a 'different individual' other than traditional 'male' and

'female' essentially starts from the early childhood of hijras and unfortunately, it starts from their family. The respondents of (Khan S. I., 2009a) study have also described about their two different life styles-, one in the family where they pretended to be a man and another within themselves where they were a woman. As a result, they had to struggle to make a balance with their emotions and biological sex. This situation made their mental health as well as physical health vulnerable. Most of them, due to this reason, were indifferent about the safe sexual behavior, which can protect them from HIV or STIs in their later lives. However, they also did not get the mental support in dealing with this dilemma from their family but were rather neglected. As a matter of fact, during this stage most of them had to leave the families and started another chapter of their life which was their involvement with the hijra community even though they loved to be with the families (Safa, 2016). Hence, they had to find the hijra guru within their community who would give them the shelter. In return, some of them were forced to be involved in sextrade; some of them did it willingly as they did not have any other thing to do for the living (Khan S. I., 2009a). In addition, many of them have reported of being raped by the 'hijra guru'. In addition, at this point of time, they also had to face difficulties in renting a house on their own, even if they had the affordability, as the landlords, in most of the cases, are not willing to provide them room on rent to them. As a result, they have to live in slums, parks or streets which are not even safe for them as they have to face sexual harassment by the clients or by the goons and even by the police. In line with that they cannot even file the case of rape due to the absence of hate crime law in the country. Safa (2016) reported that the hijra society rarely enjoy any civil rights as a human or as a resident of Bangladesh. They face lack of opportunities to get formal education, medical treatment, and employment. In spite of all these impediments and negativity we believe by extending overall united and coordinated supports of both government and various development organizations will give these people various rights of the mainstream societies for their better livelihood and development. The main objective of this study to seek and understand the socio-economic status of the Hijra community and also to identify the steps taken by the government to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Hijra community.

5. Methodology

Researchers have conducted this research in different areas of Dhaka city. The study is concentrated in Dhaka city, as most Hijra communities migrate from rural to urban areas for social acceptance and economic gain. Thus, the availability of people in the Hijra community is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The research design of the present study is explorative because the researcher attempts to explore the socio-economic conditions of Hijra communities and relate with the government schemes which improved the social identity of Hijra communities with the help of a structured questionnaire applying survey method. Because there is not enough accurate information about the location of the Hijra community, probability sampling design is difficult to apply, so the researchers used the snowball sampling technique. The purpose of the study is to examine the socioeconomic status of the Hijra Community at Dhaka city in Bangladesh. Due to lack of available journals and publications on socioeconomic status of Hijra community, it was necessary to analyze primary data to examine the research objectives. For this purpose the study based of primary data. To collect the primary data researcher used a set of structured questionnaire. Questionnaire survey is the most useful technique for this study to collect primary data because of respondent's anonymity can be maintained. The questionnaire consists of 135 questions, which provides the information related to the Socio-economic conditions of the respondents. The researcher used both primary and secondary data to collect information

regarding the research topic and research objectives. The survey collected preliminary data from the Hijra community living area using structured questionnaires. Researchers collected data only from people in the Hijra community living in the area around Dhaka city. The secondary data comprises of research articles, newspapers, and net sources. Tables and figures/charts were used for study as well as for the outcome of various types of analyses which is applicable for research objectives. The study type is quantitative; percentage, frequency analyze were used to analyze using Microsoft excel and SPSS software.

5. Result and Discussion:

Table 1: Frequency distribution of the respondents and its demographic and socio-economic characteristics

		Frequency	Percentage
Age of Respondents'	up to 20	22	16.3
	20-30	85	63.0
	30-40	20	14.8
	40-50	6	4.4
	more than 50	2	1.5
Education Status in Hijra Community	Illiterate	18	13.3
	Signature	20	14.8
	Primary	16	11.9
	Secondary	81	60
Occupation of Hijra Community	Tola/ To raise subscription	72	53.3
	Ritualized Performances	6	4.4
	Prostitution	14	10.4
	Business	24	17.8
	Job	19	14.1
Income of Hijra Community	up to 5000	23	17.0
	5000-15000	48	35.6
	15000-25000	53	39.3
	25000-35000	8	5.9
	more than 35000	3	2.2
Relationship Status	Single	101	74.8
	In a relationship	31	23.0
	Married	3	2.2
Religion Status	Hindu	17	12.6
	Muslim	118	87.4

From table 1 show that, maximum number of the hijra people (63%) fall in the age group 20-30 whereas 16.3%, 14.8%, 4.4% and 1.5% fall in the <20, 30-40, 40-50 and 50+ age group respectively. In case of highest educational level, 13.3% hijra people are Illiterate, whereas 86.7% fall in the literate group. In the literate group, 60% have the secondary education and a 14.8% and 11.9% hijra people have signature and primary education. Table 1 also shows that, among all the respondents, 100% hijra people are currently working. Most of them are earning a living through the Tola/To raise subscription. Only 6% of the hijras are active in ritualized performance for their better livelihood. But due to educational performance 14.1% of the hijra get various jobs according to their academic level. 74.9% of the hijras earn 5000 to 25000 Bangladeshi taka. Though most of the hijra take business as a profession that's why the mean income of them is highly visible. 2.2% of the hijra are earning more than 35000 taka

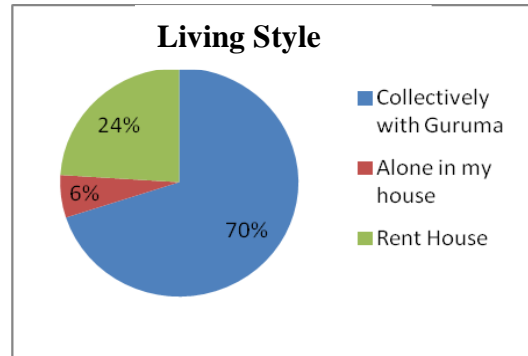
which is really noticeable. From the table 1 it was found that 74.8% of the hijras of Dhaka City are single in status. 23% of the hijra are in a relationship and 2.2% the hijra are married. It was revealed that in our sample 87.4% of the hijra people of the Dhaka city have religion statuses as Muslim. And the rest of them are Hindu.

Living Style:

Most of the study found that hijra people are mainly stay with a community in which they lead by a leader called ‘Guru’ or ‘Guruma’. In our study 70.4% of the hijras are lived collectively with Guruma. 23.7% of the hijras are stay in rest house for their convenient livelihood. Only 5.9% of the hijras are live in their own house.

Table 2: Living Style of Hijras

Living Style	Frequency	Percent (%)
Collectively with Guruma	95	70.4
Alone in my house	8	5.9
Rent House	32	23.7
Total	135	100.0

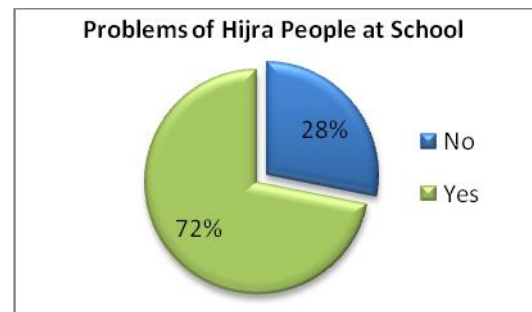


Problem of Schooling:

Now a day’s hijra people are trying their best to get educated from academic institutions. But they are facing various difficulties from teachers, students or other stuffs. In our sample 71.9% of the hijra people in Dhaka City at various academic institutions faced various problems such as harassment from their friends. But 28.1% of the hijra people in the sample do not face any problem in the time of their academic study.

Table 3: Problems of Hijra People at School

Problem of schooling	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	38	28.1
Yes	97	71.9
Total	135	100.0

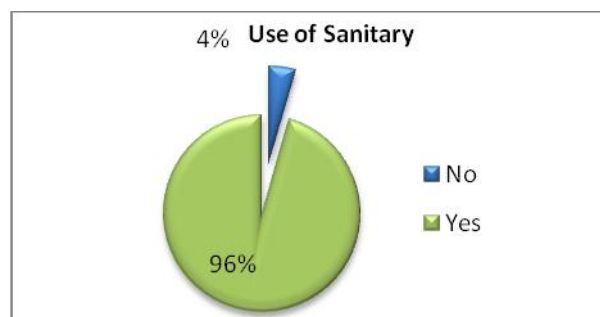


Use of Sanitary:

From the table it was found that 95.6% of the hijras use sanitary latrines in our study sample. It is good result from them. But only 4.4% the hijras are not use proper sanitation.

Table 4: Use of Sanitary of Hijras

Use of Sanitary	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	6	4.4
Yes	129	95.6
Total	135	100.0



Smoking Status:

From the table 5 it was found that 91.9% of the hijra people of the Dhaka City has smoking habit but only 8.1% of the hijra people are not interested in smoking.

Smoking Status of hijra People

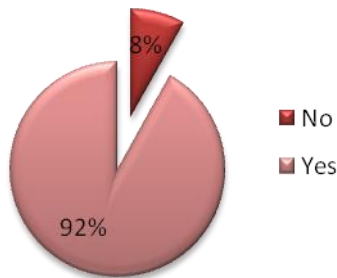


Table 5: Smoking Status of hijra Peoples

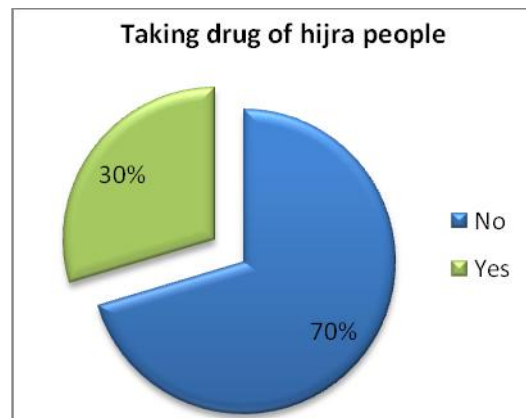
Smoking Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	11	8.1
Yes	124	91.9
Total	135	100.0

Sexual Disease:

Most of the previous study found that hijras have sexual disease for their biological configuration. In our study sample 54.1% of the respondents do not have sexual disease and 45.9% of the respondents have sexual disease.

Table 06: Sexual Disease of Hijras

Sexual Disease	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	73	54.1
Yes	62	45.9
Total	135	100.0



Taking treatment

Due to not having sexual disease 57.8% of the respondents do not take any treatment. 9.6% of the respondents go to the dispensaries for their treatment. For treatment purpose 16.2% percent of the hijras go to the health care centers and clinics due to availability of those health care service centers. 16.3% respondents of Dhaka city take treatment from hospital for their various diseases.

Taking Treatment of Hijra People

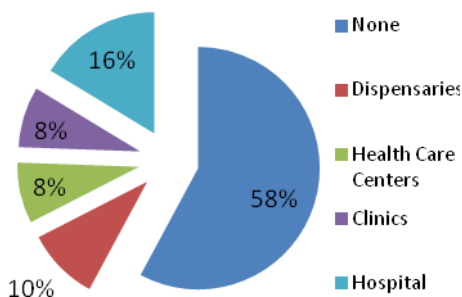


Table 7: Taking Treatment of Hijra People

Treatment	Frequency	Percent (%)
None	78	57.8
Dispensaries	13	9.6
Health Care Centers	11	8.1
Clinics	11	8.1
Hospital	22	16.3
Total	135	100.0

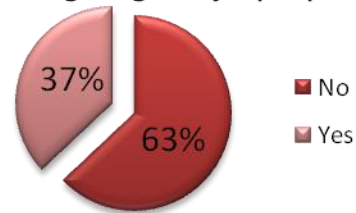
Taking Drug:

Several hijra people said due to frustration of life they had took drug. Some of the others took drug for their community lifestyle. From the study it was revealed that 70.4% of the hijras had taken drug. Only 29.6% of the hijra people do not take drug.

Table 8: Taking drug of hijra people

Take Drug	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	95	70.4
Yes	40	29.6
Total	135	100.0

Taking drug of hijra people



National ID:

From the study it was found that 63.0% of the hijra people of Dhaka City do not have national ID card but 37% of the hijra people have national ID card.

National ID of hijra people

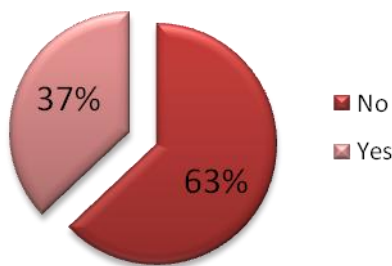


Table 9: National ID of hijra people

National Id	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	85	63.0
Yes	50	37.0
Total	135	100.0

Recommendation and Conclusion:

The government can invite people of the Hijra community to national events as brand ambassadors for social awareness and welfare programs. It will honor the people of this community on a national level and socially. The inclusion of third gender in national curriculum at school level so that our youth can have a clear idea about them. This will increase respect for third gender people in the society and help them learn to respect this diversity. On the basis of merit, employment arrangements should be made for the people of the Hijra community in public or semi-governmental or non-governmental organizations.

Social aspects of Hijra in Bangladesh have been identified along with their level of family support, education level, health level, and income level. It is clear that the acceptance of the Hijra community as a third gender has increased in their society after the Supreme Court's verdict. In general, understanding the feelings and emotional status of the Ezra community is the moral responsibility of all citizens. Because they are a part of our society. They have taken root in this society and have grown in this society. We need to create an environment in which they can live a normal life in society. From the side, the people of society have an important role to play in their socio-economic development and self-reliance.

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