

## **A Study on the Housing and Socio-economic Condition of the Bihari People in Seroil Colony, Rajshahi**

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### **Abstract**

*A relatively large number of Pakistanis known as the Bihari community have been stranded in Bangladesh since its independence in 1971. The unresolved repatriation problem is a consequence of deliberate procrastination and political indecision for both the Bangladesh and Pakistan governments. The aim was to analyse and find out the housing and socio-economic condition and the other services provided to the Bihari people of Seroil Colony, commonly known as the Bihari Colony of Rajshahi. Quantitative surveying followed by snowball and simple random sampling method was used for collecting data, and the analysis and interpretation part was visually presented with graphs, bars, cross-tabulation using SPSS (Statistical Software for Social Science) software. The intensely lousy condition of the Bihari people was found with poor housing conditions, very scarce employment in promising sectors, the low combined income of the family, comparatively high illiteracy rate, less utilisation of the provided utility facilities in a healthy way and critical condition of relief*

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*services. Day by day, the situation is falling. A kind step to recover this so long unresolved problem would be so generous from the government. This initiative might include how to make their lives happier, much more comfortable and lively through education and awareness.*

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*Keywords Bihari Community · Repatriation · Snowball Sampling · Simple Random Sampling*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

The word 'Bihari' usually means a person who lives in the state of Bihar in India. However, 'Bihari' means non-local Urdu-speaking person in Bangladesh. Usually, the people who came from the state of Bihar are called the 'Biahris'. The Biharis come from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Patna, Rajasthan and West Bengal. They stood together for the independence of India. Muslim Biharis lived scattered in villages and towns. They did not have enough skill and education, but they were happy to lead such a life. They were happy for their traditions and customs, cultures and myths. During the partition of India, these Muslims were fallen into the fault position. They became the victim of communal riots. Bihar was the primary target. Patna, Saran, Munghyer and Bhagalpur were also the worst sufferer of the communal riots (Illias, 2007).

From 1941 to 1946, every year, there were communal riots in Dhaka. By the end of 1942, the communal riots were spread throughout the villages. Many people were killed and injured during the riots of Calcutta in August 1946. These riots gave birth to killing Hindu families in East Bengal at Noakhali. As a result, about fifty thousand Muslim populations were killed in Bihar in 1946 (Illias, 2007).

In 1947 British India was partitioned into two independent nations of Pakistan and India. The partition had given the religious lines. Pakistan was designed as the new homeland for Muslims, and India was the land of Hindus. The partition of India in 1947 had given some massive population movement. The flow of this movement between India and Pakistan was one of the largest refugee's movements during that time (Rahman, 2003).

The riots of Calcutta and Bihar had made thousands of Muslims homeless and stateless. These Muslim refugees had moved to Chittagong, Khulna and Jashore. The last movement was in 1964-65. These riots had taken so many lives of Muslims. As a result, there was a massive migration of Muslims into East Pakistan. 1946-47 had made East and West Pakistan a new country called Pakistan. Muhammad Ali Jinnah said, "Bihar killing created Pakistan". Not only the communal riots but also social injustices had forced them to leave their homeland. The rapid growth of urbanisation

and industrialisation in East Pakistan created new employment opportunities for skilled migrants. The business of Bengali Hindus, who went to India during the partition, was taken by the Biharis. Most of all, the immigrants were small traders, shopkeepers or labourers (Rahman, 2003).

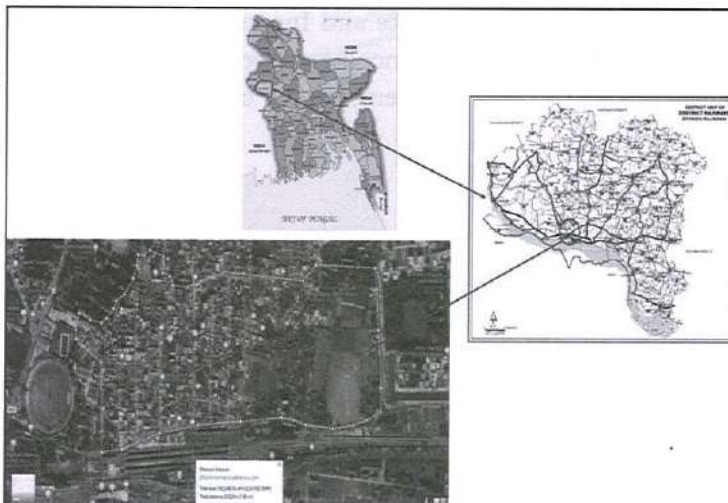
The Six-point movement did not address anything about the Biharis, and they went against the six-point formula. They started to think that if Pakistan divided, they would have to leave Pakistan and send it back to their home country. Therefore, they went against the independence of Bangladesh. They also had a strong urge to repatriate in West Pakistan. As a result, during the eve of 25 March 1971 West Pakistani army was assisted by the Bihari people to kill the Hindus. Some Biharis were also killed by the Bengali people in the other parts of East Bengal (Illias, 2007).

After the Pakistani armies were evacuated, the Biharis found themselves unwelcome in both countries. Since then, most of these Biharis have lived in refugee camps in Bangladesh, hoping to go back to Pakistan. In 116 different camps in Bangladesh, they live under vulnerable and intolerable conditions. As they are small and do not have any recognised organisation, they failed to establish their rights and voices. They cannot improve their living or health conditions as they do not have enough works or opportunities. They feel insecure and do not have the proper knowledge to improve themselves. Considering these, the objectives were set as:

- ◀ To find out the housing condition of the Bihari people in the study area.
- ◀ To evaluate their socio-economic condition.

## 1.2 Study Area

Figure 1: Income Distribution of the Study Area (Source: Field Survey, 2018)



Map 1: Seroil Colony, Rajshahi. (Source: Author's Preparation, 2018)

## 2. Methodology and Study Materials

This study involves a quantitative research method to collect information. A questionnaire survey was used to obtain information about the Bihari people. The study area is selected as the Seroil colony of Rajshahi. Since the Bihari people were facing communal violence, they started living in separate zones and Rajshahi, mostly living in the Seroil colony for years. So, their living condition, educational condition, and socio-economic condition can be brought into a clear idea by investigating this area, which leads to the aim of the study. A questionnaire survey method has been followed for collecting the data from the respondents. A coordination schema was primarily prepared by arranging the objectives, different variables and level of measurement. Snowball sampling and simple random sampling methods have been followed to obtain the required information.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1 Income Distribution

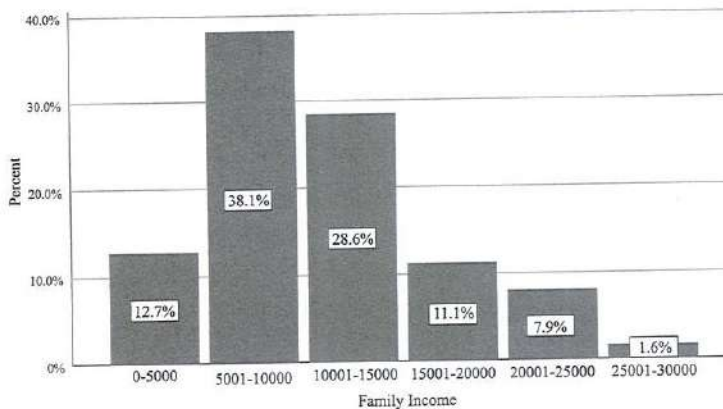
The incomes of the families of the Bihari people are divided into a few ranges, and the percentage of their income ranges are shown below:

The comparative study between the ownership of houses and the family income of the Bihari people can be visualised by the crosstab shown below:

From the above chart and table, it can be evaluated that a good number of families are below the poverty line, where approximately 91% of families have to stay in houses on rent. So, a small amount of money remains left for their survival, let alone educational facilities and others.

### 3.2 Relative Study on Literacy Rate and Income

The line is going higher with the income range increasing. That shows the relativity between income and the literacy rates of the family members of the



Bihari people. The income of the households is badly affecting the education quality of the people in the study area.

Table 1: Relative study between ownership of houses and family income

		Ownership of house * Family Income Cross tabulation						
		Family Income						
		0-5000	5001-10000	10001-15000	15001-20000	20001-25000	25001-30000	Total
Ownership of house	Own % of Total	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%	4.8%	1.6%	9.5%
	Rent % of Total	12.7%	38.1%	27.0%	9.5%	3.2%	0.0%	90.5%
Total	% of Total	12.7%	38.1%	28.6%	11.1%	7.9%	1.6%	100.0%

Source: Field survey, 2018

### 3.3 Study on the occupation of the Bihari people

After all the discussions did above, a clear conception about their occupation can be predicted. The pie-chart showing the percentage of people employed in different occupations might match with the predicted ones completely. From the survey, it was found that very few people are serving occupations like government services or any jobs that provide a big deal of salary. Most of them are rendering services like barber, auto/rickshaw driver or maid which will not provide good ways of living.

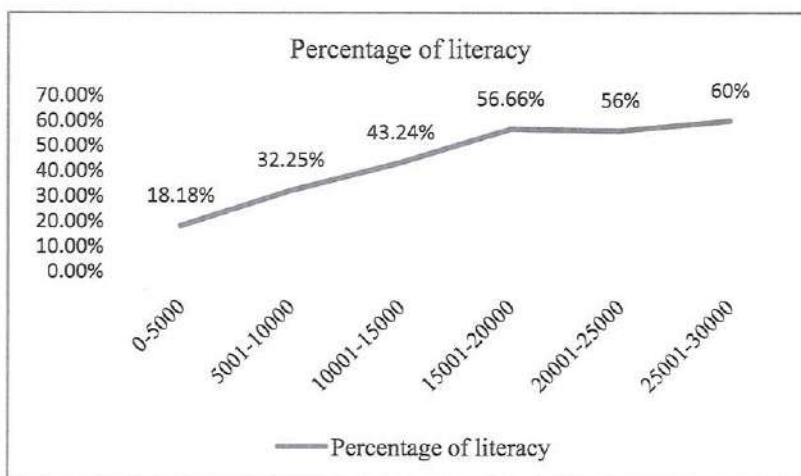


Figure 2: Relative study of Income and literacy rate of Bihari people

(Source: Field Survey, 2018)

Table 2: Percentage of people taking micro-credit

Occupation	Loan taken	Loan not taken	Percentage of loan taking
Government service	1	1	50%
Barber	0	4	0%
Maid	2	10	16.66%
Business	7	5	58.88%
Manufacturing industries	5	2	71.42%
Auto/Rickshaw	7	2	77.78%

Source: Field survey, 2018.

### 3.4 Relative study on occupation and loan of the Bihari people

Most families who take loans serve their occupational status as businessmen or auto/rickshaw drivers. Besides, a good percentage of families taking loans whose heads of the families are workers of manufacturing industries. People who are businessmen or auto/rickshaw drivers are taking loans for starting their occupation mainly, but for people who are workers in manufacturing industries, they mostly take loans for the marriage of their children or any accidental purpose. Other than these, the left small amount of families mainly takes loans for accidental purpose.

Table 3: House ownership

Type	Ownership of houses	Per cent
Katcha		6.3
Semi-Pucca		68.3
Pucca		25.4
Total		100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

### 3.5 Housing Condition and Provision of utility facilities in the Study Area

There can be facts that the families are staying in houses with poor conditions. If it can be related to the total income of the family, it may give a clear picture:

Despite having a much better range of income, they are residing in semi-Pucca houses or poorer conditions. The reason behind this is that they are not aware of the social status they are obtaining or healthy living conditions. These factors are leading them to reside as they were. Due to these, unhealthy conditions are still prevailing in their houses though they are capable of living in better conditions. Besides, a good percentage of people are still illiterate, which is shown above for which they are not aware of living in a better condition.

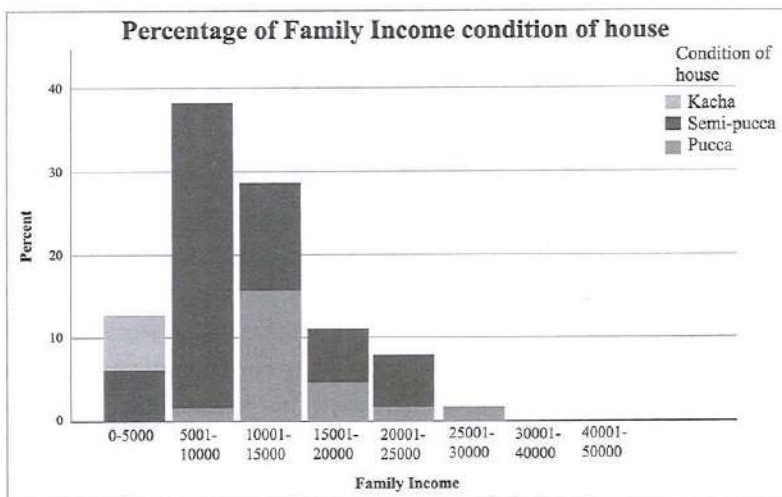


Figure 3: Relation between family income and condition of houses (Source: Field Survey, 2018)

The government mainly provides other utility services like gas, Garbage disposal, and water supply in that region, but people living in poor conditions are not aware of what it needs to be healthy. So, sometimes well-served facilities become a threat to them due to not having adequate knowledge about them, and not everyone can afford to receive good medical service. The government medical centre of that region can provide a humble service, but since the people who can afford to take any type of medical service prefer not to visit the government medical centre, these are not still that satisfactory as these should be.



(Source: Field Survey, 2018)

Figure 4: Housing Condition of the Bihari People

Apart from all these, if we talk about the utility facilities provided to the Bihari people of the Seroil colony, the situation is quite considerable and predictable. The facilities like supply water, supply gas, and garbage disposal are provided to ensure adequate quality service. However, they are lagging like

income and education, which are the primary and essential facts that teach people about the healthy condition of life and awareness about living standards. Because of these, they are still leading unhealthy lives and making their living condition worse.

Now, talking about the health conditions of living, there comes the issue of the medical services of the people of the study area. Most of the families get medical services from the government medical centres, and few of the families who can afford the expenses go to other clinics or private medical hospitals. The services provided by the government medical centres are pretty frustrating from the point of view of the residents of the study area. The sanitation condition of the Bihari people is still in poor condition because of not being capable of developing their living standards and unawareness about healthy living measures.

### 3.6 Provision of Subsidies in the Study Area

Apart from all these, there was relief or subsidies service for the Bihari people from Saudi Arabia. However, with the clock ticking and years changing, these services are being demoralised day by day. The table below shows the information collected from the inhabitants:

*Table 4: Degradation of providing subsidies to Bihari people overtime period*

Commodity	Quantity(1981-1990)	Quantity(2001-2010)
Rice	3 KG/Person	Not Provided
Wheat	9 KG/Person	2-3 KG/Family
Camel's meat	1 KG/Family of 4 persons	200-300 gm./Family
Date	2-3 KG/Family	Not provided
Milk	1L/Children	More petite than 1L for each family

Source: Field survey, 2018

So, overtime period, the reliefs which had been given are now vanishing. Families that barely earn TK.5000 could easily rely on these to survive and could utilise their earnings in sectors that might keep them better than they are today. Maybe many children could go to school other than taking over their parents' works. These factors are taking them behind from what they deserve to live like.

### 4. Conclusion

The study had the aim to assess the housing and socio-economic condition of the Bihari people of Seroil colony in Rajshahi. It can be observed from the data analysis and interpretation in the previous chapter, most of the Bihari people are still living below the poverty lines. They have a poor condition of houses and



sanitation, but there are arguments within this because it is observed that despite the increase of the family income, they are still not aware of living in a healthy environment where the lack of education comes and they are indeed among the illiterate ones. Instead of providing education, they are tending towards extending their income ranges. For this, they are still lacking behind. The utility facilities like gas, water, garbage disposal etc., provided to them are considerable but still, where survival is adverse, questioning about quality of life is out of the world. Besides, subsidies are given to these people from Saudi Arabia. These are almost diminished at present. Day by day, the people are becoming helpless, which is a matter of great sorrow.

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