

# Analysis of Socio-Economic Conditions of Rickshaw Pullers in the Capital City of Bangladesh

Mohammed Shakhawat Hossain<sup>1</sup> Md. Mokarram Hossain<sup>2</sup> Md. Sanowar Hossain<sup>3\*</sup>  
Md. Jahidul Islam Rony<sup>4</sup>

1.Principal (In-charge) & Associate Professor, Daffodil Institute of IT, Dhaka, Bangladesh

2.Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Daffodil Institute of IT, Dhaka, Bangladesh

3.Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Daffodil Institute of IT, Dhaka, Bangladesh

4.Lecturer & Coordinator, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Daffodil Institute of IT, Dhaka, Bangladesh

## Abstract:

Rickshaw is a familiar transportation media for the people of Bangladesh. Rural immigrants lead their livelihood by pedaling rickshaw. The work has been conducted to realize the socio-economic conditions of rickshaw pullers in Dhaka city. To prevail the socio-economic conditions, several variables have been considered i.e. Rickshaw pullers by their Home City, Previous Profession, Religion, Age, Marital Status, Level of Education, Income, Expenditure, Savings, Residential Status, and Basic Amenities. Data have collected through field survey from the different areas of Dhaka city, like Dhaka University area, Motijheel, Gulshan, Dhanmondi, Kamalapur, Sadarghat, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, mobility hub and so on. The most of the rickshaw pullers were found poor rural people, illiterate and migrated lived in a poor dwelling or in a slum.

**Keywords:** Rickshaw, migration, education, culture, and income

## 1. Introduction:

Rickshaw was first introduced in Japan in the early twentieth century. The word ‘ricksha/riska/rickshaw’ originates from the Japanese word ‘jinrikisha’. In Japanese language ‘Jin’ means human, ‘riki’ means power or force and ‘sha’ means vehicle. So, literally ‘jinrikisha’ means human powered vehicle (Chamberlain, Basil Hall, 1891).

Rickshaws were invented in Japan about 1869, after the lifting of a ban on wheeled vehicles from the Tokugawa period (1603–1868), and at the beginning of a rapid period of technical advancement in Japan. (Hanchao Lu., 1999). However rickshaw was replaced by motorized vehicles and disappeared from Japan by 1950s. In the 1930 rickshaw became popular in Indonesia, Singapore, and other south Asian Countries.

It is said rickshaw first reached in Bangladesh at Chittagong from Myanmar in 1919. Dhaka and other cities got rickshaw from Calcutta in 1930. European jute exporters first imported cycle rickshaw from Calcutta in 1938 for their personal use (living in Narayanganj and Mymensingh)

In the beginning rickshaw did not get positive response from the user. The people of Dhaka City used horse carriages, palanquins and boats. In 1941 Dhaka City had only 37 rickshaws and it was 181 in 1947. In 1998 the population of Dhaka City was over 8 million and the number of rickshaws was 1, 12,572. The total number of rickshaws in Bangladesh was in that year 3, 65,305. Other transportation media of City are Bus, Baby Taxi, Tempo, Car, Jeep, Truck, Pic-up, Van, bicycle,(Banglapedia).

Bangladesh Statistic Bureau and United Nation’s population fund ENFP revealed that the population rising rate is 3.82 percent in Dhaka city. Most of the people come in Dhaka city with a hope of earning money but due to unavailable of other jobs they engaged in rickshaw pulling. At present near about 15 lakh rickshaw pullers are living in Dhaka. The total number of population in the city is around 18.237 million (World Population Review, 2016). Of them 17.60 lakh people depend on rickshaw (The Daily Age, 2017).

Bangladesh historically has made a significant development in different sectors of the economy since last 20 years. However, the light of development did not reach the bottom level of the economy. Different plans have been made from time to time to develop the economic conditions of poor people, but their conditions still not changed (Ali, 2009). The different district of Bangladesh has been suffering from overwhelming population growth and extreme poverty. As a result of rural poverty, poor people are migrated to urban areas for leading a better life and better social services (Begum and Sen, 2005). For leading a better life huge number of village populations arrived in city. (Bhatt, 1989). Lack of education, money, and skills migrated people cannot take a better job that’s why they engage to rickshaw pulling to earn money (Charles, 2002). It can be said that rickshaw pulling is easy and better way for earning money for immigrants’ people (Begum and Binayak, 2004).

## 2. Literature Review:

Socio-economic Condition (SES) means of a person’s level of income, wealth, education, and prestige (Currie, C., et al, 2001). Socioeconomic status indicates social status and economic condition of a person in a society measured by income level, education, qualification, and occupation.

Income refers to wages, salaries, profits, rents, and any flow of earnings received. Income can also generate from Unemployment Allowances, social security benefits, pensions, gratuity, house rent allowance, medical allowance, interests or dividends, royalties, and others perquisites (Wisdom Supreme, 6 April 2008).

Education also plays a role in income. Income depends on level of education. The more educational qualified person like PhD holders, professionals, makes the highest monthly income while less educated persons earn less. Higher levels of education assure better economic and social status. (American Psychological Association).

Occupational prestige is one of the most important components to measure the socio economic status of a person. The lower jobs include food preparation workers, counter attendants, helpers, dishwashers, sweepers, janitors, maids and housekeepers, vehicle cleaners, and parking lot attendants. Less valued jobs pay lower salary and more laborious (Scott, Janny and Leonhardt, David. New York Times, 14 May 2005).

Wealth means the economic reserve or assets, measures of economic strength of a person, works as a future financial security at the time of emergency, makes the life comfortable. Wealth reflects income and savings of a household. All measures for wealth accomplishment are income, savings, occupation, education, age, marital status, family size, religion etc. (MacArthur Research Network, 31 March 2008).

Health is an indicator for measuring socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is significantly related to health, people who are higher in the social hierarchy typically they enjoy better health then they do not. (Adler, Nancy E.; Boyce, Thomas; & others).

Socioeconomic status is an important source of health inequity. Lower socioeconomic status has been linked to chronic stress, heart disease, ulcers, type 2 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, certain types of cancer, and premature aging (World Health Organization).

Rickshaw is a vehicle similar to a three-wheeled bicycle, having a seat for passengers behind the driver used to carry passengers by negotiated fare. They widely used in South-Asia particularly in Bangladesh for major media of transportation for short distance. Rickshaw pulling is the major media of income and employment for the poor migrants (Kishwar 2009).

### 3. Objectives of the study:

The study was conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with subsequent objectives:

- To evaluate the socio status of rickshaw pullers;
- To analyze economic status of rickshaw pullers in the capital city of Bangladesh;
- To identify socio-economic problems faced by rickshaw pullers and to suggest remedial measures to overcome these problems.

### 4. Methodology of the study:

The study has been made on primary and secondary data. Most of the study has been made on primary data, because of the scarcity of available published information concerning the socio-economic conditions of the people who engaged in rickshaw pulling. The information has gathered through field survey. The city was divided in three sections on the basis of various functions of the area, i.e. educational institutions, residential areas, and commercial areas. Convenient sampling has been used to collect 250 rickshaw pullers in Dhaka city and interviewed for collecting information concerning their socio-economic conditions. Data has been collected from the participants through questionnaires. Simple statistical tools have been used to analyze the collected data and graphs, charts have been used to represent the findings of the study.

**Table-1: Respondents Selection Procedure**

Study area	Strata Character	Samples
University of Dhaka	Education institution	50
Motijheel	Commercial area	20
Gulhsan	Upper class Residences	20
Dhanmondi	Residential area	30
Kamalapur	Mobility hub	30
Sadarghat	Mobility hub	30
Mohammedpur	Sub urban type area	40
Mirpur	Lower class residence	30
<b>Total</b>		<b>250</b>

Source: Field survey

#### Study Area:

The total area and population of the capital city of Bangladesh are 360 Sq. Km (Media Bangladesh,) and 18.237 million respectively (World Population Review, 2016). It is a high densely populated city of the country. The major transportation media are Rickshaw Auto Rickshaw, Taxi Cab, Bus, and so on. Dhaka metropolitan city is a

head quarter of many National, Multinational and private organizations which create ample opportunity of employment. There are many Public and private universities, more than 100 schools and college are situated which accommodated crore of peoples who use rickshaw for their major transportation media. For short distance, there is no alternative of the rickshaw. Dhaka is known as Rickshaw Capital of the World.

## 5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

### 5.1 Home City

Rickshaw pullers are very lower class people of the society. They came in Dhaka to live their livelihood. The majority (93%) of them came from different parts of the country, only 7% were local rickshaw pullers having their birthplace in Dhaka. Among 93% of them, 23% arrived from Rajshahi, 20% from Rangpur, 2% from Sylhet, 17% from Barisal, 8% from Chittagong, 11% from Khulna, 12% from Mymensing.

Table-2: Rickshaw Pullers by Home City

Home City	Percentage
Local	7%
Migrated	93%
(a) Dhaka Division	7%
(b) Rajshahi Division	23%
(a) Rangpur Division	20%
(b) Sylhet Division	2%
(e) Barisal Division	17%
(f) Chittagong Division	8%
(g) Khulna Division	11%
(h) Mymensing	12%

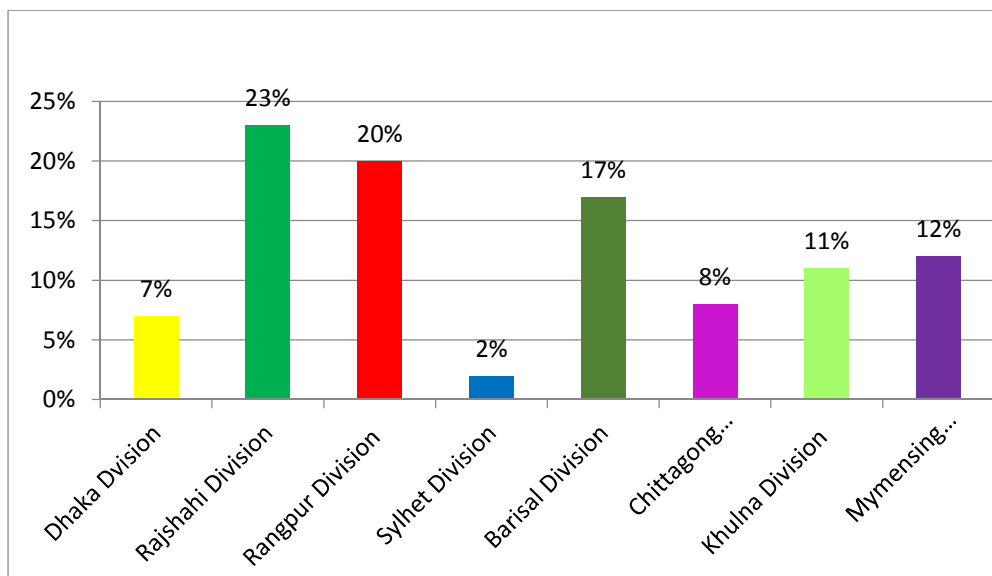


Figure-1: Rickshaw Pullers by Home City

### 5.2 Previous Profession:

The previous occupation is vital indicator to ascertain the current economic condition of a rickshaw puller. Figure 2 showed that most of the rickshaw pullers of Bangladesh 36% involved in agricultural work. They become workless for a certain time in a year due to not availability of work opportunity for all seasons of the year in agriculture. For that time they involved in rickshaw pulling for their livelihood. Farmers 12%, Construction laborers 22%, Hawkers 7%, hotel workers 5%, Business 6% and other workers 12%.

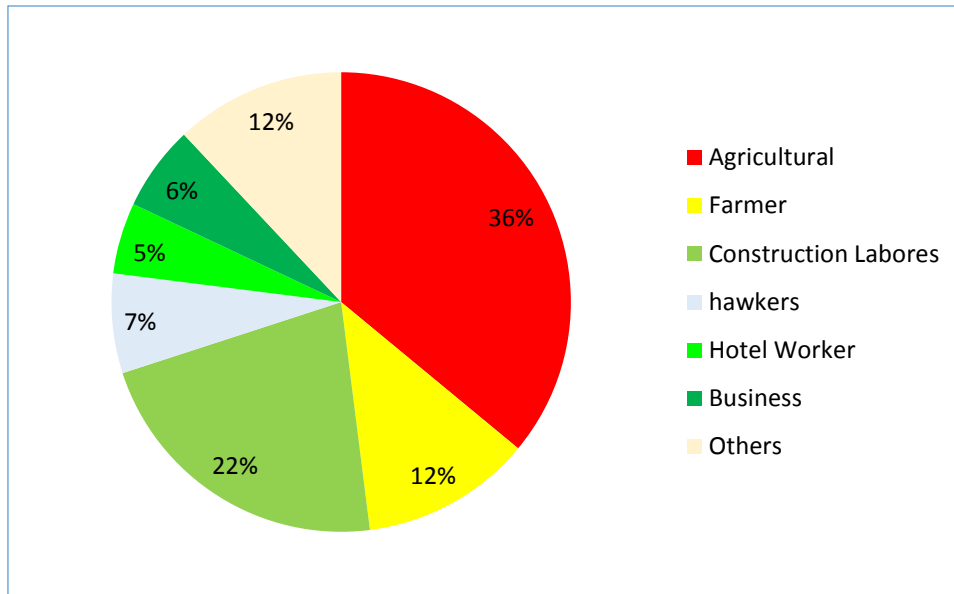


Figure-2: Rickshaw Pullers by Previous Profession

### 5.3 Religion:

In our socio-economic condition, religion is a mandatory factor for decision making of a person. Figure shows that 94% rickshaw pullers came from Muslim community while only 6% rickshaw pullers came from other community such as Hindu 4%, Buddhist 0% and Christian 2%.

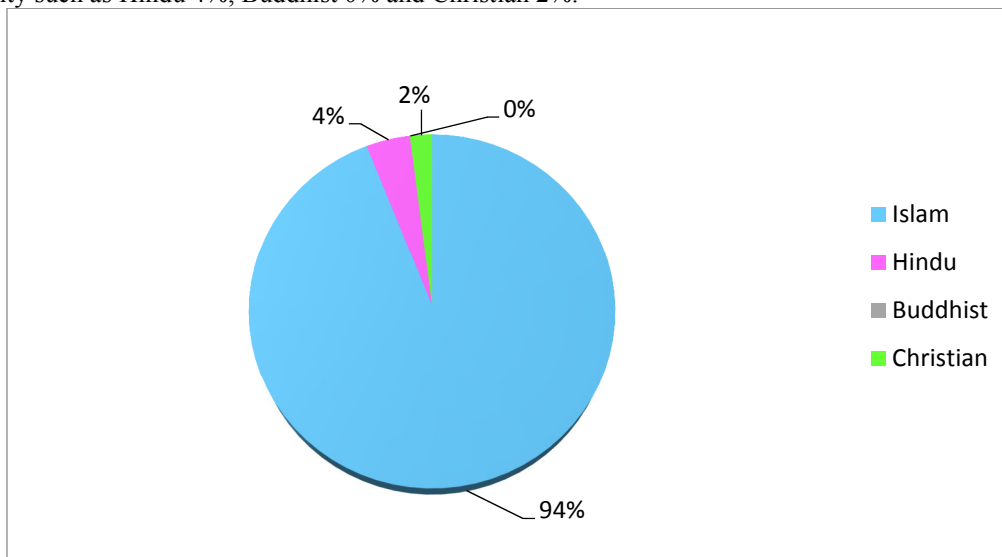


Figure-3: Rickshaw Pullers by Religion

### 5.4 Age:

The figure-4 shows that 96% rickshaw pullers were below 50 years because rickshaw pulling needs high energetic labor. Jobless young people joined in this profession to survive even though this profession is fully unsecured. Maximum rickshaw pullers were between 20-40 years old (74%) who engaged in this profession due to hard work occupation.

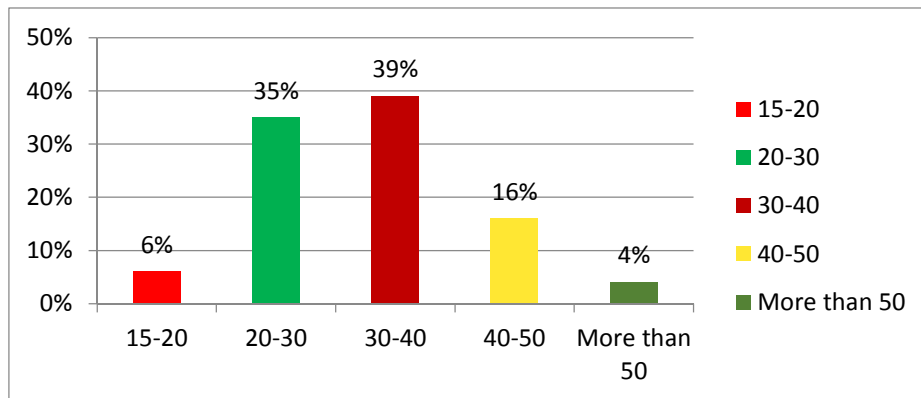


Figure-4: Rickshaw Pullers by Age

### 5.5 Marital Status:

A formal union, marriage is a social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically, and emotionally. Figure-5 shows that 79% of them are married, about 9% are unmarried, about 4% are widowed, and about 8% are divorced. Those who are married have many children. Most of them have at least three children who are ill-fed. They hardly can feed their family. They suffer from extreme poverty. Usually, they marry many times.

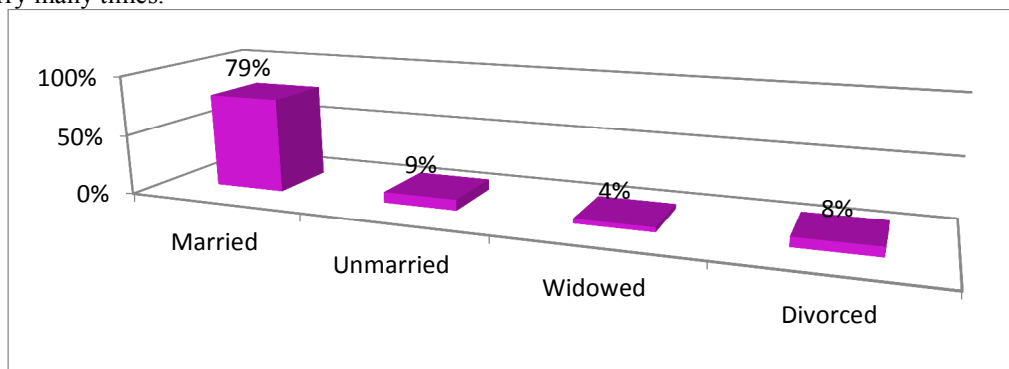


Figure-5: Rickshaw Pullers by Marital Status

### 5.6 Education:

Education points out the level of awareness of a person. As a developing country like Bangladesh, most of the people are illiterate. Large numbers of rickshaw puller 70% are illiterate and 30% are literate, they have completed only primary or upper primary level of education. It was due to lower income, poverty, and lack of proper accessibility of the educational institutions. However, they cannot fulfill their education level.

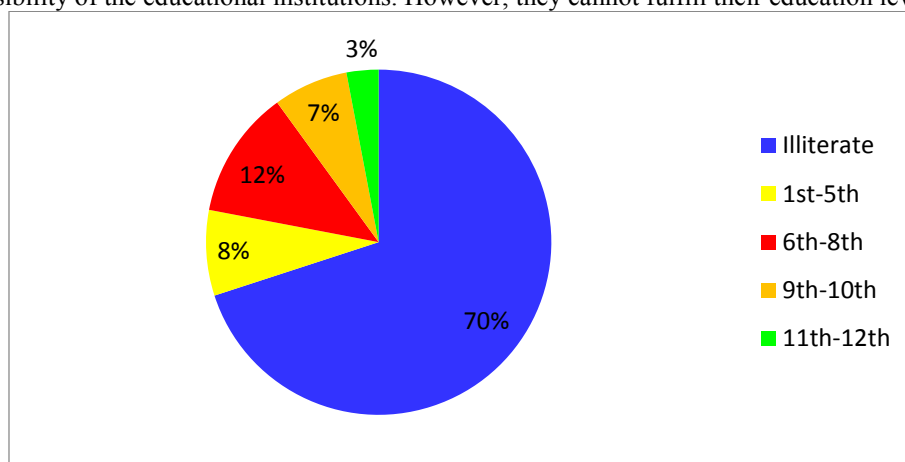


Figure-6: Rickshaw Pullers by Level of Education

**5.7 Income:**

Among 100% of rickshaw pullers majority of them (96%) earned less than taka 25,000 per month, earnings limit less than taka 10,000 were 2%, taka 10,000-15,000 were 13%, taka 15,000-20,000 were 67% and 14% earned taka 20,000-25,000 per month while 4% earned monthly more than taka 25,000. Rickshaw pullers who had a contract with school going students’ parents and having contract with office going persons monthly haired and then rickshaw pullers got fixed amount by monthly basis.

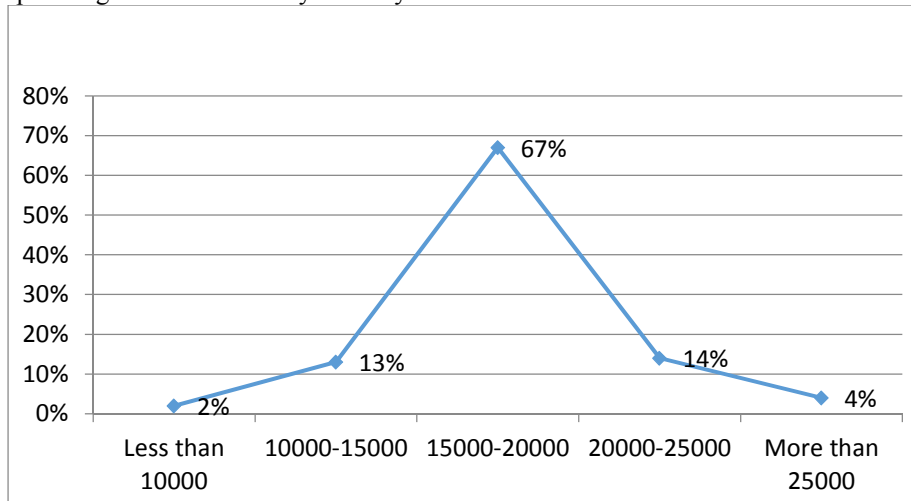


Figure-7: Rickshaw Pullers by Income

**5.8 Expenditure:**

Most of the rickshaw pullers expend majority percent of income to lead their livelihood. All day they work heard by paddling rickshaw. They take meal and snacks for several times to continue their paddling. The following figures shows that 8% rickshaw pullers expend below Tent thousand taka per month and 52% expend to ten to fifteen thousand taka per month to purchase their food and meet up household expenses. Some rickshaw pullers (33%) expend fifteen to twenty thousand taka for him and for his family members. The figures also shows that 6% rickshaw pullers expend twenty to twenty five thousand taka per month and 1% rickshaw pullers expends above 25000 taka per month to lead their family.

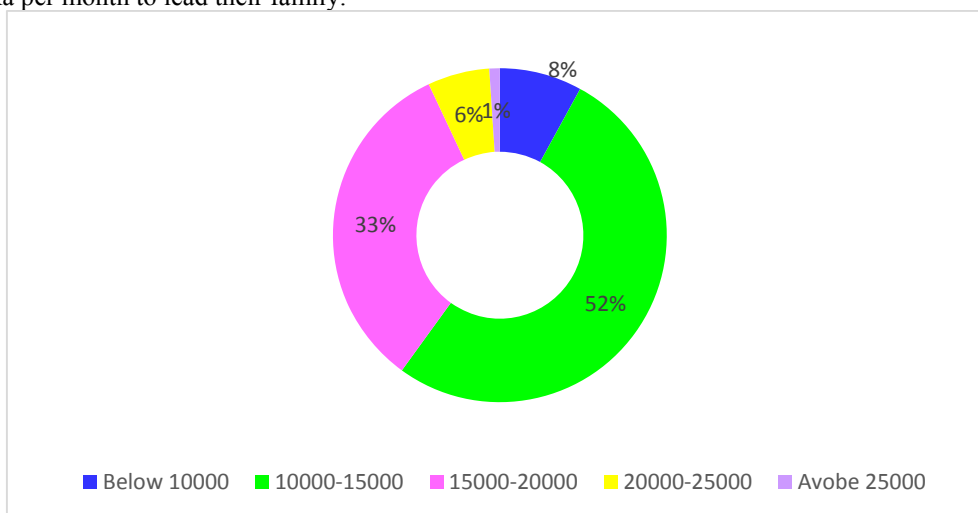


Figure-8: Rickshaw Pullers by Expenditure

**5.9 Savings:**

Rickshaw puller work more heard than other occupations to earn money. They expense most of their income for meet up their daily expenditure. They cannot deposit their earning for making their future certain. Only 2% percent rickshaw puller can save above 10000 taka per month from their income and 4% can 8000 to 10000 taka per month. Most of the rickshaw puller (34%) can save 2000-4000 taka per month after meet up their family expense. Among 100 percent 27% can save 1000 to 2000 taka and 14% can 4000 to 6000 taka per month. Following figure also shows that 7% rickshaw puller save 6000 to 8000 and 12% rickshaw pullers cannot make

any saving. They expense their all earning for their daily necessities.

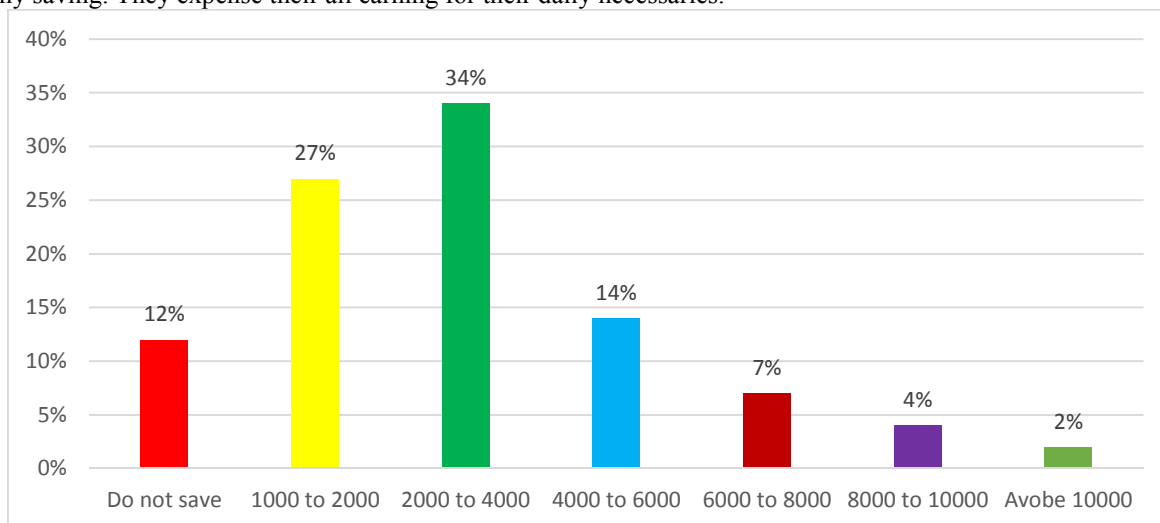


Figure-9: Rickshaw Pullers by Savings

### 5.10 Residential Status:

It is mentionable that most of the rickshaw pullers were rural immigrants and they were homeless, they passed their nights in the way. The below figure indicates that among 100% of rickshaw pullers, 40% residence in lower a class rental house, garage dwellers were 26%, slums dwellers were 12%, living in building houses were 19% and on road 3%. The rickshaw pullers who were living in slums, garages or other houses they had not paka toilet, sanitation facilities and pure water and who were in building had paka toilet good sanitation and pure drinking water.

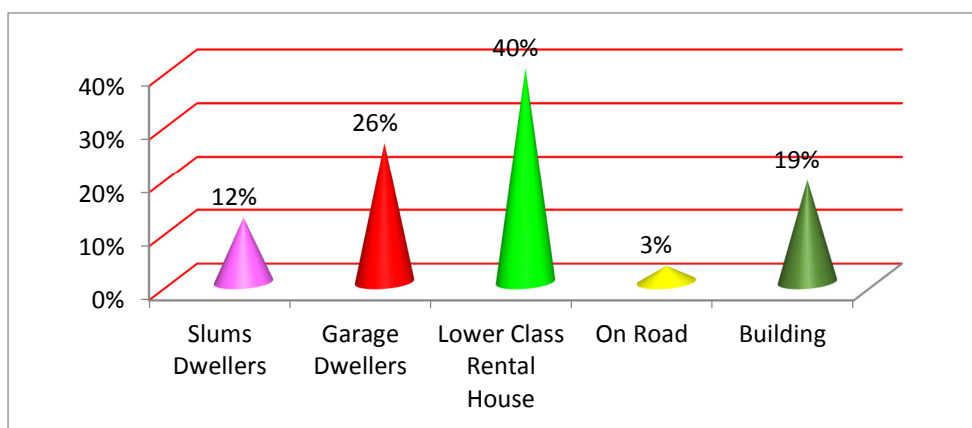


Figure-10: Rickshaw Pullers by Residential Status:

### 5.11 Basic Amenities:

From the study, it was noticed that most of the rickshaw pullers get their basic amenities though they were spent their lives without proper diet. Among 100% rickshaw pullers 97% get electricity facility, 50% get pure drinking water, 72% use paka toilet.

Table-3: Rickshaw Pullers by Basic Amenities

Particulars	Percentage
Electricity	97%
Drinking Water	50%
Paka Toilet	72%

The figure-11 showed that maximum rickshaw pullers suffered from cough, body pain, fever, different chronic diseases. They collected medicine from the dispensary without any communication of doctors (71%) because most of the time in a day they engaged in rickshaw pulling.

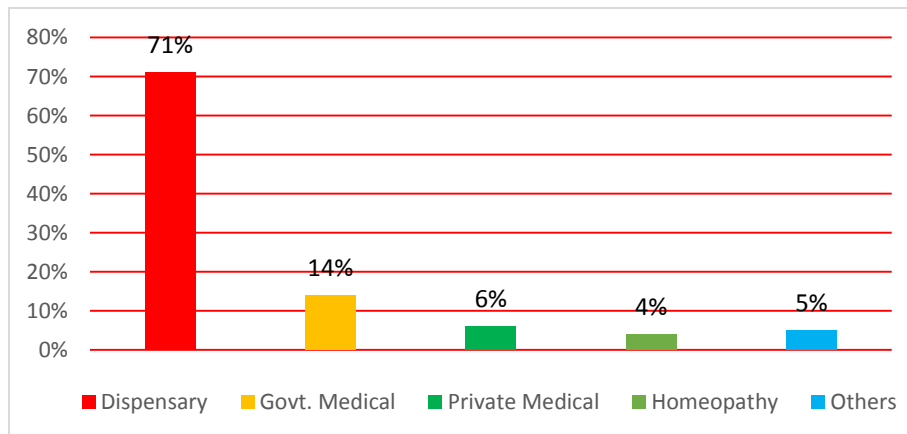


Figure-11: Medical facilities of Rickshaw pullers.

## 6. Findings:

Poor people join in this occupation as an easy way to engage in work and earn money. Most of the rickshaw pullers were rural immigrants came from different districts leaving their prior works. Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country as a result 94% rickshaw pullers of the respondents were from Muslim community. Because of high physical labor, 74% rickshaw pullers were between the ages of 20 to 40 years. Maximum immigrant rickshaw pullers were illiterate and lack of consciousness 79 percent marry in their early age. Due to lower income, poverty, and lack of proper accessibility of the educational institutions the rate of illiteracy was 70%. They lived in lower standard house (81%). Majority rickshaw pullers (96%) cannot earned more than 25,000 per month though they paddle done to dusk. They take meal and snacks for several times to continue their paddling and expend majority percent of income to lead their livelihood so they cannot deposit their earning for making their future certain. They were suffered from different chronic diseases like a cough, body pain, fever etc. They took medicine from the dispensary without consulting doctors (71%). The government did not maintain commitments toward this community.

## 7. Recommendations:

Some remedial measures are suggested to improve their present conditions.

- ✓ The government should give priority to the Rickshaw pullers as a backward community like other community groups of the country.
- ✓ Extra care should be taken to raise their socio-economic conditions like other community groups, i.e. agriculture development project.
- ✓ Education & employment generation programs must be taken to development of socio-economic conditions of rickshaw pullers.
- ✓ Rickshaw is treated as green transportation so government should take necessary steps to protect this community for sustainable Dhaka.

## 8. Conclusion:

Rickshaw is one of the principal transports in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. Rickshaw has now found in rural areas because of the improvement of road throughout the country. Rickshaw has become a symbol of Bangladesh and especially for its design and arts. And Dhaka capital city of Bangladesh is known as the world's capital city of rickshaw. Due to the easy way of transportation for short distance Rickshaw has huge popularity in Dhaka city. Though this profession is a symbol of poverty, it generates income for the backward people of the society.

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