

Changing in Characteristics of City Transportation and the Socio-Economic Scenario of Rickshaw Pullers: A Case Study within English Bazar Municipal Area

Tarit Kanti Sen (Corresponding Author),
Research Scholar, University of Gour Banga, Malda

Krishanu Guha Majumder,
Research Scholar, University of Gour Banga, Malda

Abstract

Lack of enough sustainable job opportunities coupled with poverty in rural area has forced rural poor people to search a better settlement of their life in the cities. Lack of skill, lack of education and political forced these migrants to settle down them in unorganized sector for livelihood. They are engaged in various professions in informal sectors such as cycle-rickshaw pulling. Recently due to a many reasons like increase in population, private vehicles, traffic congestion, lack of road infrastructures etc. the nature and means of the transportation within a city is altering sustainably. English Bazar Municipal area is no exception. This paper tries to recognize the present socio-economic condition of the existing rickshaw pullers within the English Bazar Municipal area and try gauge the future of the rickshaw pullers in such changing scenario.

Keywords: Rickshaw Puller, Unorganized Sector, English Bazar Municipality

INTRODUCTION

The unorganised sectors consist of various types of occupation and multiple income groups. One of the most important economic activities in informal transportation sectors is Rickshaw pulling. A huge number of poor rural to urban migrants are engaged in this sector for livelihood. But very few studies were conducted in this informal sector. We have very little knowledge regarding their socio-economic status. There are considerable research work has been conducted in unorganised sectors in India as well as developing countries to find out the socio-economic condition of the people are engaged in this informal sectors, but existing study on Rickshaw puller is very rear in India. This is another reason to undertake this study.

We believe that a plight on socio-economic statuses of Rickshaw puller within English Bazar Municipal area provide an ideal research environment to explore the dynamics of urban poverty.

Rickshaw pulling is very important activity in informal economy in India where not only poor rural migrant are taking Rickshaw pulling as profession but urban poor are also taking the economic benefit of this profession. Earning of migrant rural generate a reverse flow of income from urban to rural economic. It injects money in rural market, and established an important link between the growth of urban and rural economics.

Another reason for studying Rickshaw puller English Bazar Municipal area was to collect information for designing urban transportation in the heart of North Bengal. Their contribution to the nation by participating in the regional economic and economic efficiency of their transportation services, analysis that is very vital for the informal sector regulates.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Malda Town (English Bazar Municipal area) is the district town of Malda District. There are only two ULBs or Municipalities in Malda District, one is English Bazar and another is Old Malda. Interestingly, both of the municipalities were established during late 1860s. During last 150 years no single rural area within the Malda District has been uplifted to the status of urban area. These twin municipalities of Malda District are geographically separated by the river Mahananda.

English Bazar faces huge population pressure. Total population of English Bazar Municipality is 216,083 with 115,126 male and 100,957 female population. Where as, the population distribution of the whole **Urban Agglomeration** inside Malda District counts for Total Population 324237 (175073 Male and 149164 Female) (Census 2011). Total area of English Bazar Municipality is 13.25 Sq. KM. and the population density of the municipality is 16308 per Sq. KM. Such population density is fairly large in comparison to the district's overall population profile. The English Bazar Municipality is supporting 5% of the total district population with just 0.35 % of the total district's land area.

A considerable portion of the population of this town resides at the urban slums and engaged in unorganised sectors for sustenance. Rickshaw pulling is the one and only source of income for many people in this area. According to the data provided by the English Bazar Municipality, there are more than 3600 rickshaws have valid licences. If we assume that every valid licensed rickshaw is associated with a single rickshaw puller

as the main source of income and the average family size of the rickshaw puller is four then at least 14400 people are getting food, medicine, education and other amenities required for living a life. That is to say that at least 6.7 % of the Municipal population as well as 4.4 % of the population of the Urban Agglomeration of the district of Malda are directly depending on the profession of rickshaw pulling. However, according to officials of the English Bazar Municipality the actual numbers of the rickshaws running across the city are more than 3600 because a big proportion of the rickshaws are unauthorised.

It is true that a considerable portion of the population of English Bazar Municipality depend on rickshaw pulling for everyday living, for education of their children, for medicine for the dependants. But it is also true that the roads and lanes within the municipal area are not sufficient to serve. As well as, growing numbers of unauthorised rickshaws are creating real menace. Roads and lanes cannot be widen, new flyovers are not feasible, numbers of private cars and motorcycles are increasing in an exponential manner, urban population is increasing more rapidly than the increase of urban area. Now days, the town is suffering from road jams and chaos in a regular manner especially during the rush hours. The main accused is the rickshaw, irrespective of with license or without license. In addition to these an alternative of rickshaw has arrived, the eco-friendly, fast moving, economic Toto-Rickshaw.

It may happen that due to policy framing by the local government or due to the market competition the rickshaws pullers become jobless. Before it is too late, we should have an idea about the present socio-economic aspects of the rickshaw pullers within the English bazaar municipality so that policy can be framed in such a way that they can shift to another occupation, even loosing the rickshaw.

STUDY OBJECTIVES:

The study has been fulfilling the following objective:

- To know the demographic profile of rickshaw puller within English Bazar Municipality
- To know the socio-economic background of rickshaw pullers within English Bazar Municipality.
- To know the skill level of the rickshaw pullers within English Bazar Municipality.
- To assess the possible and feasible source of alternative job/occupation/income of the rickshaw pullers within English Bazar Municipality.
- To assess the impact on urban local economy of rickshaw within English Bazar Municipality.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Meheri Tamanna conducted a research on rickshaw cycle drivers in malda, and it was revealed that the human capital, social capital, physical/productive capital and financial capital are the key assets which the rickshaw drivers manage by and large.

Khan has conducted a research on socio-economic characteristics of cycle rickshaw pullers in malda. The study was based on primary data collected through the field survey. The study has found that: The rickshaw pullers were one of the poorest sections of the Society, living in object poverty but play a pivotal role in intra-city transportation system.

Md. Manjur Morshed and Dr. yasushi asami conducted a research on urban migration, informal economy and rural development of rickshaw pullers in malda and has found that migrants have completed information about the prospects and made a conscious choice; migrants are rarely underemployed; they end up paying insane monetary price for urban living. Finally, the implication of such migration in the context of rural is highlighted.

Mushir Ali conducted a research on socio-economic analysis of rickshaw pullers. The work was conducted to analysis to socio-economic condition of rickshaw pullers with objectives to assess the arrival and previous occupation, to examine age group, marital status, religion, and caste and analyses education level, major habit, residential condition, basic amenities and facilities of rickshaw pullers in Malda. Data were collected through field survey in 2006-2007.

STUDY METHODOLOGY:

There is no particular residential place of rickshaw puller within English Bazar Municipal area and the migrant rickshaw pullers are frequently circulated within the town. We selected the rickshaw stand from the survey area. First, we spent some time for briefing the object behind data collection and motivate them for giving the answer of question and in some cases we compensated them for loss of the earning during interview time and some cases we provided them tea and bidi to create a friendly atmosphere We tried to interact with them in colloquial speech. After collection of the data, the answers were scrutinised and respondent's answer were verified. If any kind of inconstancy was found then it was replaced by new one. Lastly we were able to cover a sample of 75 rickshaw puller.

Field survey was conducted at different areas of English Bazar Municipal area such as 420 more, Piyaji More, Rathbari, Railway Station, Public Bus Stand and Atul Market Private Bus Stand.

On the basis of pilot survey, it was found three types of Rickshaw pullers in Malda Town, namely, (a) Rickshaw puller who resides within the Malda Town and owns rickshaw, (b) Rickshaw puller who resides within the Malda Town and hires Rickshaw, (c) Rickshaw puller who are migrated from the nearby rural areas and hires rickshaw for sustenance. This study is based on 300 present Rickshaw puller within English Bazar Municipal area. All sample unit was chosen randomly. In case of non-cooperation by respondent, it was substituted by the next conveniently from different Rickshaw stand within English Bazar Municipal area.

A detailed structured questionnaire was prepared consisted with three sections. First section focusing their demographic factor, second section was focusing their working condition and third section was focusing their economic condition.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data regarding religion and caste of Rickshaw puller clearly indicate the majority religion and section of Indian society is Hindu and next followed by Muslim. The survey showed that % of Respondent was belonging to Hindu and 33% were belonging to Muslim. (Table 1- Annexure I)

In general, rickshaw pullers are coming from poor family back ground. They are most from social deprived categories and low standing in Indian society. They were not got any mid day meal education program at their age. The study shows that 44% of the rickshaw puller are illiterate, 39.5% have completed primary education but not completed upper primary education, 13.5% have completed upper primary education but have not completed secondary level education and 3% have completed secondary and above education level. (Table 2 - Annexure I)

The study showed the average age of the sample Rickshaw Puller in English Bazar Municipal area was 40 years. The study suggests that most of the respondents are belong to the age group of 30 – 44 years. (Table 3 - Annexure I).

Marital status of the rickshaw puller suggests (Table 4 – Annexure I) that 97.33% are married and 2.67% is unmarried. The result differs from Flores (2005) observation that single people are most likely to migrate than to those married in areas of recent urbanisation. But this study has concurrence with observations of F. Riosmena (2008) where it found that sometimes marriages occurred in the village, and were contracted the old system and to prepare for the migration to the city. (Table 4- Annexure I).

Connel et al. (1976) suggested that with the respect to family size, in general, migrants from rural villages tended to come from relatively larger families. The result of our study has concurrence with this opinion. As a result 78.67 % sample rickshaw puller with family size of 6-7 members next followed by 3-5 members, next followed by more than 8 members and 4% has 2 members in their family. (Table 5 - Annexure I).

The educational profile of the children of the rickshaw puller is somehow appreciable as our study shows a noticeable improvement over of their parent. 40% sample Rickshaw puller's children are studying primary school, 35% are studying middle level education 25% are taking secondary and above level education. This result is vary meaning full from long term perspective. Terms of building human capital – which arguably holds the key to overcoming poverty in the longer run (Sen, 2003). The rickshaw puller of English Bazar Municipal area has an advantage over their rural counterpart. But shifting themselves to urban, they are able to developed their human capital and protect their children from intergenerational transfer of poverty. (Table 6 - Annexure I).

The study revealed that average monthly food expenditure of rickshaw puller was Rs. 2073.33 and per day average food expenditure was Rs 69.11. The survey reported that the average cloth expenditure and house rent were Rs. 212.5 and Rs. 423.33 respectively (Table 7 Annexure I). Data regarding average monthly saving, medical expenditure and children education expenditure were Rs. 993.33, Rs118.00 and Rs. 110.67 respectively clearly indicate a low level of safety and security needs fulfilment of rickshaw puller (Table 8a). The suggest that only 5.55% respondent had life insurance policy and no one rickshaw puller had health insurance, fixed deposit and gold ornament which further indicate unsecured future of rickshaw puller (Table 8b). As concern of social needs, it was found that quality of life of rickshaw puller was very poor, as their average monthly expenditure on entertainment was Rs. 107.35, Rs. 78.68 on phone bill and Rs 155.88 on travelling (Table 9). Data regarding income spent by rickshaw puller on fulfilling of their basic need clearly indicate that the economic development of rickshaw puller in English Bazar Municipal area n was very poor, because it was found in present study that basic need consumption exhausted a significant (56.32%) their gross monthly income. This may be the reason of lack of proper knowledge regarding saving and investment, lack of education, population control, skill, better life etc. It was also revealed that 25.41% of income was used to fulfilment of safety and security need of Rickshaw puller and 7.11% of income was spent by rickshaw puller on fulfilment of their social needs. Rickshaw puller has a little contribution to tertiary sectors.

Table 7: Monthly expenditure of Respondent spent for fulfilment of basic needs.

Food		Cloth		House Rent	
Monthly Expenditure	No of Respondent	Monthly Expenditure	No of Respondent	Monthly Expenditure	No of Respondent
Up to 1500	40 (13.33)	zero	236(78.67))	Upto-500	236(78.67)
1501-2500	188(62.67)	101- 200	24(8.00)	501-1000	24(8.00)
2501 and Above	72(24.00)	201 and Above	40(13.33)	1001and above	40(13.33)
Total	300(100)	Total	300(100)	Total	300(100)
Average	Rs 2073.33	Average	Rs 212.5	Average	Rs 423.33

Source: Field survey.

Note: Figures in parenthesis show percentage to the total.

Table.8(a): Monthly expenditure to meet of safety and security needs.

Saving		Medical expenditure		Children Education	
Monthly saving	No of Respondent	Monthly expenditure	No of Respondent	Monthly expenditure	No of Respondent
Upto-500	100(33.33)	Up to 100	140(46.67)	Up to 100	32(14.81)
501-1000	36(12.00)	101-200	116(38.87)	101-200	144(66.87)
1001and above	164(54.67)	201& above	44(14.66)	201& above	40(18.52)
Total	300(100)	Total	300(100)	Total	216(100)
Average	Rs. 993.33	Average	Rs.118	Average	Rs.110.67

Source: Field survey.

Note: Figures in parenthesis show percentage to the total.

Table 8(b): Showing Respondent's planned expenditure to secure future .

Future protection Instrument	No. of Respondent (Yes)	No. of Respondent (No)
Life Insurance Policy	05(5.55)	295(94.45)
Health Insurance Policy	00(00)	300 (100)
Fixed Deposit	00(00)	215(71.67)
Gold Ornament	00 (00)	300(100)

Source: Field survey.

Note: Figures in parenthesis show percentage to the total

Table 9: Monthly expenditure of respondent spent on fulfilment of social needs.

Entertainment		Phone Bill		Travelling	
Nothing	164(54.67)	Nothing	44(14.67)	Nothing	164(76)
Up to 100	84(28.00)	Upto100	220(73.33)	Up to 100	40(13.33)
101-300	52(17.33)	101-300	52(12.00)	101-300	96(10.67)
301-500	Nil	301-500	Nil	301-500	Nil
501 & above	Nil	501& above	Nil	501 &above	Nil
Total	300(100)	Total	300(100)	Total	300(100)

Source: Field survey.

Note: Figures in parenthesis show percentage to the total.

Earning of the rickshaw puller is variable and highly fluctuated. Mainly two factors determine their earning, one is riding hour per day and another is distance of rides. Both are depended on various factors such as age of the puller, physical health of the puller, weather condition, season, social festival, traffic condition, police harassment and other factors The average monthly gross earning (before meeting their daily essential expenditure and rent) of rickshaw puller was Rs 4810. The study was found that the largest proportion of Rickshaw puller (63.76%) has earned monthly income Rs 3000 to Rs 6000. The next largest proportion of Rickshaw puller (16.45%) has earned monthly income Rs. 6000-9000 (Table10 – Annexure I).

Hard Physical labour is involved in Rickshaw pulling job. The study show major proportion of sample Rickshaw puller worked for a long hours, 38 % of sample Rickshaw puller worked 10-12 hours on daily basis. . 31 % are worked more than 12 hours daily, 28 % are worked 7-9 hours and 3 % are worked less than 6 hours daily(Table11– Annexure I). As concern of number of days worked in a month ,the study revealed that 42.33% of rickshaw puller worked 21days to 26 days,29.67 % worked 21-26 days , 25.67 % were work 10-15 days and 2.33% were worked less than 10 days in a month. (Table.12 – Annexure I).

Table 14: Factor(s) responsible for fluctuation of daily earning.

Reason for fluctuation	Nos. of Respondent	
	Yes	No
Age	111(37.00)	189(63.00)
Physical condition of health	165(55.00)	135(45.00)
Weather condition	190(63.45)	110(36.55)
Season	257(85.75)	63(14.25)
Social festivals	263(87.77)	37(12.23)
Traffic condition	100(33.45)	200(66.55)
Police harassment	45(15.00)	255(85.00)
Distance cover	137(45.75)	163(54.25)

Source: Field survey.

Note: Figures in parenthesis show percentage to the total.

Data regarding preferred area of rickshaw pulling clearly indicate that market place (40%), railway station (20%) and public bus stand were most preferred place for rickshaw pulling of rickshaw puller (Table 15). In this place rickshaw puller has faced challenges coming from the e-rickshaw (locally called Tuktuk). Rickshaw puller preferred day time for pulling rickshaw (55% of respondent). A change has been seen in preference of rickshaw puller regarding distance travels. The study showed that 41.25 % of rickshaw puller preferred long distance for pulling rickshaw (Table 17- Annexure I), because of increase their income by charging higher fare.

A common allegation regarding traffic congestion arise against rickshaw puller in rush hours specially in morning and evening time due to slow moving Para-transport mode. Rickshaw pullers in that situation get rough behaviour from all section of the society. Irrespective of the member of society who are not travel by rickshaw on regular basis feel that rickshaw should be removed from the road then only traffic congestion could be reduced. Some time rickshaw puller are become the victim of physical torture not only by the member of society but also by the police personnel. The present study should that 45% respondent faced problem from passenger side regarding the unnecessary argue for fare and they misbehave the rickshaw puller, 26.67% respondent reported that passenger had a complaint against setting comfort ability (Table 18).

Table 18: Passengers' Grievance

Grievances	No of Respondent (% age)
Bargaining for fare	135(45.00)
Comfort ability	80(26.67)
Intentionally Disruption	10(3.33)
Misbehavior	70(23.31)
Other	05(1.67)
Total	300(100)

Source: Field survey.

CONCLUSION

This study based on random sample survey conducted within English Bazar Municipal area (Malda Town) suggests that the existing rickshaw pullers in that area are mainly migrated from the urban agglomeration and / or the surrounding rural areas. And most of the rickshaw pullers do not have own rickshaw rather they hire on day basis. The other associated expenditures for maintenance are also to be incurred by him. Most of them are primarily agricultural labourers. They are fully aware about the prospects and consciously choose this profession as temporary source of earnings during their seasonal unemployment in agriculture. A considerable portion of this group is associated with unauthorised / illegal rickshaw pulling.

The other portions of the rickshaw pullers either urban poor by birth or permanently migrated from rural areas to the urban area / agglomeration. Considerable portions of this group also do not have their own rickshaws and have to hire for sustenance. They even do not have enough skill for other works. Rickshaw pulling is the one and only source of income. They lead a very miserable life in terms of the basic needs. If displaced, this group will face great socio-economic problem due to unavailability of alternative source of income. They, in general, failed to save for future unforeseen.

Although, most of the rickshaw pullers, irrespective of their migrant nature, are not educated enough, they are not literally illiterate, but they in general do not hesitate to educate their children. This is surely a good sign for the society as a whole. It is dreamt by them that their children will find some better job, better profession in future.

It is also found that a large portion of the commuters are unsatisfied with the rickshaw pullers on account of bargaining for fare, intentional disruption, misbehaviour. The rickshaw pullers are usually accused for

creating traffic disturbance during rush hour and for disobeying traffic rules. In addition to this, due to introduction of the more economic local transportation, the Toto-rickshaw, now days the frequent local commuters are just avoiding the cycle rickshaw. The local government, too, is taking into consideration to control the numbers of rickshaw within the town for better traffic condition. This may lead to socio-economic problem to many rickshaw pullers. If, by any means, the existing rickshaw pullers, who do not have any other options open for sustenance, be identified and trained before displaced then that will be humane.

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Appendix I: Tables and Figures

Table 1: Religion profile of respondent:

Religion	No. of Respondent (% age)
Hindu	201(67.00)
Muslim	99(33.00)
Christian	0(00)
Sikh	0(00)
Total	300(100)

Table 2: Educational Level of Rickshaw puller

Education level	No of Respondent (% age)
Illiterate	132(44.00)
Primary level	119(39.5)
Middle Level	40(13.5)
Secondary and Above	9(3.00)
Total	300(100)

Table 3: Age profile of Rickshaw puller

Age Group	No of Respondent (% age)
Below 20	3(1.00)
20-24	10(3.5)
25-29	8(2.5)
30-34	63(21.00)
35-39	69(23.00)
40-44	66(22.00)
45-49	39(13.00)
50-54	24(8.00)
55-59	9(3.00)
60 and above	9(3.00)
Total	300(100)

Table 4: Marital Status of respondent:

Marital Status	No. of Respondent (% age)
Married	292(97.33)
Unmarried	8(2.67)
Separated	0%
Total	300(100)

Table 5: Family Size of respondent:

Dependent(no.)	No. of Respondent (% age)
Up to 2	12(4.00)
3-5	44(14.67)
6-7	236(78.67)
8 and above	8(2.66)
Total	300(100)

Table 6: Educational Level of children of Rickshaw puller

Education level	No of Respondent (% age)
Primary level	117(40.07)
Middle level	102((34.93)
Secondary & above	73((25.00)
Total	292(100)

Table 10: Showing respondent's gross monthly income.

Gross Monthly Income	No of respondent (% age)
Upto3000	46 (15.45)
3001-6000	191 (63.76)
6001-9000	49 (16.45)
9001&above	14 (4.34)
Total	300(100)
Average	Rs 4810.

Table 11. Showing Respondent's daily working hours.

Daily Working Hours	No of Respondent (% age)
Less than 6 hrs	9(3.00)
7-9 hrs	84(28.00)
10-12hrs	114(38.00)
12hrs and above	93(31.00)

Table.12. showing Respondent's working days in a month.

No. of Working day in a month	No of Respondent (% age)
Less than 10 days	7(2.33)
10-15 days	77(25.67)
16-21 days	127(42.33)
21-26 days	89(29.67)
More than 26 days	0 (0)
Total	300(100)
Average	17 das(Approx)

Table13: Showing Respondent's opinion regarding fluctuation of daily income.

Daily earning Fluctuation	No. of Respondent (% age)
Highly fluctuated	53(17.67)
Moderately fluctuated	222(74.00)
Not fluctuated	25(8.33)

Table 15: Showing Respondent's preferred places/ areas for rickshaw pulling

Prefer Place	No of Respondent (% age)
Market Place	120(40.00)
School Bus stand	20(6.67)
Public Bus Stand	45(15.00)
Railway Station	60(20.00)
No Specific Place	55(18.33)

Table 16 Showing Respondent's preferred time for pulling rickshaw.

Prefer Time	No. of respondent (% age)
Only Day time	165(55.00)
Only Night time	105(35.00)
Both day & night tome	30(10.00)
Total	300(100)

Table17: Showing Respondent's preferred distance for pulling rickshaw.

Prefer Distance	No of Respondent
Long	124(41.25)
Short	146(48.7500)
No Specific Choice	30(10.00)
Total	300(100)

Table18: Problem recorded from Passengers

Problem from passenger	No of Respondent (% age)
Bargaining for fare	135(45.00)
Comfort ability	80(26.67)
Intentionally Disruption	10(3.33)
Misbehavior	70(23.31)
Other	05(1.67)
Total	300(100)

Source: Field survey.

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