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GIRLS' HOSTELS (PRIVATE) IN DHAKA CITY : AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Shegufta Yasmin*

Abstract : For the lack of accommodation in Dhaka city, thousands of girls have to live in hostels. As number of government hostels is small, hundreds of private hostels have been created to fulfill the demands of accommodation. Maximum institutions don't have own girls' hostels, as a result thousands of girls who come from outside of Dhaka have to depend on these private hostels where lots of problems arise. This paper will show the major problems faced by girls in these hostels. Establishing hostel is a big business now a day. Authorities don't give attention to girls' problems; they only want to do as much profit as possible. As a result lots of girls have to live in unhygienic and unhealthy environment facing lack of security. This paper studies girls' problems and obstacles intensely.

Keywords: Environment, Residential Problem, Hygiene, Illegal Work, Hostel & Business.

Introduction

Once students of outside Dhaka didn't want to come to Dhaka for studies. Especially girls didn't come except for public universities. Now a days many private universities are established in Dhaka City and many of them offer cost effective offer. That's why thousands of girls come from remote area to Dhaka city. Though number of students increases a lot but simultaneously number of hostels does not increase. Many girls don't have any relative where they can stay, that's why their parents are compelled to allow their daughters to stay at private hostel. Lack of public hostels compels a girl to live in a private hostel which is sometimes expensive for her family. But there is no alternative. Often students select hostel for her which is near to her educational institutions and also less expensive. Hostel's rent often depends on locality and its nearby educational institutions. In this way it's a new profitable business for many-they target girls who have just passed HSC exam and come to Dhaka for admission test. This is the most rush time for hostels. Even they don't bother for old boarders; they keep more students than capacity for money. Many authorities start hostel business only with one

flat or few flats, often in an under construction building where girls feel unsafe. Often rooms' sizes are very small, damp, furniture is low quality, and kitchens are very unhygienic.

Most important is that though these hostels are called "students' hostel" but here live many working women and even sometimes professional prostitutes. Many village girls are being engaged in illegal jobs in the name of attractive jobs and parties. These are happened under observation of hostel authorities. If a girl protests, she is threatened by local mastans. That's why they keep silent and suffer all tortures.

When a girl admits in a hostel, a lot of money is taken from her for compelling to stay there a long time. Private Girls' hostels can play a vital role in present day residential problem of girls in Dhaka city. But these hostels don't follow any rules and regulations and they need not to bother anybody. That's why they don't give importance on healthy environment. They only think about their business. Low food quality, damp environment, lack of water, unhealthy toilets, food not serving in time in the name of want of gas, unsafe building, no strict gate-keepers, outsiders easy access— all these are common complains of these hostel's boarders. Many hostels are beside main road, where girls are disturbed by eve-teasers but they can't protest in fear of losing seat in hostel.

Many hostels are situated in such a building where other commercial offices held in different floor which occurs privacy problems for girls. When someone takes admission, she is told one kind of menu, but later they don't follow that menu always. There is no other way except accepting this situation. That's why everyone wants that all these private hostels should come under some rules and regulations.

Advocate Alina Khan, Executive Director, Bangladesh Human Rights Foundation, says, "We have received many complaints against such girls hostel and they found those complains are true. She thinks institutions should have own hostels for girls. Most of the hostels in Dhaka city are illegal because they don't have trade license or income tax certificates. In these hostels owners use their own girls to compel new girls to involve in illegal jobs. If anyone protests, rental *mastans* are used to control those girls. We need government monitoring cell to observe all these girls' hostels." (*Kaler Kantha*, 18.2.2012, pg 6)

The food is not cooked with sufficient spices and looks unappealing. They use too much palm oil, and the rice is often too soft. They often find bugs in the *daal*. When the girls protest in the canteen, the matron assures them that the hygiene and quality will improve, but the effects are never consistent. Water shortages are another major issue. The girls are informed beforehand when water will be available and it becomes their responsibility to save up as much as they can in pails and bottles. Many a time they find the fan or light

* Senior Lecturer, Dept. of English, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, ASA University Bangladesh, Shyamoli, Dhaka.

not working in their rooms. Formalities require them to hand in applications which result in nothing. Authority tell them to manage on their own, and they end up paying for the repairs. Boarders of ten rooms share two grimy bathrooms and the lights of one are out of order.

Objectives

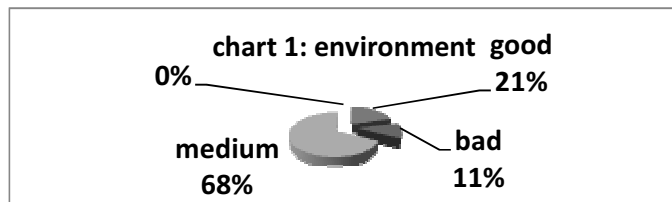
- To understand the scenario of private girls' hostels of Dhaka City.
- Identify the problems of private girls' hostels of Dhaka City.

Methodology

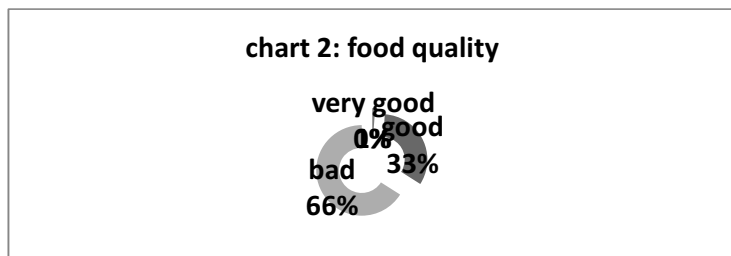
- Total 100 girls were interviewed through a questionnaire, consists of 15 questions. They are belong to two private hostels of Shyamoli and Lalmatia, Dhaka.
- Few private girls' hostels are visited by the author.
- Newspaper reporting is analyzed.
- Individual girl is interviewed.
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is held among those who live in hostel.

Findings from Questionnaire

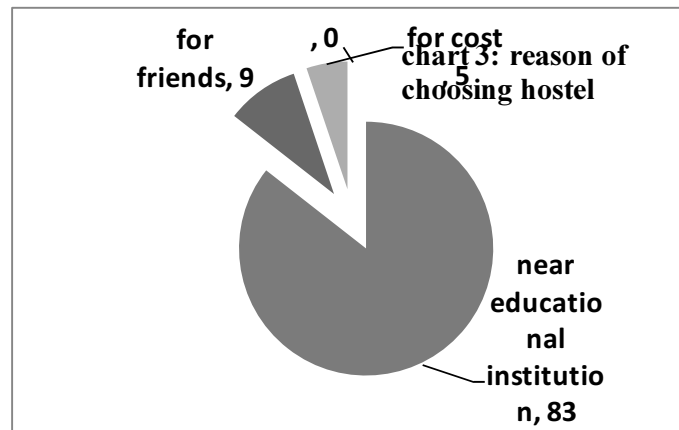
Total 100 girls are interviewed. Their age group is 18 to 29. Their duration of staying at hostel is from two months to seven years. Many of them are working ladies. Most of them study in various private universities and colleges.



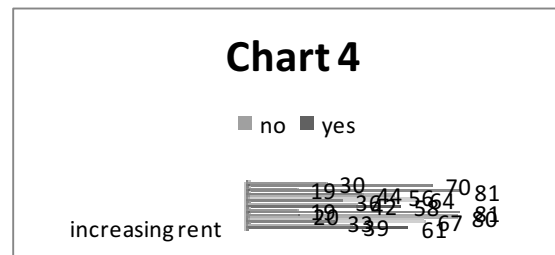
From chart 1, we can see that 68% girls commented their hostel's environment as medium, 21% said environment was good and 11% said it as bad.



In chart 2, food quality of hostel is discussed. 66% marked their hostel's food quality as bad. 33% thought quality is good and only 1% said it very good.

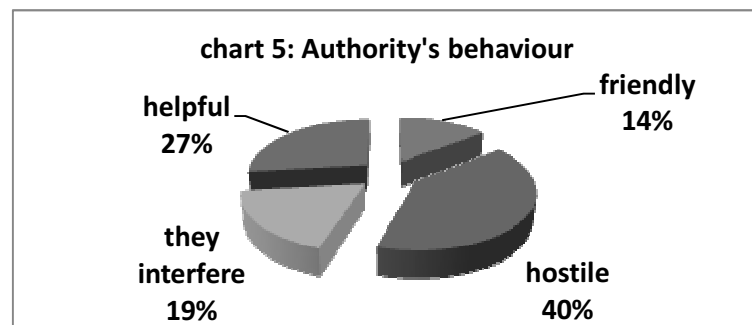


In chart 3, reason of choosing hostel is discussed. 86% girls chose their hostel because it is near their educational institutions. 9% chose it as their friends live here. 5% chose it for cost effectiveness.



From chart 4, we come to know that only 30% said there is no fixed time to enter in the hostel, 70% admitted that there is fixed timing. 19% think their hostel is not costly, 81% think it is costly. 44% students think their hostel's environment is not study friendly, 56% think it is study friendly. If hostel boarders complain anything against system of hostel, 64% think that is not acceptable for authority. 36% think that authority takes cordially complains. 42% said electricity and water supply is not regular in their hostels. While 58% said it is okay. 19% girls don't feel safe and secured in the hostel, but 81% feel safe and secured. 20% don't think food is served in time, while 80% think food is served in time. 67% declared that their hostels are not hygienic and 33% think it is hygienic. 39% boarder don't think sit rent is increasing

regularly, but 61% claim that rent is increasing regularly which is almost 600 tk to 1000 tk per year.



Hostel's authority's behaviour is questionable. In chart 5, we see that 40% boarder think authority's behaviour is hostile, 27% think it is helpful, 19% think they interfere in boarders' issues, and lastly 14% think they are friendly.

Interview of Girls who Live in Hostels

- Nadia Shakiba, a university student who lives by herself in a flat in the city says, 'owners do not want to rent their flats to single women. I used to live in another flat before, from where I was asked to vacate because I stayed alone. The owner said that people "talk" about me and they did not want to hear that anymore.' Nadia comes from a city outside Dhaka. Her parents had rented the flat for her, but when the owners realized that Nadia was to live there alone, they threw her out fearing society's irrational comments. The notion of women living alone in Dhaka is still widely unacceptable, though times have improved. Nadia says, 'before I started living alone, I used to share a flat with eight other girls in Banani where our neighbours used to think we were disowned by our parents and were of lower standards, rejected by society because we were "not of good character". Even the guards used to talk to us very disrespectfully.' It appears that in an attempt to educate herself and gain financial stability, a woman is made to choose between her 'image' in society and her future. This is one consideration that discourages many girls from moving away from their families to come and pursue a good education or establish a solid career in Dhaka. 'No one has the right to evaluate a girl's character.'
- Farjana Rahman, lives in a hostel in Shyamoli. Her hostel's water was contaminated and most of the boarders suffered from diarrhea and eye

diseases. They complained the hostel authority, but they didn't do anything for first few day, after that all the girls protested in together, they tried to solve water problem, but could not succeed because of a illegal water line which brings sewerage water into min line.

List of Some Private Girls' Hostels in Dhaka City

- Rupali Girls' Hostel:** 16/9 Indira Road, Tejgaon College Lane, Farm Gate, Dhaka 1215.
- Mother Teresa Homes:** Sector 5 & 13 (near Shanta Mariyam University), Uttara, Dhaka.
- Jahanara Garden:** 136/B, Green Road, Farm Gate, Dhaka.
- Principial Gulshanara Student (Girls) Hostel:** Babar Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1207.
- California Exclusive Hostel:** House 9/A, West Dhanmondi, Dhaka.
- Labonno Prova Chhatrri Nibas:** 41/14/B, Hazi Afsar Uddin Lane, Jigatola, near old vegetable market, Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1205.
- Nari Nibash:** 762 Satmashjid Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka.
- Mother Teresa Homes :** House 117/1, Road 9/A (New), Dhanmondi (Near Stamford University)
- Rokeya girls' hostel:** 131/5 Jahanara Garden, Farm gate,
- Nibedika girls' hostel:** 100 Monipuri para, Farm gate, Monthly Tk 2000, 2200, 2500, 2700, 3000 (including seat and food).
- Aponggar girls' hostel:** 5/5, Block-F, near Lalmatia Millennium Hospital, Monipuri para, Farm gate.
- Nibedika girls' hostel:** 114 Green road, Mostofa lane, near Ananda Cinema hall.
- Dreamland Girls' Hostel:** 17/2-A, Tallabag (near west Razabazar mosque), Shukrabad.
- YWCA Girls' Hostel:** 11 Green Square, Green Road, Dhaka-1205. (Beside YWCA Girls' High School)
- Shanti-niketon:** house 8, sector 4, road 19, Uttara.
- 'Holy star Girls' Hostel:** 170, Green Road. Near Comfort Hospital, beside Charmvil Apartment.
- Orchid Homes:** 180 Big Maghbazar, Dhaka.
- Batikram Girls' Hostel:** 25/2 Khilji Road, Shyamoli, Dhaka.
- The Mum Care:** 86/2 Indira Road, TnT Field Lane, Farmgate. Uttara branch: Bani Vila, House 8, Road 6/A, Sector 4, Uttara, Dhaka.
- Harbin jvar Ladies Hostel:** 22/8 Tajmahal Road, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held among 20 girls who live in a private hostelin Shyamoli, Dhaka. The following opinions and comments are come out from discussion:

1. Hostel's water is often contaminated and girls have to be sufferer of diarrhea, eye diseases.
2. Hostel authority does not listen to girls' various problems.
3. Food quality is very low which creates diarrhea.
4. If a girl keeps food in the common refrigerator, most of the time it is stolen.
5. Sometimes useful things are stolen from room when a girl goes to toilet keeping room unlocked. Especially soya bin oil is stolen which girls keep for their personal cooking.
6. Often food quality is so worsen that girls have to cook food with their personal arrangement. As example: egg fry, meat etc.
7. As there is only one television, it's hard to watch for girls. Hostel's maid servants watch TV most of the time.
8. If any girl is become sick, no extra facility is available from hostel authority. Girls have to manage doctor or medicine.
9. Maids do not clean rooms. Boarders have to do all kinds of washing, even bathrooms.
10. Maids clean toilets once is a month and rest of the time girls have to do it.
11. Cleaners are suppose to clean verandas and stairs, but they don't do it regularly, as a result, these places are haven for cats, mice etc.
12. Every one keep own bowls for food in the dining hall. But if a girl makes late to collect her food, it is often stole. None is found to supervise it.
13. Many working women live in the hostel. They often violet rules. Some of them smoke cigarettes in the room and compels other roommates not to disclose it to authority.
14. Smokers suggest or encourage other boarders to smoke.
15. Even some working women are found taking drugs, but students can't complain to authority duo to lack of clue.
16. If a roommate keeps light on for whole night or upto mid night, others can't protest.
17. Once there was a rule if a girl does not live in hostel for few days, her bill of food is curtailed. But now hostel authority takes full month's bill of meal whether a girl takes food there or not.
18. Some girls are involved in prostitution. They insist other newcomers in this profession indirectly by convincing them with gifts, better diet etc.
19. If a girl does not have any boy friend, she is treated in different manner. Those prostitutes try to involve those girls with boys. They act as middle

men and take commission from boys by introducing with new girls. This relationship is started with conversation in telephone.

20. Few girls are identified as prostitute and they are expelled from hostel.
21. If a hostel is nearby of educational institution, they think that they will always get boarders. That's why they don't bother of any complaining. In every new semester they get new boarders.
22. Many girls want to live at individual flat with some selective girls, but they can't. Because landlords don't want to give rent to girls. Hostel authority takes this chance.
23. If an educational institution has its own girls' hostel, girls could feel more comfortable.
24. Though they pay for seat and food, but often they have to take food from outside for time and quality. Its increases their monthly expenditure which is often a burden for them.

Conclusion & Recommendations

For women, living single in Dhaka city is one of the most difficult experiences they say, when it comes to finding an accommodation. And though the problem of finding a suitable residence is common for both single men and women, the social position of women makes it more difficult for them to live alone in the city. The options most single women in the metropolis are left with are either renting apartments with roommates or finding women's hostels. The city over the last decade has secured its social position at par with most developed economies across the world with women's participation leading the progress in literacy and various fields of work. But in a mixed society of conservatives and forward minded, independent women coming to Dhaka for work or study are often refused accommodation, defeated by some extreme conservative ideologies by some apartment owners.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra, identifies two major challenges faced by women living by themselves. 'There is the practical problem – landlords are hesitant to provide accommodation to women without a male counterpart,' she explains. 'Society has a basic tendency to label these women as vulnerable, weak and not careful about their physical protection.' She adds, 'it reflects our patriarchal outlook. The other problem is that society views these women as easily approachable and easily accessible and this leads to their harassment.' Not much of legal support is available from the law enforcement when it is sought by the women during an incident, she regrettably says. In order to save themselves from social degradation, and live up to society's definition of how women should lead their lives, many forgo their education and careers. 'Social

consciousness needs to be raised. Women should come forward and set examples and solidarity,' muses Sultana Kamal. Their morale must not be let down. 'Women have every right to live by themselves. The government can ensure legal provision against landlords and form rules against sex discrimination where a woman's job or accommodation is not assessed by her sex.'

Another option for single women is to live in hostels. Dhaka's women's hostels are the abode of hundreds of girls who come from different parts of the country, and they are not without their own drawbacks. Eve teasing is another social problem faced by many women who live on their own.

References

Daily Kaler Kantha, 18 February 2012.

<http://www.itservicebd.com/admission/ladies-hostel.htm>

Annex

Hostel's name: Age: Duration of staying:

1. **How is the environment of your hostel?**
 - a. Good b. Bad c. Medium
2. **Is your hostel is costly?**
 - a. Yes b. No
3. **How is food quality of your hostel?**
 - a. Very good b. Good c. Bad
4. **How many beds in your room?**
 - a. Single b. Double c. More than two
5. **Is there any fixed time to enter hostel?**
 - a. Yes b. No. If yes, then what's the time?
6. **Is food served in time?**
 - a. Yes b. No
7. **Are working women live here?**
 - a. Yes b. No
8. **Is your hostel study friendly?**
 - a. Yes b. No
9. **Is your hostel hygienic?**
 - a. Yes b. No
10. **Why did you choose this hostel?**
 - a. Near your educational institution b. For your friends c. For cost
11. **Does your hostel's rent increase regularly?**
 - a. Yes b. No.0020 If yes, what is the rate of increasing?
12. **How is hostel authority's behaviour?**
 - a. Friendly b. Hostile c. They interfere d. Helpful
13. **Is electricity and water supply okay?**
 - a. Yes b. No
14. **If anyone complains against any service, is it accepted seriously by authority?**
 - a. Yes b. No
15. **Do you feel safe and secured in your hostel?**
 - a. Yes b. No. If no, then why?