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NECESSITY AND AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION: A STUDY ON THE SLUMS OF RAJSHAHI METROPOLITAN AREA OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract: Cities have been equipped with the extended population in Bangladesh because of the migration from the rural area to the cities. People generally tend to migrate from rural to city area in order to get better work. This study mainly attempts to state the necessity and availability of information of slums at the Rajshahi Metropolitan area in Bangladesh. The work furthermore endeavors to discover the sources of slums information. Particularly, it intends to show the understandability of slum's on information whether it is necessary ingredients in their life and aims to focus on the satisfaction level on the availability of information of the respondents. It also demonstrates the impact of the promotion of information to the slum dwellers life. Moreover, the paper provides some effective ways to make the information literate slum.

Key Words: slum dwellers, availability of information, necessity of information, migration, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Bangladesh is now Asia's fifth and the world's eighth most populous country with the area of 147,570 square kilometers (56,977 square miles) and an estimated population of about 152,518,015 (BBS 2012). The growth rate of

the population has fallen from 3% per annum at the first five year plan (1973-78) to about 1.34% p.a. in 2011 (BBS, 2011). Bangladesh has been gaining fast, unplanned, and uncontrolled urbanization. The population is expected to grow by another 40% by mid century, to 222 million, and finally stabilize around 240 million several decades after that. The rural population, currently about 73% will cease growing at around 140 million by 2025, mainly due to rural to urban migration, but the urban population will continuously grow. The urban population is currently made up of one third slums, and two-thirds non-slums, but the slums are growing at twice the rate (5% p.a.) than the overall urban growth rate (2.5% p.a.), meaning that the slums will account for a rapidly increasing proportion of urban dwellers (Directorate General of Family Planning, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Bangladesh, 2012). About 49% of the total population of Bangladesh is poor, destitute, vulnerable and living inhuman lives. 20 million people are extremely poor, which is 7% of the total population (Baten and Azad, 2010).

Alamgir, Jabbar and Islam, (2009) found that Slum areas have no available formal education facilities and slum people were found to be engaged in rickshaw pulling, day labourer, petty business, small job services etc. Analysis showed that migration and taking in microcredit were beneficial for the slum dwellers. The physical condition of slums is characterized by high density living, improper utilization of public goods, lack of basic amenities, unhygienic and polluted environment, poor literacy rate, unemployment, crime, social, moral and psychological degradation and poor health. Human living conditions in the absence of basic civic amenities such as safe and adequate water supply, sewerage and sanitation and toilets, has been precarious and miserable for the health, safety and comfort in such communities (Hardoy et al., 1997). Due to the raise of slums in the city areas of developing countries, a big number of research and report have been published in this regard. Most of the researches have concentrated on living condition, health, sanitation, environment and so on. But little attention has paid on the necessity and availability of slum's information. And so, this study attempts to analyze the availability and necessity of information of slum dwellers of Rajshahi metropolitan area in Bangladesh. Several studies (Deshingkar and Grimm, 2005; Narayan et al, 2002) also suggest that an increasing number of poor migrant every year migrate either permanently or seasonally to Rajshahi city. The poor settlers in Rajshahi city have shelter in many urban areas. They live scatteredly in different urban areas like railway lines slums, municipal roadside areas, in riversides, and also often live on other vacant lands (Haider, 2010). Rajshahi district having 25, 95,197 population bounded on the north by Naogaon zila, on the east by Natore zila, on the south by Kushtia zila and India and on the west by Chapai Nawabganj zila. The total area of the zila is 2,425.37 sq.km (936.00 sq.miles) (BBS, 2012). Information is vital ingredient in human life. Proper information

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has the enormous impact on the respective matter's development and success. The urban poor do have knowledge of their own, but this may be inadequate to cope with the complexities of urban life. To mitigate risk and to move out of poverty, the urban poor do require additional knowledge (Castañeda and Xjimenez, 2001). Access to information and communication are essential to develop that knowledge and thus enable the poor to be aware of and make the most of any opportunities in a dynamic urban environment (Lowe, 2001:1). Indeed, information will be useless until it is not used for the proper aspect.

Objectives

Against this backdrop the main objective of this study is:

- To know the slums understandability of whether Information is necessary ingredients in the life;
- To trace the areas where information is required of slum dwellers;
- To assess the information that is available surrounding them;
- To know the sources of information of slum dwellers;
- To discover the satisfaction level on the availability of information of the slum dwellers;
- To identify the impact of the promotion of information to the slum dwellers life;
- To provide guidelines to create awareness for the information literate slums in the society;

Methodology

The study has conducted through a field survey on the availability and necessity of information of slum dwellers of Rajshahi metropolitan area in Bangladesh. There are many places where slums live in Rajshahi metropolitan area among of them a few places have been selected namely Kajla, Vadra, Talaimari, Verypara, Court station, Alupotti launch ghat, and Kashia danga. From these places 55 slum dwellers were selected to collect the data. The data was gathered by interview with the structured questionnaire during the month of February 01, 2012 to March 1, 2012. The collected data were then analyzed by suitable software SPSS and simple graphical representation.

Table 1: Location of Study Area and Frequency of Sampling

Location	Respondents	Percents
Kajla	11	20
Vadra	6	10.9
Talaimari	17	30.9
Verypara	6	10.9
Court station	7	12.7
Launch ghat	5	9.1
Kashia danga	3	5.5
Total	55	100

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Age Group of the Respondent

Table 2 represents about the age of the respondents where the majority number (50.9%) of respondents age is 40+ years while 43.6% belongs to (20-40) years. The lowest number i.e. 5.5% of the respondent's age group is (0-20) years. So, maximum slum dwellers age is 40 and more years.

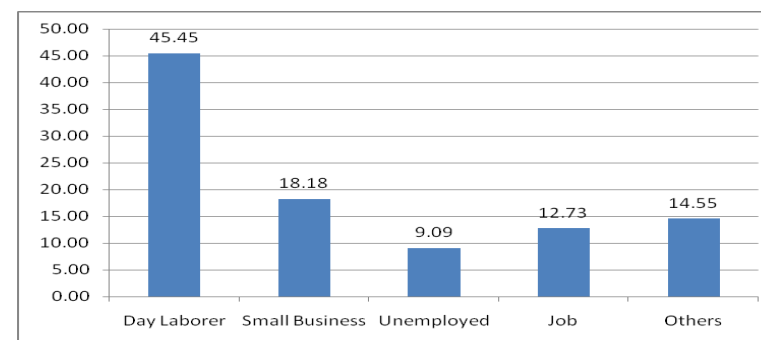
Table 2: Age Group of the Respondent

Age group(By Year)	Respondents	Percent
0-20	3	5.5
20-40	24	43.6
40+	28	50.9
Total	55	100

Occupation of the Respondents

Figure 2 express about the occupation of slums. In the figure, day laborer occupies the highest position i.e. 45.45%. The portion of small business is moderate which is 18.18% while the 12.73% respondents are engaged with jobs like peon, guard of government and non-government sectors. Besides, 14.55% of respondents engaged with others occupation namely rickshaw puller, grocery shop, scavenger, servant etc. The figure demonstrates that day labor is the main occupation of slums in Rajshahi Metropolitan area.

Figure 2: Occupation of the Respondents



Living Duration of Slum in the Surveyed Area

As of table 3, the majority respondents i.e. 34.5% have been living as slum dwellers from more than 5 years while 27.3% of them live from less than 15 years. The least number i.e. 7.3% have been living from more than 3 years. As of the table it is clear that maximum slums have been living for more than 5 years in the Rajshahi metropolitan area.

Table 3: Duration of Living as Slum Dwellers

Duration of living	Respondents	Percents
>1 year	8	14.5
>3 years	4	7.3
>5 years	19	34.5
<15years	15	27.3
>20 years	9	16.4
Total	55	100

Information is Necessary Ingredients in the Life

Table 4 describe about the importance of information in leading the smooth life of slums where most of the respondents 34(61.8%) think that effective information on leading the life is obvious while 38.2% of them do not understand what is information and how it can change their life which demonstrates that big portion of respondents feel that information is required ingredients to change their existing life.

Table 4: Information is Necessary Ingredients in the Life

Information is necessary	Respondents	Percents
Comment	34	61.8
Do not understand	21	38.2
Total	55	100

Areas Where Information is Necessary

Necessity of information on various issues of slum dwellers is imperative. Slums face crucial importance on having effective information and assistance on fundamental matters. Housing plays a very important role in the human life and its society. Housing has a tremendous social and economic impact on our lives and the way we live. It has direct and immediate influence on health, education, economy, environment, political and social life of any society (Sinha, 1978). The problem of shortage of houses for the low income group in developing countries is critical. High levels of poverty and unemployment, and increased land cost have contributed to the formation of squatter settlements surrounding many urban centers in developing countries (Alaghbari et.al. 2009). Furthermore, throughout the history of epidemiology, different attributes of people and their environments have been considered as potential causes of disease. Socioeconomic status is one of the most consistently correlated factors of health conditions (Duncan, 1996). Table 5 depicts about the necessity of information of slums in their different parts of life and society. It is found that 100% of slums need the accommodation, food, sanitation, micro credit, drug addiction information respectively where as pure drinking water, politics related information is required by 98.2% respondents respectively and technology based aspects' information is needed by 85.5% respondents. Moreover, educational information is required by 69% respondents. Besides, entertainment, mother health and nutrition, poultry and dairy, natural disaster, drainage related

information is not required more i.e. below 50% slums require on such issues. Whereas child health information is required by more than 50% respondents i.e. 63.6% slums think that their child health related information and treatment is necessary. This proves that the slums do not bother about the mother health but feel about their child health. So, the table authenticate that more or less, all the slums require information on accommodation, food, sanitation, micro credit, drug addiction, pure drinking water, political aspects. Besides, technology based aspects' information, educational information, child health related is required moderately.

Table 5: Areas Where Information is Necessary

Types of Information	Necessity of Information (% of respondent)		Types of Information	Necessity of Information (% of respondent)	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Accommodation	100	00	Poultry and dairy	43.6	56.4
Food	100	00	Natural Disaster	30.9	69.1
Education	69	31	Micro credit	100	00
Pure Drinking Water supply	98.2	1.8	Adult health and nutrition	43.6	56.4
Entertainment	23.6	76.4	Drainage	21.8	78.2
Political	98.2	1.8	Economical	60	40
Child health and nutrition	63.6	36.4	Drug addiction	100	00
Mother health and nutrition	27.3	72.7	Technology based information	85.5	14.5
Sanitation	100	00	Others	--	--

Areas Where Information is Available

Availability of information means which information is obtained by them from various government body, NGOs, National and international organizations etc. As of the Table 6 it is observed that micro credit, political and economical aspect related messages are obtained by 100% of the respondent respectively when 96.4% respondents mentioned that pure drinking water related information is available while technology like mobile, Television etc. based information is available which is 89.1% respondent's opinion and 85.5% respondents claimed that sanitation related information is existing in their community where as 81.8% respondents stated that education information is also in their hand by different bodies. Besides theses, no respondents stated that the accommodation, food, drug addiction based information is available surrounding them. Furthermore, few respondents i.e. 36.4% respondents said that information on child health and nutrition is available followed by 27.3% entertainment, mother health and nutrition 20%, natural disaster 16.3%, 12.70% drainage, poultry and dairy 10.9%, and adult health and nutrition 3.60%. So, it proves that micro credit, political and economical, pure drinking water information is widely available while accommodation, food, drug addiction information is not available in the slums area.

Table 6: Areas Where Information is Available

Types of Information	Availability of Information (% of respondent)		Types of Information	Availability of Information (% of respondent)	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Accommodation	000	100	Poultry and dairy	10.9	89.1
Food	000	100	Natural Disaster	16.3	83.7
Education	81.8	18.2	Micro credit	100	000
Pure Drinking Water supply	96.4	3.6	Adult health and nutrition	3.60	96.40
Entertainment	27.3	72.7	Drainage	12.70	87.30
Political	100	000	Economical	100	000
Child health and nutrition	36.4	63.6	Drug addiction	000	100
Mother health and nutrition	20.0	80.0	Technology based information	89.10	10.90
Sanitation	85.5	14.5	Others	--	--

Sources of Information of Slum Dwellers

Table 7 expresses about the sources of information used by the slums dwellers. As of the table, it is seen that most of the respondents get the information from neighbor, by self experience, radio, TV, forefather which is 100%, 90.9%, 88%, 83.6%, 69% respectively. And, no respondent get information from internet and cartooning which demonstrates that there is no use of Internet among the slums. Moreover, government office is the source of information of 56.4% respondents. There are the small sources of information like poster 28.2%, NGO (Local/International) 27.3%, mobile communication 21.8%, educated people 20%, and newspaper 15% while only a few respondents treat the sources of information namely Mobile Short Message(SMS) systems 7.30%, street drama 2%. So, the table proves that neighbor, self experience, radio, TV is the prime source of information of slums. Moreover, government office is the moderate source of information of the least developed people. Besides, posters, NGOs (Local/International), mobile communication, educated people, and newspaper are the little source of information of slum dwellers.

Table 7: Sources of Information of Slum Dwellers

Sources of Information	Sources of Information (% of respondent)		Sources of Information	Sources of Information (% of respondent)	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Internet	000	100	Mobile communication	21.8	78.2
TV	83.6	16.4	Newspaper	15	85
NGO(Local/International)	27.3	72.7	Self experience	90.9	9.1
Educated people	20.0	80.0	Poster	28.2	71.8
Banner	5.5	94.5	Street drama	2	98
Radio	88	12	Others	-	-
Mobile Short Message(SMS)	7.30	96.70	Government office	56.4	43.6
Neighbor	100	00	Film	5.5	94.5
Cartoon	000	100	Forefather	69	41

Satisfaction on the Availability of Information of the Respondents

Table 8 expresses the level of satisfaction on the availability of information in relation to needs to lead their life and to cope with the society. It is seen that most of the respondents i.e. 63.6% are less satisfied with the existing information where the rest of respondent i.e.36.4% is dissatisfied which proves that the majority portion of respondents are less satisfied with the existing information.

Table 8: Level of Satisfaction on the Existing Information

Satisfaction Level	Respondents	Percents
Less satisfied	35	63.6
Dissatisfied	20	36.4
Total	55	100

Impact of the Promotion of Information to the Slum Dwellers Life

Information is indispensable ingredient for the creation of awareness among the people, for the accomplishment of any plan, and for the increment of responsibilities towards himself, family, and nations. Table 9 enumerates the promotion of information to the slum dwellers life. It is clear that majority of the respondents i.e. 45.45% provided their comments as poor and 32.73% said good while 21.82% of them did not comment on that. So, the table proves that the impact of promotion of information to the slums life is poor.

Table 9: Impact of the Promotion of Information to the Slum Dwellers Life

Impact	Respondents	Percents
Good	18	32.73
Poor	25	45.45
No comments	12	21.82
Total	55	100

Proposed Roles and Responsibilities of Various Professional and Non Professional Organizations/Medias to Create Awareness among the Slums to be Information Literate

Awareness body	Proposed Roles and Responsibilities
Government Organization	Awareness through diverse programs in the slum area
NGOs	Awareness through different programs within the slum region
Public Library	Awareness through campaign
Educational Institutions	Awareness through different programs
Researchers	Accomplishing research on the diverse issues of slums life
Cultural Organization	Creating consciousness through dramas and various cultural shows
Radio	Attentiveness through various programs
Television	Attentiveness through various programs
Educated person	Counseling on the various issues of information
Health Worker	Awareness among the slums through health information

Medical officer	Awareness among the slums through health information and providing proper treatment of different diseases
Mobile Phone Operator	Disseminating effective information through mobile messaging systems
Politician	Mobilization of opinion by effective information
Drug addiction protection center	Creation of awareness by fruitful information on the adverse effects of drug addiction
Campaign through Bill board, Posters, Cartoons in the slums area	Campaign through Bill board, Posters, Cartoons in the slums area

Conclusion

The people in the slums are very entrepreneurial and hard working, and we believe, given the opportunity, they will be able to do well, economically and socially. However, the extreme poor require more than just start-up capital to climb out of poverty. They require forward and backward linkages (markets) for their products. They require a safe home at night. They require primary health care services, safe water and sanitation facilities (Baten and Azad, 2010). High rates of urbanization in developing countries have produced innumerable slums and squatters with very poor living conditions. The unavailability of pure drinking water, sanitary latrine and waste disposal from these slums are imminent causes of public health problems for the population living there. (Kamal and Rashid, 2004). The study demonstrates that majority number of respondent's age level is 40+ years and most of them have been living in the rented house as slum for more than 5 years and maximum of them are engaged with the work of day labor and big portion of them is signature literate who know to sign the name only. In the case of information need on the day to day life leading of slums, most of them argued that the importance of information in leading the smooth life is obvious. It is found that most of slums need the accommodation, food, sanitation, microcredit, drug addiction related information, pure drinking water, political aspect, technology based information, educational information. It is observed that most of the slums said that microcredit, political and economical aspect related messages, pure drinking water related information, technology based information like mobile, television etc. based information, sanitation related information are existing in their community and information on child health and nutrition is also available. On the other hand no respondents stated that the accommodation, food, drug addiction based information is available surrounding them. Besides, it is seen that most of the respondents get various such information from neighbor, by self experience, radio, TV. And, no respondent get information from Internet and cartooning which demonstrates that there is no use of Internet among the slums. Moreover, government office is another source of information of respondents. There are the moderate media of information like posters, NGO (Local/International), mobile communication, educated people and newspaper

while only a few respondents treat banner, street drama, mobile Short Message systems (SMS), and film as the sources of information. The government, non government organization, public library, educational institutions, researchers, cultural organization, print and electronic medias, educated person of the slum's area, health worker, medical officer of nearby hospital, mobile phone operator, politician, drug addiction protection center can concentrate more on the creation of awareness among the slums to be information literate for the best possible utilization of the suitable information in the right places of their life.

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