

Research Article

Socioeconomic Disparities: Unveiling the Horijon Perspective in Barishal City

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Abstract

This study thoroughly examines the inequalities that the Horijon community must contend with. By observing different aspects of Horijon perspective, this paper reveals the pervasive inequality and discrimination towards the *Horijon / Shebok* communities in Barishal city. Horijon is one of the deprived ethnic groups in India and Bangladesh. Because of their miserable situation, they cannot use their full potential. This study focused mainly on the level of their lagging behind so that they can contribute to the economy with full potential. This study is based on an intensive survey study on many social and economic factors on the Horijon community in Barishal city, a divisional city in southern part of Bangladesh. The investigation focuses on the complex interactions of numerous factors like education, healthcare, financial aid, living conditions, savings and investment status which contribute to the marginalization of the *Horijon* community. Considering the hurdles, the study also acknowledges promising developments, improved community awareness and government initiatives to raise living standards. Additionally, the research points out how women are becoming more conscious of their rights and engaging themselves with education, employment and starting their own businesses. This suggests a change in the trajectory of achieving greater gender equality and socioeconomic empowerment in the *Horijon* community. After careful assessment, the study uncovers the area-wise challenges and hardships of the *Horijon* in Barishal city. The understanding acquired from this research paper could help shape initiatives and interventions intended to overcome the multifaceted difficulties that the *Horijon* community as well as other unprivileged communities' encounter.

Keywords

Disparities, Gender Equality, Hurdles, Marginalization, Multifaceted, Socioeconomic Empowerment

1. Introduction

In Indian sub-continent caste system can be seen in Vedic period (circa 1500 BCE), where there are four basic categories: Brahmins (people who are priests), Kshatriyas (fighters), Vaishyas (people involved in business), and Shudras (labor). Excluding these categories there is another category, which is identified as “untouchable”. Traditionally they worked on

tasks which are tagged as “impure” like, muchhi (leather-worker), sweeper (cleaner) etc. Because of this social identification, they were discriminated from many social activities such as they were restricted entered into temples, funeral, sometimes they were restricted from many villages and ultimately were separated from society. To show them their de-

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sired respect and bring them into mainstream society the great leader Mahatma Gandhi first named them “Horijon” (children of God), from then they are called Horijon. Their social plight remained the same in the medieval period, though, some evidence was found about social reformation on that period. Between 8th and 17th centuries, there was a movement named Bhakti Movement, which was organized by some saints named Kabir, Ravidas, and Tukaram to ensure the social rights of the marginalized people, where Horijon also included. This movement reduced the untouchable condition of Horijon in a significant scale. In the 18th century, under British colonial rule, there was a massive social reformation has occurred. The colonial administration reduced caste-based discrimination, which impacted on social reformation. By rejecting the Hindu caste system, Ambedkar and many of his followers converted into Buddhist in 1953. Many reformers i.e. Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule, and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar contributed to vanish this caste-based discrimination. One of the marginalized caste people Jyotirao Phule founded a school for Dalit (marginalized people) children, Savitribai Phule worked for the rights of Dalit girls.

The Horijon community has been marginalized in Indian society following independence due to systematically discriminatory practices, extreme poverty and lack of access to education, despite rights guaranteed by the constitution [1, 8, 30]. Dalit movements that supported political and economic justice, including the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Dalit Panthers, rose to a prominent position in the second half of the 20th century [11-13]. Although land reforms were undertaken, their influence was restricted by poor implementation [7]. Along with recent developments in inclusion in society, political representation and education brought about by reservation rules, growth in urbanization and globalization have also produced new economic opportunities, especially in the service sector. Movements like #DalitLivesMatter and leaders like Mayawati correspond to the community's growing resilience and empowerment. But social isolation, manual scavenging, and caste-based violence still exist, especially in rural areas [4, 16]. The history of the Horijon community demonstrates both the tremendous progress made in the direction of a society with greater fairness as well as the ongoing difficulties associated with structural oppression. The Horijon society in Bangladesh has a long tradition of economic hardship, structural exclusion and eventual empowerment which traces back to colonial times when the British brought Dalits to Bengal to perform physically demanding tasks and discriminated against sanitation [6, 17]. As "untouchables" and outsiders, Horijons were restricted to isolated "sweeper colonies" and disregarded from both upper-caste Hindu and local Muslim-majority society as a whole despite their crucial role in preserving public sanitation [3, 27]. Their risk factors were further increased by the 1947 partition of India, which left many of them stateless and subject to societal assault and expulsion in the eastern part of Pakistan (now Bangladesh) [10, 5]. In metropolitan areas including Dhaka,

Chittagong and Khulna, the community kept up providing essential sanitation services despite the political irresponsibility deteriorating their living conditions after partition [9, 2]. The socioeconomic hardships and relentlessness that characterize the Horijon community in Barishal city are examined in this study, which also illustrates their historical direction and draws attention to the long-term consequences of social exclusion and prejudicial attitudes. The Horijon community of Bangladesh is mostly engaged in cleaning roads, sanitation work, and other types of cleaning jobs. Though these types of work are very important for maintaining hygiene, they often do not receive adequate job facilities. Mostly, they earn very low wages; moreover, there is very little job security or benefits like pensions. Despite the risky nature of their work, they do not have access to sufficient healthcare facilities.

Due to their economic struggles, they are unable to access proper education. This lack of education limits them from pursuing alternative employment opportunities. As a result, poverty in the Horijon community remains persistent. Most families in the community live in informal settlements with inadequate housing and poor sanitation facilities. Ironically, the people responsible for maintaining hygiene in society often lack access to basic hygiene themselves.

The Horijons are mostly excluded from mainstream social and cultural activities, as many people in Bangladesh believe that the Horijon community is “polluted” because of their occupation. Discrimination occurs in many forms. Horijons live in segregated slums, often isolated from other communities. Since Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country, and most Horijons are either Hindu or Christian, they face religious discrimination. Furthermore, being a lower-caste Hindu is considered a curse for many in the Horijon community.

There are significant health and safety concerns in the Horijon community. Sanitation work is very risky, but safety gear is often unavailable, making their work even more dangerous. Many individuals in the community sustain injuries or contract infections at a young age and suffer throughout their lives. The lack of access to healthcare only worsens their misery.

From the very beginning, Horijons have been one of the most neglected communities in Bangladesh. Even after the country's independence, the government has failed to take necessary steps to alleviate their troubles. Efforts to improve the conditions of Horijons through specific programs to help minority communities remain insufficient. In recent decades, minority communities like the Horijons have started organizing themselves to demand their rightful needs, such as better working conditions, housing, and education. One of the most recognized platforms in Bangladesh is the Horijon Oikya Parishad. This organization has played a crucial role in highlighting the needs of the Horijon community and advocating for policy changes. For decades, the community has demanded formal recognition as a distinct marginalized group, secure housing facilities in sweeper colonies or informal settlements, fair wages and other job facilities, and access to

quality education, including scholarships for Horijon children. To fulfill their demands, Horijon workers have periodically staged protests and strikes, with notable protests occurring in the capital and other major cities of Bangladesh. The government has taken some steps to minimize the hardships faced by the Horijon community. These include housing projects for Horijon families, offering permanent employment contracts to sanitation workers, and implementing policies to protect minority communities like the Horijons. However, these steps are slow, and implementation remains inconsistent. NGOs and civil society organizations are also running educational and vocational training programs for Horijon youth. Some NGOs conduct awareness campaigns to highlight the indispensable role of Horijons in urban life. Despite these efforts, caste-based discrimination continues in mainstream society. Horijons often face barriers when trying to find jobs outside sanitation work. They even struggle to rent homes in non-segregated areas.

2. Literature Review

This study looks at various aspects of *Dalit* children's right to educational opportunities in Bangladesh. Factors behind the limitation of *Dalit* children's access and relationship are mentioned in terms of caste-based social exclusion, income, social relations, access to the labor market, schooling and parental education level and status. The research uses a qualitative approach and case studies and analyzes the causes of various economic, social, and cultural deprivations [20, 33].

Dalit children's access to education and impacting their social integration. A study shows, the literacy rate among the *Dalit* community is very poor and educational opportunities are limited. Surveys applicable to various districts show that the *Dalit* community has a higher education rate and lower primary school attendance [24].

The study emphasizes on the socioeconomic disadvantages of the sweeper community of Bangladesh. The study also focuses on their reliance on loans and lack of access to the basic rights comparing to the general community. The study concluded by discussing about policies which can be implemented to ensure the improvement of sweeper community's standard of life [18].

Another study was conducted on empirical data which give us insights into the educational attainment, profession and income of Bangladeshi Horijon community. The majority of participants in social surveys and observations were affiliated with Government jobs which indicates the community's preferences for occupational change. The data on the community also reveals gender inequality in educational opportunities. The study also suggests policies which can be taken to improve their status and social equality by addressing the challenges faced by the *Horijon* (Methor/ Shebok/ sweeper) community [14, 23].

Dalit children in Bangladesh faces many the challenges. By focusing on the ongoing discrimination towards them in our

society the researcher shows those challenges. The challenges faced by *Dalits* in obtaining educational opportunities are the main concerns of this research. It also discusses about the little access of healthcare for deprived communities by treating them as a stigma. The study concluded by emphasizing on the policy intervention to take down the barriers of discrimination for the *Dalit* children in accessing education [22, 34].

A study explores the social, economic, political and also cultural factors which lead to the health disparities that the majority of *Dalits* face. The main concern of this paper is about the health inequality among *Dalit* population in Bangladesh. This study uses the "Commission on social determinants of health conceptual framework" proposed by the WHO. According to the study *Dalits* are more likely than non-*Dalits* to suffer from skin conditions, Pneumonia, TB, Diarrhea etc. Waterborne infections seem extremely widespread among *Dalit* population due to slum's lack of fresh water and proper sanitation system. This study investigated two sweeper colonies in Dhaka: Ganaktoli Sweeper Colony which is near Hazaribagh area and the Agargaon Public Workers Department Sweeper Colony. On top of that, the author also used an inclusion condition that the respondents must be at least 18 years old or above. In order to gain an expanded comprehension of the exclusion process, the author also conducted 7 key informant interviews with religious and community leaders as well as NGO professionals. They selected key informants on the basis of the two criteria: information depth and voluntary participation. The qualitative data is evaluated using an interactive approach. A large portion of the participants are illiterate; their ages range from 22 to 64 with an average age around 30. The primary findings of the research include the fact that the *Dalit* population in Dhaka has significant challenges, especially a lack of education and a basically landless condition. Access to healthcare knowledge is scarce or absent due to *Dalit* people's extremely low literacy rate. The data also reveal that little or no education narrows the Occupational opportunities and result in low income. The main drawback of the paper is that though they are studying the Health Care inequality of *Dalits*, they don't include one of the main stakeholders of this health sector which is government Healthcare providers. Most importantly working within only 2 colonies won't provide the accurate scenario of the whole *Dalit* community from across the country that's also a drawback of this paper. For improvement, the author would add more stakeholders of the healthcare sector and they can also use person-to-person interviews that will help much more to understand the original scenario. Besides that, if possible, collecting more data from different places in the country helps more to portray the right or appropriate scenario of the *Dalit* communities' struggle to have Healthcare facilities [26, 35].

The researcher applied the concept of empowerment to better understand and clarify the obstacles and adjusting process faced by people of *Dalit* community in Bangladesh. They collected data from three thanas of the capital city Dhaka. Those thanas are- Hazaribagh, Sutrapur and Demra.

Dalits account for the majority of the population within these locations. This study used numerous kinds of approaches, including semi-structured interviews and onsite observation. 22 qualitative interviews with Dalit community members are conducted as part of the project. Primary and secondary research data from various government, academic and non-government investigations and publications on the subject were used by the author. The study also shows that the elder person of the community wants to carry the legacy of their ancestors but the young member of the community wants to change the age-old tradition and culture. This study's downside is that an extremely small percentage of primary data was gathered and the information was chosen with intent by the researchers, using a purposive sampling technique [19].

The qualitative data presented in this research demonstrates how the governmental apparatus and the general public in Bangladesh have mostly failed to acknowledge that work-based discrimination is still a prominent aspect of social life in this country. After providing a brief introduction to the context relating to *Dalit* hood and *Dalit* human rights in general, the author makes an attempt here to show the magnitude of deprivation and exclusion. The gap between national policies and the international human rights framework is also explained in the same vein. In this article the author takes brief note of Fraser's theory of justice and he argue that focusing of both issues of recognition and redistribution is helpful to understand the plight of '*Dalit*' people in Bangladesh in more meaningful way. In other words, he tried to show that Fraser's theory of justice – while it focuses simultaneously on redistribution, recognition and representation, has the potential to provide a workable framework for understanding the 'injustices' that *Dalits* in Bangladesh live through [31].

Discrimination based on work and descent is any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on inherited status such as caste, including present or ancestral occupation, family, community or social origin, name, birth place, place of residence, dialect and accent that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life. This type of discrimination is typically associated with the notion of purity and pollution and practices of untouchability, and is deeply rooted in societies and cultures where this discrimination is practiced [32].

It is estimated that about 5.5 to 6.5 million people facing caste-based discrimination live in the country. Some drawback of this paper is that though this paper worked about the discrimination of *Dalit* people of Bangladesh but they didn't take any real interview of any of the communities' people. The author of this paper just took some paper-cutting stories. Moreover, in this paper there is no real measures from where we can understand the actual conditions that *Dalit* population are facing in Bangladesh [25].

The purpose of another paper is to study social exclusion and multiple deprivations that *Dalit* communities experience

in their day-to-day life. The author of the paper draws that *Dalit* are discriminated and deprived of choices such as free selection of occupation, access to housing, education and other benefits. From this study we came to know that *Dalits* are excluded from labor market. This exclusion forces them to do their traditional stigmatized occupations, causes income poverty and bars their integration to wider society. Menial jobs with poor income lead to limit their capacity to invest on education. The lack of education makes them unaware about their rights. It is a vicious cycle which goes on barring them from breaking the barrier of social exclusion and multiple deprivations [21].

This paper uses qualitative methodology. The research is mainly focused on Telugu sweepers Colony. Primary data are collected by using in-depth interviews and analyzing documents. The researchers interview 32 of different age groups, sexes and educational backgrounds. The objective of the study is to highlight various aspect of social exclusion of *Dalit* community and to explore the nature of deprivations of *Dalit* community in Bangladesh. The findings of this paper are that emerged out of the analysis where fixed and segregated accommodation, inadequate Civic amenities, Limited access to education, rupture of social Bond exclusion from social relationships and networks, labor market exclusion and inadequate income. The main drawback of this study is that the author doesn't make any contact with the other stockholders of this problem. If the research were showed some comparison between *Dalits* and local people on the social conditions, then this paper would be more acceptable.

Afsana Binte Amin, Zakir Hossain & Md. Abdullah Al Istiaque Mahmud in their country report, "*Dalit* Women in Bangladesh-Access to Economic Rights: Focus on Land, Higher Education and Employable Skills for Livelihood", tried to show the status of *Dalit* women in relation to land rights, education and access to employable skills available for them. The study also found that the high rate of early marriage in *Dalit* society is affecting negatively their education, health and social dignity. When they focused on *Dalit* women's land rights issues in Bangladesh- they found that 50.6% *Dalits* live on Khas land and also found that 50.4% of *Dalits* are Landless where Only 0.8% of Land is owned by *Dalit* women [15].

Professor Ainoon Naher & Abu Ala Mahmudul Hasan, in their article "*Dalit* Communities Living in Railway Lands in Northern part of Bangladesh", by their study they tried to understand the multiple aspects of the marginalization and vulnerability of the *Dalit* Community who live in the land owned by railway of North Bengal. The *Dalit* community of North Bengal who lives on railway lands faces multifaceted challenges, including economic, social, and political marginalization. To eliminate the tradition of untouchability and discrimination based on caste and profession, the law commission has drafted the "Boishamya Bilope Ain-2014". The literacy rate is very low in the studied area. Only two persons were found to have completed their Higher Secondary Certificate or HSC and another three had completed their Sec-

ondary School Certificate or SSC studies. The relationship between the 'Dalit' and dominant communities is not very harmonious in the studied area. The 'Dalits' studied in this research have been living on the railway land for generations but they neither have any legal rights on the land [28].

This paper discussed the experiences of a Gurkha couple, *Dalits*, who immigrated to the UK after the 2009 Gurkha campaign. Despite expecting to face prejudice from the local white population, they faced discrimination from fellow Nepalis due to their low caste. Struggling to find accommodation in the Nepali community, they eventually rented from a Pakistani landlord who was indifferent to their caste. This narrative highlights unexpected challenges and ethnic dynamics among the Nepalese diaspora in the UK, providing a unique perspective on the complexities of identity and discrimination. The author argues for the use of the caste structure in Nepal due to historical, social and contested reasons. The focus is on *Dalits* in the UK, investigating discrimination within the Nepali community, in military and immigration contexts and comparing it with Indian *Dalits*. Although foreign castes are studied, the article suggests that the campaign against apartheid in the UK should include both Indians and Nepali *Dalits*. The delay in adopting race legislation in the UK despite evidence of discrimination in research by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) and the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance (ACDA). The focus shifted to the Gurkhas, who migrated to England in 2004, reproducing caste among the diaspora, particularly affecting *Dalits*. While not discounting the role of civilian upper-caste groups, the study emphasizes the influence of the Gurkhas in perpetuating caste abroad. Immigration has created a small *Dalit* community in the UK, subjecting them to traditional subordination within diaspora communities. This analysis highlights the wider significance of extending the caste debate beyond Indian Hindus and Sikhs, as demonstrated by the experience of Nepali *Dalits* in the UK [29, 36].

3. Objectives of the Study

This research manuscript's fundamental objective is to investigate the Horijon community's socioeconomic structure in Barishal City. Additionally, it addresses the following other concerns:

- 1) To identify the elements that give rise to the fragility of the economic, cultural, and social circumstances of those who are part of that specific group.
- 2) To determine the obstacles facing the Horijon community in achieving their rights to higher education, land, economic independence, and marketable skills for employment.
- 3) To determine their status as occupants.
- 4) To be aware of the Horijon community's household profile in Barishal.
- 5) To evaluate the state of the livelihood, both financial and non-financial manner.

- 6) To learn about attitudes and trends in their field of expertise.

4. Methodology

This paper is based on an in-depth analysis that contains a broad variety of stakeholder individuals who are an integral part of the 'Horijon (*Dalit*)' community living in Barishal metropolitan city. This research is not only quantitative but qualitative in nature. The data has been collected through interviews, case studies and observation methods.

An interview with both structured and unstructured questions was prepared in order to gather the required data. After collecting the data, the data was analyzed using the statistical software STATA and to generate graphs and charts, Microsoft Excel was used. All the data was mostly qualitatively analyzed.

The research area of this study is demonstrated in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3.

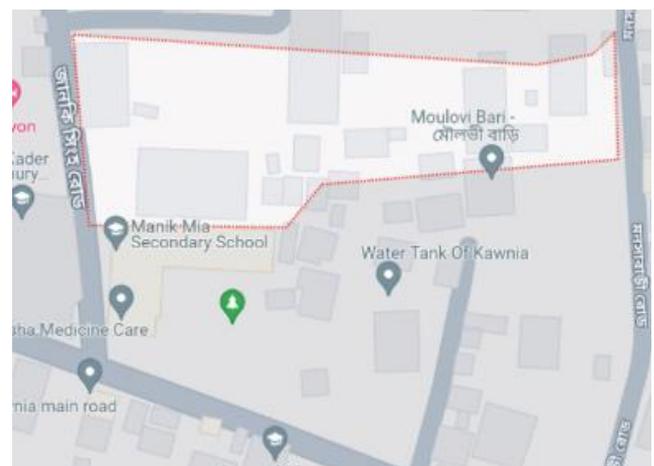


Figure 1. Shebok Colony, Amir Kutir Road, Barishal.

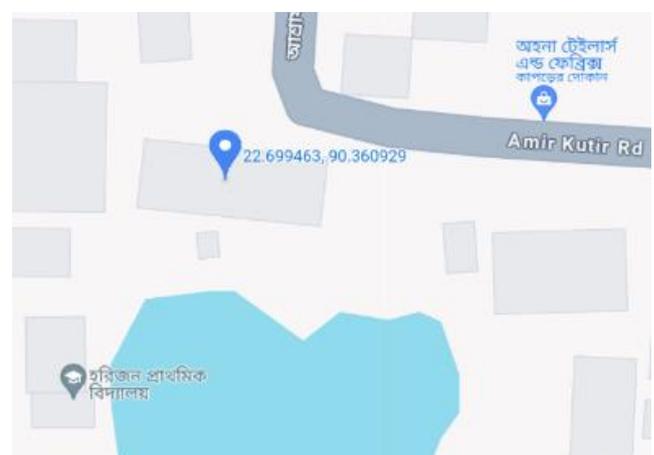


Figure 2. Kawnia Sweeper Colony, Kawnia, Barishal.



Source: Google Map.

Figure 3. Katpotti Horijon Colony, Katpotti, Barishal.

5. Results and Findings

5.1. Classification of Distribution of the Respondents on Age and Gender

Among all 85 respondents 55 are male and 30 are female. Majority of the respondents i.e. 49% are in age group of 26-40. 78% of respondents belong to the age group of 26-60 and 7% belong to the age group of above 60. Only 14% belong to the age group of 16-25 years.

Table 1. Tabulation of Age and Gender of Respondents.

60 Families (85 Respondents)				
Age group	Gender		Total	Percent
	Female	Male		
16 - 25	5	7	12	14%
26 - 40	15	27	42	49%
41 - 60	8	17	25	29%
Above 60	2	4	6	7%
Total	30	55	85	100%

(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

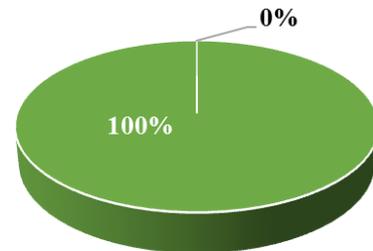
Table 1 shows that the largest number of respondents are almost belong to such age group, which can be considered as the average age of a mature household person.

5.2. Demographics

5.2.1. Religious Views and Languages

Though there is homogeneous religious beliefs but diverse languages. Most of the Horijons can talk Bangla and Hindi i.e.

76.47%. They usually talk Hindi and Bangla mixed within themselves. Outside their community they talk in Bangla. Beside Bangla and Hindi some of them can talk Bihari i.e. 2.35%, Urdu i.e. 1.18% and Jabalpur i.e. 1.18%. Some of them talk Bangla on their own accent which is different from common Bangla accent.



Legend: Buddhism (orange), Christianity (yellow), Hinduism (green), Islam (red)

Figure 4. Religious views of Horijon.

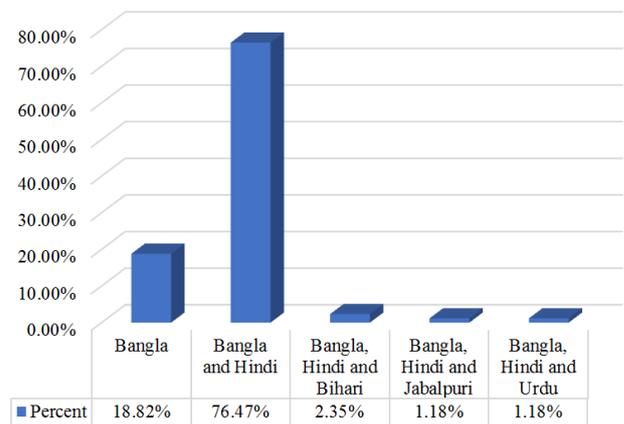
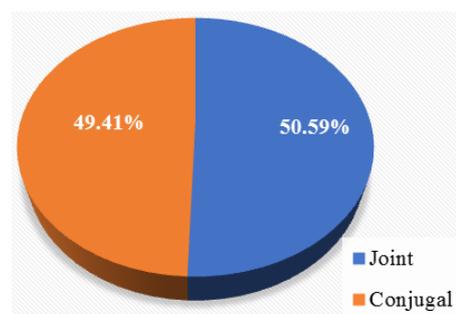


Figure 5. Languages of Horijon.

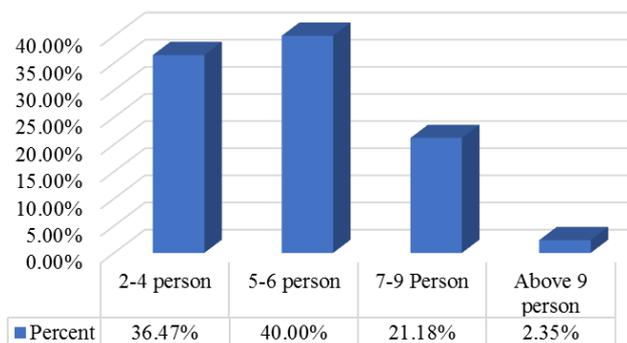
5.2.2. Types of Family

Joint family is their traditional type of family. But, conjugal type of family is becoming more popular day by day. Although joint family still take over the larger fraction i.e. 50.59% while 49.41% live in conjugal family.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 6. Family types.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 7. Percentage of number of family members frequency.

Most of the family i.e. 40% has 5 to 6 members and 36.47% family has 2 to 4 members and 23.53% family has more than 7 members, which clearly indicates that most of them live in small family and their income amount can handle this small size of family.

In recent eras, most of them are concerned about family planning. Almost all newly married couples know the importance of family planning.

5.3. Employment and Occupation

5.3.1. Employment Status

Most of the Horijon are employed and among them largest fraction is working for City Corporation i.e. 61%. A little fraction of them are working for government jobs which is 18%. Only 1% work for private sector. Only a very small fraction of them is unemployed i.e. 7%.

Table 2. Tabulation of job status.

Job Status	Frequency	Percent
City Corporation Job	52	61%
Govt. Job	15	18%
Semi Govt. Job	1	1%
Private Job	8	9%
Retired Person	3	4%
Unemployed	6	7%
Total	85	100%

(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Among the unemployed people all are female, who are housewives. But some of them are looking for a job.

Table 3. Tabulation of gender-based job status.

Job Status	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
City Corporation Job	22	30	52
Govt. Job	1	13	14
Semi Govt.	0	2	2
Private Job	1	7	8
Retired Person	0	3	3
Unemployed	6	0	6
Total	30	55	85

(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

The presence of females in workforce is eye-catching. Among them, almost 28% of females are working whereas around 65% of males are in the workforce. Thus, it is clear that the females of Horijon are willing to join the workforce and they are concerned about earning.

5.3.2. Occupational Views of the Respondents

Traditionally Horijon people work for cleaning jobs. Almost all of them i.e. 94.80% work as cleaners which is their traditional job. A very small fraction of Horijon i.e. 5.2% can switch their job which is not well remarkable. Among them, 2.6% work as a laborer, 1.3% MLSS and 1.3% are washman, which is also their traditional job.

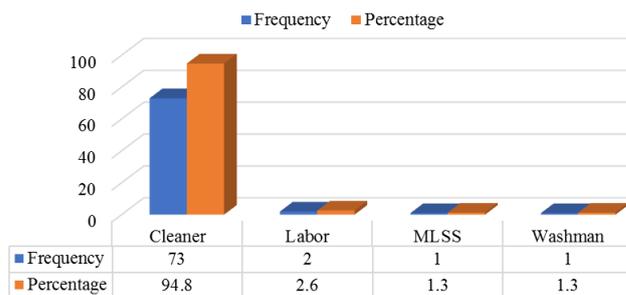


Figure 8. Occupational Views.

5.4. Educational Qualifications

They are almost literate. Most of them can write their own name and identity. Almost 88% can read or write and only 12% cannot read or write even their own name. Among the respondents' largest fraction of 79% are attending school and only 21% never attended any institutional education. The people who never attended any school are all over the age of 40 years. They said insolvency was the main reason of their being

illiterate. Most of them studied till class 8. The majority of them falls in the education level of class 6th – 8th i.e. 36.74%, 35.29% fall in class group 1st – 5th. Rate of people who completed SSC (10th grade), HSC (12th grade) and undergraduate are the same rate i.e. 2.35%, which indicates they are not higher educated. Most of them cannot even complete secondary-level education. They are educationally lag behind because of being unconcern and the small income of their father. But the new generation’s kid and their parents are very concerned about the importance of education. They send their kid to school, some of them hire tutors and some of them send their kids to coaching centers for extra learning but most of them cannot afford this so they only depend on school education. Nowadays almost all of them want to make their children well educated. It must be mentioned that they did not face any discrimination to admit their children to any educational institution.

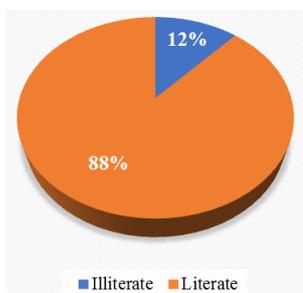


Figure 9. Literacy Rate.

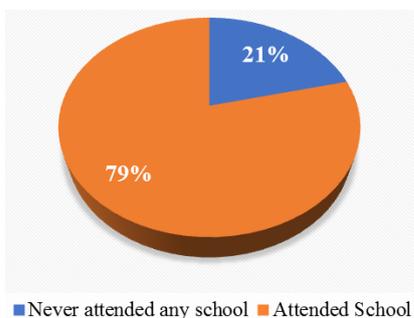


Figure 10. Institutional Education.

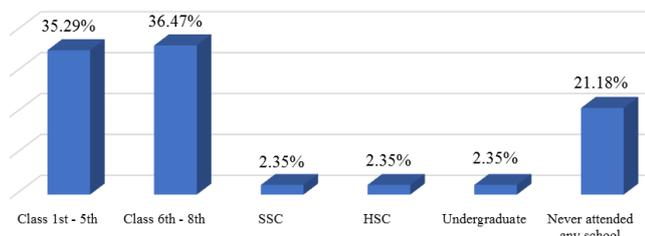


Figure 11. Educational qualification distribution.

5.5. Job Switching Trend

Traditional job switching trend rate is very low. Most of

them following their traditional ‘cleaner’ job. Only 3.79% can switch their job, which is almost negligible.

Table 4. Tabulation of Fathers Occupation Occupational View.

Respondent’s Father’s Occupation	Respondent’s Occupation				Total
	Cleaner	Labor	MLSS	Washman	
Cleaner	71	1	1	1	74
Labor	3	1	0	0	4
Water tank Supplier	1	0	0	0	1
Total	75	2	1	1	79

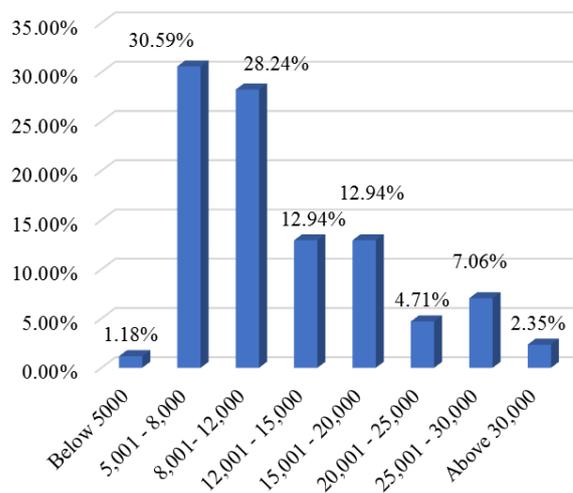
(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

But, in most recent years they are trying make their children educated and their children are not interested in their father’s traditional job.

5.6. Economic Activities of Horijon

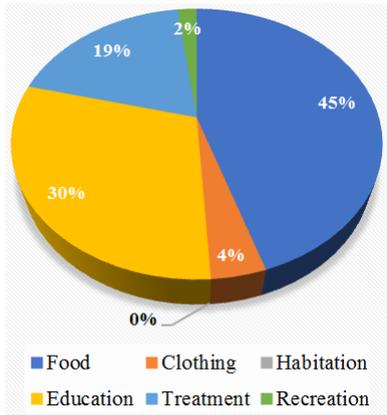
5.6.1. Income and Expenditure Distribution

This survey shows that most of them i.e. 29.41% have an income level at 5001 – 8000 BDT, the second largest income group is 8,001 – 12,000 BDT, 28.24% belong to this group. 12.94% belong to the income group of 12,000 – 15,000 BDT and 15,001 – 20,000 BDT, 7.06% belong to income group 25,001 – 30,000 BDT, 5.88% belong to income group 20,001 – 25,000 BDT. Only a small amount of people i.e. 2.35% have a higher income. But a very small number of people i.e. 1.18% have income less than 5,000 BDT.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 12. Monthly income distribution of Horijon.

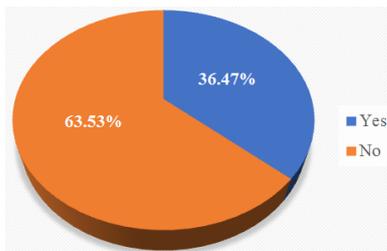


(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 13. Average Monthly Expenditure of Horijon.

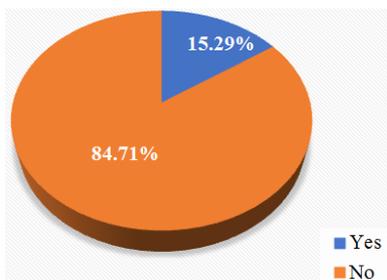
This result indicates almost 30% Horijon live under the poverty line. The struggle against poverty pulls them backward from their basic needs. Their average monthly highest expenditure is on food consumption, they expend almost 45% of their monthly total expenditure. Only 2% expended on clothing, which is their lowest expenditure. Educational expenditure is the second largest expenditure of them, around 30% expended on education per month. They spend 4% on clothing and 19% for treatment cost per month. Most of them cannot do proper treatment because of low income. Some of them are suffering critical disease without proper treatment.

5.6.2. Investment, Saving and Loan Status of Horijon



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

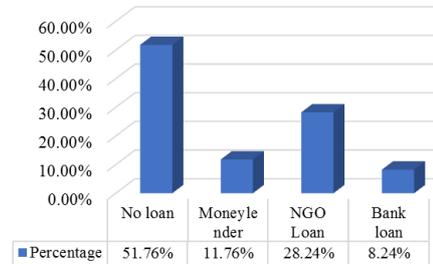
Figure 14. Saving status of Horijon.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 15. Investment status of Horijon.

Most of the Horijon has no saving. Only 36.47% has savings on the other hand 63.53% has no savings. They cannot save money because of their low income. With recent higher inflation rate they have no money left after meeting basic needs to save. Most of the Horijon has no investment i.e. 84.71% where 15.29% has investment. Most of the investment type is very small business or life insurance or fixed deposit.

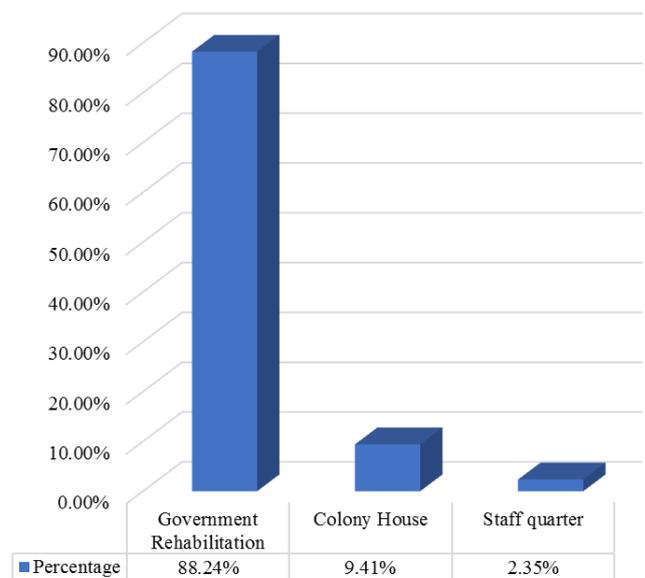


(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 16. Loan status of Horijon.

Most of the Horijon has no loan i.e. 51.76%. Their popular source of loan is Non-Government Organization (NGO). Almost 28.24% Horijon collected loan from NGO. The second popular source is moneylender i.e. 11.76%. Only a small fraction i.e. 8.24% of them has bank loan. It is clear that their main source of loans is NGOs.

5.7. Habitational Status of Horijon

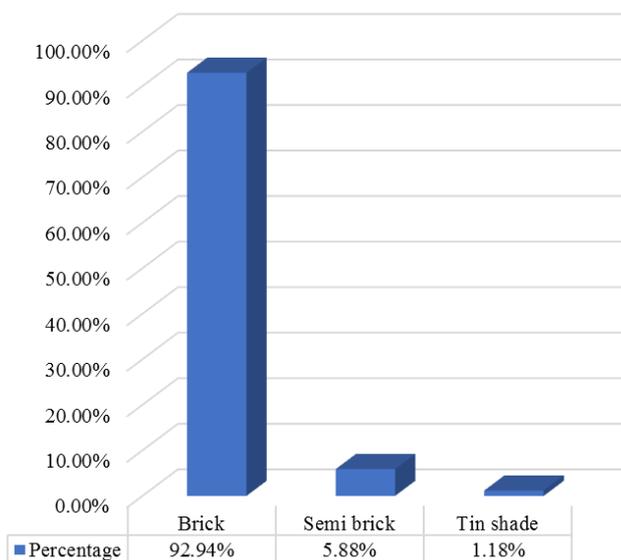


(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 17. Percentage of Habitation Status.

Most of them live in government rehabilitation home i.e. 88.24% and only 9.41% live in colony house. Mainly Horijon

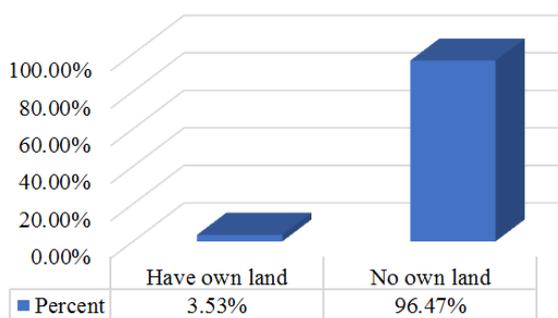
from ‘Kathpotti Horijon Colony’ are live in colony house. Their living condition is not so well. They have to live in a very crowded place. Almost 16 families live there in a small place. Only very small two rooms for a family of 5 to 7 members, which is not healthy.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 18. Living Condition of Horijon.

On the other hand, people who live in ‘Amir Kutir Shebok Colony’ and ‘Kawnia Shebok Colony’ have government rehabilitation houses. Some people who work for the government i.e. 2.35% live in the government staff quarter. Most of them live in brick-built houses i.e. 92.94%. 5.88% and 1.18% live in semi-brick build and tin-shade houses respectively. Thus, most of them have good habitation conditions.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

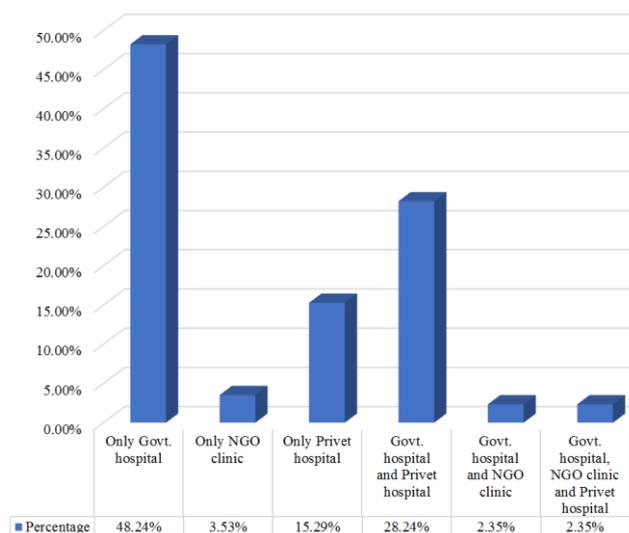
Figure 19. Land Ownership Status of Horijon.

Most of them (96.47%) has no own land. Only very small fraction 3.53% has their own land. In Bangladesh, price of land is very high. It is quite impossible to buy land with their insufficient lower income.

5.8. Health and Nutrition of Horijon

5.8.1. Treatment and Healthcare

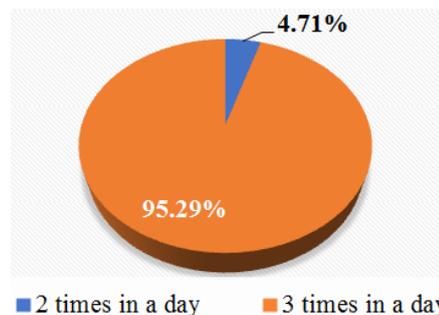
Most of the Horijon receive healthcare from government hospitals. Though they claimed that government hospital cannot serve them properly and they also face many difficulties while getting healthcare in government hospital but due to the higher cost of private hospitals, they have to go for treatment and healthcare in government hospital. 48.24% fully dependent on government hospital. Among them, 28.24% go for treatments and healthcare in both government and private hospital and only 2.35% goes to government hospital and NGO clinic.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 20. Healthcare receiving Institutions for Horijon.

Third-largest group 15.29% dependent only on private hospitals. They are not satisfied on the service of the government hospital, that’s why they prefer private hospitals over government hospitals. 3.53% of them depend only on NGO clinics. 2.35% of them go both government hospitals, NGO clinics and private hospitals as needed.

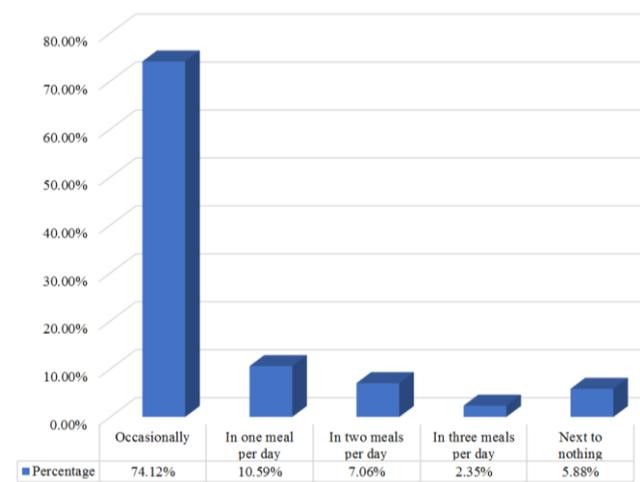


(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 21. Meal Consumption Per Day.

5.8.2. Food Consumption Distribution

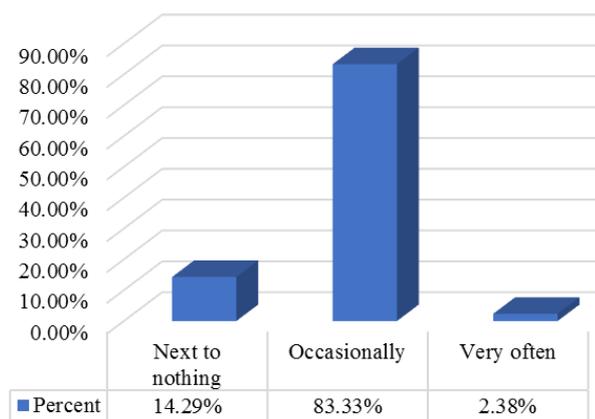
Being below the poverty line, the people of Horijon community usually eat 2 meals, about 95.29%. Moreover, due to various reasons, for example, for work, or doctor's prohibition, shortage, speed above the market price, etc., about 4.31% people can eat 3 meals and spend one meal without eating.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 22. Protein Consumption Level.

Due to lack of sufficient income and health awareness they cannot consume protein rich food every meal, besides most of the Horijon people like to eat vegetables for their religious reason. let alone every day, after meeting all the family expenses. About 74.12% of the people consume protein foods occasionally. Besides, 10.59% people eat one meal, 7.06% people eat two meals, 2.35% people eat three meals and 5.88% don't eat protein-rich food.

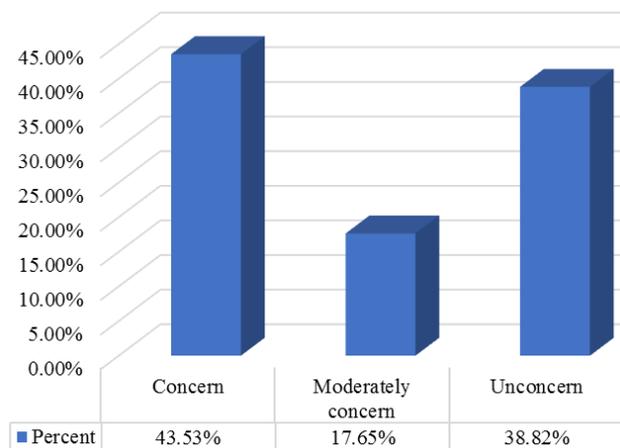


(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 23. Fruit Consumption Level.

Most of the persons from the Horijon colony occasionally

consume fruit, almost 83.33% of our respondents occasionally consume fruit. From our 85 respondents 14.29% of them consume fruit in a very small amount which is represented by next to nothing in our chart. After that only 2.38% of the respondents very often consume fruits. So, it states that the rate of consumption of fruit is below average at our studied population. This low consumption of fruit might happen because of their economic condition or having lack of knowledge about the nutritional value of fruits.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 24. Concern rate about Nutritious Food.

Although Horijon community lags far behind other communities in the country in all aspects, with increasing education rates, people in this community are becoming more aware of nutritious food than before. At present about 43.53% are aware about the nutrition of food and many uneducated and educated people know about the nutrition of about 17.65% of food by hearing or watching advertisements in various media. Moreover, about 38.82% people do not know about the beneficial or harmful aspects of food including nutrition.

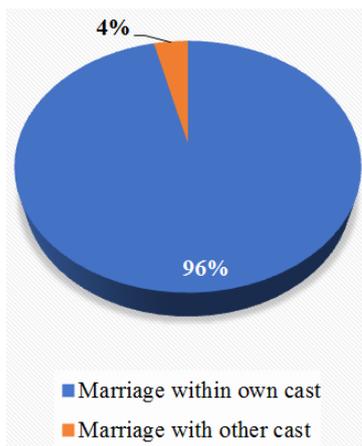
5.9. Social Status of Women

There has been an increase in awareness among the Horijon community in all aspects as compared to earlier times. As a result, they have become more aware of women. If we consider the social aspect, it can be seen that women are getting more education now than before and getting more help from family to study. Public and private support is being provided for the advancement of women's education. Due to increase in education rate, job opportunities are increasing for them and girls are now joining government and private jobs. Besides, the government is also introducing some special benefits for them, such as: they are being transferred to their posts in place of dead husbands or brothers, fathers, as a result of which they and their families are gaining prosperity. Also, Horijon women are turning into entrepreneurs by taking loans in var-

ious ways. Finally, it can be said that earlier women were ruled by men only as child-producing machines and domestic workers, but now this idea has almost been erased, and women's rights and awareness are increasing in the society.

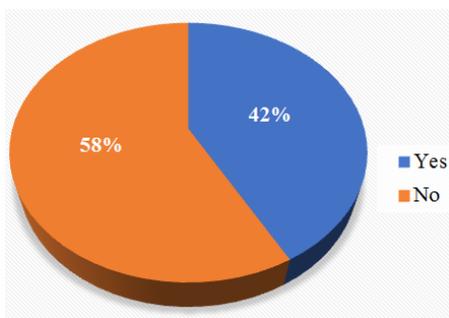
5.9.1. Marriage Type

From ancient Ages, some reforms have been going on among people of all religions or among all types of tribes, marriage is one of them. This is more common in the Horijon community, because they are considered as a small caste from the beginning, people from other tribes do not marry them and they do not marry boys or girls outside their tribe due to oppression, oppression or their psychological reasons. As a result, about 96% of the Horijon community marry within their own caste. In spite of all this, it is seen that the caste differences are decreasing day by day. According to that source Horijon community people are now making intra-caste and marriage relationship which is 4% percentage which is very less but it is a positive aspect that inequality is decreasing day by day.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 25. Cast Based Marital Status.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 26. Involvement in Dowry System.

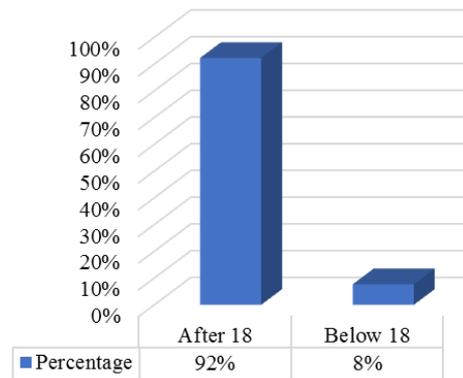
5.9.2. Dowry System

Dowry is a social disease. Within the Hindu community, what

is seen in abundance is specifically termed as ‘Pana’. Since the Horijon community is a lower and poorer caste of a Hindu community, dowry is more common among them. Although there is not much direct information from them, various surveys or secret sources are available regarding its severity. Our survey shows that 42% are involved in dowry and 58% are against it.

5.9.3. Child Marriage

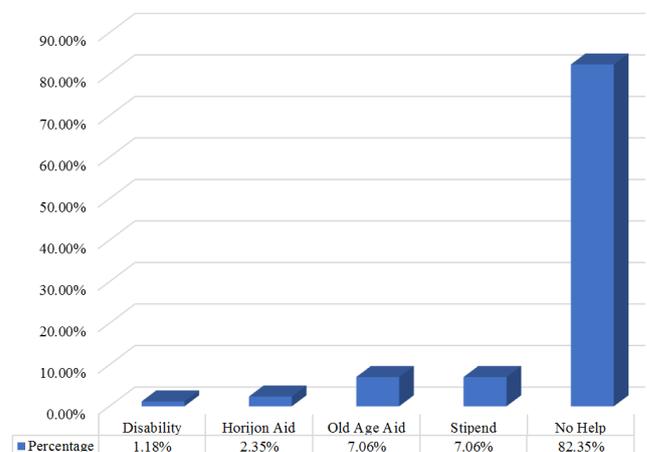
Child marriage is a social curse, premature marriage is one of the biggest obstacles to Horijon female’s education. Nowadays the rate of child marriage is decreasing through social awareness. People of Horijon community are now aware enough about child marriage. They also marry after adulthood. The rate of early marriage is very low in Horijon community. In Horijon community, people of 8% get married below 18 years old. Maximum of them get married after 18 years old i.e. 92%. So, it is a very good news that everyone concerns about early marriage in Horijon community.



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 27. Distribution of Age-Based Marital Status.

5.10. Financial Aid from Government



(Source: Fieldwork, 2023-24)

Figure 28. Financial Aid Distribution.

The collected dataset shows that most of the Horijon people get no financial help from the government which is 84.35% of our 85 respondents. Both Old Age Aid and Stipend are sharing the value of 7.06% from our sample. After that 2.35% people get a special kind of aid from the government which is Horijon Aid. At the last, only 1.18% of people from the community get Disability Aid from the government.

5.11. Visual Phenomenon of Study Areas

5.11.1. Area 1: Amir Kutir

The largest *Horijon/Dalit* communities is located in this area of the Barishal city. It has experienced significant changes over the past five years. The government provided colony houses which improved their standard of living significantly. This government project was in process for almost 10 years. While these houses are of great favour, the lack of medical facilities poses a great burden. The community mainly communicates in a mix of Hindi and Bengali language internally but for outsiders, they use only Bengali. They face great difficulties financially. Many of them rely on NGO loans or money lenders which later impact their real income. Almost all of them are aware of the importance of education but financial constraints limit the access to quality education. The majority of them are working under the city corporation as sweepers or day labourers. Similarly, they are aware of the nutritious foods but poverty prevents them from consuming proper meals.

5.11.2. Area 2: Kaunia

In Kaunia, Barishal, there has been a recent shift from semi-brick houses to government provided colony houses which improved their lifestyle drastically. But this community also lacks medical aid from government and life gets really difficult when one or more members of a family faces a difficult medical condition like diabetes, coronary heart disease, chronic respiratory disease etc. Bank loans are not easily accessible. If someone has a 'Deposit Pension Scheme' already maturing in a bank, he can get a loan from that certain bank only. The absence of formal paperwork for colony house houses is another concerning matter and it puts their future in insecurity. Girls of this community get married soon after they turn 18. Borrowing money from known individuals is preferred over NGO loans. Their savings are mainly stored in a welfare fund in most cases.

5.11.3. Area 3: Katpotti

In a small area in Katpotti Road, Barishal, some families of *Horijon* community are living in a critical condition. The place was a trash dumping point long ago. Unlike other areas, they are not provided with colony houses from government and still living in semi-brick houses. Despite contributing in the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, they are receiving minimal facilities. Colony houses were proposed for them in the past but the finalization of that project is still uncertain

which leaves this community in a critical state. Discrimination has diminished significantly under the rule of the present government but the community is in need for continued support to access basic facilities for an improved life.

6. Conclusion

The Horijon communities in Barishal city have seen positive developments in almost all our studied parameters, but despite government efforts, healthcare remains a significant hurdle. Also, challenges persist as educational opportunities are limited for them. In the context of dowry practice, the respondents preferred not to say anything clearly but some of them confirmed that dowry practice is common in their society but not a compulsory culture. It depends fully on personal willingness. At present, the discrimination is next to none towards these communities but in the past, they endured suffering for a long period. Education is called the backbone of a nation. To develop Horijon's condition more, the authority should provide them with more educational facilities and make them aware of the importance of education. This study tries to cover almost all of the parameters of social and economic measurement of human beings and analyzes the data on the basis of those parameters.

Abbreviations

BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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