

Impact of rural-urban migration in low-income settlements in Bangladesh: A case study on Baganbari slum

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Abstract

Rural-urban migration is one of the most familiar terms in the present world, especially in developing countries. The people of Bangladesh have a strong tendency to migrate towards the megacities. The migrants are required to cope with many uncertainties, risks, and challenges. This paper is aimed to find out the impact of RUM especially on the life standards of the migrants. Here qualitative approach has been followed, and the Baganbari slum of Mirpur region has been selected as the representative of the slums of Bangladesh. Demographic characteristics of the respondents were presented here in order to categorize the migrants. Based on survey questionnaires, 20 household heads of the slum were part of the survey. Three key informant interviews, five FGDs, and two case studies were also used to collect data. During FGD and KII, the respondents were asked about their monthly income, hometown, religion, age, monthly income, and others. Also, the respondents mentioned about some causes of their migration. The study shows the brutalities of slum life and reflects the limitations of slum life as well. According to the findings of the study, the government should take a special look at the proper education and skill development facilities of the slum children.

Keywords: rural-urban migration; migration status; impact of migration factors; Bangladesh; Dhaka

Article History

Received: November 30, 2023

Accepted: June 14, 2024

Cite this as: Faeique, A. (2024). Impact of rural-urban migration in low-income settlements in Bangladesh: A case study on Baganbari slum. *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(1), 63–70. <https://doi.org/10.20473/ijss.v16i1.52063>

Introduction

The term migration refers to the permanent or temporary movement of people. There are two types of migration. The first one is internal migration, and the second one is external migration. In the case of internal migration, people migrate within a specific country. Rural-urban migration is a form of internal migration (Majumder, Rahman, Sarkar, & Dilanchiev, 2021). Rural-urban migration is also known as (RUM). RUM is generally seen in the developing countries of the world. Being a developing country, Bangladesh is not an exception (Jahan, 2012). In developing countries, rapid urbanization might be found. This urbanization brings the development of trade and industry, which creates job opportunities and requires rural-urban migration (Khanam, 2016).

There are two types of factors that are mainly responsible for rural-urban migration. The first one is the push factor, and the other is the pull factor. The push factors include loss of income sources, landlessness, low-income opportunities, poor medical service quality, poor transportation service, and others. The pull factors include better income opportunities, better medical service quality, better transportation quality, positive information about urban life, better safety and security services, and others (Islam, 2014). People in the rural area migrate to the urban areas to get better lifestyle and employment opportunities. This tendency is mostly seen in the lower income people; they migrate to city areas, and due to their financial limitations, they start living in the slums. As well as instead of getting a better life, their life becomes uncertain and full of various problems



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(N. Uddin, 2018). However, this study has been conducted on the people of Baganbari slum to evaluate the impact of rural-urban migration in low-income settlements in Bangladesh.

M. N. Uddin and Firoj (2013) studied the reasons and results of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh regarding Chittagong City. Their study reflects the two core factors of migration. In Bangladesh, both pull and push factors are responsible for the rural-urban migration. According to their survey, most of the rural people migrate to urban areas for better life opportunities. They have also identified 'low-income' as one of the major push factors in the case of rural-urban migration.

Farhana and Mannan (2019) studied the socioeconomic impact of rural-urban migration. Their key objective was to evaluate the socioeconomic impact of migration. According to their study, rural-urban migration, or RUM, introduces many changes in the social and economic context regarding any country. The lower-class people mainly migrate to urban areas for better opportunities. Both positive and negative consequences are seen in rural-urban migration. The higher rate of work opportunity might be considered a positive consequence of migration to an individual migrant, but at the same time, unplanned rural-urban migration might create slums, which will ultimately bring negative outcomes. Ishtiaque and Ullah (2013) studied how migratory determinants affect the migration of rural-urban migrants. According to their study, there are some factors that influence rural-urban migration. After evaluating those factors, one common tendency might be seen among almost all migrants. Most of the migrants have migrated only because of extreme poverty, and they dreamed of reducing poverty by migration.

Jahan (2012) investigated the aftereffects of RUM on social and physical environments. In her study, she tried to analyze and represent rural-urban migration regarding environmental aspects. In her study, she showed that environment and environmental hazards are one of the main push factors of migration. She also determined that this migration tendency ultimately brings some negative impacts on both the socioeconomic situation and the environment. Majumder and Rahman (2022) did an analysis of its impact on the environment and health. According to their findings, individuals migrate from rural regions to cities for a wide range of factors and causes. However, migration has a significant impact on the health and safety of the migrants. Lagakos, Mobarak, and Waugh (2023) conducted a study on the welfare effects of encouraging rural-urban migration. In their study, they tried to explain RUM regarding developing countries, and their key concern was Bangladesh. Their study highlights that RUM is a familiar phenomenon in developing countries, and Bangladesh is no exception. After that, they discussed the challenges of rural-urban migration, and at the end of their study, they gave their observation and recommendations for the welfare of the state.

Islam and Gagnon (2016) investigated the utilization of reproductive health facilities by urban migrant women. Their study reflects that rural-urban migration also has impacts on the reproductive healthcare services of women. According to their finding, migrated women are less eager to receive reproductive healthcare services. Majumder et al. (2021) conducted an experimental study on the determinations of urban migration. The major findings of their study are that people migrate to urban areas for better life opportunities and for the betterment of their lives. According to their study, 80% of the migrants are young to middle-aged persons who are aimed to achieve a sustainable career and better life. Rana and Ilina (2021) studied climate change and migration impacts on cities. According to their studies, urbanization is the primary driver of RUM. Also, the rapid urbanization of cities and the increasing rate of migration are interrelated, and both are directly or indirectly responsible for climate change. Hossain, Kazal, and Ahmed (2013) assessed RUM and its consequences for food security. According to their research, individuals in the rural areas migrate to the urban areas. Especially, the migrants are more tend to move toward the capital of Bangladesh. It has also been noted that most of the migrants are young in age, and most of them have very little or zero work experience. Another key finding of their study is that the sudden increase in population makes food security status very uncertain in urban areas. Khanam (2016) analyzed the hazardous views regarding migration from the countryside to the city and its relationship to the growth in crime. According to this study, Bangladesh is a developing country, and as a developing country, it has a high migration rate. As a consequence,

slums are created in the city areas for the accommodation of the migrators. However, the cities of Bangladesh need more employment opportunities for the migrants. So, the migrants are being involved in several crimes.

Selod and Shilpi (2021) conducted a study on RUM in the developing world. In the paper, the scholars tried to explain migration from an economic perspective. According to the study, rural-urban migration is a very familiar term in both classical and modern economics. In their study, it has also been reflected that people migrate from lower-income areas to higher-income areas, and this migration brings economic equilibrium. Rahman (2017) studied the elements that affect household income in Bangladesh's impoverished urban slum settlements. In their study, they tried to determine rural-urban migration based on the socioeconomic condition of the respondents. They were determined to find out the best possible solutions to reduce the household income distance between the urban slum people and the local residents. S. Ahmed and Eklund (2021) conducted a study on climate change impacts in coastal Bangladesh based on migration, gender, and environmental injustice. According to their study, it is clear that due to global warming, climate change, and other environmental push factors, people in rural and coastal areas are migrating to urban areas for a safe and secure life. This migration is influencing the socio-cultural norms and values. As well as it is also influencing urban politics and creating an uncertain and unsafe environment.

Islam (2014) examined the underlying reasons and implications of migration from rural to urban. The study focused on migrant street vendors in Dhaka City. His study states that RUM is a very familiar matter in Bangladesh. However, this migration has a negative impact on the development journey of both rural and urban areas. Hasan and Raza (2009) performed a research investigation on migration between cities and villages in Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to their study, Bangladesh and Pakistan were united till the liberation war of Bangladesh. The rural-urban migration has taken place in these countries since before the liberation war. The people of Pakistan tend to move to Karachi and other urban areas of Pakistan, and this migration has a socio-political impact. I. Ahmed (2014) studied the factors in building resilience in the urban slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh. In his study he entitled Dhaka as the rapidly urbanizing megacity. This rapid and unplanned urbanization is creating hundreds of slums in this city, and this is also bringing many hazards to the 14 million people who are living in the slums. N. Uddin (2018) studied the slum people of Chittagong City to assess the urban sustainability of slum settlements in Bangladesh. In his study, it is reflected that people of the nearby areas migrate to the second megacity of Bangladesh, but their lives are affected by thousands of uncertainties and problems.

Even though many qualitative studies and research have already been conducted on the term 'RUM,' which reflects various points of rural-urban migration. However, the number of studies regarding the impact of rural-urban migration on the life standards of migrants is very low, especially in the context of Bangladesh. So, this study has been conducted on the people of Baganbari slum to evaluate the impact of rural-urban migration on the life standards of the migrants in low-income settlements in Bangladesh. The results of the current study will help the advisors of the Municipal Association of Bangladesh to ensure comprehensive development.

Methods

This study was carried out using a qualitative research design. The study was conducted on the basis of both primary and secondary data sources to fulfill the requirements of the study objectives. So, a mixed approach can be used for this study. The primary data was collected through FGD, KII, questioner survey, and some case studies and secondary data was also evaluated. Based on survey questionnaires, 20 household heads of the slum were interviewed, including eight women and 12 men who belonged to different professions. Three key informant interviews, five FGDs, and two case studies were also used to collect data. These strategies have been adapted to deal with the limitations of this research and also reduce bias. Baganbari slum, which is situated in Mirpur, has been selected as the study area because most of the rural migrants live in this slum. Table 1 shows the Baganbari slum's overview.

Table 1.
An overview of Baganbari slum

Information	
Established	1980
Location	Ward no. 4 of DCC under Mirpur 14
Previously known	Karim Mia's slum
Area of the slum	One acre
Actual Owner of Land	Ministry of Housing and Public Works and DWASA.
Total population	1250
Total Families	277
Average family members	5.5

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2015)

Results and Discussion

Results

40% of the total respondents were female in gender, and they were unemployed in their village or previous residence, but in their urban life, they were getting jobs and working opportunities. According to the survey, most of the female respondents are now working in the garment factory, and this job opportunity has worked here as one of the key pull factors for female migrants. The findings also reflect some other pull factors. Some of the pull factors are possibilities for work in building sites, residential areas, the desire for better life opportunities, and others.

The female respondents have to go through many life and health hazards. Most of the life risks are interrelated to their workplaces. The condition of the safety and security protocols in their workplace are very vulnerable. The FGD shows that the respondents are always afraid of building collapse and fire because of the poor infrastructural condition of their workplace. Most of the buildings do not have emergency fire exit. Also, the migrants have to deal with health risk factors. As well as unhygienic sanitation system and lack of pure drinking water have made their life more vulnerable.

According to the FGD and KII, it is clear that most of the female respondents are illiterate, and they do not know their legal rights. As a result, they are often become the victims of domestic violence and other violations of laws but unable to take any legal action. The respondents also claimed that those legal services are often pushed back or take longer time duration, especially in the case of female migrants. Data was collected through the questionnaire survey from 20 household heads of the slum. Both open and closed-ended questions were used to conduct the survey. By conducting the questionnaire survey through closed-ended questions, the following things are found.

Table 2.
Demographic characteristics of 20 household heads

	Characteristics of the respondents	Number (N=20)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	60
	Female	8	40
Age	22-29	9	45
	30-39	7	35
	40-49	2	10
	50-59	2	10
Religion	Islam	17	85
	Buddhist	1	5
	Hindu	2	10
	Christian	0	0

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 2 shows that 60% of the total respondents were male, and 40% of respondents were female. Also, Table 2 shows that 45% of respondents were under 30 aged, 35% were under 40, 10% were under 50, and the rest 10% of respondents were under 60. Table 2 also reflects that 85% of respondents belong to the Islam religion, 5% of respondents belong to the Buddhist religion, and the remaining 10% of respondents belong to the Hindu religion.

Table 3.
Quality of slum life compared to village life

Is slum life better?	Percentage (%)	Number
Yes	75	15
No	25	5

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 3 reflects that most of the household heads prefer slum life to village life. According to Table 3, only 25% of households support village life, while 75% of households prefer slum life.

Table 4.
Availability of power and gas

Availability	Percentage (%)	Number
Yes	65	13
No	35	7

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 4 shows a limitation in providing power and gas supply. According to the survey, the majority portion of the respondents (65%) are eligible to get power and gas supply. On the opposite, only 35% of respondents still need to get this facility.

Table 5.
Schooling for children

Schooling for children	Percentage (%)	Number
Yes	45	9
No	55	11

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 5 reflects that due to lower income and other limitations, only 45% of respondents can send their children to school, while 55% of respondents are unable to bear the expenses of the school. So, they do not send their children to school.

Table 6.
Planning for going back village

Planning about going back to village	Percentage (%)	Number
Yes	30	6
No	70	14

Source: Field data (2019)

According to Table 6, when the respondents were asked about their intention to go back to the village, then 70% of respondents answered 'No.' On the other hand, only 30% of respondents' answer was affirmative. A participant in this research named RI said during FGDs:

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“We had not much job opportunities in our village but after migration, now we have job in the garments factory. Though it prevents us from starving but breaks our self-confidence. Our duty starts very early but our pack up time depends on our supervisor.” (Field data, 2019).

From the FGD, it is clear that city life has more working opportunities than village life. So, they want to stay in urban areas.

Table 7.
Current profession of the migrants

Current profession	Percentage (%)	Number
Rickshaw Puller	10	2
Home servant	40	8
Garment Worker	50	10

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 7 shows that it takes a considerable amount of time to get a job after their migration. The household heads of the slum area are involved in various types of professions. According to the survey, the majority portion, 50% of the total respondents, are garment workers in the profession, 40% are home servants, and the remaining 10% are rickshaw pullers in the profession. One respondent named KB said during KIIs:

“Sometimes our supervisor force us to work for the entire night without any break and often some of us become victim of sexual harassment.” (Field data, 2019).

From the KIIs, it is clear that the working place of the migrants is not safe for the female workers. Female garment staff have to face harassment on a usual basis. The victims cannot file protests or seek any aid from the authorities. As a result, they cannot focus on their work properly. Many of the female workers have to leave their work due to harassment. It creates a negative impact on their daily life.

Table 8.
Reasons for leaving village

Reason	Percentage (%)	Number
Unemployed	60	12
River Erosion	40	8

Source: Field data (2019)

Table 8 reflects that most of the households said they left their village because of unemployment, and the rest of the households said they left their village because of river erosion. According to the survey, 60% of the total respondents have shifted to urban areas because of unemployment, and 40% of the total respondents have left their villages because of river erosion. While conducting FGDs, one respondent named (KM) said:

“As a human being we have some dreams as well. We dream to make our life better. Also, we must need money to survive in the cruel world. We did not have any option but migrate in this city to escape from the dark sides of village life.”

From the FGDs, it is clear that the migrants wanted a better life, but villages were unable to provide them the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. So, they decided to shift to an urban area because it has huge employment opportunities.

Discussion

The findings of the present study show that people migrate to urban areas because of push and pull factors. They are attracted by better life opportunities and employment opportunities. However, the urban areas and urban slums are unplanned in nature. Urban slums are unable to provide minimum facilities for their residents to lead their lives. The migrants' life is full of uncertainties and hazards. Also, the majority portion of the migrants are unable to get educational, health, power supply, gas supply, and family planning services. The findings of the present study are similar to some previous literature and studies.

A similar study shows that most of the migrants are male in gender and unmarried. Also, the literacy rate of the migrants is very low in number. At the same time, the migrants are quite unable to fulfill their basic needs in the slums (Majumder et al., 2021). Another existing study supports the findings of this study. Most of the people in rural areas of Bangladesh migrate to Dhaka City to improve their lives. This rural-urban migration brings social, political, and environmental influences afterward (Jahan, 2012). In another study, it has also been found out that the life of the slum people is full of various hazards and uncertainties. It also supports the current study (I. Ahmed, 2014). The current study shows that migrants usually migrate to have a better lifestyle. However, after migration, they are introduced to the brutalities and risks of an uncertain slum life, which is also reflected in an existing study (N. Uddin, 2018). A similar study narrates that in the context of Bangladesh, mainly the lower-class people migrate to urban areas, which brings both positive and negative outcomes. The authors considered the higher rate of jobs as a positive outcome and the increasing rate of slums as a negative outcome of rural-urban migration, which also indicates the findings of the current study (Farhana & Mannan, 2019). The findings of the current study show that 80% of the total respondents are young and middle-aged people. This finding is similar to the existing literature, where the authors found that the majority portion of the respondents were young and middle-aged persons (Hossain et al., 2013).

Conclusion

The findings of this study and the existing literature show that nowadays, in Bangladesh, rural-urban migration or RUM has become a regular matter, as in other developing countries. Most of the people in the rural areas of Bangladesh tend to migrate to Dhaka and other megacities of Bangladesh for a better life. However, being a very small country, Bangladesh has some limitations to fulfill the increasing demand for migrants. As a result, the people who have migrated to Dhaka or other cities for a better life are now victims of thousands of problems, hazards, and uncertainties. It is a great matter of concern and threat for the cities as well as the country itself. The study was conducted to find out the impact of RUM, especially on the life standards of migrants. The findings of this study show the brutalities of slum life and reflect the limitations of slum life as well. According to the findings of the study, the government should take a special look at the proper education and skill development facilities for slum children. The study has some limitations. However, the findings and data that have been collected from only one slum might not be the same in all slums. So, future studies might be conducted to overcome the limitations of this study.

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