

## Household strategies of the professional vehicle drivers living in Dhaka mega city

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### Abstract

The livelihood approach focuses on both material and non-material dimensions of a community. The paper aims to explain the recent livelihood scenario and the household strategies adopted by the professional motor vehicle drivers living in Dhaka city. Primary data have been collected from two hundred professional drivers living in four different neighborhoods in Dhaka City, by using a structured questionnaire. To supplement primary data, secondary data have also been collected from relevant sources too. The study reveals that, what are the different household strategies of the large number of drivers which is continued over the years. However, the paper argues that the drivers adopt such strategies through their household to survive in this city as they have limited access to existing economic and social systems.

**Keywords:** Household Strategies, Vehicle Drivers, Economic activities, Education, Health and Social service

### 1. Introduction

City life and household strategies have attracted widespread research attention in underdeveloped countries. Household strategies are those implicit principles that guide household members when seeking household goods or survival essentials which suggests people to try to meet with their preferences,

despite the economic or social constraints they face. However, the rapid urbanization process among the cities of developing countries forces to increase the number of vehicles belongs to the increasing number of apartments, which become a common scenario for day after day in this city.

**Table 1:** Trends and Projections of Urban Population in Bangladesh (1941-2015)

Year	National Population		Urban Population		
	Number (million)	Growth rate (% annual)	Number (million)	Share (% of total population)	Growth rate (% annual)
1941	41.99	1.66	1.54	3.67	3.71
1951	44.17	0.51	1.83	4.14	1.74
1961	55.22	2.26	2.64	4.78	3.74
1974	76.37	2.53	6.00	7.86	6.52
1981	89.91	2.56	13.56	15.08	10.97
1991	111.45	2.17	22.45	20.15	5.17
2005	155.80	2.08	46.40	29.78	4.67
2015(p)	184.60	1.71	64.90	36.78	3.88

Source: BBS, 2013

The urbanization of this country is characterized by an overwhelming concentration of population in metropolitan areas, especially in Dhaka. The total population of Dhaka increased from 1.98 million to 9.91 million between 1974 and 2001, experiencing a growth of 400 percent in that period

(BER, 2010). Few NGO's has been reported that by 2014, the total number of city dwellers in Dhaka accounted for more than twenty million. As a result, the urbanization process helped to increase the number of vehicles as well as the number of its drivers too, given on the following table:

**Table 2:** Number of Registered Motor Vehicles in Dhaka

Type of Vehicles	2004	2006	2008	2010
Motor car	4734	7403	13749	19557
Jeep/Microbus	2114	4548	5077	6687
Taxi	532	266	0	0
Bus	779	949	1144	1101
Minibus	368	75	107	142
Truck	1437	1480	1642	4543
Auto-rickshaw	2344	230	155	1362
Motor-Cycle	7872	16284	23713	30264
Others	1300	2728	2550	12225
Total	21471	33963	48137	75881

Source: BRTA, 2011

RTA annual report shows that, up to December 2010, the total number of the registered vehicles was 603166, but for the year 2010 total registration was 75881 and it was only 21471 for the year 2004. So this record easily represents the increasing trends for the vehicles which may indirectly indicate the number of drivers for those vehicles. Besides this, the demand of labor for the transport and communication sector in 2004-05 was about 8.44 million (SYB, 2010).

**Table 3:** Number of Registered Motor Vehicles in Bangladesh

Type of Vehicles	2004	2006	2008	2010
Motor car	5410	8447	16927	20690
Jeep/Microbus	2514	5540	6537	8040
Taxi	540	275	9	0
Bus	857	1020	1342	1233
Minibus	622	241	307	311
Truck	2583	3065	2609	10056
Auto-rickshaw	8974	6898	19071	19018
Motor-Cycle	24941	51106	93541	88499
Others	2761	3713	4076	13331

Source: BRTA, 2011

However, an attempt has been made in this paper to explain the working pattern and the survival strategies adopted by the self-motivated vehicles drivers in their households in Dhaka mega city.

## 2. Importance of the Study

A few studies focus on coping strategies adopted by the lower income people as the drivers in adverse urban situations, where the city government is failed to ensure the basic necessities of life. The study shows that the number of drivers in Dhaka city has increased with the process of urbanization during the last few decades, and that how they cope up with the adverse situations they face through strategies adopted mainly in their households. However, it is also observed that the number of vehicles is increased in Dhaka city several times more than the number increased in any other city or town of the country.

## 3. Methodology

The study was conducted in four busy neighborhoods in Dhaka City, Bangladesh between July and December of 2013. These neighborhoods include Mirpur, Banani, Dhanmondi, and Old Dhaka. Two hundred drivers were selected from the neighborhoods proportionately by using random sampling methods. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire constructed on various forms of household adaptations such as, economic activities, expenditure and purchasing pattern, shelter and environmental services, using social services, rural-urban network, social network and community participation etc. To get more ideas about the current scenario of its related issues, secondary data have also been collected from different websites, previous surveys conducted by researchers including the Road and Transport authority of Bangladesh. Here, only descriptive statistics (percentages) are mainly used as a simple way for data analysis.

## 4. Objective of the Study

Major objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To find out the household strategies of the professional vehicle drivers in Dhaka city

2. To analysis the problem and prospects of vehicle drivers living in Dhaka city

## 5. Household Strategies of Drivers Living in Dhaka City

**5.1 Economic Activities:** The self-motivated drivers of Dhaka city are mostly employed in low paid jobs in informal urban sectors. The survey shows that they are mostly involved in numbers of vehicles as Bus driving (13%), CNG/Taxi driving (24%), Private car driving (49%) & others included Lorry, Truck, Tempo etc. (13%).

Entering more household members into the workforce is another survival strategy of them. Sometimes female members operate income-generating activities in their households. Only 68% of them are only earning member of his family and besides this, 32% of them have supporting earning member of his family. Nonetheless, more than 22% of household's children, especially unmarried daughters, work away from home to contribute to the family income too.

The average monthly income of the households is 8000 taka and the households with more than one income-earning member are relatively in better economic condition, but this number is less significant. Only 34.6% of households have some small savings (see Table 2). However, more than 20% of households take loans regularly, or have to take on an emergency basis as well too.

**Table 4:** Saving of Vehicle Drivers Living in Dhaka City

Monthly Savings	Number of Saver	Number of Saver (%)
No Savings	132	66
0 – 500	4	2
501 - 1000	48	24
1001 - 1500	16	8
Total	68	34

## 5.2 Expenditure and Purchasing Pattern

Their earning is generally insufficient and they mostly spend their earnings to full-fill basic needs. They have to spend more than 50% of their earnings on food items and more than 20% for housing. They also spend a small amount of their earnings on clothing, medicine, education and other incidentals. They mainly buy food items like rice, pulse, potatoes and vegetables at a low cost price from the local retail shops. Even they sometimes buy bad quality fish from local fish-markets too. Moreover, they cannot afford expensive items like meat, milk and fruit; and they usually buy cheap clothes from second-hand markets.

**5.3 Shelter and Environmental Services:** Without having the access to urban land, all of them have to live in rented 'Wallup-tin-shed houses'. Some of their houses are also constructed from low cost housing materials like tin, bamboo, straw and polythene. Only two percent of drivers live in better condition which is provided by their vehicle (specially the private cars) owner. And mostly (73.8%) use the single roomed housing to live. In many cases, more than five members of the households live in single congested room.

The majority of households (54%) have no cooking facilities and they have to cook in their living room. Another 46% have access to a common *chula* (Burner) where ten to fifteen households shares one kitchen with four to six *chulas*. Access to electricity is inadequate and irregular. Most of them have no

individual access to the city's water supply and they have to collect drinking water from a common municipal tap. Most importantly, more than 85% of households have to use common toilet too.

**5.4 Education, Health and Other Social Services:** Most of the drivers (about 75%) of Dhaka city have studied only primary/junior level but they did not or could not complete this levels that means they have studied within Class 1-5. Mostly they are from very poor family where their parents could not bear the expense for their study, and so they had to leave study, and had forced to start working and earning. The majority cannot read or write fluently. Somehow they can read Bangla and they hardly spell the English words. Only 20% drivers have passed the echelon of primary level and started and incomplete in studying at secondary level. They have some basic education which is needed to drive and understand the signs, maybe some of them have passed the college level and some of them did not complete even the secondary level. However, at least, they can manage the directions of written words and signs.

Drivers of Dhaka city have very limited access to the existing health care facilities. Only 33.4% use services from city health centers, most of which are operated by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). The majority (58.2%) get their medicine from pharmacies without the consultation of trained physicians. About 29% of them take medical advice regarding maternal health from the health centers operated by NGOs and almost all of their children are immunized at different health centers too.

The drivers, who are really low-paid, can hardly think about recreation and very few of them rarely participate in the city's cultural activities. They typically pass their leisure time by gossiping with family members and community members or playing indoor games like crum, ludo and cards. Some of them like to pass their leisure time by watching television at home or in some communal place like tea stall. In this city, only 21.6% of the vehicle drivers who are mostly living as single, used to go to movies, parks, zoos and museums for recreation.

#### **5.5 Networking**

The poor people like the drivers, mostly migrate to the city from the rural areas for economic reasons. Despite living in the city for a long period of time, they do not generally lose their bonds with their villages and they feel better identifying themselves as villagers rather than city dwellers. Even the city-born young generation identify themselves as people of rural districts, from where their fathers migrated. The survey shows that about 80% of them maintain a connection with their villages, where they visited at least once a year. About 10% of them visit rural areas mainly for celebrating the Eid, a religious festival. Another 15.2% of them visited rural areas to look after their former homesteads and agricultural land, including for taking rice, wheat, vegetables and fruits that cultivated by their family members or relatives in the village.

**5.6 Working Strategy and Vulnerability of Work:** Most of the drivers (80%) came from outside of the Dhaka city. Previously about 32% of them were employed in different working areas including Agriculture (19%) sector. Survey found that 19% of them belong to this profession for a year only, and most (66%) of them are working between 2 to 5

years. 79% of Bus drivers were working as a helper or conductor before. About 20% of them are also involved in other part-time job or side business. Most of the Drivers (78%) have faced an accident in their job life. Two to five times accident per year is a common for 61% of them. Nonetheless, 29% if they had faced for five to eight times accident per year on an average. And about 8% had to face more than eight times accident in a year too. About 20% accident cases the drivers became injured seriously (ADB, 1997). In reality, 19% drivers (mostly the Bus drivers) have to drive more than eight hours per day and most of them (47%) just to drive between five to eight hours.

#### **6. Conclusion**

Urbanization in Bangladesh is typically characterized with two sets, one is Money and power, and another one is poverty and deprivation. However, rural-urban migration does not create improved opportunities for a significant proportion of these migrants like the drivers who are living in Dhaka city. Invariably, most of the Drivers have to live below or close to the poverty line; and they have a little access to employment in formal sectors, existing infrastructure as well as social services too. Despite of living in the city for a long period of time, unfortunately they do not have the sufficient access to the city's social, cultural and political life.

As the urban government has little initiative to create opportunities for the poor city dwellers like the drivers, they have to cope with poverty and needs, through their 'household strategies' such as: putting more family members into the work force, through engaging with another job or small trading, avoiding many basic goods which represent luxuries to them, withdrawing their children from education, using kinship as social capital etc.

There is an intra-household variation in coping with poverty and deprivation based on households having more than one income earning member, having access to urban or rural land etc. In fact, this helpless group has to cope with poverty and vulnerability by relying on their own household strategies may be which is not even sufficient to fulfill their basic needs too. Really they have very little access to existing economic and social institutions and they are living in cities but leads a poor life where they are just kept out from the human capital development process at all.

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