



## Socio-economic condition of tannery worker in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

The study aims to know the Socio-economic condition of tannery worker in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has the potential of developing leather industries due to having quality raw materials (hides and skins) and cheapest laborer market but tannery worker condition is not so good in Bangladesh. It was also observed that 33% of these workers belongs to 19-30 years' age group, 45% has primary level education, 41% earned with the range of Taka 3001-5000/- per month, and 38% has 6-10 years' work experience. Most alarming information found in the survey that 90% of the trimmers have been suffering from general illness and they affected various diseases after joining their job in the tannery.

**Keywords:** socio-economic, condition, tannery worker, Bangladesh

### 1. Introduction

The first detailed baseline survey of leather industrial sector of Bangladesh was organized in 1979-80 by the committee on Development of Leather Export level headed by the government of Bangladesh. This extended survey made a package of recommendations together with prohibition of wet-blue export, return of duty on imported leather processing chemicals for export of crust and finished leather, cash subsidy on export of crust and finished leather.

In 1981 The World Bank carried out a study for the leather manufacturing industries as a review of the Second Five- Year Plan. As part of the ESCAP attempt to identify the leather manufacturing industries as prime conveyor for development of industries in Bangladesh, on behalf of BSCIC (Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation). Chowdhury made a study on leather and leather products industries of Bangladesh in 1981-82 and indicated a number of development action plans and specific role of the BSCIC <sup>[1]</sup>. Hamid surveyed the tanning industry as a sub sector in 1983 on behalf of UNIDO and achieved that installed capacity for wet-blue was 171 million square feet against total accessibility of 100 million square feet of hides and skins <sup>[2]</sup>.

Haq and Islam in a study in 1988 recorded that the social rates of return is higher than the financial rates in the processing of finished leather for export. Our government has provided various incentives packages to footwear and leather goods export to ensure the policy suggested by TIP <sup>[3]</sup>.

Huq and Islam made one of the pioneering efforts (Choice of Technology: A Case study of leather manufacturing in Bangladesh) in the form of a pilot inquiry <sup>[4]</sup>. They made an in-depth study of the leather manufacturing industry focusing on technology transfer in Bangladesh in 1988. The study attempted to identify alternative techniques by types and sources and then evaluated in the light of the existing input

costs and revenue earned (cost effectiveness) in the context of development objectives of the dominion

Huq and Ahmed created only four week's brief survey on "Bangladesh Leather Sector-strategy for Further Development" from mid- December 1989 to mid- January 1990 for Harvard Institute for International Development's Employment and Small Enterprise Policy (ESEP) project, Bangladesh Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh. They identified some major constraints in expansion and development of leather manufacturing industry- such as working capital, technical know-how, management, skilled operators, administrative bottlenecks, customs formalities, frequent changes in policy decisions, etc. and suggested a number of policy changes including BMRE <sup>[5]</sup>.

In 1995 Research department of Bangladesh Bank has undertaken a detailed study on the basis of survey to examine the export potentialities of leather & leather goods sector. The Team conducted the survey and prepared a report on the basis of in-depth analysis of the available data and the situation prevailing in different areas of leather and leather manufacturing businesses of the country. The report ended with some suggestions for development of the sector. Karim had an attempt to update present knowledge of leather industry, undertook a study which was published by the World Bank Resident Mission, Dhaka, as "Industrialization Strategy study of Bangladesh: Export prospects for Leather and Leather products". The objective of the study was to assess prospects and possibilities for developing forward linkage with leather goods manufacturing. The specific investigation encompassed grounds such as the size and structure, production facilities and production issues, procurement of raw materials, laborer skill, marketing of leather, management and environmental issues <sup>[6]</sup>.

Islam and Faiz made a study on “The Leather and Leather Product Industry and The Informal Credit Market in Bangladesh”. They determined the urban informal monetary market in Bangladesh with specific reference to its significance in financing the Leather and Leather products manufacturing industry and business. In this study they investigated the size and trend of the activity in its different stages such as hide and skin curing, tanning, manufacturing leather and leather products and their marketing channel. The study attempted to locate the geographic concentration of the activity and to discuss the contemporary production methods and rates of return from the activity and to identify several constraints and ordered to credit rating, unhealthy credit giving system in the institutional sources, etc. They emphasized the extent of informal financing, the sources of credit and the altogether usefulness of the informal financial sector in promotion activity for leather manufacturing sector [7].

Ahmed in the study titled “Inventory of Leather Sector of Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects” made an intensive survey. For Bangladesh Finished Leather, Leather goods and Footwear Exporters' Association (BFLLEA) with financial assistance of the Matching Grant Facility Management Units, a component of Export Development Project of government and the World Bank [8]. This study was undertaken for a thorough study of leather sector industries of the country covering all aspects of manufacture to assess the present status of raw material supply, capacity and production of leather and leather products, to identify problems of production and export and determine needs for the development of industries to make optimum use of the potentials of local raw stock. Besides these, there are some papers relating to various factor of leather sector. These papers contained some general discussions, suggestions and conclusions and were not directly involved with applied studies on this sector. In this respect, work of Manzur received wide attention. Manzur (1994) in his paper “Leather Industry-The present and Future” highlighted the prospect of leather industry of Bangladesh and its development over the years. He pointed out the advantageous

position of our leather industry from various points of view [9]. A number of studies have addressed economic, social, and community development issues in rural areas. However, few have combined these constructs into a theoretical framework that can be used to project the impact of a leather-finishing facility on a small town. The major purposes of this study were to project the social and economic impact from establishing a new leather finishing facility in a rural community and to development an application model through which community business development decisions could be made. In a survey, Hossain has reported that manufacturing industries in and around Dhaka city provide about 2,70,000 jobs [10]. Zahur found that leather industries have enough scope for both vertical and horizontal expansion in terms of economic return and social benefits [11]. The research purpose to understand the socio-economic condition of ternary worker in Bangladesh.

## 2. Methodology

The unstructured and structured questionnaire were prepared to collect primary data on the number of operable tannery at Hazaribagh, maximum hides & skins consumption per day, and to evaluate the environmental impact in the study area. The results of the study based on the direct observations of the tannery workers, interviewing technologists and officials through random sampling.

## 3. Result and discussion

The data obtained from field survey and compiling from secondary sources in the course of three years (2009-2011) study period are presented in this paper.

### 3.1 Number of tannery at Hazaribagh, Dhaka

Table-1 indicates that a total of 122 tanneries found in the 60 acres of land at Hazaribagh, Dhaka out of which 112 and 10 were in working and laid off status respectively. Out of the working tanneries 43 self-exporters also hired 69 numbers of job-working tanneries.

**Table 1:** Total number and status of tanneries in different blocks studied at Hazaribagh Area

Block		Production type			Total
		Self-exporters	Job-worked	Lay-off	
B-1	Monessware road	3	5	1	9
B-2	Sher-e Bangla road	12	13	1	26
B-3	Mid Hazaribag	22	30	5	57
B-4	Sonatagar/gojmohal	4	18	3	25
B-5	Kalu nagar	2	3	0	5
Total		43	69	10	122

Some of those tanneries set up their own footwear and leather products unit inside and/or outside their premises.

### 3.2 Hides & skin consumption at Hazaribagh, Dhaka

In course of survey it was revealed that the 112 working tanneries processed raw hides & skins in three shifts per day during the month of October - December, 2011 on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha (called as peak season) and in one or two shifts

throughout the rest of the year (called as lean season). Maximum number of raw hides & skins processed by the tanneries in a day during the peak season were recorded to estimate maximum waste production in a day. Thus a total of 31645 pieces of cow hides, 107200 goat skins, 11200 sheep skins and 3420 buffalo hides (Table-2) were processed in a day found at Hazaribagh.

**Table 2:** Maximum Hides & skins consumption (Piece) in a day during the peak season, 2011 by the tanneries of different blocks at Hazaribagh, Dhaka with calculated weight

Block	Cow hide		Goat skin		Sheep skin		Buffalo hide		Total	
	Piece	MT	Piece	MT	Piece	MT	Piece	MT	Piece	MT
Monessware Road	700	8.40	5000	7.50	0	0.00	0	0.00	-	15.90
Sher-e Bangla Road	775	9.30	5000	7.50	0	0.00	2700	59.40	-	76.20
Mid Hazaribag	18420	221.04	77200	115.80	11200	16.80	720	15.84	-	369.48
Sonatagar/Gojmohal	5750	69.00	10000	15.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	-	84.00
Kalu Nagar	6000	72.00	10000	15.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	-	87.00
Total	31645	379.74	107200	160.80	11200	16.80	3420	75.24	-	632.58

**3.3 Total working people in tannery at Hazaribagh, Dhaka**

A total of 7298 people were found working in the 112 tanneries at Hazaribagh, Dhaka during survey. The workforce included 157 technologists, 1212 permanent laborers, 4863 temporary laborers and 1066 office stuffs (Table-3). Among these workforce 882 directly handled raw hides & skins and solid wastes. They are called as trimmer. They were the main

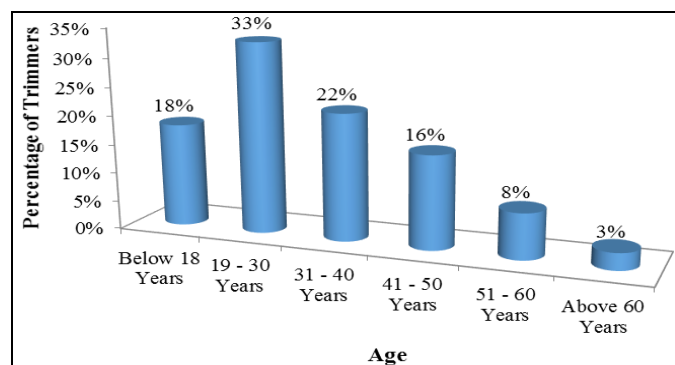
respondents of the surveyed questionnaire. It was also observed that all of the trimmers were male. Besides, a total of 6075 laborers (permanent & temporary laborers) were found working which was about 83% of total workforce working in tannery at Hazaribagh, Dhaka. These people were not institutionally trained. They improvised their skill through working.

**Table 3:** Number of working people of different categories in tannery at Hazaribagh, Dhaka

Block	Technologists	Permanent laborer	Temporary laborer	Office staff	Total
B-1 Monessware road	13	25	170	29	237
B-2 Sher-e bangla road	21	116	610	154	901
B-3 Mid hazaribag	91	877	2817	653	4438
B-4 Sonatagar/gojmohal	19	78	623	129	849
B-5 Kalu nagar	13	116	643	101	873
Total	157	1212	4863	1066	7298

**3.3.1 Age structure of the trimmers**

During the survey 882 trimmers were interviewed about their age. The ages of the trimmers were clustered in six groups, such as, (below 18 years), (19 – 30), (31 – 40), (41 – 50), (51 – 60) and (above 60 years). Maximum 291 respondents were found in the age group 19 – 30 years which was 33% of the total respondents. A total of 698 trimmers were found in the working age group viz. 19 – 60 year’s age. The most alarming information was that, about 18% of the total trimmers were found child laborers lying below 18 year’s age group (figure-1).

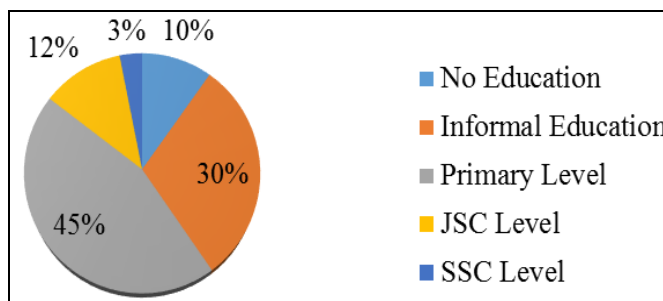


**Fig 1:** Percentage of trimmers belonged to different age groups in Hazaribagh tannery area

**3.3.2 Educational qualification of the trimmers**

The trimmers were also interviewed about their educational qualification. The education levels achieved by the trimmers were categorized as No Education, Informal Education, Primary Level, JSC Level, and SSC Level. It was found in the

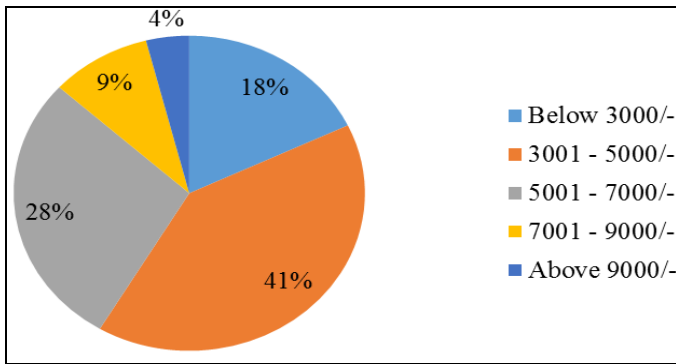
survey that most of the trimmers (45%) completed primary level education; 267 trimmers were found having informal education getting from different NGOs while some were having literacy but not getting any formal or informal education.



**Fig 2:** Percentage of trimmers with different level of education in Hazaribagh tannery area

**3.3.3 Income distribution of the trimmers**

It was observed that most of the trimmers worked contractually under a supervisor or their leader. The owners of the tanneries were verbally agreed with the trimmer’s leader or supervisor to perform their activities by paying contracted amount of money following ‘no work no pay rule’. Some owners paid the money weekly while some went for monthly payment. The owners paid the money to their leader and he disbursed it. During the contract the owners also mentioned that the trimmers were required to clean the workplace by dumping all the solid wastes to the nearest dumping ground with their regular activities. The trimmers were treated like daily basis laborer.

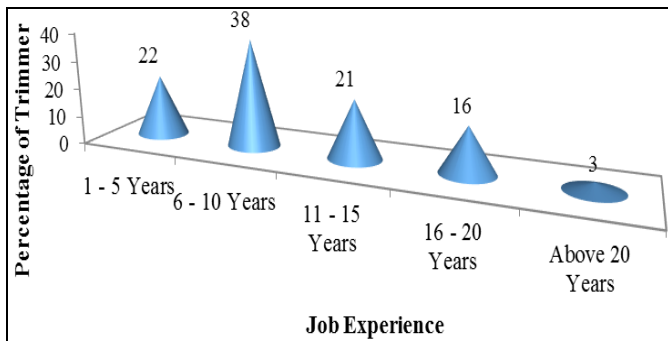


**Fig 3:** Percentage of trimmers with their range of monthly income in taka during 2011 in Hazaribagh tannery area

It was found in the survey that maximum 41% of trimmers were getting wages at the range of BDT 3001 to 5000/-. A total of 607 trimmer out of 882 were getting their wages at the range of BDT 3001 to 7000/-. Interestingly, it was observed that 18% of the trimmers were getting taka below 3000/- per month and most of them were child laborer, apprentices and aged people with having no previous work experience as trimmer.

**3.3.4 Length of Job of the trimmers**

Total length of job performed in terms of year, as trimmer were surveyed among 882 trimmers which were clustered in five groups such as, (1 – 5), (6 – 10), (11 – 15), (16 – 20) and (above 20 years). Maximum 337 respondents were found who were working for 6 – 10 years which was 38% of the total respondents.



**Fig 4:** Percentage of trimmers with their range of job experience in years during 2011 in Hazaribagh tannery area

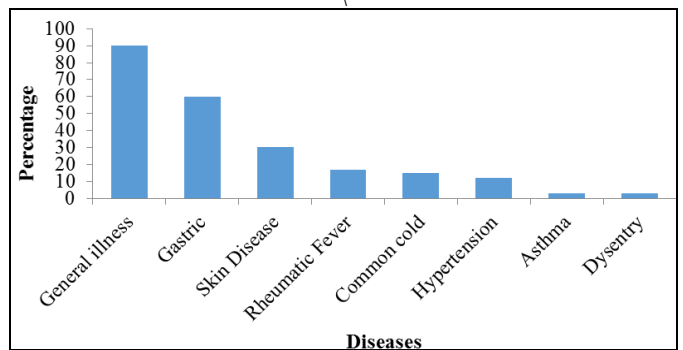
**3.3.5 Chronic health problem of the trimmers occurred during job**

During the survey, it was observed that most of the trimmers (90%) had been suffering from some selective diseases viz. gastric, skin diseases, fever, common cold, hypertension, asthma and dysentery etc. severely due to direct contact of raw hides & skins, chemicals and wastes. They also replied on asking about their sufferings that they were affected more than one disease after getting the job and not so much aware on using personal protective equipment's in the workplace. Moreover, they expended a significant amount of money for their treatment which required to be earned by working more time in the tannery and they did not afford sufficient nutritious

food for themselves and for their family members.



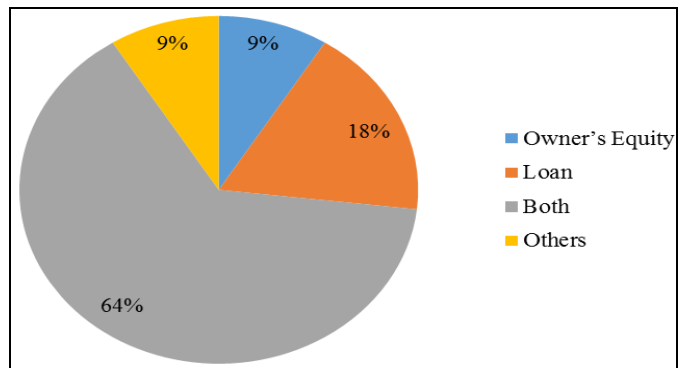
**Fig 5:** Skin disease affected foot of a trimmer



**Fig 6:** Percentage of affected trimmers by diseases in Hazaribagh tannery area

**3.4 Source of fund and its utilization for tannery operation at Hazaribagh, Dhaka**

The tanneries of Hazaribagh, Dhaka were operated by their owner's equity with getting bank loan including BMRI Principal. It was revealed from the Balanced Sheet and by peer interviewing with the management people of some tanneries that 64% of them got running capital from both owner's assets and bank loan, 9% self-financed and another 9% got loan from Mahajans, the local loan providers.



**Fig 7:** Percentage of tanneries with their source of fund during 2011 in Hazaribagh tannery area

It was also observed that most of the funds were utilized for collecting raw materials, disbursing wages & salaries, payment for bank interest & Mahajan's interest, and payment for utility services; but there was no fund using to manage

tannery pollution; no agreement found between tannery and corresponding government agencies for maintaining Polluter's Pay Principle (PPP). Therefore, only dumping was followed here for solid wastes management.

#### 4. Conclusion

Naturally Bangladesh has abandoned supply of raw hides and skins, cheap labourers so that Leather industries of Bangladesh should be operated well with utilizing those available resources. But it was found in the tenure of this study that numbers of tanneries were being reduced gradually year after year due to unplanned industrialization and poor Scio-economic condition of tannery worker.

Scio-economic condition of ternary worker in Bangladesh is not so good, they face different kind of problem due to their economic condition. It was also observed that 33% of these workers belongs to 19-30 years' age group, 45% has primary level education, 41% earned with the range of Taka 3001-5000/- per month, and 38% has 6-10 years' work experience. Most alarming information found in the survey that 90% of the trimmers have been suffering from general illness and they affected various diseases after joining their job in the tannery.

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