

Socio-Economic Dynamics and Development Challenges in Rural Bangladesh: A Case Study of Brahmapur Village

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Abstract

This study explores the socio-economic conditions of Brahmapur, a rural village in Naldanga Upazila, Natore district, Bangladesh. Utilizing qualitative and participatory approaches, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), the research investigates villagers' lifestyles, economic activities, educational access, and barriers to development. Findings reveal agriculture as the primary livelihood, limited female economic participation, and challenges in accessing modern resources. Recommendations emphasize technical training, women's empowerment, and infrastructural development to foster sustainable growth.

Keywords: research investigates; villagers' lifestyles; economic activities; educational access; barriers; development

Background

Bangladesh, often referred to as a country of villages, is predominantly rural, with approximately 60% of its population residing in rural areas (World Bank, 2021). Agriculture remains the cornerstone of its national economy, employing nearly 40% of the workforce and contributing significantly to GDP (Ahmed et al., 2019). However, despite its importance, the agricultural sector faces challenges, including low productivity, lack of modernization, and vulnerability to climate change. Villagers, who largely depend on farming for their livelihoods, struggle to meet their daily needs due to these systemic issues. The rural population also contends with pressing socio-economic problems, including inadequate education, limited employment opportunities, insufficient healthcare facilities, and the marginalization of women in economic and social spheres (Rahman, 2017). Furthermore, disparities in communication and infrastructure between urban and rural areas exacerbate these challenges, hindering equitable development. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) has emerged as a transformative approach to understanding and addressing these challenges by emphasizing the active involvement of community members in assessing their needs and identifying solutions. PRA tools, such as participatory mapping, focus group discussions, and problem identification matrices, enable communities to contribute their insights and priorities to development planning. For

instance, a case study on rural road development in Rangpur demonstrated how PRA methods ensured infrastructure projects aligned with community needs, resulting in sustainable and inclusive outcomes (Rahman et al, 2023). This methodology's participatory nature is particularly valuable in the Bangladeshi context, where top-down approaches often fail to capture the realities of rural life.

As part of an academic inquiry, PRA was applied in our field study of Brahmapur village, situated in Naldanga Upazila of Natore district. This participatory approach allowed us to observe and analyze the socio-economic conditions of the villagers more holistically. By involving the community directly in data collection and discussion processes, authentic insights were gathered into their education, employment, healthcare, and gender dynamics. The outcomes of this study not only deepen our understanding of rural life but also highlight PRA's potential to inform policy recommendations that are both sustainable and community-driven.

Scope

The present study aims at understanding the existing educational service delivery system at Brahmapur village and identifying the challenges/barriers to ensure quality education to the villagers. Documenting the recommendations of the villagers to improve the service delivery was also done within the scope of the study.

Introduction

Bangladesh is considered a developing country with a population that exceeds its land area. As of 2024, the population is estimated to be approximately 171.59 million, with a growth rate of about 1.33% per year (World Bank, 2024). The majority of the population resides in rural areas, emphasizing the critical importance of village development for the country's overall progress. Consequently, the development of Bangladesh is often seen as closely linked to the advancement of its rural communities (Arefin 2023, Monir 2023, Hore 2024). Data was collected from the village of Brahmapur, located in the Naldanga Upazila of Natore District. Brahmapur is a rural area with an estimated population of 135,318 as of the 2022 census (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The literacy rate in this area stands at 51.37% for individuals aged seven and above (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The primary objective of this study was to analyze the economic conditions of the villagers, aiming to contribute to a broader understanding of rural economic challenges and opportunities in Bangladesh.

Objectives of my study

The core objectives of Own Village Study (OVS) program can be cited as the followings.

- To know the life-style of villagers of Bangladesh.
- To identify the economic problems of villagers.
- To find out the existent problems of villages.
- To know the socioeconomic condition of rural people.
- To observe the rural development, employment,

communication and agricultural activities.

To analyze the situation of Rural Economy in the village;

To identify the problems associated with Rural Economic condition

To come up with suitable policy interventions/suggestions/recommendations.

Method of Study

Study Area

The study was conducted in Brahmapur village, located within Brahmapur Union, which is part of the Naldanga Upazila in Natore District. According to the most recent data from the Brahmapur Union Parishad, the village spans an area of 27.20 square kilometers and has a population of approximately 27,216 people. The literacy rate in the area is 41.71%, reflecting the educational challenges faced by the community. Brahmapur Union contains one growth center and has a total of 11 primary schools, 5 secondary schools, and 4 madrasas that serve the educational needs of the population. The Naldanga Upazila, which includes Brahmapur Union, had a total population of 135,318 as recorded in the 2022 Population and Housing Census. The literacy rate for individuals aged 7 and above in Naldanga Upazila stands at 51.37%. These statistics underscore the importance of rural development in areas like Brahmapur, where population and educational challenges remain significant. Table 1 Shows the Union Profile of Brahmapur and Figure 1 shows the Map of Naldanga Upazila of Natore District.

Table 1: Union Profile of Brahmapur

Village Name	Union Name	Upazila Name	Area (sq km)	Population	Literacy Rate	Growth Centre	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Madrasas
Brahmapur	Brahmapur	Naldanga	27.2	27,216	41.71%	1	11	5	4

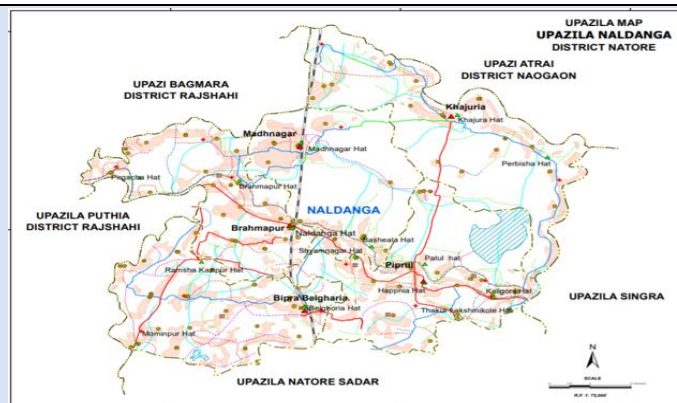


Figure 1: Map of Naldanga Upazila of Natore District

Study Design and Tools

A cross-sectional study design was followed to attain the study objectives. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was used tools and qualitative tools for data collection. PRA tools that were used in this study involves village transect, social mapping, problem identification, Chapatti diagram etc. FGDs, Key Informant Interviews (KII) and case study were used to collect qualitative data. Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) is an application for communication and transfer of knowledge. So, it can be call as learning process too. It is firmly anchored

on the principle of 'seeing is believing' and 'learning by doing'. (Rahman et al, 2023).

Transect map

The members of Group entered the village of Brahmapur through the southern road. Local authority greeted us warmly and provided a briefing on various aspects of the village. Then the team were guided through the village, where important landmarks, such as mosques, madrasas, and offices, were shown to us. These landmarks have been depicted in Figure 2.

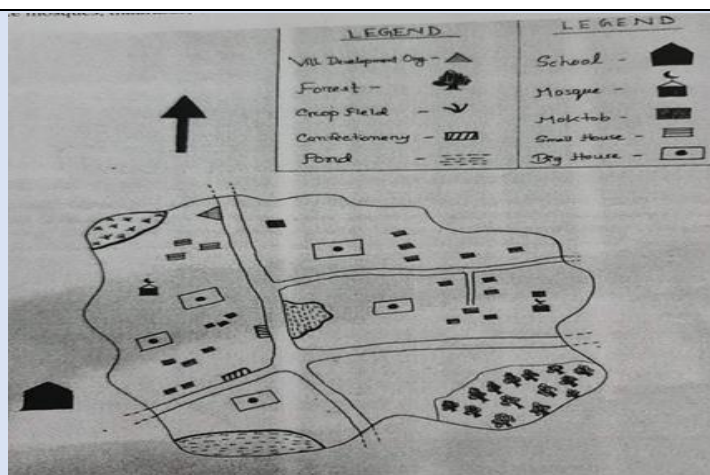


Figure 2: Transect map of the profile

Results and Discussion

To analyze the economic foundation and livelihood patterns of the villagers, the study categorized residents based on their primary occupations. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of various professions within the community. The findings reveal a significant reliance on agriculture as the primary occupation, reflecting the rural character of the village. Other notable professions include fishing, livestock rearing, and small-scale businesses, which collectively demonstrate the economic diversity

within the community. The results also highlight the limited participation of women in economic activities, with most households reliant on male income earners. Self-employment opportunities, while present, are often hindered by the lack of formal training and resources. The absence of large-scale industries further restricts employment opportunities, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to diversify income sources and enhance economic resilience. Figure 3 shows the distribution of different profession.

Table 2: distribution of various professions

Sl no.	Profession	Number of people	Percentage
1	Service	1	10%
2	Agriculture	7	70%
3	Business	1	10%
4	Fisherman	1	10%

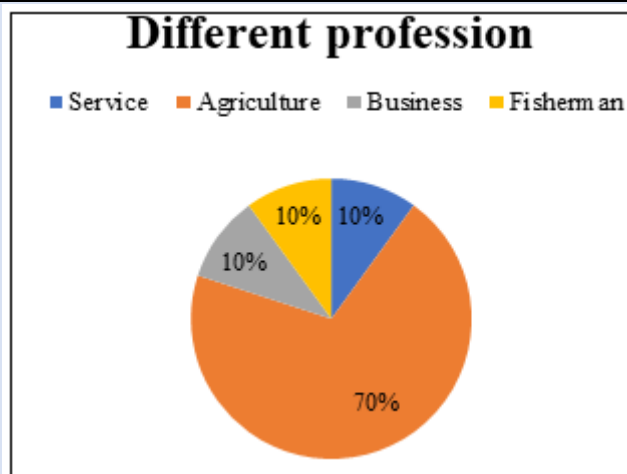


Figure 3: Distribution of different profession

Table 3 and Figure 4 show that majority people are dependent on agriculture which is 70% here. Other people are engaged in service, NGO, fishing &

business. So, it can easily be inferred that majority villagers are relied on agriculture.

Table 3: Types of Agriculture

Sl no.	Profession	Number of people	Percentage
1	Farming	3	43%
2	Livestock	1	14%
3	Poultry	1	14%
4	Fishery	2	29%

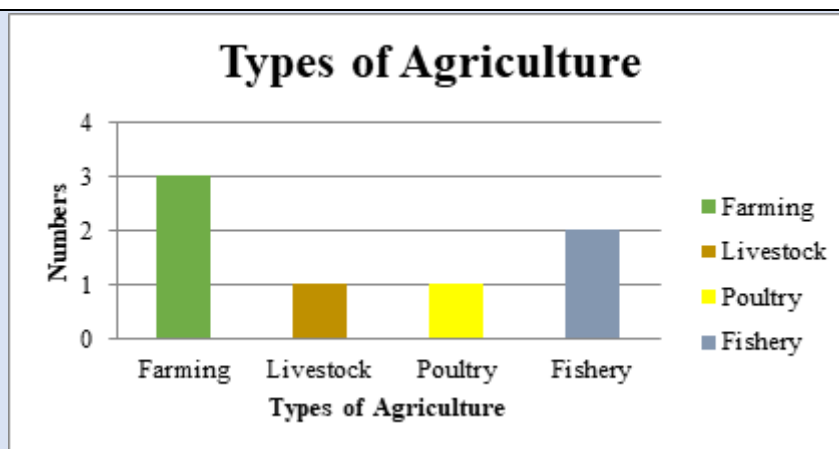


Figure 4: Monthly Income of families

In every household within the village, it is common for there to be 4 to 5 dependent members who rely on the respective primary income earner. The main crops cultivated in the village are rice and vegetables, which form the backbone of local agriculture. While traditional farming methods remain prevalent, there has also been the adoption of some modern technologies, notably television and mobile phones, which have become essential tools for both communication and entertainment in the village. Self-employment is an important source of livelihood for the villagers, with various occupations such as

fishing, farming, livestock rearing, service-based jobs, and small-scale businesses being commonly practiced. However, despite these diverse employment options, there is a lack of formal training institutions in the village that could assist individuals in enhancing their skills or pursuing self-employment opportunities more effectively. This lack of access to training is a barrier for many who wish to improve their economic standing through entrepreneurship or specialized work. In terms of female participation in economic activities, it is noteworthy that women do not engage in handcrafts or other traditional crafts. Additionally,

while the village does host some small and medium-sized businesses, the role of women in conducting or managing these businesses remains limited. Female entrepreneurship is not as prominent, reflecting broader social and cultural barriers to women's involvement in the business sector.

The village is surrounded by several rural markets, providing access to goods and services, but it lacks a bank branch to offer traditional banking services. As a result, the residents rely on mobile financial platforms such as Bkash and Nagad for their financial transactions, enabling them to send and receive money, pay bills, and conduct business without the need for physical banking infrastructure. An NGO is present in the village, providing loans to the residents to support their small businesses, agricultural activities, or personal needs. This service helps alleviate some of the financial pressures faced by the villagers. Moreover, many villagers are familiar with the concept of 'Digital Bangladesh'—a national initiative aimed at improving the country's digital infrastructure and services. According to the villagers, the Digital Bangladesh program has significantly impacted education, business operations, and communication in their community. They believe that the increased use of digital technologies has opened up new opportunities for learning, facilitated business transactions, and improved overall connectivity, contributing to the village's gradual integration into the digital age.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study provides insights into the socio-economic conditions of Brahmapur village. The main findings indicate that agriculture forms the primary livelihood, and most households are economically solvent. However, significant gaps exist, particularly in women's economic participation and access to technical training. To address these challenges and promote sustainable rural development, the following recommendations are proposed:

Establish training centers to develop technical skills among villagers. Increase opportunities for women's self-employment through targeted programs. Promote higher education and vocational training for the younger generation. Develop industries to create local employment opportunities. Introduce modern agricultural tools to enhance productivity and crop yield. Support community-based initiatives that empower marginalized groups and foster inclusive

growth. While the socio-economic condition of Brahmapur village is satisfactory overall, implementing these recommendations will significantly enhance the quality of life for its residents, ensuring a more resilient and progressive rural economy.

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