



Socio-economic Condition of Rickshaw pullers in Patna

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Public transportation is an important part of the nation's economy. With only around 10% households owning motorcycles and 0.7% cars, public transport is both a necessity as well as a convenience. In Patna (Bihar), this percentage goes even lower. Thus, Cycle Rickshaws form a prominent feature in the local transportation system of Patna. Rickshaws are mode of human powered transport and it is referred to as a runner drawn two wheeled cart which seats 1 to 2 persons. Here, a casual observer can see that a large number of commuters use rickshaw as their medium of transport. They carry the passengers to and fro at anytime of the day unmindful of their health, bad weather conditions and the inconvenience caused due to rough and rugged roads and lanes of Patna. These are migrants from different parts of Bihar, in search of jobs, but as they do not have any skill and higher education they opt rickshaw pulling as their occupation. It was also observed that they live in poor condition with no facilities like education, health hygiene and housing etc. Thus, the objective of this paper is to assess the socio-economic condition of these rickshaw pullers whose livelihood depends solely on the mercy of their customers.

Key words:- Human powered transport, Education, Poverty, Unemployment.

Introduction : The word 'rickshaw' originated from the Japanese word "Jinriksha" ('Jin'=human, 'riki'= power or force, 'sha'= vehicle) which literally means "human powered vehicle". They first appeared in Japan around 1868. Some American sources give the credit to an American Blacksmith, Albert Tolman for inventing rickshaw around 1848 in Worcester, Massachusetts for a missionary. By 1914, it was introduced in China. Here, they were initially used to transport passengers. Soon after, rickshaws appeared in many big cities of South-East Asia and in India.

Around 1880, rickshaws appeared in India. In Shimla, traders used it to transport goods. Later in 1920s it was used to carry passengers to and fro through the streets of Calcutta which eventually spread in all big and small towns of north India. In late 20s, they were banned in several cities for causing traffic congestion and their number is still decreasing. However, environmentalists have supported the retention of cycle rickshaws as a non-polluting and inexpensive mode of transport.

Objectives of the Study :

The main aim of this study is to bring out the detailed analysis of the social, economic and domestic condition

of rickshaw pullers in Patna. Apart from these, the other objectives are to know the literacy rate among rickshaw pullers and their family, their level of satisfaction, their life style, living condition and to know if they are politically active and aware of their rights.

Study area :

The survey has been carried out in Boring road, Boring Canal road, Bailey road and Patna junction of Patna Municipal Corporation.

This area is located at the junction of 25°37' N latitude and 82°37' E longitude. Patna is situated on the southern levee of river Ganga. The total area of the Patna Municipal Corporation is around 57 Sq. Km. It is the largest city of the state with a population size of 1442992 (sensus 2001).

Methodology :

The project has been carried out with the help of field survey and data interpretation.

Hundred rickshaw pullers have been interviewed on a random basis.

This study has been carried out through Personal interview on the basis of a structured questionnaire.

Data collected through the questionnaire has been interpreted through simple statistical calculation.

Results and Discussion :

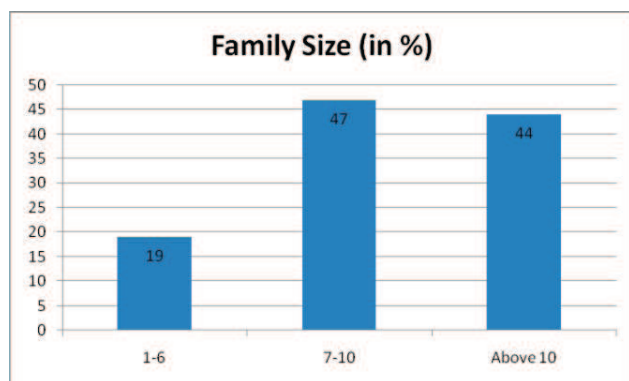
As far as sex-structure is concerned, Bihar is found to be a male dominated society where women are confined to their houses and indoor jobs. Therefore, a casual observer can see only the male population pulling rickshaws not only in Patna but throughout Bihar. It is also proved by the survey that 100% of the people engaged in rickshaw pulling is found to be male.

The age-group shows that rickshaw pulling is not very popular among the young people. A large number of rickshaw pullers belong to the age-group of 21 to 40 years, (51%). It is followed by the age-group of 41 to 60 years with 34% share, 9% are under the age of 20 and only 6% are above 60 years.

The city is dominated by two major religious groups namely Hindu and Muslims. It was found that among the rickshaw pullers, 56% of them are Hindus followed by 44% of Muslim population. However, among the Hindu population 52% belonged to the general category followed by 38% OBC I & II and 10% SC & ST.

Marital status is an important aspect for our study as marriages bring responsibilities of family including parents, wife and children. It requires constant income to support the family. It was found in the survey that 84% of the rickshaw pullers were married while 16% them were unmarried.

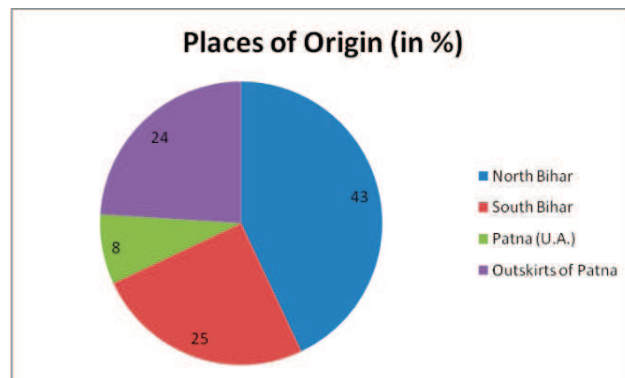
Family Size



*Based on sample population

In this study, it has been found that nearly all the rickshaw pullers have large size of family where 47% of them have family members between 7 to 10, followed by 44% having more than 10 members and 19% having 1 to 6 members in their family. The reasons behind it are-

- trend of early marriage in their society which creates a scope for a larger family.
- poverty, low standard of living, lack of education and the common mind-set to have more children so as to be able to earn more for their families.
- the desire to have a son over a girl child leads to more number of children.



*Based on sample population

In the study, it was also found that most of these rickshaw pullers are **migrants** from different parts of Bihar. About 43% of them have come from North Bihar followed by 25% share from South Bihar and 24% from the outskirts of Patna. Only 8% of the surveyed rickshaw pullers are from Patna itself. The main districts from where these workers migrate are Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Sitamarhi, Samastipur, Vaishali, Purnia, Begusarai, Munger, Nalanda, Jehanabad, Gaya, Buxar and Bhojpur. The main reasons behind this are, better job or economic opportunity, landlessness, debts and natural disasters like flood and drought etc.

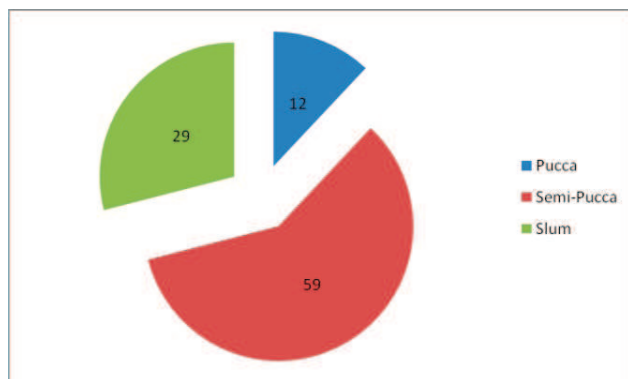
Social Condition :

By social condition, one means the living standards and the surroundings in which rickshaw pullers live. By studying their place of residence, one can easily envisage their poor social condition and the unhygienic environment in which they live.

The study of **housing conditions** includes the structure of the houses with number of rooms and basic facilities such as toilets and kitchens. As Patna is a big city with adequate facilities, in the survey it has been found that 54% of rickshaw pullers live in semi-pucca houses, 19% in pucca houses and 29% in slums. However, it was found that there was not a single house

with a separate kitchen facility. As these rickshaw pullers are poor and generally migrants from different parts of Bihar, 53% of them have rented houses to live in while 18% of them had their own dwellings and 29% of them do not have any fixed place to live in.

Type of Houses (in %)



*Based on sample study

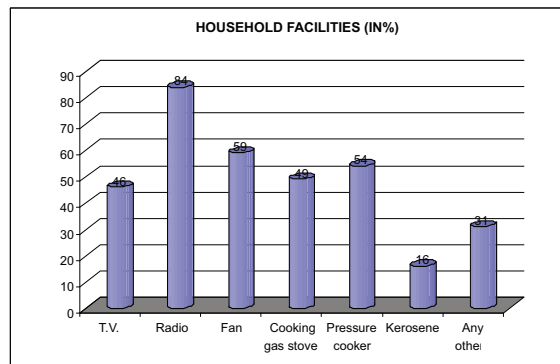
The **living conditions** of rickshaw pullers is found to be very poor where 93% of them are living in highly congested houses with only one room for the entire family, while only 7% have access to two rooms. Though each household has a large number of family members to support, 66% of the rickshaw pullers have their family living in their native place and only 34% of them have their family staying with them.

As far as **basic-amenities** or facilities are concerned, it is not found to be very satisfactory. With only one room available for the entire family, 68% of the rickshaw pullers have kitchen within the same room while 32% cook their food outside in the open space. Most of the houses of the rickshaw pullers use common toilets i.e. on an average 8 to 9 families have access to a single toilet and this accounts for about 65% of the surveyed rickshaw pullers. 29% of them use outdoor or open space for toilets and only 6% owned an individual toilet facility inside their house.

The rickshaw pullers mainly depend on 3 **main sources of water** supply for their daily requirements. About 57% of them have access to the supply of water by Patna Municipality in their homes while 26% use public hydrants i.e. an upright pipe with the spout or nozzle on the streets used mainly for cleaning streets, watering trees etc. The other 17% of the rickshaw pullers have individual or separate connection of water supply though they do not have their own boring or motor pump.

With regard to **Electricity**, it has been found that 61% houses have access to electricity which are mainly pucca and semi-pucca houses and have electric items like Radio, Fan, Lights, T.V. etc. While 39% of the houses do not have any access to electricity.

HOUSEHOLD FACILITIES (IN%)



*Based on sample population

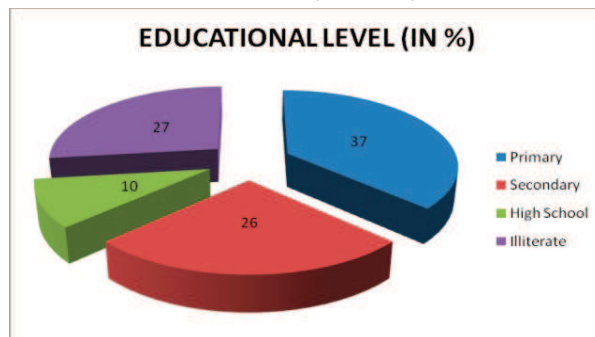
Some of the basic **housing equipments** of day to day use were also assessed in the houses of rickshaw pullers and surprisingly quite a good number of gadgets were found in their houses. About 46% of household had T.V., 84% of the houses had radio 59% had fans, 49% had cooking gas-stove, 54% had pressure cooker and 16% had kerosene stove to enjoy a better life-style.

Living in urban area, also requires awareness of their surroundings therefore, the awareness among rickshaw pullers with regard to their political and fundamental rights were studied. It was found that 62% of them had their Voter I.D. About 38% of them cast their votes regularly while 62% of the rickshaw pullers do not cast their votes at all. It was found that 69% had Ration-card and only 13% had a Red-card.

Education :

Education is a vital fact for the empowerment of backward and poor societies. Therefore, it becomes necessary to see the educational status of rickshaw pullers of Patna and their scope for improvement.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL (IN %)



*Based on sample population

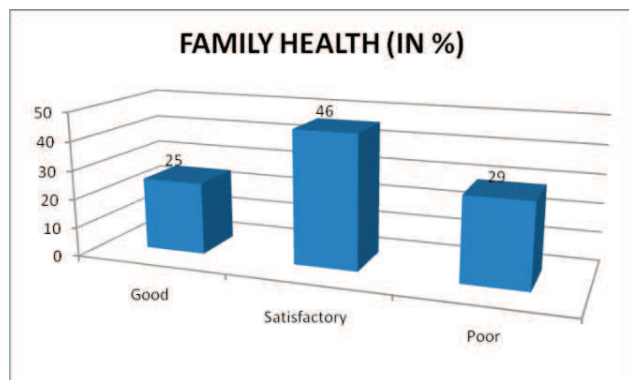
In the study area, it was found that 69% of the rickshaw pullers were literate and had different **levels of education**. 37% of them had primary education, 26% of them had secondary education and only 10% had qualification above class 10th. It was also found that 54% of the rickshaw pullers send their children to school and 46% did not, the reason are :-

- unable to pay the school fees.
- lack of interest in studies.
- earning money is more important than studying – to earn and supplement family income.
- not old enough to go to school etc.

The government schools are preferred to private schools as 73% of the school going children go to government schools, while 27% go to private schools, the reasons being free schooling, mid-day meals, free books and uniforms and other facilities.

Health and Hygiene :

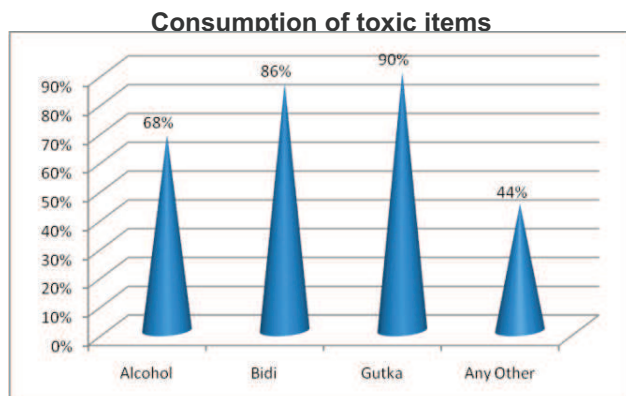
With unhygienic housing and living conditions, the rickshaw pullers and their family do not enjoy very good health. About 46% of rickshaw pullers were said to be in good health with no serious health problems except minor cold and flu. 29% of them were said to be in poor health condition, as they lived in slums with no-proper meal and money to treat themselves. Only 25% rickshaw pullers confirmed their good and satisfactory health conditions.



*Based on sample population

In the survey it has been found that 43% of rickshaw pullers go to government hospitals for their **medical treatment** because they get free medial check-ups, medicines, vaccines etc. About 28% go to private clinics only when they suffer from any chronic disease or are referred to by the government hospitals. About 29% of them go to ojha's and fake jadi-buti shops for their

treatment. These are basically those rickshaw pullers who do not have money or are orthodox in nature.



*Based on sample population

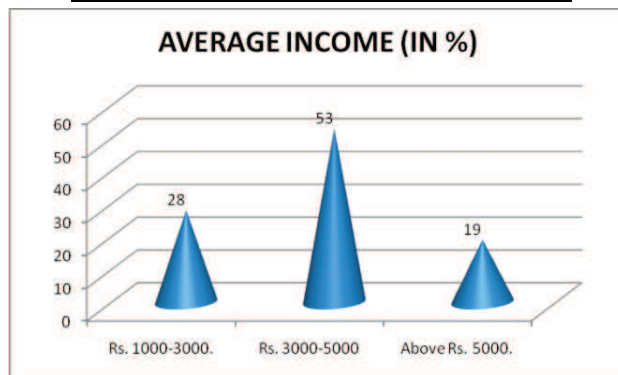
The health of the rickshaw pullers is also affected by the intake of toxic items which is a common feature among them.

According to the survey, 68% consume alcohol, 86% consume bidi, 90% and 44% respectively gutka and other items on a regular basis while others occasionally. The reasons for consuming such items are said to be their everyday problems related to their family, poverty, debt etc.

Economic Condition :

The economic condition includes the level of income, savings, expenditure etc. which is key to their overall well being. Therefore, it becomes necessary to have a detailed analysis of the economic condition of rickshaw pullers of Patna.

AVG. INCOME (PER MONTH)	RICKSHAW PULLERS (IN %)
Rs. 1000-3000	28
Rs. 3000-5000	53
Above Rs. 5000	19



*Based on sample population

The rickshaw pullers seem to enjoy a fair amount of monthly income as 53% of them have an average monthly income between Rs. 3,000-5,000, whereas 28% of them have income between Rs. 1000 and 3000 and the rest 19% have income above Rs. 5000. The variation in the level of income depends on the area of rickshaw pulling, the weather condition, the non-availability of other transport facilities and road conditions.

As far as the **nature of job** is concerned, about 68% of rickshaw pullers do it as their permanent job whereas 24% of them on a temporary basis and 8% of them do it as a part-time job. The permanent rickshaw pullers are between the age group of 30 to 60 years and are basically unskilled and therefore, are not willing to change their occupation. On the other hand, the temporary group is between the age group of 20 to 30 years and are always looking for better jobs. Thus, they are not fully dependent on rickshaw pulling.

The reasons for opting rickshaw pulling vary from person to person. They have taken up this job due to lack of opportunity in their village and land to cultivate, other educational or technical skills, training centres for skill enhancement in the villages, lack of money for the treatment of family members, they also earn money to meet the marriage expenses of either then daughters or sisters, to pay a debt or as an additional source of income to their family.

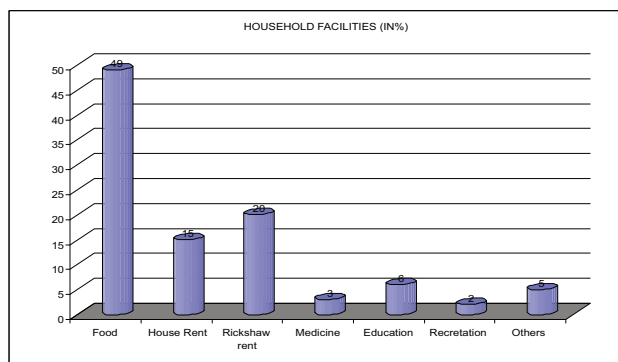
It is a general impression that a migrant coming from village might have a **property or land asset** but it was found that only 56% of them had land but not big enough to support their families. The remaining 44% do not have any land or house which forces them to take up rickshaw pulling for their livelihood.

Looking at the fair amount of earning by rickshaw pullers, a study was done on their **savings**. Savings is very important as it protects them from any future hassle. It was found that 51% do not save any money as they spend on rickshaw rent, house rent, medicines, schools fees etc. Only 18% save on a regular basis while 31% of them do it occasionally. About 24% of them have saving accounts in a bank.

Heavy debt was a major reason for opting rickshaw pulling as their main occupation. About 84% of them do not want to be caught in the vicious cycle of debt but 16% of surveyed rickshaw pullers were found to be

under debt. The reason being marriage, sickness, buying a new rickshaw, better homes, natural calamities, funeral rites etc. The rickshaw pullers generally avoid taking loans unless it is very important and they have no other option.

The **ownership** of rickshaw directly affects their income level. The rickshaw pullers either own it or take on rent on a daily or monthly basis. In the survey, it was found that majority of the rickshaw pullers i.e. about 75% of them took rickshaw on rent whereas only 25% have their own rickshaw and enjoy a better economic condition.



*Based on sample population

As said earlier, the rickshaw pullers earn a fair amount of monthly income between Rs. 3000 and 5000 (average) but still do not enjoy a good economic and social condition. Therefore a study was done on their mode of expenditure. From the survey, it has been found that a larger share of monthly income that is 49% is spent on food followed by 20% on rickshaw rent, 15% on house rent, 6% on education, 3% on medicines, 2% on recreation and 5% on other expenses. Those who have migrated send a big share of their income to their immediate family in the villages.

Thus, monthly expenditure in itself manifold and never ending but besides these there are some other occasional major expenses one has to bear, the most important being marriages, funerals and major illnesses.

Conclusion :

Rickshaw pullers are an integral part of the transportation system of Patna.

They are mainly illiterate and unskilled migrants from the neighbouring areas like Hajipur, Samastipur,

Muzaffarpur, Buxar, Begusarai, Jehanabad, Purnia etc.

Their family income can support their lifestyle to some extent. As their average monthly income of Rs. 3000 is spent mainly on food items, rickshaw rent and house rent.

Even though they live in highly congested houses with unsatisfactory water and Sanitation facilities, they have access to some of the basic amenities.

Most of them are illiterate and unaware of educational needs so, they don't want to send their children to schools due to lack of money and awareness.

Most of them enjoy better health condition and don't suffer from any severe disease. The families with better housing and sanitary conditions had better health condition in comparison to their counterparts living in slums.

Suggestions :

Rickshaw pullers are an important part of the society and if they serve us so well all around the year then it is the duty of each and every citizen and the government to have a little caring attitude towards them.

All rickshaw pullers and their rickshaw should be registered in the Patna Municipal Corporation.

Proper rickshaw stands should be made.

Fares should be fixed according to the distance and condition of road.

Special package should be made for rickshaw pullers in budget.

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Web links :

www.patnamunicipalcorporation.com