

Meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Food and Livelihood Perspective of Transgender Community in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The SDGs provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt to meet the targets, and the Bangladesh government has put in place resources to achieve the SDGs. This research attempts to show how meeting SDGs is progressing in our country from the perspective of food and livelihood of the transgender community. Transgender, or 'Hijra' as commonly known, is in a poor state regarding their identity crisis. This research has been done on 200 hijras from five different places, Rajshahi, Natore, Dhamrai, Ashulia, and Manikganj, to assess food and livelihood opportunities. These were attained via focus group discussions, questionnaire surveys, interviews, and observation techniques. The socioeconomic profile of the transgender community indicated their poverty and deprivation, pointing to the gap in gender equity following the SDGs. The food and livelihood situation could have been better and different in the three research sites (urban, peri-urban, and rural). There was a social structure within the community, the Guruma (the 'female' leader of hijra communities) playing a dominating role in income and leading a better life than the members. The constraints and opportunities identified were similar for the three research sites.

Keywords: Transgender, Hijra, Livelihood, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a new universal set of goals, targets, and indicators that UN member states use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next

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15 years. That includes a group of 17 sustainable development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustices, and tackle climate change by 2030 (Ashraf et al., 2019). The Bangladesh government has put in place resources such as money, people, and intellect to achieve the SDGs. However, achieving SDGs would be difficult as the goals are enormous, and the Government alone needs help. There should be joint efforts; the international donors, NGOs, civil society, researchers, and the community must work together to achieve the Goal.

To see how to meet Goal 2 (No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being and Gender Equality) this research has worked on the food and livelihood perspectives of transgender people (Arvind et al., 2021). Transgender (hijra in Bengali) is an umbrella term that means neither men nor women. Several South Asian countries have recently legislated gender nonconformity as a legal practice, despite hijra's long history of societal acceptance (Hossain, 2017). Traditionally, a hijra is male-bodied feminine-identified people who sacrifice their male genitals for spiritual power to bless and curse the newlywed and the newborn (Nanda, 1998). They got their recognition as third gender in the Bangladesh cabinet on November 11, 2013, and it declared that Hijras would be given similar rights as any other man or woman enjoys in terms of education, job facilities, housing, and health (<https://www.hrw.org/asia/bangladesh>). Unfortunately, they have not been able to use any of their rights except the ability to vote; they have a poor rate of employment; and in many places, they are not even allowed to finish high school because of their hijra identity (Khan et al., 2009; Hossain, 2016; Chowdhury, 2015). There are many reasons work behind their barriers (Afsary, 2018).

The financial and social status of the hijra is very often discussed from the perspective of the hijras as they are one of the most marginalized groups in Bangladesh, with no access to primary education, health services, or employment opportunities. From the articles published by the Daily Star, it is evident that the norm in Bangladesh is that hijras are considered not valid and valuable as employees or receivers of education and training. So being incapable of earning a livelihood through any decent means, several transgender people are compelled to involve in anti-social activities for their livelihood (The Daily Star, 2010; Dhaka Tribune, 2014).

Therefore, the study has been conducted to pinpoint some of these causes and come up with solutions, with a particular emphasis on the food and means of subsistence of the Hijra people in the regions of Dhamrai, Ashulia, Manikganj, Natore, and Rajshahi.

1.2 Rationale of the Study:

Goal 2 of the SDGs addresses how to comprehend a disenfranchised group of people and integrate them into the mainstream of sustainable development. This research is a multidisciplinary effort to understand how the marginalized group, the hijras, are currently placed in society and how their fate can be gradually changed.

1.3 Research Question:

The research is destined to answer some questions. They are:

- How are the hijra community placed regarding their food and livelihood?
- What opportunities exist for them to improve their livelihood sustainability?
- What constraints currently live in the Bangladeshi context to enhance their status?

1.4 Research Objective:

Several study goals will help address the research questions, including the following:

- To identify the communities in which hijras are placed regarding their food and livelihood.
- To explore the opportunities that exist for them to improve their livelihood sustainability.
- To identify the constraints and state of livelihood conditions of transgender communities in Bangladesh in improving their status to achieve the SDGs.

2. Literature Review

Although a third gender known as hijras has been recorded in the Indian Subcontinent from prehistoric times, only recently has hijras been acknowledged as the third gender by legislation. Other South Asian nations, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, have only recognized *hijras* as the third gender. This is even when the larger LGBT community faces severe legal disadvantages, and same-sex sexual relations are illegal in the country (Nambiar, 2017). So, most of the demands made by this community involved voicing the most critical aspiration of all, state recognition, the Hijras interviewed for the newspaper stated that: "because the state identifies only two sexes, the Hijras are deprived of the rights to marry, own a passport, a driving license, open a bank account or apply for employment. They said that being recognized by the state is vital, as it is related to all other rights" (The Daily Star, 2008).

If seen as a broader issue, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan were able to give recognition to the third-gender people. The Nepal Supreme Court was the first in this region to recognize the

third gender category in 2007 and issued a decision that considered the single most comprehensive judgment affirming protections for gender identity (Ahmed & Sifat, 2021). The Government was asked to scrap all laws that discriminated against sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Later in 2009, the Pakistani Supreme Court issued an order requiring the Government to formally recognize the hijra community as having a distinct gender, along with a warning that the hijra community's right to inheritance must be upheld and that police harassment must not be tolerated. The Government was also asked to provide the hijra community with national identity cards displaying their distinct gender (Siagian, 2022). Only recently, the Supreme Court of India, in 2014 has guaranteed transgender rights, including equal access to education and employment. The Indian Election Authorities also approved an independent identity for intersex and transsexuals to appear in the country's voter lists. Article 27 of the Constitution of Bangladesh provides that all citizens are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection. Article 28(1) further states that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen based on religion, race, caste or sex. In 2013, the policy decision to officially recognize the hijras or transgender as a separate gender in our community was approved in the Bangladesh Government's Cabinet Meeting. From statistics, it appears that there are at least 10,000 hijras in Bangladesh, and they are being denied their rights in various sectors, including education, Health, and housing, because of being a marginal group (Khan et al., 2009; Chowdhury, 2015). After the hijras achieved their legal recognition, the law commission recommended formulating a law to prevent discrimination. This law and the media representation discourse described the proposal as all-inclusive for all minority groups in Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2014). The Government estimates there are 15,000 hijras in Bangladesh, but rights groups say the figure is closer to half a million; the controversy because hijras remain one of the most neglected and marginalized groups in Bangladesh despite being officially recognized as a third gender in 2013 (Khan et al., 2009 ; Hossain, 2016). Many hijras live in slum areas and subsist on odd jobs. They are often turned down for work, so many take to the streets and demand money from roadside shopkeepers using abusive language if any shopkeeper refuses to pay money (Hossain, 2016). In a study of Bangladeshi hijras, participants reported not being allowed to seek healthcare at the private chambers of doctors and experiencing abuse if they went to government hospitals (Khan et al., 2009).

Transgender people are most likely to be unemployed or under-employed, so the community suffers from extreme poverty and limited housing access. Many are evicted or refused proper housing even when they can afford it, in the rare circumstances that they had access to education as a child (García & Kim, 2020). However, even in school, they are victims of bullying and violence. Many suffer manhandling at the hands of law enforcement officers as adults while trying to fend for themselves in the streets (Khan et al., 2009; Afsary, 2018). Notable here is the plight of transgender youth and teens, who often experience repeated acts of harassment that leave them with the impression that they must be hostile or provocative in order to survive; the constant torture, helplessness, depression, isolation, and alienation they feel at the hands of the majority has led many transgender people to behave violently and engage in criminal activity (Tan & Weisbart, 2022; Whipple, 2019). A general lack of empathy towards them has stripped many of them from a sense of morality which might be the main reason behind their unfriendly attitude and attraction to crimes (Tsai et al., 2022).

Thus, the most common norm existing in the Bangladeshi society always forced the hijras to give up their families before adulthood, as discrimination and abuse are common factors in an adolescent hijra's life. In some instances, feminine males are often considered as creating societal problems starting from a damaged reputation of the family (Khan et al. 2009).

What is needed here is to bridge the gap in the attitude of the majority community by the unified call for humanity, to stop prejudices against the transgender community and to give them the opportunity to a fair normal life (Khan et al., 2009; Afsary, 2018).

Recently there have been a number of efforts which indicate changes along this line. In the modern times, media is shaping societies in that it is a part where knowledge, opinions, culture and more the message which is communicated so far and wide (LaCorte, 2019). 'Bandhu' an organization that works towards ensuring a dignified life for gender-based minorities through protection of human rights, quality of Health, including sexual and reproductive Health, as well as ensuring access to societal security and justice has recognized the Dhaka Tribune for publishing the highest number of articles related to the transgender community (<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2018/05/26/bandhu-awards-dhaka-tribune-for-advancing-development-of-hijra-community>)

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sites

Being an exploratory research, the Project is focused on three sites- urban, peri-urban and rural. Rural areas are the least populated, agriculture-dominated areas, and peri-urban areas are mixed and have a larger population than rural areas; however, urban areas have a larger population than both and are more industrial. Here, Urban included the hijras in the city's living conditions. Peri-urban indicated a transition from an urban to a rural living environment. Rural means village life. These three types of sites were represented in the study:

- Dhamrai, Asulia as urban sites
- Manikganj has the flavor of peri-urban.
- Two villages in Natore and Rajshahi were the rural sites.

Table1 Status of the Sites

Particulars	Frequency	Valid Percent
Dhamrai-Asulia	50	25.0
Manikganj	49	24.5
Two villages in Natore and Rajshahi	101	50.5
Total	200	100.0

3.2 Data Collection

The researchers followed both quantitative and qualitative methods (Mixed Method). For data collection, the following methods are applied-

Questionnaires: The Method applied for primary data collection in this Project was a semi-structured questionnaire; the questionnaire was prepared, tested, administered to the subjects, and filled in by the researchers. Additional information related to the research was noted during the sessions.

Focus Group Discussion: Focus Groups were 6-12 participants, with an interviewer asking questions related to the survey.

Interview Method: Multiple questions were posed to elicit data pertinent to the research topics, and the responses were recorded.

Observation: Observation was made to document the aspects of research while visiting the sites regarding living conditions and livelihood.

4. Results and Discussion

The Results are presented in a sequence: first, the Socioeconomic states of the hijra community; next, the income and livelihood and then, the inter-relationship between different parameters of these two.

4.1 The socioeconomic state of the hijras

A socioeconomic profile of the subjects included in the survey provided us with complete information to interpret the results.

4.1.1 The socioeconomic state of the hijras: Gender

Table 2 shows the results of responses of the hijras when they were asked to identify as male, female, or Tran's gender. Out of the 200 hijras, eight were male, 171 were female, and 21 were transgender by born. From this study, it has been found that hijras are primarily identifying themselves as female.

Table 2 Gender (as identified by the subjects) distribution of the hijras

Particulars		Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender Distribution	Male	8	4.0
	Female	171	85.5
	Common(By born)	21	10.5
	Total	200	100.0

4.1.2 The socioeconomic state of the hijras: Religion

Though the Hijras are considered queer to ordinary people, they usually inherit their religion from their parents; as seen in the survey, among 200 hijras, 187 were identified as Muslims and 13 as Hindus.

Table 3 Religion of the Respondents

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Religious Status	Muslim	187	93.5
	Hindu	13	6.5
	Total	200	100.0

However, out of 200 respondents, only nine hijras reported not engaging in any religious activity (Table 4), and only two reported engaging in a religious activity regularly. In contrast, 144 respondents reported engaging in religious activity frequently, while 45 reported engaging in religious activity erratically.

Participation in religious activities refers to their regular religious activities, eg, Namaz, reciting The Holy Quran, and for Hindus Puja.

Table 4 Participation in Religious Activities

Particulars		Frequency	Valid Percent
Participation in Religious Activities	Regular basis	2	1.0
	Frequently	144	72.0
	Less Often	45	22.5
	None	9	4.5
	Total	200	100.0

4.1.3 The socioeconomic state of the hijras: marital status

Regarding their response about marital status, 31 hijras reported that they were married, 166 were unmarried, and three were living together (Table 5).

By the term 'married' they indicated that these respondents were married following their tradition and lived as husband and wife. Unmarried is not married and single, whereas 'living together' means they have boy/girlfriends and live with them, addressing them as brothers or cousins.

Table 5 Marital Status of the hijras

Marital Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Married	31	15.5
Unmarried	166	83.0
Living together	3	1.5
Total	200	100.0

4.1.4 The socioeconomic state of the hijras: accommodation

Of the 200 hijras, it was observed that 85 hijras live as single alone, 77 live in a group, 15 live in hijra communities, and 23 live as a family (Table 6). Since Hijras were not known to live in communities, families, or even occasionally alone, depending on their preferences and comforts. Group means the respondents live in a group of four or five members in the same house, in community means ‘hijra polli’(hijra village), where 15-20 hijras live together.

Table 6 Accommodation Facilities of the hijra

Accommodation Facilities	Frequency	Valid Percent
Single living alone	85	42.5
In group	77	38.5
Hijra Community	15	7.5
As Family	23	11.5
Total	200	100.0

4.1.5 The socioeconomic state of the hijras: health condition

Table 7 shows that most of the hijras, about 70% are free from any severe mental and physical diseases. In comparison, only 5% reported being mentally sick, 16.5 % were physically ill, and 9% had both.

Table 7 Health condition of the hijras

Health-related hazards	Frequency	Valid Percent
No complaints	139	69.5
Mental diseases	10	5.0
Physical diseases	33	16.5
Both	18	9.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 8 shows that the primary source of medical care was the 'local pharmacy' (28.3%), the highest percentage which indicated that the hijras feel more comfortable going to the local pharmacies. It is well recognized that most poor people, not correctly educated, need to consult proper medical doctors but trust local pharmacists for treatment.

More than 22% Hijra people went to government hospitals and reported that they get good behavior from doctors and nurses, so it is the second highest. The category ‘Others’ include homeopathy, herbal treatment/other available treatments from religious persons. Only 15% of responses came from private hospitals, indicating that those in better economic conditions go to private hospitals. A good 12% reported quakes.

Table 8 Health Treatment sources of the hijras

Health Treatment Service Facilities	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Government Hospitals	114	22.8%	57.3%
Private Hospitals	75	15.0%	37.7%
Quake	60	12.0%	30.2%
Local Pharmacy	142	28.3%	71.4%
Others	110	22.0%	55.3%
Total	501	100.0%	251.8%

4.2 The socioeconomic state: Comparison among the rural, peri-urban and urban hijras

4.2.1 Health, sanitation, and environment

The Health & sanitation status of the hijra community marginalized in society is essential. To know about when sanitation was asked, among 200 respondents, 91% of hijras were found to know about sanitation (Table 9). Only 9% of them were not informed. They knew how to use the toilet properly and clean, use soap before eating, after using the toilet, and return from the outside like bazaars/markets.

Table 9: Having Sanitation Knowledge

Sanitation Knowledge	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	18	9.0
Yes	182	91.0
Total	200	100.0

The hijra rated their surrounding environment, which was checked by observation, and the results given in Table 10 shows that 40% of the hijra's living condition was considered polluted/unhealthy, while 29% of them said they lived in normal condition and 31% said their environment was healthy.

Table 10 Opinion of Surrounding Condition of Environment by the hijra

Surrounding Condition of Environment	Frequency	Valid Percent
Polluted/Unhealthy	80	40.0
Normal	58	29.0
Fresh/healthy	62	31.0
Total	200	100.0

4.3 Food and Livelihood Perspectives of Hijra Communities

The main aim of this research project was to the food and livelihood of the Hijra Communities, where income is the most critical factor.

4.3.1 The significant sources of income of the hijras

Table 11 shows the sources of income as mentioned by the hijras. However, the source of their income was many and diverse, thus challenging to document. However, the researchers must categorize those primary sources depending on the respondents' answers. Also, the source of income being multiple answer-based questions, the number of responses from a single person was many, especially because hijra people generally were not bound to do a fixed job. They had to play many roles as a source of income to survive.

As seen from Table 11, about 93% of responses had been under 'collection/donation'; as many as 36.6% of primary sources were 'collection'. Many of the hijras expressed that 'collection' is their right and should get it without any reservation. They collect money/goods from shops, bazaars, and weekly markets, 'the hat', on a fixed day once a week. There may or may not be a fixed rate for collecting money, and the shopkeepers gave money sometimes for fear, sometimes to avoid any trouble, and sometimes out of sympathy towards hijra community, as reported.

Singing and dancing were their preferred income sources (93% of responses). This is not unexpected, as most of the hijras were identified as females. Also, they mentioned that they like and love to sing and dance; often, this community has been recognized as a lively group of people.

Other sources of income mentioned were 'sewing and odd jobs'(17%) and 'manual labor' (26%); often they work as a laborer in road building, agricultural labor, or industrial labor on a seasonal basis. The item 'others' indicated petty trade, sometimes mentioning going to India for four months or six months and bringing goods for selling or staying there for a short period. Entertaining people and prostitution had been mentioned as good income sources for many of them, especially an occupation for young girls.

Table 11 Income Source as mentioned by the hijras

Particulars	Responses		Percent of Cases	
	N	Percent		
Sources of Income	Collection/donation: money & goods	186	36.6	93.0%
	Dancing and singing	140	27.6	70.0%
	Sewing and odd jobs	34	6.7	17.0%
	Entertainment/ Prostitution	23	4.5	11.5%
	Seasonal manual work	52	10.2	26.0%
	Others	73	14.4	36.5%
Total	508	100.0	254.0%	

4.3.2 The significant sources of income of the hijras: between sites variation

Although, as a marginalized minority group, the hijras indicated various diverse sources of income and their difference from the mainstream, the scope became limited for the transgender people in Bangladesh. The socioeconomic environment related to the urban, peri-urban, and rural being different, a cross-tabulation was made with the status of the site and their source of income (Table to identify the relationship between them (Table 12).

The result showed that irrespective of the size variation, they heavily relied on collection/donation and singing/dancing. However, interesting was that income through entertainment/prostitution was much more in the case of urban areas (14.3%) than in rural areas (only 0.4%) and absent in the peri-urban area (Table 12).

Table 12 Association between the primary income source and the site of the hijras

Sources of income		Status of the Site			Total
		Urban	Peri-Urban	Rural	
Collection/donation	Count	47	47	92	186
	% within Types	30.5%	37.3%	40.4%	
Singing /Dancing	Count	41	40	59	140
	% within Types	26.6%	31.7%	25.9%	
Sewing/odd jobs	Count	5	6	23	34
	% within Types	3.2%	4.8%	10.1%	
Entertainment/Prostitution	Count	22	0	1	23
	% within Types	14.3%	0.0%	0.4%	
Seasonal Work	Count	17	16	19	52
	% within Types	11.0%	12.7%	8.3%	
Others	Count	22	17	34	73
	% within Types	14.3%	13.5%	14.9%	
Total	Count	154	126	228	508

4.3.3 The attitude to significant sources of income of the hijras

During the research, the researchers noticed that the income perception of hijras has changed during recent years due to the awareness created and most of them leading dissatisfied life. Though the sources of income mentioned played a vital role in their living, a cross-tabulation of income sources with 'satisfaction' was done (Table 13). The cross-tabulation results indicated that the majority were not satisfied. Entertainment/prostitution is a good income source.

The researchers have provided the income sources into five dimensions considering the per capita income of the people of Bangladesh (FY2017-18 as \$1602, Bangladesh Bureau of

Statistics-BBS) and grouped in five scales, Tk. 1-4000 is for Highly Dissatisfactory, Tk. 4001-9000 for Dissatisfactory, Tk. 9001- 15000 for Neutral, Tk. 15001- 25000 for Satisfactory and Tk. 25001- above for Highly Satisfactory, which was explained to the respondents before scoring.

Table 13 Income Source Cross-tabulation with satisfaction

Particulars(Sources of Income)		Income perception of the respondents					Total
		Highly Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Highly Satisfactory	
Collection	Count	15	69	45	49	8	186
	%	8.1%	37.1%	24.2%	26.3%	4.3%	
Dancing	Count	5	42	42	45	6	140
	%	3.6%	30.0%	30.0%	32.1%	4.3%	
Sewing	Count	2	12	10	6	4	34
	%	5.9%	35.3%	29.4%	17.6%	11.8%	
Entertain/Prostitution	Count	0	1	0	19	3	23
	%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	82.6%	13.0%	
Seasonal Work	Count	3	16	12	18	3	52
	%	5.8%	30.8%	23.1%	34.6%	5.8%	
Others	Count	15	23	9	21	5	73
	%	20.5%	31.5%	12.3%	28.8%	6.8%	
Total	Count	40	163	118	158	29	508

4.3.4 The attitude to significant sources of income of the hijras: between sites variation

A cross-tabulation has been made regarding the variation in living sites (rural, peri-urban, and urban) and income satisfaction level perception of the transgender communities(Table 14). No one in a metropolitan area was highly dissatisfied, but in rural areas, the rate of highly disappointed hijras was high; almost 70% of the total responses were dissatisfactory in rural whereas 0 % was in urban areas. But interesting was that the income satisfaction was symmetrically distributed for peri-urban areas.

Table 14 Site-related satisfaction difference in income of the hijra respondents

Status of the Sites		Income perception of the respondents					Total
		Highly Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Highly Satisfactory	
Urban	Count	0	0	7	38	5	50
	%	0.0%	0.0%	14.0%	76.0%	10.0%	100.
Peri-Urban	Count	1	19	19	9	1	49
	%	2.0%	38.8%	38.8%	18.4%	2.0%	100.
Rural	Count	19	50	23	5	4	101
	%	18.8%	49.5%	22.8%	5.0%	4.0%	100.
Total	Count	20	69	49	52	10	200
	%	10.0%	34.5%	24.5%	26.0%	5.0%	100.

A Chi-Square Test was conducted to test the significance of this difference between the sites in income satisfaction perception.

Chi-Square Test result

Particulars	Value	df	P Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	116.460a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	129.586	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	79.428	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	200		

So, a significant relationship between income satisfaction perception and the status of the site was observed, $\chi^2(8) = 116.460$, $p = 0.000$. so the Null hypothesis is rejected.

4.3.5 The attitude of the hijras toward the legal implications of their jobs

There is an impression of the people that many hijras are associated with illegal activities. When asked for their opinion (Table 17), the idea of legal was 83.6%, whereas foul was 16.4 %.

Table 17 Legality of job/ work as considered by the hijras

Legality of Work	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Legal Work	199	83.6%	100.0%
Illegal Work	39	16.4%	19.6%
Total	238	100.0%	119.6%

4.4.1 The Major expenditure pattern of the hijras

The expenditure patterns of the hijras were investigated to understand the livelihoods and significant related issues. Table 18 lists important expenditure categories for the hijra community as one of their primary sources of income. Most of the responses went for 'personal expenses' (43.3%), 'Family expenses' about 18% while 'savings' had more than 24% responses. Hijras were found to tend to savings. They don't want to waste their income; many had DPS in banks. The 14.4% responses in 'others' include expenses like those for husbands, boyfriends, mobile payments, etc.

Table 18 Expenditure Pattern of the hijra community

Particulars		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Expenditure Pattern	Personal Expenses	198	43.3%	99.5%
	Family Expenses	82	17.9%	41.2%
	Savings	111	24.3%	55.8%
	Others	66	14.4%	33.2%
Total		457	100.0%	229.6%

4.4.2 The Major expenditure pattern of the hijras; variation with sites

From the cross-tabulation of three sites, urban, peri-urban and rural, it was seen that most respondents from all areas spend on personal expenses (Table 19), ranging from 31.8% to 53.2%. The number of responses for savings was also high (21.0 to 28.7%). So the expenditure picture was quite similar in the three sites except for the 'other' category, where more urban and peri-urban respondents (21%) than rural (4%)

Table 19 Expenditure Pattern of the hijras: site relate differences

Expenditure Pattern		Status of the Site			Total
		Urban	Peri-Urban	Rural	
Personal Expenses	Count	50	49	99	198
	% within Types	31.8%	43.0%	53.2%	
Family Expenses	Count	28	14	40	82
	% within Types	17.8%	12.3%	21.5%	
Savings	Count	45	27	39	111
	% within Types	28.7%	23.7%	21.0%	
Others	Count	34	24	8	66
	% within Types	21.7%	21.1%	4.3%	
Total	Count	157	114	186	457

4.5 The educational background of the hijras

In this era of modernization, a community's basic need for sustainable livelihood is education. It is essential to investigate the state of education in the Hijra community. The present state of the educational condition of the hijra community, as identified in the survey, is given in Table 20. Among 200 respondents, 45 were illiterate, 87 had primary education, 59 had secondary education, 8 had Higher Secondary level education, and only one had higher education.

Table 20 Education Background of the Respondents

Education Background	Frequency	Valid Percent
Illiterate	45	22.5
Primary	87	43.5
Secondary	59	29.5
Higher Secondary	8	4.0
Others	1	0.5
Total	200	100.0

4.5.1 The relation between education background and income satisfaction of the hijras

The cross-tabulation of their educational background with income satisfaction perception (Table 21) showed that 24.4% of illiterate were highly dissatisfactory. In comparison, 40% of illiterate respondents were dissatisfied with their income, and only 24.4% were neutral. The percentage of satisfactory levels was only 11.1%. Among primary education holders, 10.3% of respondents' income was highly dissatisfactory, 39.1% were dissatisfied, and 28.7% were neutral. At the secondary level, 20.3% of respondents were neutral, and 28.8% were dissatisfied. About 42% of the secondary level was satisfied with their income level, and 8.5% were delighted. That 62.5% of higher secondary level hijras were comfortable, and 25% were glad with their income level indicated that education remains essential.

Table 21 Education Background of the Respondents and Income satisfaction Perception of the hijras

Particulars	Income perception of the respondents					Total
	Highly Dissatisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Neutra l	Satisfactor y	Highly Satisfactor y	
Illiterate Count	11	18	11	5	0	45
%	24.4%	40.0%	24.4%	11.1%	0.0%	100.0
Primary Count	9	34	25	17	2	87
%	10.3%	39.1%	28.7%	19.5%	2.3%	100.0
Secondary Count	0	17	12	25	5	59
%	0.0%	28.8%	20.3%	42.4%	8.5%	100.0
Higher Secondary Count	0	0	1	5	2	8
%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	100.0
Others Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0
Total Count	20	69	49	52	10	200
%	10.0%	34.5%	24.5%	26.0%	5.0%	100.0

4.6 The food and consumption habits of the hijras

Food and availability are essential; data on the number of meals available each month were gathered.

4.6.1 Type of food as the main meal of the hijras

The options provided for response were snacks as a meal, light meal, medium meal, and complete meal (Table 22); the results show that 15.5% of hijras took only snacks as a meal, 37% hijras took a light meal, 30% hijras could take medium meal and finally only 16.5% of them took a full meal.

Table 22 Current Level of Meals per Month

Particulars		Frequency	Valid Percent
Current Level of Meals	Snack as meal	31	15.6
	Lights meal	74	37.2
	Medium meal	61	30.7
	Full meal	33	16.6
	Total	199	100.0
Missing data		1	
Total		200	

The hijras, when asked to recall the food availability situation during the past, what they can remember (Table 23).

Table 23 Status of Meals in the past

Particulars		Frequency	Valid Percent
Status of Meals in the past	Snacks as meal	4	2.0
	Lights meal	84	42.2
	Medium meal	59	29.6
	Full meal	52	26.1
	Total	199	100.0
Missing	System	1	
Total		200	

Table 20 shows the status of meals in the past; when the food situation was better for hijras, only 2% of hijras remembered to have snacks as a meal (currently 15.6%), whereas full meals by 26% (now 16%) indicating that present levels of meals became poorer.

4.6.2 Type of food as breakfast consumed by the hijras

Breakfast in the morning is essential food uptake, and Table 24 shows the type of breakfast hijras reported. Bread and tea option was taken by 33.9% of the hijras, whereas rice with curry by 28.7%. The item ‘others’ include fruits/ cake-biscuit/ ruti-dal/ khichuri/paratha etc.

Table 24 Food taken during breakfast by the hijras

Breakfast Pattern	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Breakfast- Rice with curry	82	28.7%	41.2%
Breakfast- Bread & Tea	97	33.9%	48.7%
Breakfast- Others	107	37.4%	53.8%
Total	286	100.0%	143.7%

4.6.3 Variation of breakfast types with sites

Among the hijras rice was more or less popular (peri-urban: 37% to 20% urban), and responses to 'Others' was more among the urban hijras, 58.8%. Indicating the variation of food, including fruits, ruti, poratha, and boiled egg(Table 25). The rural hijras taking bread-tea at higher frequency (43.4%.) might be due to financial, rice being expensive.

Table 25 Variation of Breakfast Types with Sites (urban, peri-urban, rural)

Breakfast	Particulars	Urban	Peri-urban	Rural	Total
Rice with curry	Count	14	27	41	82
	% within Types	20.6%	37.0%	28.3%	
Bread & Tea	Count	14	20	63	97
	% within Types	20.6%	27.4%	43.4%	
Others	Count	40	26	41	107
	% within Types	58.8%	35.6%	28.3%	
Total	Count	68	73	145	286

4.7 Employment opportunities preferred by the hijras

The hijras, a marginalized minority, might have aspirations regarding their livelihood opportunities. The questionnaire survey included this aspect, and the results are given below.

4.7.1 Type of livelihood opportunities preferred by the hijras

When asked whether they want to pay regular employment overwhelming majority responded 'yes' regardless of their educational background. Among 200 hijras 169 had shown their interest in employment (Table 26).

Table 26 Interest on paid employment opportunity

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	31	15.5
Yes	169	84.5
Total	200	100.0

It is clear that the respondents are very eager to be employed regardless of their educational background. Among 200 hijras (Table 27) when asked about the type of employment they would prefer, results showed that about 40% could not specify the job they wanted (Table 27). About 28% wanted a government job, while 'security guard' and 'managing parlor' followed (16 and 14 percent respectively).

Table 27 Occupation preferred by the hijras

Interested area of Occupation	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Parlor	50	14.2%	29.1%
Security Guard	59	16.8%	34.3%
Government job	101	28.8%	58.7%
Others/Any Job	141	40.2%	82.0%
Total	351	100.0%	204.1%

4.7.2 Type of livelihood opportunities preferred by the hijras

The interest of the hijra community in jobs was very justifiable because they often get a little scope. Naturally, their claim for any job received a high preference; among the hijras of the rural site, 50.3% preferred it (Table 28). At the same time, peri-urban received 34.1% of responses, and the urban area received 30.5% of responses. This preference for a government job as the first choice for the peri-urban site (40.7%) reflected the job security issue in a developing country.

Table 28: Job preference as reflected in their option

Types of preferred employment		Urban	Peri-Urban	Rural	Total
Parlor	Count	23	8	19	50
	%	21.9%	8.8%	12.3%	
Security Guard	Count	16	15	28	59
	%	15.2%	16.5%	18.1%	
Government job	Count	34	37	30	101
	%	32.4%	40.7%	19.4%	
Others/Any Job	Count	32	31	78	141
	%	30.5%	34.1%	50.3%	
Total	Count	105	91	155	351

4.8 Attitude of the hijras about getting privilege/sympathy from others

To know the attitude of the hijras about others, when asked whether they get sympathy/privilege the results (Table 35) shows that 52% hijras said that they get benefits/privileges, but the rest (48%) said that they do not get any benefits/privileges.

Table 35 Impression of hijras about getting any benefits/ privileges

Getting any benefits/ privileges	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	96	48.0
Yes	104	52.0
Total	200	100.0

For getting a more clear idea about the sources of benefits/privileges, when asked about the authorities, the results (Table 36) shows that 21.5% of them told getting benefit from the government, 18% getting privileges from society, and only 8% from their family/relatives.

Table 36 The hijra's idea about the sources of benefits/ privileges

Sources of Benefits/ Privileges	Frequency	Valid Percent
Family/Relatives	16	14.0
Society	36	31.6
Government	43	37.7
Others	19	16.7
Total	114	100.0

The attitude and behavior of most communities towards the hijra community are significant factors contributing to the welfare of the hijra. When asked (Table 37), it was found that among 200 respondents, only 5% of hijras hold negative expectations from ordinary people. In contrast, 10% expect neutral, and 89.5% of hijras expect positive attitudes from ordinary people.

Table-37 Expectations of the hijra from the Common People

expectation of the hijra	Frequency	Valid Percent
Negative	1	.5
Neutral	20	10.0
Positive	179	89.5
Total	200	100.0

Also, when asked about their expectations from the Government (Table 38), more than 82.5% of the respondents expected a positive role. In comparison, 10% of respondents gave neutral and only 7.5 % negative feedback.

Table 38 Attitude Expectations from the Government

Expectations from the government	Frequency	Valid Percent
Negative	15	7.5
Neutral	20	10.0
Positive	165	82.5
Total	200	100.0

4.9 Conflicts in the life of hijras: their realization

A clash of interests and conflicts can influence the availability of food and the sustainability of livelihood of the hijra community. When explored, they reported facing many financial, social, and other conflicts. As summarized in Table 39, the highest was pointing to financial conflict (34.4%) responses clear that their communities are not free from money-related matters. The domination of their leader, Guru had become the reason for the second largest (8+7+14 = 29%) conflict. A particular Hijra community usually has a fixed area within which they operate, can earn, and perform, but often they trespass and quarrel for area division (10.2%). Conflict for leadership is a big issue among hijras; 8.4% of responses were for a leadership position. Especially seniors try to dominate their juniors. 6.4% of responses had come in dominating attitude of members.

Table 39 Conflicts in the lives of the hijra

Pattern of Conflicts	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Area Division	40	10.2%	25.8%
Leadership position	33	8.4%	21.3%
Gaining Guru's attention	31	7.9%	20.0%
The dominating attitude of Guru	57	14.5%	36.8%
The dominating attitude of members	25	6.4%	16.1%
Financial conflict	135	34.4%	87.1%
Others	72	18.3%	46.5%
Total	393	100.0%	253.5%

A cross-tabulation with disputes and living sites was conducted to determine whether there is any site-wise variation in the conflict (urban, peri-urban, and rural). As summarized in Table 40, financial strife was the most dominating regardless of the sites (urban area 44.8%, 33.0% for peri-urban and 32.6% for rural areas). Conflicts were generally high for peri-urban and rural areas than urban ones. The competition for gaining gurus' attention was surprisingly lower in urban areas than the peri-urban and rural areas, which may indicate that hijras in urban areas were more self-oriented and had not had much interest in Gurus.

Table 40 Conflict types of the sites

Sources of conflict		Status of the Sites			Total
		Urban	Peri-Urban	Rural	
Area Division	Count	3	12	25	40
	% within Types	5.2%	12.0%	10.3%	
leadership position	Count	5	8	21	34
	% within Types	8.6%	8.0%	8.7%	
Gaining Guru's attention	Count	1	10	21	32
	% within Types	1.7%	10.0%	8.7%	
The dominating attitude of Guru	Count	8	12	37	57
	% within Types	13.8%	12.0%	15.3%	
The dominating attitude of members	Count	5	6	15	26
	% within Types	8.6%	6.0%	6.2%	
Financial conflict	Count	26	33	79	138
	% within Types	44.8%	33.0%	32.6%	
Others	Count	10	19	44	73
	% within Types	17.2%	19.0%	18.2%	
Total	Count	58	100	242	400

4. Concluding Remarks

Our state's constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation. Recognizing the hijra group as a distinct gender is a massive step in the right direction. However, this acknowledgment exists only on paper (Khanam, 2022). They continue to be the poorest of the poor. Hijras have a right to equal protection under the law, a dignified means of subsistence, accurate media representation, and the ability to live in a community without fear of violence or discrimination. The state must enact and enforce laws, policies, and programs that ensure hijras can fully exercise their rights as citizens (Goni & Hoque, 2020). Currently, hijras who live in rented homes have the general public as their next-door neighbors. It demonstrates their acceptance in society. With time, their lonely days are behind them. They

may now return to their house and enjoy special occasions with their family. This analysis painted a picture of their successful makeovers. The research's conclusions and results have been included in earlier tables. The three places are far apart from one another. Every location differs from the others. Given the specific shortcomings and accomplishments of the sites, additional research is required to look into potential solutions for problems that still need to be addressed. Three sites' food-related features highlight their knowledge of food. The alterations to these places are also evident in the hijra community's eating habits. According to the competitive image, rural areas must be developed to develop hijra communities. Rural communities have limited economic potential; therefore, their food and livelihood sources are static.

In contrast to rural settings, peri-urban and urban areas have more prospects for hijras. But if they are adequately educated, all opportunities are well-spent. They take advantage of numerous modern amenities, yet they need to gain knowledge. Their partners dupe them due to their lack of education. There are 17 SDGs, many of which will take a lot of work. One of these is the tremendous gender inequality that exists in our nation. The youth are forced to quit their schools due to the physical changes brought on by hijra, preventing them from receiving an education. This becomes a significant obstacle for the hijra to obtain a respectable living in contemporary society. It is unavoidable that the environment has a vital role in our lives. While Hijras are aware of sanitation, they are unaware of the importance of the domain. There may be an excellent chance to help Bangladesh achieve the SDGs if the bulk of our society and the hijras become aware of the problems described in this research.

Finally, it can be said that third-gender people have limited access to society's cultural, economic, and political institutions and cannot fully reap the benefits of more conventional forms of social organization. They cannot exercise authority or fully appreciate their citizenship rights at home or in society. People who identify as hijra face severe barriers to accessing essential social, cultural, legal, academic, and medical resources. The results show that the lack of recognizing a Hijra as a distinct gendered human being far beyond the male-female binary is the root cause of most forms of discrimination and exclusion in the lives of the Hijra community. This has made it impossible for them to participate in mainstream society while maintaining their dignity as human beings. Therefore, various measures have already been taken for the betterment of the community by the government of Bangladesh and certain NGOs.

5. Authors Contribution

The research's planning and execution, the study's analysis of the findings, and the creation of the report were all done by the four writers.

6. Acknowledgments

We want to express our special thanks to the Gono Bishwabidyalay Multidisciplinary Research Cell for the research funding and for helping us a lot in conducting the research project. Moreover, we are very much thankful to our former Director of the Research Cell, the late Prof. Dr. Iqbal Jubery, for his enormous contribution to the research project ahead. We pray for his departed soul to rest in peace. We are also interested in saying thanks to our colleagues and other experts who helped us to take the endeavor forward.

7. Conflict of Interest Statement

There are no disclosed conflicts of interest for the writers. The manuscript's contents have been reviewed and approved by each co-author, and there are no competing financial interests to disclose. We attest that the submission is unique and is not already being considered by another publisher.

8. Ethical Statements

At this moment, we are consciously assuring that the manuscript titled "Meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Food and Livelihood Perspective of Transgender Community in Bangladesh" is a piece of our original writing that has never been published. There are no plans to publish the work elsewhere at the moment. The paper accurately and thoroughly reflects the authors' own research and analysis. The significant contributions of co-authors and co-researchers are duly acknowledged throughout the work. The findings are correctly positioned about earlier and ongoing studies.

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